

Worth her Weight in Gold

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“Okay, let’s do this,” he said taking her hand and dragging her half way down the side of the hill.

“Slow down you brute!” she said pulling on his hand, and he stopped to look at her.

“What do you want me to say to your parents?” he asked.

“Just tell them you wish to marry me and you want their blessing.”

“And what about my payment of gold?”

“You’ll get it when you’ve done your part.”

“Why am I even I’m doing this, I don’t even like red-heads,” he said looking at her long red hair, which was braided down her back past her bottom. He had to admit to himself though that she wasn’t half bad, for a redhead. He dragged her the rest of the way down the hill from which they had made the final arrangements on their deal. He needed gold, she needed a husband . . . or rather a baby. He could provide both. Once the baby was born he could go his separate way with his gold, a simple plan.

He stopped as they were approaching the parent’s house. “Wait a moment,” he muttered under his breath.

“What, what now?” she asked expecting the worst. She was nervous about every tiny detail.

“The ring,” he said and dug into his pocket retrieving a dainty diamond ring, which she had chosen and bought for herself. She put out her splayed fingers and he slipped it on.

It came as no surprise that her parents weren't really happy about the arrangement. Rafe was definitely not in her class, but she seemed to have trouble finding a respectable man to take her, and at twenty five her parents insisted she find a husband within the year or they would choose one for her. Aurora knew who they had in mind and Rafe was by far the better option. He was at least handsome, that was important, she didn't want to end up with an ugly baby. Either way, her parents were sentencing her to life.

"I love your daughter," said Rafe to her parents. "I knew when I saw her bending over that well, collecting water, I just had to have her."

Her mother raised her fine brows, pursing her lips.

"I mean to say," he said, noticing the look, "that I really love her and respect her, and I want to do the best in my power to ensure she's well provided for and wants for nothing. She's sweet and she doesn't take any crap from me and . . . well, she's perfect."

Aurora smiled secretly to herself. He was kind of sweet in his stupidity. When he put his arm heavily around her shoulder half groping her breast she nudged him off and kept smiling. He was laying it on too thick. Her parents were going to throw him out of the house. Amazingly, they didn't.

* * *

Standing in front of the full length mirror in her bridal vestments, Aurora admired the quality of fit showing off her feminine shape to its best. In her mind she felt cold, numb, locked into a surreal world that there appeared to be no escape from now. She brushed her hands down her flat tummy and over the sea of white material, musing over how lovely it looked, such a beautiful sacrificial whiteness. She lifted her eyes and saw in the mirror that Rafe had come in. She snatched up the layers of her dress, it's white bulk overflowing into her arms, trying to hide herself from view.

"It's bad luck for you to see me," she said, looking for some way to conceal herself better. There was no where to hide and it was useless trying to cover the dress. Giving up, she turned to the mirror again. Rafe stood close behind her, looking into her eyes in the reflection. He was handsome in his bridegroom raiments but his face was heavy and serious, not loving or tender.

"You're not backing out now are you?" he asked. "I've already gone through all this trouble with your parents. I need this gold."

"Don't worry, I will marry you," she said, in a dead voice. She wanted to cry, but she held herself, it would serve no purpose and only ruin her face.

They stared silently at each other's reflections a long time. As children they used to play together before his parents moved away to a neighbouring village. Now he

was a stranger, and about to become her husband.

As he waited at the altar with the priest, Rafe watched Aurora come toward him down the aisle. Gripping a small posy of flowers in her hands she did indeed look beautiful at least. Her face showed glad relief that things were about to happen, about to be over with but within she was sorry for him, sorry for herself, the weight of what they had done was starting to weigh on her mind.

After an exchange of vows and a meaningless show of affection, the newly married couple climbed onto the horse-drawn carriage, Rafe taking the reins, leaving the guests to cluster behind waving madly their goodbyes.

As the last of the evening light was fading away they arrived at a pretty little inn. The inn was a popular place, served fine hot meals, well stocked with wine and had rooms befitting of royalty. Aurora's parents had organised a room for the newly-weds, complete with frills and a fireplace.

Rafe closed the door quietly and locked it, shutting them both in as if they were sharing a jail cell. He glanced around, taking in what the room had to offer. There was plenty of luxury and warmth in the room, yet he felt bare and cold within, the uncertainty behind the wisdom of their arrangement was starting to creep in.

