

"Dearest," said the note, "when you read these lines I shall not be of this world. Try and believe that what I have done is best—best for both of us. Try also to forgive and, if possible, forget.—Your wretched Clarence."

The young man addressed an envelope, inserted the note and laid the missive on the desk top beside a photo in an oval, silver frame. But as he did, the eyes of the girl in the photo caught and held him. Up till now he had studiously avoided looking at the picture. Perhaps he had been afraid of the reproach that he felt might creep into those eyes.

But now, it was too late even for such reproach. He took the photo up and looked long and tenderly on it, and then pressed his lips to the cold glass. Sighing, he replaced the pictured likeness of the girl whose heart he was going to crush. Then he glanced at the clock on the desk. It was just 2.07. In less than three minutes, therefore, all would be over!

He sat down again and took up the revolver. Leaning back he closed his eyes, and his lips began to move slowly as he counted: "One—two—three—"

The door burst open! A messenger boy stood there saying something.

The young man opened his eyes and sat up straight, staring perplexedly and in an aggrieved way at this intruder. After all his careful preparations, it was most strange that he had neglected to fasten the door.

"K. and J. has jumped two points!" This was what the boy said, or shouted.

"We've been callin' an' callin' yuh on the 'phone," he went on, "An' yuh never answered—"

The young man dropped the revolver, which clattered to the floor, and sprang forward. Joy had spread over his face as the morning sun spreads over the twilight dawn, and for a moment he stood gripping the edge of the desk and panting, and gazing at the messenger. "Yep—she's shootin' way up! 'Change has went clean crazy!" continued the boy excitedly. "The boss says to hang on close an' not sell out for your life. The Pritchard syndicate is in now, buyin' right an' left!"

The young man shot forward and clutched the lad's shoulders. His lips moved but no sound came forth. What he was reiterating was: "Is it true—is it true?" He drew his tongue across his dry lips, and tried again to speak.

"True? You betcher life it's true!" returned the boy. "Gee! Yuh needn't turn the waterworks on, though!"

For tears were raining down the young man's cheeks.

The sound from the back of the room ceased abruptly. A voice took its place: "Jumping Jeremiah, but my arm's sure done up with all this cranking."

A man in shirtsleeves came forward and joined the other two.

"How did I do it?" asked the young man, as he wiped the tears from his face with a mercerized silk handkerchief, and turned to the man in shirtsleeves.

"Oh, so-so," was the reply. "But say, Bill, can't you get a little more pep into that last part? It don't seem to have the punch that the first part has. And I'd make that writing shaky, because I've got to take a close-up of the letter, and it's got to look true, y' understand. I sure must compliment you on that pump work though. You can weep as well as little Mary P. and then some! Now, let's go over that last part again."

A Strange Gift

By Charlotte Brewster Jordan

Little Karina Suzanne Hjorth was called Zanna for short. She lived in Norway, away up on a mountaintop. Although she had been born in Norway, she had not always lived there. For ten happy years she had lived in Canada, and then (when Zanna was thirteen years old) they had returned to the house on the rocks which Mr. Hjorth had built for them all, close by his great mill.

At first Zanna thought it was beautiful to live on a mountain so high that, in order to reach her home, she had to climb up two hundred and thirteen steps. Zanna counted them all herself, and wondered how her sturdy Norse grandfathers ever had the patience to cut these

rough steps out of the solid rock hundreds of years ago. There were just two hundred steps too many for Mrs. Hjorth, who, after two or three attempts, always lost her breath at the unlucky thirteenth step. So after that her husband always drove her round by the winding road-way, which was very much longer. But little Zanna always liked to climb the steps.

Back of their home was a noisy, rushing waterfall which splashed and foamed night and day, and turned the mill-wheels, and then tumbled noisily down and down the rocks till it became a commonplace, demure canal.

Zanna often used to ride on the queer little canal-boats to see if she could not find some English-speaking tourists whom she might invite to her home. But she never found any, and instead, used to watch the peasant folk coming from the market. Zanna thought she would never tire of looking at the fair-skinned, flax-haired maidens with their ample woolen skirts and bright-colored knit bodices, quaintly cut and fastened together with curious brass or silver clasps and buckles.

After a while, however, Zanna became used to the rosy-cheeked peasants, and then she began to grow very lonely. I think she was really a little homesick for the children and flowery valleys of her Canadian home.

"Of course I have you and papa and Baby Joanne," she said to her mother one day. "And I don't think I would get lonesome for any one else if some green grass and pretty flowers grew up here. But it's just rocks, great, bare rocks everywhere. And it always makes me wonder whether the giants didn't try to build houses with these awful rock blocks, and got angry because they couldn't, and then just threw them round. Why, that big flat rock back of the kitchen is twice as big as our whole yard over the ocean!"

I think Zanna grieved more than most little girls, for she used to have a magic touch with all growing things, and loved her "plant children" far more than dolls.

"Never mind," said mother, who heard the sigh and guessed for what her little daughter was longing. "It is too bad we cannot have our garden, dear, but things might be very much worse. It is better for us all to live here with father than to have all the flower-gardens in Canada."

So Zanna thought instead of Christmas, and of what she would like in her stocking, and on the beautiful tree which she and Joanne would have together. In fact, she thought so hard about it that before she knew it the next day was to be Christmas.

You all know how early she got up to peep into her stocking, for you probably do the same thing yourselves. Everything was lovely by the nursery chimney-place, and when she hurried to the breakfast-room she was just in time to meet the postman with his arms full of presents from her little schoolmates in Canada.

"But Zanna hasn't seen the best of all yet," said her mother.

"More yet!" exclaimed excited Zanna. "Why, I can't think of anything else I want!"

"It is so big," explained her father, with a twinkle in his eye, "that old Saint Nick couldn't think of getting down the chimney with it."

"Couldn't get it down the chimney!" "No. In fact, he couldn't carry it at all. He had to get four horses, instead of reindeer, to cart it here in wagon-loads—four hundred, I think. They left it out by the kitchen with Miss Karina Suzanne Hjorth's name on it. Get on your wraps and we'll see."

Sure enough! It was just as Mr. Hjorth said. The big, flat rock was covered deep with—what you'll never guess, so I'll tell you right now—with four hundred cart-loads of soil! Rich, black, woody earth several feet deep! And Zanna was so happy she could hardly keep the tears back, for she knew that this strange Christmas present would be a joy to her all her life long.

And when her mother gave her her present, a package of seeds of each kind—mignonette, phlox, pansies and asters—Zanna thought she was the very happiest girl in Norway.

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