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THE INTRUDER

By Rene Bizet

Translated by William L. McPherson

I was eighteen years old. For the first time I was free. My parents had allowed me to make a trip alone through the country. For a whole month I could realize my dream of rambling over the Breton roads, my sack on my back, without worrying about the length of the march, sleeping under the stars and eating my bread on the bank of a stream.

Sometimes I was tired and conditions of travel afoot were not favorable. Thus one oppressive July Sunday I regretted that I had not stopped at Sarzeau when it grew dark and the sky clouded over. I had still three good leagues to go to the next village. The southwest wind blew in squalls across the country, forcing me to stop to catch my breath. I was not discouraged until the rain began to fall in torrents, blinding me and almost strangling me. The lightning illuminated the horizon. The thunder and the ocean mingled their tumult so completely that I feared any minute I should reach the edge of a cliff and stumble into the waves below. I had given up hope of finding shelter.

Suddenly I saw on my right a dark mass in the shadows. It must be a house on the side of the road. Who would be cruel enough to refuse hospitality to a drenched wayfarer? I felt for the door. I discovered it and rapped on it. There was no answer. A lightning flash revealed a low, thatched cottage. I rapped again. Not a sound in reply. Then out of irritation than anything else, I seized the knob and turned savagely. The door opened. I entered with a sigh of relief. Finally I had a refuge.

But where was I? What was going to happen? I drew my lamp from my pocket and walked ahead. There was a long passageway—then to the left a furnished room. I called aloud to awaken the occupants. No voice responded. The house was empty. Since I was the sole possessor for the night and there was little chance that the owners would return in such weather, I decided to install myself as comfortably as possible and go to sleep. I found copper candlesticks on a mantel-piece. I lighted the candles. In the room were chairs, a table and a small clothes closet. But all the furniture seemed to have been chosen by a city person with rustic taste rather than by country people.

"What a lucky chance which brought me here," I said to myself. "At dawn shall get out, for after that I might not find a welcome."

But the tempest raged outside. I was light-headed. I closed my eyes as soon as I sat down on the bench which I intended to make my couch, and I thought I was dreaming when I heard these words:

"What are you doing in my house?" I gave a start. No, it was not a dream. Two steps away was a woman who, a candle in her hand, was examining me curiously.

"You came to rob me?" She spoke so audaciously and had the air of being so little frightened by my presence that I did not know what answer and contented myself with looking at her closely. She was a woman and very good-looking.

"Well," she continued, "are you afraid?"

As she said this she drew a revolver from her pocket. I jumped up. "But, mademoiselle!"

"Well," she said, "it is not for you to be afraid. I am going to give you a piece of advice. If you want to keep out of trouble and avoid being accused of a crime, go away. I intend to kill myself. And if they know that you spent the night here!"

I was sure that she was not joking. She expressed herself calmly, without bravado and toyed with the weapon in her hand as she might have toyed with a pendant to her necklace.

"You want to kill yourself?" "Yes." "Why?" "For reasons which don't interest you."

"Nevertheless, what justifies you in killing yourself?" "No—no moralizing. If you please. There is something so ridiculous in our dialogue at this hour and in this place, that I almost feel like leaving you here and killing myself outside on the road."

"But it is raining too hard. You want to shoot yourself, but you are afraid of the rain!" "It is true. And now, go. I beg you, leave me here alone. You don't know me. What difference does it make to you if I kill myself? At my age, when one is tired of life, it is because one has suffered in love. The man whom I loved has just deserted me, in spite of my tears. I am indifferent to everything. I can neither smile nor weep. I ask your pardon for sending you away. But it must be. Go. Continue your journey. Think of me until the dawn. And swear to me that you will never tell any one what you have seen."

She put the weapon and the candle on the table. She pushed me out and slammed the door violently behind me.

I know that I ought to have resisted, that I ought to have defended her against her folly. But I had neither the time nor the strength to do so. We had talked but a few minutes, and the scene which I had passed through was so strange and so unexpected that out on the road I hardly knew if I had not been all a dream. I walked ahead abstractedly in the rain and mud. I paid no attention to the howling of the wind. I tried to keep on my feet and to plunge through the darkness. I remembered nothing.

Stumbling against a stone and almost falling over it restored me to my senses. My memory came back. There was a thatched house and a young woman. There was the revolver—and death. There was the drama which I was allowing to be played through. I turned about and ran toward the house. I shouted aloud my remorse, as if men could hear me. I hurled myself at the door. The flames of the candles threw fitful shadows on the wall. I listened. All was silence. I saw her stretched on the bench on which I had lain. I had arrived too late.

I drew nearer and heard the sound of regular breathing. I saw her beautiful hair in a golden network about her closed eyes. Her hands lay on her breast like flowers. The revolver was still on the table. Weary, exhausted, no doubt, she had been overcome by sleep before death appeared. I put the weapon in my pocket. I blew out the candles. I went out again into the storm, this time joyously, leaving my Sleeping Beauty. I was not, under my vagabond cloak, enough of a Prince Charming to awaken her with a kiss.