Aurora stood by the window with her head turned aside, looking out over the front courtyard of the inn. He didn't know how to approach her. Rafe had only kissed

her once. It had been quick, cleanly done without emotion, simply getting the job done. Now everything was more real, more intense, more difficult. He had never truly in the past considered her a potential lover, but now he had become her stud for hire, for a bag of gold.

As the man it was his responsibility to take the lead. He was certain this was her first time. It wasn't his. So as the more experienced, and as the man, he drew near to her, and touched her arm. She turned to face him and waited for him to do whatever it was he had to do to get things started. What was restraining him? Her breast was near him, but he didn't move. She wanted to get this over with. She leaned forward and put up her mouth to be kissed. He pursed his lips, feeling reluctant, as if he was about to kiss his sister.

"Oh, for heaven's sake!" she said exasperated by his hesitation. But she was half overcome by her own insecurities. It was suddenly more difficult than she thought. She had always imagined her first time to be before a fire, on a soft blanket, with a man she adored, the latter being of distinct lacking.

"Help me get this off," she said, turning her back to him. She waited while he fiddled with the cords tightly drawn at the back of her dress.

"Why do they have to be so complicated," he said tugging at them roughly, and she had to brace herself each time, or be pulled off balance.

In a minute he had them loosened and asked, "Do you want me to take your hair down?"

"Please," she said quietly, and waited patiently while he took each pin out, moving around her with his hands up in her hair, making sure he was getting them all. She was holding the top part of her dress tightly against her breast to keep it from falling down now that it was undone. She watched his upturned face as he concentrated on the top of her head. He attended her so sweetly, her heart melted a little, just a little.

Her scalp felt stiff and sore from all the cruddy stuff her mother had plastered in her hair to keep it up during the service. Aurora had kept saying *natural*, not curled. Her mother curled it *tight*. Rafe tried to shake her hair down but it was so unnaturally stiff that it stayed a mangled lump.

Aurora went over to the bed. She was still gripping her dress against her body. "Turn away," she said. She didn't want him to see her.

He looked at her as if it was a useless request, but he did as she asked. She slipped the heavy dress off, glancing first to see if he peeked, and leaving her under garments on climbed under the covers.

"All right," she said so that he knew he could turn around. She was snug under the blankets, looking at him like a hunted animal. He started to unbutton his shirt, not caring that she watched.

"Close the curtain over the window," she ordered nervously.

He went and closed it.

"And put out the light," she said quickly.

He did that too.

He continued to undress when she said, "Leave your clothes on."

"I never sleep in my clothes," he said, impatiently.

"Leave them on," she insisted, staring up at the ceiling.

He sighed heavily, and climbed in bed beside her fully clothed. He shifted a little to get comfortable, and she held her breath. Then, with a quick, deliberate movement, he put his arm around her and drew himself up to her side, resting on his elbow.

He was kissing her throat and his hand warming to her side. She looked up at him as he paused for a moment. His eyes were hard and bright with a fierce impersonal purpose.

"Aren't you tired, tonight?" she asked, hoping he was. Even in her innocence, she could recognise the heat of desire pulsing in her belly, masking it with her frigid stiffness. It frightened her to feel such strong physical sensations toward a man she didn't love. She wasn't ready for it, not tonight at least.

He looked at her with relief more than anything, and said, "Yeah, I'm pretty tired." He rolled to his back, keep-

ing close so they only needed to speak in murmurs.

"You're not sorry are you?" she asked, fretted.

"About getting married? No! Are you?"

She shook her head. "No." She turned and gazed into his eyes for a moment. His face was so close. "I'm glad it's you I'm doing this with," she said.

"It's going to be strange having a kid I won't even really know, but I think it'll work out best for all of us this way, just like we agreed," he said, but he looked troubled.

"Just like we agreed," she repeated, numbly. "Good night."

"Good night."

* * *

The next morning Aurora saw her husband was still sound asleep and quietly got out of bed. The room next to theirs was furnished with benches and with compartments for clothes. A bath built into the floor was so large and deep that steps led down into the water. Thankfully, in these times the furnace had come into use, heating the room as well as the water with a single fire. Looking forward to taking a nice warm bath, Aurora slipped off her night clothes, her body very white and slender. The water was nice and soothing as she walked down into it—creeping up her legs and finally submerging her waist and breasts. She sponged the water over her neck and shoulders luxuriating in the feeling. She dunked her head a

moment then resurfaced, and was just about to wring out her saturated hair when she turned and saw Rafe at the edge of the bath. She didn't know how long he'd been standing there, but he was very still, watching her with a strange expression. He suddenly didn't seem to look at her like his sister any more.

