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SF PERUSALS

Death Takes A Holiday

A Comedy in Three Acts

by Alberto Casella

Rewritten for the American Stage
by Walter Ferris

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
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STORY OF THE PLAY

The complete text as acted with great success at the Ethel Barrymore Theater, New York. This striking drama has established itself among the important plays of our time. It is based on the poetic conception of death suspending all activities for three days during which period he falls in love with a beautiful girl, and through her realizes why mortals fear him. The mood of this play is established with remarkable skill and while it is charged with exciting moments, it is a perfect background for a love-story that is as simple as it is appealing The character who symbolizes Death is for the most part a very human sort of person, with none of the conventional claptrap that might easily have been dragged in for mere effect. A play that arouses thought, stimulates discussion, and presents a novel and optimistic philosophy on the problems of love and death. *Death Takes a Holiday,* in spite of the early restrictions that prevented widespread production at first, has established itself as one of the most popular and successful plays for amateurs. It is one of those rare combinations that appeals to schools, colleges, churches, Little and Community Theaters.

NOTE

Amateur groups producing this play must announce in all advertising and publicity that the play is by Alberto Casella, rewritten for the American stage by Walter Ferris.

"DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY" was first produced by Lee Shubert, on December 26, 1929, at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre in New York City. The play was directed by Lawrence Marston, the settings were designed by Rollo Wayne, and the cast was as follows:

CORA ..... *Florence Golden*
FEDELE ..... *Thomas Bate*
DUKE LAMBERT ..... *James Dale*
ALDA ..... *Ann Orr*
DUCHESS STEPHANIE ..... *Olga Birkbeck*
PRINCESS OF SAN LUCA ..... *Viva Birkett*
BARON CESAREA ..... *Wallace Erskine*
RHODA FENTON ..... *Lenore Sorsby*
ERIC FENTON ..... *Roland Bottomley*
CORRADO ..... *Martin Burton*
GRAZIA ..... *Rose Hobart*
HIS SERENE HIGHNESS, PRINCE SIRKI, OF
VITALBA ALEXANDRI ..... *Philip Merivale*
MAJOR WHITREAD ..... *Frank Greene*

ACT I

The Great Hall in the Castle of Duke Lambert.
Late evening in October.

ACT II

The same. Three nights later.

ACT III

The same. Eleven-thirty, the same night.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

ALDA is a woman of twenty-eight, slender, beautiful, whose manner suggests a restrained restlessness and hunger. It is blasé, with unsatisfied emotion playing beneath it.

DUKE is a fair man of forty-five, with an air of good health and good breeding

STEPHANIE is a dark, rather mysterious looking woman of forty, with a rich husky voice.

PRINCESS is a fair, sweet woman, maternal and solicitous.

BARON CESARFA is bluff and red-cheeked, at seventy-five, with a merry eye

RHODA is a handsome, straightforward English girl of twenty-four

CORRADO is a dark, beautifully mannered man of twenty-two, with a lightly dissipated face.

ERIC is a tall, intelligent-looking Englishman

GRAZIA is a lovely girl of eighteen, charming and gentle, but oddly remote.

PRINCE SIRKI (SHADOW) a man of distinguished appearance with the pleasantly modulated voice of a man of the world. Slight accent

MAJOR WHITREAD is a lean, tanned, distinguished soldier, about forty

ACT ONE

Scene: Great Hall in DUKE LAMBERT'S *Castle in Italy. The ceiling is high and the stage is so arranged that it gives the impression of a large room. At the rear are three French windows opening on to a garden in which are cypress trees, rose bushes and other luxuriant foliage. To the left of the French windows is a stand on which there is a bowl of roses. There are three steps leading from the Great Hall to the garden. At the top of these, at the left, is a small marble bench. On the stage at the right is a large fireplace. Just in front of this a table and two chairs. To the rear of the fireplace, a door. At the left a divan without a back. Left rear a buffet on which are decanters and glasses. The door left, wide and arched, leads to the reception rooms. Left, rear, a stairway.*

Time: Eleven thirty at night, late October.

At Rise: The stage is empty and dimly lighted. A dark shadow crosses the garden which is flooded with moonlight. The passing of the shadow is repeated two or three times. Enter CORA, *a maid.*

CORA

Fedele, Fedele. (FEDELE *enters from right.*) They're here.

FEDELE

Yes I know. The Duke's had an accident.

