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## *Elfa*

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him that he himself might tell me the news. Ah, Ernst, that is another noble man. I could have loved him first for the news he brought, that you were safe; and next, for the way in which he spoke of you."

"What did he tell you of me?" I asked, somewhat hoarsely, in my anxiety to learn how much she knew of my past.

"Together, they told me everything that had been said by Max Grubel; and how he had retracted it; but they told it in such a way as showed me how highly both thought of you. Yet I knew very much of it—all that was true, indeed—long ago." She said this in a faltering voice as if confessing to a fault.

"You knew this, Elfa?" I cried in my astonishment.

"Yes, dearest. The good priest at Massen told me all the story of your life, that day before our marriage. But he charged me not to let you know that he had told me: and I promised that I would not, unless the knowledge came to me in some other way. He thought, and I thought, too, that you did not wish me to know and would choose your own time to tell me. You are not angry that I did not tell you of my knowledge?"

"No, Elfa, no," I whispered, laying my hand on her head and smoothing her golden hair. "I am glad you know it. I should have told you, but I feared that if you learned how wild and violent a life I had lived, you might fear instead of loving me."

"Then I wish I could have let you know. But we