"I want to come in," he said, slipping off his clothes.

"Don't you dare!" she said, but quickly had to avert her eyes from his nakedness. She heard him coming in and felt the disturbance in the water.

"We're married now," he said.

"I don't care. Go away!" She pressed her face into her hands and swore that she was going to kill him. Just as soon as she could get out of the water without him seeing.

"Don't turn away," he said, soothingly. "How are we supposed to be husband and wife, brief as the arrangement may be, if you keep turning away?"

His voice was coming from right in front of her. She spread her fingers and peeked. "You rat! Get out! I can't bathe with you in here!"

She looked down through the water and could see everything he had to offer, clearly he wanted her. She was a little bit awed, and turned her face away, blushing hotly.

She didn't know if she wanted to or not. Part of her thought it was pretty gross. It was Rafe, the boy she used to throw stones at. Part of her thought it was, well, pretty exciting. And in the water it was so intimate, incredibly

intimate, no blankets to hide under.

"Come on, we've got to do this some time. Stop putting it off," said Rafe. "I'm never going to get my money."

"Oh, that's very romantic," she said and the feeling was gone.

"I didn't realise it was supposed to be romantic. I thought we were supposed to just do this thing and get it over with."

"You're just making it more painful than it needs to be with that mouth of yours."

"Yeah, well, I'm not exactly happy about this arrangement either."

"Ha!" She laughed shrill and false. "You have the far better deal. After all this is over, you get to walk with your pockets full of gold, I'm left to look after your baby!" She felt a dangerous prickle in her throat and swam to the edge. She got out without caring that she gave him a full back view. She gathered up an armful of her clothes and went back to the room. After drying herself thoroughly and wrapping the towel around her hair, Aurora got dressed in her bridal gown again. It was custom to wear the bridal garments until the marriage was consummated, at this rate she would be wearing them for the rest of her life.

In a minute or two Rafe followed her out, clutching a towel around his waist. He watched while she ducked her head into her towel and rubbed vigorously.

She glanced over at his lean strong body, the water glistening on his chest and shoulders. "Will you put something on," she said, but he stayed standing there, looking mournful.

"I'm sorry your parents have put you in this situation," he said. "It doesn't seem right. I'm finding that out about life. There aren't any guarantees for happiness, and everyone seems to want to screw you over." He went over to her, quietly, and closing his hand softly on her upper arm, he drew her against him. "Do you even want a baby?"

She thought about it a moment. "Yes."

He stooped to kiss her, but she looked down at her hand while fiddling with the wedding ring and burst into tears. Rafe stood by dumbly, unhappily. He didn't know what to do. He had never seen a woman cry so. Did girls always act this way when they had to yield themselves to a man?

"I'm not that bad am I?"

His words only made the tears flow afresh, her eyes clenching against them. Rafe watched with a tightness in his own throat. He wanted to comfort her in his arms, show her he wasn't that bad, but he didn't dare touch her, not yet.

"Aurora," he said . . . "Aurora."

Suddenly she looked up at him, and forced herself to rise to this thing that she had done and must see through.

"You'll be patient with me, and gentle? Oh, I don't have to ask. I know you will. I know you're good . . ."

"Sweetheart," he said, and again held out his arms.

She shook her head and drew back. "It's been so—so quick," she said. "Tonight. I promise. Not till then. I'll be your wife then—your *wife*."

* * *

They didn't make it to his home before the night had closed in, and they were forced to stop at a small wayside inn. It was dingy, miserable, dirty, a direct contrast to the one her parents had arranged for them. She wasn't prepared for what was about to happen once they got up to their room. What would he expect of her? Her imagination got the better of her, and a strange flutter throbbed somewhere low in her body. She wasn't sure if she was ready for this, but at least it was night. If things were different, if this were a real marriage, and he loved her, and she loved him, she wouldn't care about the time of day. She had always believed that everything and anything, any time of day, was proper between a man and his bride. But none of this was real and she wanted darkness to hide it all, then maybe the details would be easier to forget once it was over.

"Good evening," said the stout fellow behind the counter. "Room for two?"

"Yes," said Rafe.