CORA

A bad one?

FEDELE

It couldn't be. His car's still running. The lodge keeper telephoned.

CORA

Racing with his son, I suppose. I'm always afraid Corrado will have one, driving like that.

FEDELE

It isn't like the Duke. He takes care of himself.

CORA (*looking out into the garden*)

It's a queer night. Are those shadows or clouds driving across the moon?

FEDELE

Clouds, of course.

[*Voices are heard off.* FEDELE *switches on the lights and he and* CORA *stand on either side of the French windows. Enter* ALDA *and the* DUKE.

[ALDA *is a woman of twenty-eight, slender, beautiful, whose manner suggests a restrained restlessness and hunger. It is blasé, with unsatisfied emotion playing beneath it. The* DUKE *is a fair man, of forty-five, with an air of good health and good breeding.*

[FEDELE *and* CORA *take their wraps and go out.*

DUKE

What a night!

ALDA

We're all a little mad, aren't we? (*Declaiming.*) The moon, the moon's to blame.

DUKE

It's been doing some very odd tricks.
(*He glances back toward the garden where a dark shadow seems to cross. He is startled and speaks suddenly.*)
Alda . . . look!

ALDA

What is it?

DUKE

A shadow. Don't you see?

ALDA

Yes.

DUKE

It's like the one we saw on the road, just before we struck.
It is. . . . (*She laughs and turns away.*) We're letting our imaginations run riot tonight. It's just a cloud passing over the moon.
[*She sits on the divan.*

DUKE

Yes, of course it is. Silly of me to be startled. I must

be a bit nervy. (*Crosses to table and takes cigarette.*) Sure you're all right?

ALDA

Quite. I'm not even shaken. I suppose a proper woman would be in hysterics.

DUKE

Your nerve is magnificent.

[ALDA *sits and lights a cigarette then looks up.*

ALDA

Do you know . . . for just an instant I hoped we *would* crash.

DUKE

Good lord . . . why?

ALDA

I don't know. Perhaps I wanted a thrill . . . At least I'm sure it wasn't courage.

DUKE

Well, my dear, we've had glimpses of deep water tonight, and I don't like it.

[ALDA *gives him a brief smile. She is evidently puzzling over something.*

ALDA

Do you know, there seemed to be something desirable beyond that crash . . . I had a curious glimpse of it.

DUKE

Come, come. We must shake this off. I suggest a whiskey and soda.

[*He goes to the buffet.*

ALDA (*curiously*)

Didn't you feel anything?

DUKE

I felt a very healthy sense of fear, and a touch of conscience at risking your life.

ALDA

Nothing else?

DUKE

Well, if I did, I'm not going to talk about it. (*He comes down to* ALDA.) You'd better fall in love, my dear. Then you won't be worrying about small thrills.

ALDA

I wish I could!

[*Enter* STEPHANIE, *wife of the* DUKE, *the* PRINCESS *of* SAN LUCCA, *and* BARON CESAREA.

[STEPHANIE *is a dark, rather mysterious looking woman of forty, with a rich husky voice.*

[*The Princess is a fair, sweet woman, maternal and solicitous.*

[BARON CESAREA *is bluff and red-cheeked, at seventy-five, with a merry eye.*

STEPHANIE

Lambert . . . I'm so glad to see you!

DUKE

Why, dear?

STEPHANIE

I've been troubled all the way.

PRINCESS

So have I. Have the children come in?

DUKE

They've gone around the lake, I think. We were trying to keep up, but lost them.

BARON

You go too fast. Everybody goes too fast. None of you will live as long as I have. Be used up, the lot of you.

ALDA

You went the pace in your day, dear. You might give us our turn.

BARON

Humph!—. Perhaps I did. But I don't know why I follow you children about like this. Youngsters, all of you.

PRINCESS

It's refreshing to be called a youngster with Grazia eighteen.

STEPHANIE

And Corrado twenty-two.

DUKE

As for Alda . . . she's about eighteen herself tonight. And I . . .

BARON

You're ageless. All dilletanti are. Youth doesn't

know the value of things. Life goes slower with me. Slower every day. I can look at it. By and by, when things stop altogether and I slip through, perhaps I'll know what it's all about. What silly youngsters you'll all seem then.

ALDA

You're not to talk like that. You've got to stay here and be my balance wheel.

BARON

You need one, you naughty girl.