It is astonishing what power there is in the intense, absorbing realization of what is true, good and real. The holding of this intense thought of reality, of goodness, of our divinity, strengthens our character and reveals to us consciousness of the possession of omnipotent power. Character can only grow by what it feeds upon; if we take only divine thoughts into our minds, the character will be divine; but every foolish, wicked thought mars the web of character, and the wicked threads stretch themselves across the web, as a perpetual testimony of our folly. Remember that your success is a child of your thought. If your thought is mean and contemptible, your success must be of the same kind.

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Hill Born.

I have grown weary of this languid land; Sick of the low horizon line that flows Like a great sombre river; sick to death Of rose and laurel, eucalyptus, palm. Brooding in lavish sweetness. I am mad For the harsh glory of my own far hills, For the stern masculinity of home.

They do not have sunrise or sunset here; Rather the shameful day slinks covering in Over gray waste of waters and gray land, Under a muted, melancholy sky. And never does it burn away in one Swift, splendid burst of sanctifying flame As day once did, but shambles grayly past

Under the mantle of the leper fog, To the dull stupor of a starless night. O God—for splendid spaces in this dawn— For glimmering vastness—for the wind that swings Tumultuously in from starry horizon— For the tempestuous magic of a sky Torn into shreds of fire—and for the hush

Of aspen leaves black on an amber heaven— For all the mighty pageantrics of day That made life epic large, I am athirst. They have been music in my memory; They will go echoing with me till I come Home to my hills.

Feet that have trodden granite Can never be content with milder ways. Eyes that have held high converse with the stars Cannot be tamed to blinking servitude In molelike burrows. Hearts that have followed the wind Beat with a winged insurgence till they spurn The timorous flesh to skyward trails again.

And mine to-night is wild with all rebellion; Blind to all other beauty—hungering only For hill horizons and a coyote moon— Sage in my nostrils—milling, maverick stars— And then the flame clad riders of the dawn Loping across the sky with hoots of thunder.

—Ted Olson.

Interpretation in Music.

Every work of art emanates from an interesting and absorbing idea which seems to demand expression in the most artistic and complete form. Especially is this the case in music, the most intimate and the most introspective of all the arts. This magnificent art depends for its effects upon channels of its own. While the painter and the sculptor speaks directly to their public through a completed work, the musician on the other hand must depend upon an artistically trained interpreter. His work is not finished when he places it upon paper. Its value may be raised or lowered depending upon the character and the training and the talent of the one who elects to perform the work. In the work of musical art there slumbers under the veil of notes and staves a sleeping beauty awaiting the magic touch of the interpreter to bring all the loveliness to life.

The interpreter must first of all be a real artist, otherwise it will be impossible for him to liberate the magical vibrations of the music. In the work of the creative musician there must naturally be more dependence upon intuition and individuality, while with the interpretive artist greater stress is laid upon the extent of his interpretive knowledge. What is of greater importance to the interpretive artist is that he shall know not merely the composer and his work, but shall comprehend the nature of the musical receptivity of the public mind for which he must perform.

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The Great Disillusion.

Disillusion, alas! comes to all of us. My first disillusion, says Mr. Arthur Porritt in the Best I Remember, came when I was a boy of nine years, and every detail is burned upon my memory.

At my day school in a Lancashire town the boys had a mad craze one year for a particular form of sweets. All our pocket money went on a sort of sherbet, which we ate dry with a spoon, and which we called "kall." It was sold in little flat wooden boxes, and there were several varieties, lemon, orange, pineapple, and so forth. Opinions varied sharply as to the merits of the various kinds. One boy praised lemon kall; another cared for nothing except orange; and a third vowed that all other varieties of the sweet were simply unearable compared with pineapple kall. We quarreled and almost came to blows over the relative merits of the flavors. We formed groups of orange kall boys and felt bitterly toward the avowed champions of lemon and pineapple kall. In fact, we boys blindly elevated the kalls into real party issues.

Now the summer holidays came while our differences of opinion were at a height, and I went to visit relatives in an East Lancashire town. While there I had the supreme joy of being taken over the factory where the kalls were made. On my round I entered a room where four girls in white overalls were filling the familiar flat wooden boxes, which were already labeled; there was a mountainous pile of the toothsome powder on a huge round table. I looked at the boxes; they bore colored labels, yellow for lemon kall, red for orange kall and green for pineapple kall. But all the boxes were being filled from the same pile! Aghast, I asked one of the girls if a horrible mistake was not being made. "Aren't you putting orange kall into a lemon kall box?" I asked in a tone that must have sounded horror-struck.

"Oh, no," she replied; "there's no difference in the kall; the difference is only in the labels on the boxes." I left the factory, a sadly disillusioned boy.

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Woman's Tool.

Engine-Driver—"The reason we are kept waiting here, ma'am, is because the engine has broken down. I have examined it, and if I only had the proper tools I could fix it in half an hour."

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