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## Late at Night

«It's time for us to dress.» He spoke softly into the peace of the room where the contours were only dimly lighted by a candle.

«Already?» I said, equally softly and questioningly.

We had rested for nearly an hour next to each other. The peace of the room reflected the peace within ourselves.

«You know I must catch the last tram . . .»

«There is still half an hour's time for that.»

«Let's have a cigarette.»

Slowly, hesitatingly and nearly unwillingly, he lifted his deeply tanned legs across me and let his body follow quickly. On the table were cigarettes, an ashtray and a lighter.

«Shall I light one for you?»

«Yes, please.»

He lighted both cigarettes and pushed one between my lips while he looked down at me with a relaxed smile.

«Happy?» he asked.

«Yes, you too?»

«Yes, very much so.»

Afterwards is often the best time, I kept thinking. No words needed, nor assurances either. Relaxed is All.

We finished our smoke. He bent half down; I drew him fully towards me. We just looked at each other without words. There was no need of them. We kissed and then he drew away from me and stood



Photo Jim. Zürich

erect. I thought, good heavens, *how* well proportioned he is, while he stretched contentedly before going to the bathroom.

I shut my eyes. The evening had gone by in perfect harmony. Perhaps for the reason we were rarely able to see each other. This may have added to the fact that these rare hours of an evening seemed to gain in intensity from one time to the other. As time went by we had both realized what we had gained by going steady.

He returned from the bathroom and I said:

«Do you really have to go?»

«I'm afraid so. Work, as you know, begins early for me.»

«Switch the light on, please.»

He switched the light on and went to the candle and blew it out. If only I could forever hold in my memory the harmony of all the movements of his handsome body!

He started dressing. It was time for me to put on my house suit and see him off the premises. One more brief embrace.

«See you soon.»

«Soon.»

I took him downstairs and opened the front door.

«Thanks for the evening. Be good.»

«Thanks. Good night, sleep well.»

«The same to you.»

I returned to my flat and looked out of the window until the bend of the road swallowed him.

For a long while I sat in my deep armchair. I had another glass of Vermouth. The room I was so fond of seemed so much nicer tonight — simply because he had touched and used so many things in the room. It was as though he had become part of the room or the room part of him. While I was still sitting quietly in my armchair, the thunderstorm which had been threatening the whole evening, broke with sudden force. Thank god he is safely on his tram, I thought, when the rain started to pour down. And from where he gets off he has only to cross the street to get home, so he won't get soaked.

I switched off the light, threw the curtains apart and looked out into the down-pouring rain. Lightning and thunder followed each other in quick succession but I felt my inner peace to be stronger than all the elements from heaven.

I pushed down the covers of my bed, undressed and lay down. There was only a brief lightning-like vision of a dark beloved head before I fell into a sleep as deep and satisfactory as can only result from the complete fulfillment such an evening can give.

by Richard Arlen