[*She goes to him and takes his arm. They walk toward the garden.*

DUKE (*to* PRINCESS)

He adores her. His dead son was Alda's husband, you know.

PRINCESS

How touching!

DUKE

It's the one thing that keeps the old boy going.

STEPHANIE

It's the one thing that keeps us all going, isn't it?

[*Enter* RHODA FENTON, *a handsome straightforward English girl of twenty-four,* CORRADO, *son of the* DUKE *and* STEPHANIE, *a dark, beautifully mannered man of twenty-two, with a lightly dissipated face, and* ERIC FENTON, *a tall, intelligent-looking Englishman. They enter laughing and talking.* CORA *and* FEDELE *enter and take their wraps and exeunt.*

RHODA

Oh, what a drive! Has my hair gone white, anybody?

ERIC

Not yet, but it probably will. It always happens between twelve and five

CORRADO (*he goes to his father*)

Are you all right, sir?

DUKE

Quite all right, old fellow.

CORRADO

The lodge keeper said you'd had an accident. I nearly turned over myself. It was a near thing.

RHODA

Near! We flirted with a coroner's inquest, and passed on.

ERIC

I haven't gone so hot and cold since the war.

DUKE

How did it happen?

CORRADO

I don't know. My lights must be out of order. There was a curious shadow in front of me and I didn't see the cart at all.

DUKE

A shadow? That's odd.

CORRADO

Just that last second some instinct told me to swerve.

ERIC

And we made a slight parabola at seventy miles an hour on one most inadequate wheel.

RHODA

Yes with a fifty foot drop below—

ERIC

One inch more and all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't have found the pieces.

PRINCESS

Oh, Corrado . . . with all these lives in your hands!

CORRADO

I'm sorry, Princess.

BARON (*comes down steps*)

They play with life easily, at his age.

DUKE (*shaking his head*)

Was Grazia frightened?

RHODA

She hardly knew what was going on.

BARON

Was she asleep, or drugged with moonlight?

RHODA

No, she wasn't asleep. Just dreaming.

DUKE

Where is Grazia now?

CORRADO

She stayed in the garden.

PRINCESS (*to* CORRADO)

I wish you wouldn't drive like that with my little girl.

CORRADO

I'm sorry, Princess. I was distraught tonight.

BARON

Distraught . . . humph . . I've *had* my life, and one year more or less doesn't matter, but you're just beginning. What is it, don't you care about living?

RHODA

I adore it.

CORRADO

I care about Grazia's life.

BARON

You don't act like it. If life's good why gamble with it?

RHODA

It was Grazia. Corrado couldn't go fast enough.

ERIC (*lightly*)

I believe her exact remark was that if we *did* go fast enough we might reach the illimitable, whatever that is.

BARON

Humph . . . you nearly made the discovery.

DUKE

Well, I don't know that Corrado was altogether to blame. As a matter of fact I didn't see that cart either. I hit it.

CORRADO (*quickly*)

You did?

STEPHANIE

Lambert!

DUKE

Don't be alarmed, my dear. An extraordinary escape! Even the car is hardly scratched.

ALDA

The driver must have traveled fifty feet through the air. (*She laughs.*) He went flapping through the moonlight like a great crow.

ERIC

Toward the illimitable?

DUKE (*laughing*)

And he looked so astonished when we reached him. He must have thought he was in heaven and Alda was a beautiful angel.

BARON

Humph! Quite right, quite right.

ERIC

Quite.

ALDA

Grazie, Signori!

CORRADO

Was the driver hurt?

DUKE

Winded a little. Nothing more.

CORRADO

But I don't understand it. We ought all to have been killed!

DUKE (*in an odd tone*)

Neither do I. It's too near the miraculous for my simple mind.

CORRADO

I think I need a drink.

ERIC

So do I.

[*He crosses to buffet.*

BARON (*rising and going to buffet*)

I could do with a little stimulant myself.

CORRADO

How about you, Rhoda?

RHODA

Yes, I'll have a spot.

CORRADO

Princess? You Mother?

[*The* PRINCESS *shakes her head.*

STEPHANIE

No thanks.

ERIC

Well, happy days.
[*He lifts his glass.*

BARON

And a beautiful woman to love.

CORRADO

And a beautiful woman to love *us*. It's not much good without that. (*Pause. He comes down.*) You know, I'm wondering . . . if our cart driver *had* broken his neck . . . I mean, what do you suppose comes after? . . . Where could he be now?