The innkeeper eyed Aurora's bridal gown with a smile she wanted to slap off his face, and she found herself shrinking closer to Rafe while he reached into his pocket to get some coin. She was grateful at least she had his jacket wrapped around her shoulders. In a moment she noticed that several other men at the tables, drinking and smoking, were watching her.

"Can I have anything sent up to your room?" said the innkeeper.

Rafe turned and looked at Aurora. "Do you want anything?"

She shook her head grimly, hugging her body. For all the material hanging off her body, she felt completely exposed.

"The honeymoon suite," said the innkeeper handing over the keys, and Aurora noticed the smug exchange between the two men at her expense. A few of the fellows raised their glasses with a wink, telling them to keep it down because others next door wanted sleep.

"Can't promise anything," said Rafe, putting his hand on Aurora's back to lead her away. Her blood went hot, and she followed Rafe up the rickety wooden stairs, her lips compressed into a tight line. Rafe suddenly stopped and gave her the keys. "I have to go check on the horses. I won't be a moment."

Aurora continued on without him. Her head was pounding as she unlocked the door. The men had all been laugh-

ing at her, amusing themselves with something that should have been kept between her and Rafe.

The room was as she had expected, sparse and uninviting with a small double bed, a small table, and a wash basin, but it was warm. She fluffed the pillow as if she would beat its stuffing out. Rafe had been so smug. He was going to come in here, mount her like a mare, then boast to his new friends the next morning over breakfast. On impulse she walked over to the door and turned the lock. He could sleep outside in the hay with the animals, if he was going to act like one.

She sat on the bed and waited with nervous, guilty tension for Rafe to return and find himself locked out. She slipped his jacket off her shoulders but put it to her face, inhaling in his scent. The thought of how kind he had been giving it to her while he was left cold, softened her and she almost got up to unlock the door, when the handle rattled followed by a couple of knocks.

“Aurora, it’s me. Unlock the door.”

Rafe waited patiently, presuming she had locked it for security measures while he was away. But then he heard her voice muffled from the other side of the door say, “I’ll be sleeping on my own tonight. I’m sure you’ll find someplace else warm.”

“What? Why are you acting this way? Open the door, Aurora.” She could hear the pressure in his voice. She pressed her brow against the door almost giving in to him,

but his anger stirred her stubbornness. "Open this fucking door, or I'll break it down," he said.

"Goodnight, Rafe," she said acting foolishly proud herself. She went over and plonked down on the bed. She couldn't let him in now, she would appear too foolish.

The room felt empty and lonely. She left the candle burning, and couldn't bring herself to get unchanged even. She had been lying there, hoping Rafe was all right, when the lock clicked and the door opened. She sat up, surprised, and Rafe came in and quietly closed the door again, locking it with the spare keys he had retrieved from the innkeeper. She couldn't read his face, but his neck and shoulders were tense. She didn't move, not knowing what he would do or say.

"You can't turn locks on your husband," he said. "It's not right."

"You're not my real husband, and even if you were, you don't own me."

"You still don't turn locks on your partner! I would never do that to you," he said in a tone that worked more effectively than anger, and she struggled to hold onto her own anger. He was right she thought, watching as he began unfastening the buttons lining the front of his shirt.

"Just what do you think you're doing?"

"If you want to give your parents a baby," he said, pulling his shirt from his trousers, "you have to let me get in." He stripped the shirt from his back and tossed it

to the chair by the bed.

For the second time in her life she was facing Rafe nude from the waist up, very soon to be nude from the waist down. For a moment she could do nothing but stare, half hypnotised by the way he was working the buttons of his trousers. His skin was sun-bronzed and lightly covered with fine, dark hair, tapering to a narrow line that plunged across the smooth lines of muscle and dipped into the waistband of his trousers . . . the trousers he was unfastening. The memory of that hard body pressing against her softer body made her giddy, light headed. He didn't mind that she was looking. He wanted her to. He may not love her, any more than she loved him, but since seeing her naked in the bath, the way the water touched her breasts, he sure as hell wanted her. The look on her face made it pretty obvious she wanted him, too.

Then it all went away. He didn't know what he had done wrong, but she was angry again.

"You humiliated me in front of those men," she said.

He stopped undressing. "You humiliated me, too! How do you think I felt going down there to get the spare keys because I couldn't keep a hold of my wife?"

"Well, then, we're even," she said.

