

Some Ado About Beauty—A Fantasy

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"Thank you, dear, I'd much prefer to ride in the rear seat."

"Ump!" from the man at the wheel of the car.

As she enters, the hem of the lady's dress is caught on the car-door hinge.

A subdued petulant exclamation, but the attentive hotel-door attendant has adroitly freed the fragile fabric.

Through the night-mirk of the great city the car speeds rapidly. A drifting snowy-rain flecks the windows. The lady is plunged in silence and nestling deeply in the warmth of her luxurious wraps. A persistent train of pleasurable thoughts reveals itself in the slight recurring movement of the delicate skin around her sensitive lips.

"Beg pardon, Jim, I—I didn't catch what you just said?"

"Just said! Great Scot! I have been saying for the last fifteen minutes, in fact, ever since I picked you up from the Royal. It is evident you have been all this time charmingly oblivious."

"I'm sorry."

"O' thanks."

A silence.

The car swerves sharply; it has turned westward.

"Gracious! We are in Lakewood already."

A growl from the wheel:

"Might be in Hades with a full cargo of oblivious souls."

A silence.

The slushy-snow drive flecks the opposite windows. The car turns sharply south. It stops under an ample weather-porch of a commodious house bearing all the appearances of a well-appointed home. The lady passes into the house.

The man quickly follows.

A short period (in minutes) elapses.

The couple meet in the sitting room of their home.

The lady is already seated in a sumptuous chair, beside a glowing coal-fire, endeavouring to bring her voyaging thoughts under control in order to read an ivory-covered volume she has taken up. On the small table, rich in its gold and lacquer work, standing at her elbow, is a shaded ornate amber light.

The man enters, strides over the yielding Oriental floor-rugs and takes his position on the opposite side of the fireplace. His lips are a trifle compressed.

He selects a cork-tipped cigarette from a richly-chased silver case, and as he lights it, he furtively scrutinizes the partly averted face of the woman, on which the fire glow has imparted a colour reminiscent of early summer roses.

"Your watch losing, dear? Much slow, eh?"

"Eh? Slow, no, why?"

"Must be: an hour slow."

"An hour?"

"Yes, the hour you promised to be ready—and wasn't."

"Oh, Jim."

"All right, but an hour is a heavy exercise for—(you gave it the name yourself) for my natural impatience, or was it, my impatient nature?"

"Sorry, Jim, the time flew—"

"So didn't the ticker of my speedometer."

"So sorry, dear."

"I daresay—I'm sure you are, sweetheart."

"Ah, Jim, there is an hour in one's life when one lives an age, a whole existence."

"I understand that; the hour I waited for you."

"Jim, they—*we* were talking of life, the real life, the something that is a part of the mundane, yet, quite above it all. And of Nature and Art and Truth."

"Ump, some small subject, very! Yes?"

"Nature, Art, Truth, that wondrous trinity, integral parts of true Existence."

The man moves and stands up with his back to the fireplace. He assumes an air of attentive resignation.

"They—*we* were in agreement—"

"No, really! It's incredible! Positively all in agreement?"

"Oh, Jim, listen, please!"

He sighs:

"All right."

"They—*we* were in agreement that the mystery of life—the clayey birth-marriage-death life—has been thoroughly explored and all that it has to offer to mankind is now fully comprehended."

"A very sanguine philosophy of finality, I must say. I wish I was—"

"Listen, please."

"I again swear—promise. As patient as I waited."

"Jim, the best lived life, measuring it by its pleasures, results, experiences, or by whatever you will, is but a mere promise, a suggestion of some other state where all these things will be so much better acted and done with a clear understanding. Present human Joy is a mere smack of the lips, a mild fore-taste of what Joy really is."

"Hopeful!"

"They—*we* agreed that Art is the esoteric symbol, everywhere and in all times, of that promise; therefore Art is a kind of phylactery, you understand, that real Life should—No, *must*, always display on its daily garb. Art, in the dawn that came and awakened the slum-

bering brute into a manhood, was the silver fire-star that also then arose and he'd its high place in the heavens."

"Oh!"

"But when they—*we* came to speak of Truth; ah, Truth, Truth, Truth. Truth that defies all definitions, baffles all visualization; like an ignis fatuus, formless in its radiance and elusive to the understanding of the highest human intelligence: then, leaning back in his chair, HE, with closed eyes, and in a low impassionate voice, its tones falling like a gently swaying sweet-toned silver bell in some leaf-still Buddhist temple; with that soulful abstraction that is so his own; in a tremulous ecstasy that exhorts him above us all—"

"A sort of poetic Einstein?"

"He spoke, yes, he spoke as one might murmur during the passage of a beautiful dream, or as one wrapt and gazing at the splendours of a gold-and-scarlet sun vision in the western summer-sky or one lost among the glories of the white and pink-toned cloud castles flushed by the riot of a gorgeous sunset. We were hushed under his magic spell and floated with him along on the irresistible current of his prophetic fancy."

"Floaters, ump!"

"The spell was the unmeasured—the unmeasurable passage of charming moments, sweet as when one loses consciousness in a perfect blissful moment when the scent of a rare perfume greets our senses for the first time."

"A moment, a blissful hour."

"Oh, listen. He told us how beauty, that wondrous child of the mysteries, was born; Beauty, the offspring of the marriage of the golden sunbeam with the silver-crystal waters that flow through fields of asphodels, from the fountain of Truth; and how this Beauty was Truth's own grandchild and that Truth, the hoar old grandam, hoar with her myriad ages, sits within her azure-purple grotto and smiles with satisfied love and complacency upon this her radiant little one."

"Sounds like a blaa-blaa, blaa-blaa, blaa from Wagner."

"Hush, Jim, He told how Truth, her power and serenity garbed in the modest colours of a plain life, had lived for aeons and aeons on familiar terms with unsophisticated man and openly walked with him in his poetics and philosophies, wooing him ever upward and forward; inciting him to see, with his own sight, the world, which is but a part of himself; to harken to the music of its moods; to delight in the perfumes that tell of the loves of its flowers and to rightly relish the sweetness that comes