BARON

It might be well to give that a little attention if you're going to keep up this speed.

STEPHANIE (*lightly*)

The poor carter would be gathered into the heart of God.

ALDA

Yes, but where . . . Olympus, the Elysian fields, . . . the Pearly Gates?

ERIC (*smiling*)

I fancy he would be driving a superb team of mules down a perfect road, with a barrel of wine and an amiable wife waiting at the end. . . . That is, if he could choose. . . . All ideas of heaven are really wish-images, aren't they?

DUKE

In that case a woman would look forward to a perfectly appointed boudoir, and the entrance of a perfectly satisfactory lover.

ALDA

How well you know us.

BARON

Ha . . . sounds like *my* entrance.

ALDA

Have you a lurid past, dear?

BARON

I've lived harder than any of you. We knew how, in my time.

ALDA (*smiling*)

And were you a tremendous lover?

BARON (*pleased*)

Five beautiful creatures depended on me, all at one time, for their pleasure . . . and profit.

DUKE

Good Lord! Think of the fatigue!

BARON

And I kept them all happy, too. No one's man enough for that, nowadays.

CORRADO (*to* RHODA)

This is no place for a young girl, Rhoda. Shall we dance?

RHODA (*rises*)

I'd love to.

[*Exeunt* RHODA *and* CORRADO.

ALDA (*to* BARON)

Oughtn't you go to bed, darling?

BARON (*rising*)

Bed? Certainly not. I'm feeling younger, I don't know why.

ALDA

I think you ought to go. It's been a tiring day.

BARON

So it has. Dashing about all over the place. Felt about eighty-seven at dinner time. Thought I wouldn't last much longer. Now I'm about sixty.

ERIC

It's a gay tune. . . . You're not too tired?

ALDA

Never.

[*They exeunt.*

BARON (*as they move away*)

That's right, burn up your youth. You've got plenty of it.

CORRADO (*entering*)

Has Grazia come in yet?

PRINCESS

No, I wish she would.

DUKE

She's quite safe in the garden, Marie.

PRINCESS

Yes, of course. But I'm so . . . shaken, tonight.

STEPHANIE

She has many friends, but she's a lonely child.

DUKE

She seems too gentle and lovely to be real, sometimes.

PRINCESS

I wish she were like other children I've tried to bring her up to be sensible, but it's so difficult to make an impression.

DUKE (*smiling*)

She just fades, if things aren't pleasant. I've seen her.

PRINCESS

Yes, she simply doesn't hear.

DUKE

It's a very normal and alert little mind.

PRINCESS

But such a dreamy one.

BARON

Marry her off. Nothing like marriage to spoil your dreaming.

CORRADO (*crossing up to steps*)

Thanks Baron. I'm the prospective bridegroom, you know.

(GRAZIA *enters from garden.* CORRADO *rushes up to her. She is a lovely girl of eighteen, charming and gentle, but oddly remote.*)
Grazia. . . .

DUKE

Ah . . . here's our little dreamer.

STEPHANIE

Bringing the moonlight with her.

PRINCESS

Darling, are you all right?

GRAZIA

Of course, Mother dear.

PRINCESS

I was so frightened when I heard of your accident.

GRAZIA

But we had no accident, did we Corrado?

CORRADO

No, dear, but we just escaped one. I'm so sorry I ran that risk.

GRAZIA

But I like going fast. It feels like wings.

PRINCESS

But you never will again, will you, Corrado?

CORRADO

No. I've had my lesson tonight.

DUKE

Were there any elves in the garden, to entertain you, my darling?

[GRAZIA *gives him a brief, intimate smile.*

GRAZIA

There may have been. . . . It's the strangest night I've ever known. Didn't you feel it? All the time on the drive there were shadows running over the fields And yet there weren't any clouds in the sky to make shadows. Didn't you notice?

DUKE (*startled*)

By Jove . . . there weren't.

PRINCESS

It was just your imagination, Grazia.

GRAZIA (*as though not hearing*)

I had forgotten how silent and swift a shadow can be. I felt as though there were wings somewhere about. And we seemed to be flying, too.

PRINCESS

Don't, Grazia. You disturb me when you talk like that.

DUKE

Now, we think you've been free quite long enough. When are you going to fold your wings and be my little daughter-in-law?