He sighed heavily. This was such a failure between them. "How did I upset you? Tell me so I can avoid it in the future."

"Engaging them like that. You knew they were un-

dressing me with their eyes and thinking about us, about you scoring points!"

"They were just drunken fools showing a bit of cheer, don't hold it against them. I don't know what they meant by it, but I certainly didn't mean anything by it."

"I just want this whole thing to be over."

"I know," he said. His features became tense, one corner of his lips dipping. "And I'm only trying to give you what you want. Is it okay that I enjoy it?"

She seemed to soften, and he decided it was okay for him to join her on the bed.

"I want you to enjoy it, too," he said. "Tell me what you want?"

"You have to show me the decency any husband should accord his wife, especially in public . . . make people believe you love me."

"That's not quite what I was meaning, but I'm happy to do it," he said. "Since I know what your needs are, I see no reason why I shouldn't tell you mine."

"What?"

"You want a loving husband in public. I want a loving wife in private. What do you say?" He brushed the back of his hand upward across her cheek, stroking warmth across her cool skin. Then he leaned forward, and kissed her, with a slow, tender kiss, lingering on the mouth. She kept her eyes open, watching him, as her mouth responded automatically to his mouth moving tantalizingly over her

lips. He held her face making the kiss last, and dipping his tongue in. She was afraid of what he might be able to uncover hidden deep inside her, afraid of the emotions he evoked in her whenever he touched her. But she put her arms around his neck, and taking his kisses, allowed him to lay her down. Gathering handfuls of her dress he pulled up all the layers to uncover her thighs and lay himself between them. She flushed, but still she did not object.

He began kissing her neck energetically, running his hands up and down her bare thighs. His lips slobbered over her eyes and cheeks. His tongue sought inside of her ears. She struggled to try and sit up, but couldn't.

"I can't with those dogs down their getting off on thinking about what we're doing up here," she said.

"What we're supposed to be doing. We're not actually doing anything. And they're going to be getting off thinking about it whether we're sleeping or fucking."

She squealed in embarrassment, turning her face into his shoulder. "Do you have to be so vulgar about it?"

"Sorry." His lips nudged her face softly. "Do you have to be so damn proper all the time?"

He put his hand gently in her hair and kissed her cheek as he would her mouth, then worked his way to her lips, kissing them as if he wanted to eat her, moving down to her neck, sucking on her earlobe.

"This is all wrong," she said struggling to sit up.

Rafe climbed off her, but stayed close.

She was his wife. He could do whatever he wanted. And right now he wanted to toss her on her back and plunge into the soft heat of her cunny, over and over and over . . . A sharp pain twisted in his belly. He couldn't. Not this way. She'd hate him like poison for the rest of their lives. When it came down to it, she just didn't want him. He only wished to hell he didn't want her.

"What do you want? What do I have to do to make it right?"

"I want you to respect me."

"I do respect you. I don't have to fake that."

"Just the loving me part?"

He ran his hand over his eyes. She looked away. She couldn't bare him right now, his touch.

"I'm sorry," he said, genuinely. "You want a child and I come into the bargain."

She felt her eyes prickle again with hot tears. She didn't want to hurt him, but he didn't understand that after this no respectable man would have her. Once she had his baby she was doomed to loneliness. She was trying not to cry, but her tears wouldn't hold, and she felt them slide from beneath her lashes and down her cheeks. Rafe's hand hovered over her hair, her hair that he would have loved to press with his lips, but he didn't. She had forbidden it; her entire manner had forbidden it.

"I don't mean to keep making you cry," he said. He

wanted to pick her up and comfort her in his arms. He could do it, hold her close and safe, for she was so fragile; but she would only push him away. He risked touching her hair, plucking a strand away from her wet cheek. "You're out of my range of experience," he said.

She looked up at him, her eyes wet with crying. "Because I'm rich?"

"Because you're beautiful, and a virgin."

"You think I'm beautiful?"

"Don't you know you're beautiful?" He leaned forward closely, half drugged. "All women are so soft, so smooth, so touchable," he said, punctuating each phrase with a kiss, brushing his lips against her temple, her cheek, her neck. She shuddered as she felt him suck her flesh into his mouth, over and over, kissing and licking her throat.

"If you have to do this now, I would rather you not kiss me," she said, wanting to keep herself as separated from him as possible. If she wasn't careful he'd be leaving with her heart, not just the gold.

