
Elfa

And well I might: for now I saw how nearly I had made a desperate wreck of both our lives.

"I wish that you had told me before, Elfa," I said, my features relaxing, not without some effort, indeed, into a smile. "But go on, I am interested now, indeed."

"Then I am very sorry I did not. Well, when I came here, I think the having a secret—it was only a simple one after all, Ernst—pleased me. I had to watch your going out and coming in, so that I might find time to seek for my cousin. I found her, but not until to-day; and Captain von Unger, who met me by chance this morning on the market-place, had told me of the house just as you came to us. You went out again soon and I hurried to the house and saw Esther. I had not much time; for we had a thousand greetings to exchange and ten thousand old memories to recall, yet I managed to get from her the little story of her love. And oh, Ernst, you should have seen her when I said I knew her lover's name." And Elfa laughed musically like a child.

"How did she show her love, Elfa?" I asked.

"Why, like a woman. She spoke indifferently of him; said she had heard of a Captain von Unger—for in telling me the story, she had not mentioned his name—in fact, that she had met him: a tall, self-conceited, rather foolish person, was he not? She had heard nothing to his good and much to his discredit. That he was mean, bad-tempered, cold-hearted, and hateful, and so on. I said nothing, but just looked steadily at her. Oh, yes, she had heard that he was intending