[GRAZIA *sits on divan.*

CORRADO

Father's going to build us a villa in the woods, just at the top of the cliff, Grazia.

GRAZIA

How nice. It's lovely there. (*She gives the* DUKE *a charming smile*) Thank you, sir

DUKE (*gently*)

I would do anything for you, my dear.

BARON

Better clip her wings, if she's going to live up there.

STEPHANIE

Love will bind her, my friend.

PRINCESS (*sitting on divan*)

And children

CORRADO

Won't you make it next month, Grazia? I'm so impatient.

DUKE

Won't you, dear?

PRINCESS

We could be quite ready in a month.

GRAZIA (*slowly*)

I wish I could . . . but . . .

CORRADO

We could spend the winter on the Riviera, and in Egypt and Greece. You know how much you want to see the Ægean Isles.

BARON

See things while you're young and fresh. That's the time. They sink in then.

DUKE

It's only a question of making up your mind, my darling.

[GRAZIA *turns and looks at them as if slightly puzzled.*

GRAZIA (*rises*)

You know I love you all, and want to please you. But don't you see, I'm not ready.

CORRADO

But why, Grazia?

GRAZIA (*slowly as though searching her thoughts*)

That life is too . . . There's a kind of happiness I want to find first, if I can.

CORRADO (*desperately*)

Aren't you happy with me?

GRAZIA

Yes dear . . . but that isn't quite what I mean. (*She looks at them helplessly.*) I wish I knew how to tell you. (*She turns toward the garden*) There is something out there . . . which I must find first.

[*She begins to walk to the steps.*

CORRADO

May I come with you?

GRAZIA (*gently*)

I'd rather be alone, if you don't mind.

[*She goes into the garden, leaving a constrained silence behind her, which the* BARON *breaks.*

BARON

Leave the child alone. Life will tame her fast enough.

STEPHANIE (*rises*)

Shadows running!

DUKE (*rises*)

I know what she meant. I saw them, myself.

BARON (*going to the* PRINCESS)

Well, I believe I could do a bit of running myself, tonight. Funny, my legs are getting younger. (*He flexes one knee.*) That fellow ought to creak, but it doesn't (*He leans over to the Princess.*) Marie, one who *was* about to die, salutes you, and asks the honor of a dance.

PRINCESS (*rising*)

Delightful. I remember when you led every ball.

BARON (*delighted, as they go off*)

Ha . . . I will again, if this keeps up. Amazing, isn't it? I didn't think I'd ever dance again.

STEPHANIE (*to* CORRADO *who is on the porch*)

Was it a bad evening for you, dear?

CORRADO (*comes down the steps*)

She's so utterly lovely.

STEPHANIE

Yes . . . and so delicate . . . so fine. . . . But you will win her . . . if . . .

CORRADO (*impatiently*)

If I turn saint, and deny every human impulse. If I live only in music and poetry. . . .

STEPHANIE

But love *is* music . . . and love *is* poetry. . . .

CORRADO

But one can't live like an anchorite, on nothing but beauty. For instance, one occasionally wants a drink. . . . Tonight I'd like a dozen, after what I've been through.

STEPHANIE

You will never reach her that way.

CORRADO (*desperately*)

I know it. I can hardly ever reach her. She's so pure and remote. . . . And I'm a human being.

STEPHANIE

You must be very careful, dear, not to frighten her. She loves you, I'm sure. . . .

CORRADO (*going to her*)

And I love her till I'm half mad with it. But it's no good cursing, is it? Sing something, Mother. It might bring her in from the garden.

[*The telephone rings. The* DUKE *answers.*

[*Exit* CORRADO

[ERIC *enters.*

DUKE

Yes . . . ? Really. . . . How very strange! Is she

actually out of danger? But that seems impossible! Thank your mistress for the message and tell her I am much moved.

[*Enter* ALDA.

STEPHANIE

Is it Selma?

DUKE (*astonished*)

The butler says she's apparently well. She's taken food, and wants to get up.

STEPHANIE

But I thought she was dying!

DUKE

She was. The doctor said she wouldn't live through the night. Apparently the All-soul wasn't ready for her, either.

STEPHANIE

There is some meaning in all this.

DUKE

Yes. . . . And I don't feel at home in the age of miracles. (*To* STEPHANIE.) We must tell the Princess.

[*Exeunt* STEPHANIE *and the* DUKE. ERIC, *looking distrait, goes and picks up the glass which he set down before.* ALDA, *after a moment, follows him.*

ALDA

What's the matter, my dear?

