

Calla and Lilly

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secret anxiety. After a number of dances Bill Dolan started a sort of oration.

"Although I ain't had the pleasure of knowing you ladies for long," he said, mopping his face a good deal and glancing nervously at Burton from time to time. "I feel like I was an old friend, being as I—that is because I—"

Bill stopped and gazed anxiously around.

"He seems to be stuck," remarked Burton, scornfully. "I guess he wants to say it's because he heard so much about you from me."

"Sure! That's it!" cried Bill, taking new heart. "My friend Burton can't talk about nothing else. Why when he gets going about the O'Heraghty twins he gets so—so—I mean so elegant—"

"Eloquent," interrupted Burton.

"Well, eloquent, then," said Bill, glaring back. "What's the difference? If you want me to go on—"

"Can't you keep still, Burton?" said Calla, severely. "It's a perfectly dandy speech. Don't pay any attention to him, Mr. Dolan."

"Well, the long and short of it is," continued that young man, visibly cheered by encouragement from this quarter, "I wanted to ask if you wouldn't mind if I made a regular fourth at this here party?"

Calla and Lilly assured him they would be delighted.

"And, what's more," Bill went on, getting very red and fidgety again, "I wanted to find out, that is to ask in a way, meaning no offense; I wanted to ask Miss Calla O'Heraghty—in the presence of her sister—if she would keep company with me."

The twins looked hard at the table and blushed in unison, but for a different reason it may be hazarded. Calla was the first to look up. She glanced shyly at Burton.

"If he doesn't mind," she said.

"Bless you, my children!" said Burton, sheepishly.

"Well, that's settled!" exclaimed Mr. Dolan with great satisfaction. "And here's a waltz to clinch the bargain. Come on, Cal!"

Lilly continued to stare at the table. She was of three minds, whether to scold, or cry, or laugh.

"Well?" questioned Burton, experimentally, when they were left by themselves.

She looked at him with deep reproach. "It was all a put-up job!" she said.

"What of it?" said Burton, doggedly.

"It isn't square to Calla!"

"Ain't he a good sort of chap?"

Lilly was constrained to admit that he was.

"Earns first class wages for a kid, too," added Burton.

"I'm afraid he spends it all on his back," suggested Lilly.

"Ah!" growled Burton with his most hang-dog air. "I set him up his clothes. Them are what I bought for myself."

"Oh, Burton Shevlin!" she cried horrified. Nevertheless she let him take her hand under the table.



FROM over the rim of his push-cart spectacles Giuseppe peered into the corner of the cluttered room. "Is the cough no better, my Gemma?" he asked anxiously.

"It is, I think, a little better," the young wife answered, rising from the low mattress to light the lamp and carry it to the work bench, "but this benediction to climate where the sun never shines is bad. Do you remember, Giuseppe mio, the sun, how he shone in Amalfi?"

Searchingly the man looked at her. Was this stooping, huddled figure in the gray knit shawl the dimpling, laughter-loving child he had married not six months before? The lamplight fell full on the delicate, oval face framed in the brown curls. Startled, Giuseppe laid down the tiny plaster bambino which he was chiseling.

"Perhaps America is not good for you. Pasquale maybe was wrong, and it were better to have bided in Amalfi."

"Amalfi! Is Amalfi, with its taxes, its tiresome, chattering women a home fit for the artist? No, Giuseppe, we did well to leave Italy. In America you will be famous."

Giuseppe sighed. "Three months ago I thought even as you. But America is fast—restless. In these rushing streets, where trains shoot through the air, is there time for the beauty? The American do not buy my images." Then abruptly, "Pasquale is late again tonight."

"You have said it, Giuseppe. The American do not buy your images because of Pasquale. Your Madonna he sells as fish."

"Speak not so," answered her husband. "All cannot be artists. Pasquale is a fisherman. But to him we owe much. His fish paid for my lessons in modeling, his fish bought for us our tickets to America."

"And if we owe," replied the girl quickly, "does he not live with us? Do you not model from early till late figures, figures, for yourself and for him? He does nothing but sell—and that badly! Is the work not beautiful? Did not all in Amalfi, the padre himself, praise your 'Manger' and 'Wise-men' and 'Christ-child' for the Christmas Presepio? I tell you, Giuseppe, Pasquale is a failure." A violent attack of coughing interrupted her rapid flow of speech.

"There, there, my little one," said Giuseppe, soothingly, putting his arm about her shaking shoulders. "You speak too much. Let the fiddle talk."

From a faded bag he drew a violin and lovingly drew the bow across the strings. The plaintive strains of a folk song awoke the memory of a dwarfed boy fiddling for pennies at the big hotel, as year after year had slipped by and he still sat before his table of images in the square of Amalfi; the golden words of the padre: "Giuseppe your work teaches where my words fail. Speak to more people, my son."

Then had come Pasquale's luck. Day after day the great run of fish, the high prices in Naples. Even as he drew the bow across the strings, Giuseppe recalled the night that the fishing boat had upset and he had struggled in the icy water, until he felt Pasquale's strong arm. How many other times had he not felt that arm about him! Now it was the artist's turn. Recognition was slow but it would come. "When it comes," thought Giuseppe, "it will be well for Pasquale."

The door opened abruptly, and a tall, broad-shouldered man stumbled into the low room. Pasquale always stumbled. The noise disturbed Giuseppe's reverie. "You are late," he said, frowning. "Have you sold much to-day?"

Pasquale unfastened the broad band that strapped the heavy basket to his shoulder.

"The day has been bad," he replied. "Yet have I sold eight. How is Gemma?"

Giuseppe shrugged his shoulders. There was no need for words—a fresh attack of coughing spoke for itself. "Why were the sales so small," he thought. "Eight were well enough when Pasquale knew not the streets, but now?"

Pasquale watched him anxiously, reading in the high forehead and sensitive, drooping mouth disappointment, pity, resignation. "I am slow, amico mio," he said at last, "stupid and slow. You are right to be angry. But try me a little longer. To-morrow it will be better."

"So you say, always, Pasquale. Did any speak of the work to-day?"

"Yes, there was one," answered Pasquale, speaking rapidly, as though reciting a much-rehearsed lesson. "A Signor, molto ricco, I remember because he bought a Madonna and the gold rubbed off the crown. You must change that, Giuseppe. 'For the man who made this,' said the Signor, 'a future openeth,' his very words. When the future openeth, Giuseppe, Pasquale will no longer be needed."

"Speak not so," said Giuseppe as he looked to see if Gemma, too, had grasped the significance of the words. "Speak not so, Pasquale. Then, as now, I will

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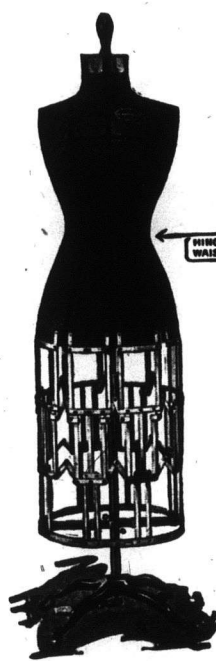
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