ERIC

You.

ALDA

Don't bother about me, Eric. I should only disappoint you.

ERIC

Why should you disappoint me?

ALDA

I'm too restless for marriage. Besides, I've had that.

ERIC

What *do* you want, then?

ALDA

I don't know . . . something overpowering . . . I want to be swept away . mastered. . . .

ERIC (*ironically*)

Sorry, if I'm not magnificent enough.

ALDA (*with a laugh*)

It isn't that. The trouble is I've known too much. I've drained sensation. .

ERIC

Well, I've been said to have my points as a lover.

ALDA (*smiling*)

Have you?

ERIC

There are several women who have found me . . . adequate. . . .

ALDA

I have no doubt. But now you'd like to settle down

in a charming country house, and breed healthy English children. Sorry, my dear, but that prospect doesn't amuse me.

ERIC (*fiercely*)

Alda . . . if you'll come out into the moonlight with me. . . .

ALDA

I think I won't put you to the test.

[*Enter the* PRINCESS *and* CORRADO.

PRINCESS

Grazia ought not to be out so late. She may not be warmly enough wrapped.

CORRADO

Shall I call her?

PRINCESS

Thanks, I wish you would.

[*As he starts rear, a loud shriek comes from the garden . . . high and full of terror. All stand fixed for a moment, then* CORRADO *bounds toward the rear windows as the rest of the guests crowd into the room.*

[GRAZIA, *her hair in disorder, her face convulsed with terror, appears in the central window. She screams again and looks back, as though unable to move.* CORRADO *reaches her.*

CORRADO

Grazia . . . what is it!

[*She is about to fall.* CORRADO *catches her.*

ERIC

What's happened.

ALDA

What is it? Oh, Grazia!

DUKE

Here, Corrado! . . .

[CORRADO *carries* GRAZIA, *moaning, to the couch. Her mother kneels beside her. . . .* GRAZIA *is hysterical with fear.*

PRINCESS

Grazia, Grazia!

DUKE

Stand back, give her a little air. Brandy, somebody!

[RHODA *brings a small glass of brandy and hands it to the* PRINCESS.

[ALL *in the group are questioning one another—* "What can it be?" *etc.*

PRINCESS

She can't take this yet. Smelling salts.

STEPHANIE (*calling*)

Cora, the smelling salts, quickly!

[CORA *exits and returns immediately with the salts which she hands to* STEPHANIE *who gives them to the* PRINCESS.

PRINCESS

Here, dear . . . Oh, please don't cry so!

GRAZIA (*shuddering*)

Don't let it . . . come in. . . .

ALL

We won't.

DUKE

Give her a little brandy.

RHODA

What do you supposed happened?

ALDA

Some prowler may have frightened her.

PRINCESS

Darling . . . can't you tell us?

BARON

She can hardly breathe. . . . A bad fright.

DUKE (*fiercely*)

If any one has harmed that lovely child! . . .

PRINCESS

Grazia . . . look at me . . . It's mother . . What frightened you?

[GRAZIA *only moans.*

ALDA

Did you fall asleep, and dream?

STEPHANIE

It is more than that.

PRINCESS

Drink some brandy, darling. (GRAZIA *sips brandy, shuddering.*) Now try to tell us what it was.

GRAZIA

I can't.

PRINCESS

Please, dear. . . . We must know.

[GRAZIA *is breathing with difficulty, her eyes wide and staring.*

GRAZIA

I . . . don't . . . know . . . what it was . . . There was something cold . . . and terrible . . . Oh, Mother.

[*She clings to her mother.* CORRADO *kneels before her.*

CORRADO (*huskily*)

It's all right, Grazia. You're safe, now.

GRAZIA (*after a moment*)

I was sitting by the fountain . . . watching the shadows . . . in the garden . . . dreaming. I could hear your voices . . . and the music . . . It was all so peaceful . . . and so beautiful . . . that I didn't want to come in . . . I thought . . . in a moment I am going to feel something important . . . some happiness. I felt a world about to open. . . . And then . . . Oh!

[*She shudders.*

PRINCESS

Go on, Grazia.

GRAZIA

And then . . . an icy wind seemed to touch me. . . . But it wasn't a wind, because all the leaves were still.

[*She pauses and shudders.*

CORRADO

Oh . . . Grazia!

GRAZIA (*more strongly*)

I felt some one behind me . . . running. There wasn't any sound . . . but I felt some one running. . . . And I saw . . .

[*She sits staring, wide-eyed, into the distance.*

DUKE (*sharply*)

What did you see?

GRAZIA (*convulsively*)

A . . . shadow . . . an enormous darkness. . . . And yet it wasn't a shadow, because I could see the sky and the moon through it. . . . (*Rising.*) Oh, Corrado!

[CORRADO *takes her into his arms.*

CORRADO

It's all right, Grazia.

PRINCESS

Quiet, dear.

[*She holds brandy to* GRAZIA'S *lips again.*

BARON

The excitement's tired her. They go too fast.

ERIC

Is she apt to be hysterical?

PRINCESS

No, only very sensitive.

RHODA

Then what can it be?

DUKE

It was that ride, of course, and the danger. It's been working underneath.

GRAZIA

I felt something . . . cold!

STEPHANIE

Ah! . . .

PRINCESS

I must get her home to bed.

STEPHANIE

Shall I have a room prepared—here? She ought to lie down for an hour.

PRINCESS

Perhaps that would be better. (*To* GRAZIA.) Can you walk, darling?

GRAZIA

Yes. (*She shrinks back against her Mother.*) But not through the garden.

PRINCESS

You're going to lie down for a little while, darling.

RHODA

You're all right now, aren't you, Grazia?

GRAZIA (*trying to smile*)

Yes.

[*She glances again apprehensively toward the garden*

DUKE

A good night's sleep and you'll forget that accident.

ALDA

We'll come and see you tomorrow, dear.

GRAZIA

Please do.

[*The* PRINCESS, GRAZIA *and* STEPHANIE *go out.*

DUKE (*sharply*)

Corrado, Eric, search the grounds!

ERIC

Very good.

CORRADO

We will, sir—

[*They exeunt, quickly, into the garden.*

[*The others speak lightly, but they are evidently shaken.*

ALDA

What a night! It just needed this excitement to top it off.

BARON

Good melodrama, my dear. It began with a laugh and ended in a shriek.

RHODA

I wish I could forget Grazia's scream. (*She glances apprehensively toward the garden.*) Alda, would you mind if I stayed in your room? I don't want to be alone.

ALDA

I wish you would. I confess I don't want to be alone, either.

BARON (*to* RHODA)

I thought English girls didn't have nerves. Outdoors all day.

ALDA

Scratch any woman and you'll find nerves, dear.
[*A shot rings from outside and all jump, the* BARON *particularly.*

BARON

Great Scott . . . what's that!

ALDA

Now who's nervy! (*She rises.*) Shall we go up, Rhoda? I'll feel safer in bed.

RHODA

So shall I. Would you mind if I locked the door and looked in the closet?

ALDA

Not a bit. If *you* don't I will.

RHODA

Could we talk for a little while?

ALDA

We're certain to. I can't sleep.
[*They exeunt upstairs.*

STEPHANIE (*entering*)

You are not coming, Lambert?

DUKE

No, dear. I'll wait for the boys.

STEPHANIE

Very well. Goodnight, dear.

[*She exits.*

DUKE

Goodnight, darling.

BARON

As for me I shall light a cigar and remember all the beautiful women who have done me the honor to love me. Remember, my boy, when you're old you don't sleep. Live a full life, and you'll have reminiscences for a mellow night cap. Goodnight.

[BARON *exits upstairs.*

[*Enter* CORRADO *and* ERIC *from the garden.*

DUKE

Oh there you are! Did you see anything?

CORRADO

Not a thing, sir.

ERIC

We looked everywhere, and there's not a sign of any one, sir.

DUKE

But the shot?

ERIC

I thought I saw something, but it was only a shadow

CORRADO

Has Grazia gone, sir?

DUKE

No, she's lying down.

CORRADO

I'd like to get my hands on that prowler!

ERIC

So should I.

DUKE

Yes, if it was a prowler!

CORRADO

What do you mean, Father?

DUKE (*in a strange voice*)

I don't know. The most extraordinary things have happened tonight. You miss the precipice by an inch when you should have gone over; I run into a cart at fifty miles an hour; and nothing happens! No one is hurt!

ERIC

The mysteries do pile up, don't they, sir?

CORRADO

And Grazia . . . saw shadows . . .

DUKE

Exactly.

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