"Why don't you want me kissing you?" he asked, playfully restraining her. "Because you hate it, or because you like it too much?"

A soft sigh escaped her lips as he rolled the soft lobe of her ear between his teeth, coaxing tingles to ripple across her skin, making her shiver.

She turned her face to look at him. "Don't try to play coy; it doesn't suit you," she said.

He stopped as if a bucket of cold water had been dashed over him. Aurora didn't know what she was feeling. All she knew was when he took the blankets and turned over, it was like an abandonment.

They slept a part that night. She felt a sinking disappointment squirming in her tummy as she lay on her side facing away from him. He was too tense to be asleep, she knew he was awake and probably thinking if this was worth the bag of gold she had for him after he had given her what she needed.

She tossed restlessly, irritated. She should close her eyes and go to sleep. Yet that other thing! She twisted with an ungovernable soreness, a heat growing somewhere between her thighs, that made her compress them together with a furious restlessness. Giving in to her own irritations, she leaned over and whispered in his ear. "Do you want to do this thing?"

He was on his back, staring up at the ceiling. He turned his head on the pillow to look at her.

"Do you want to?" she asked, afraid he would turn her down in his sullenness.

"How are you going to be able to do it, Aurora, if you can't even say it?"

The hot blushes swept in crimson waves across her lovely face, as she cast down her eyes. She snuggled into his side resting her cheek on his chest. She was tense, not daring to breathe, hoping her nearness would trigger

him into action, but he didn't move. If pressing against him wasn't going to make him interested, perhaps she could compel him with other methods. Lifting her face, she brushed her soft lips over his earlobe and gently nibbled it, dipping her tongue in a little way, while her hand slowly slid down the front of his pants finding his ready cock.

She grasped it nervously, as she softly murmured: "Oh, Rafe, I'm so afraid; and yet—oh yet, dearest, I want you." She pressed herself closer, snuggling her hips against him. "I want you to fuck me," her voice sinking almost to a whisper, as she pressed and passed her hand up and down his shaft.

"Aurora, Oh! Aurora," he gasped, "Give me the tip of your tongue, sweetheart." She slipped him the tip without the slightest hesitation, drawing, at the same time, what seemed a deep sigh of anticipation as she yielded to his slightest wish. He had one arm under her head, and with the other he gently opened her nightgown, and put his hand inside feeling for her breast, kissing and sucking at her delicious tongue all the while. As his hand squeezed and kneaded, a heat flushed somewhere, everywhere inside her. He bent his head and licked her virgin nipples, his tongue drawing lazy circles, tension building inside her as she drew closer and closer to the peak. When at last his mouth captured a good portion of breast she made a little noise, and involuntarily squeezed the hard

thing she was tightly clasping between his thighs. He toyed and amused himself with her breasts till he could feel her vibrate all over with the excess of her emotion.

Caught in a transport of delight she stopped stroking him, but he covered her hand with his and made her squeeze his cock, which was in a bursting state, saying, "Do you like the feel of it?"

She nodded, her eyes gazed into his with a most encouraging look. She pressed and pinched the tip of it with her fingers, feeling it, and drawing exquisite responses out of him, which if she didn't know better would have thought were painful. He kissed her again, less sensuously, more hungrily, as though he were going to devour her, and she responded, offering her lips, her mouth, her tongue.

He paused and pressed his face to hers. "Take off your nightdress," he said on a shuddering breath.

"I don't want to," she said, shrinking a little.

"It's okay, you don't have to," he said gently, resuming their lovemaking by hitching up her nightdress a little way, and placing his lips on hers, to remind her how enticing it was. Half lying on her, he buried his hand between her un-resisting thighs. Excitement coupled with trepidation in her heart as he slipped one finger inside her. She gasped at the sudden stab of pleasure, grasping at his shirt. He slowly moved his hand around, watching her face intently. Her thighs relaxed, opening so he could

get further in. He moistened his fingers with the luscious spendings, moving the tips of his fingers all around the lips of her tight cunny, then his finger found its way further, till it tickled her sensitive clitoris, sending shivers up her spine, making her tremble. He pushed in further, stretching her delicate flesh until he saw the shock of pain on her face, then he withdrew, stroking wet fingers over the small stiff-bud he had learned long ago would bring intense pleasure. Sobs tumbled from her lips, one after another, as his fingers played against her, probing, plying, each time stretching father and father. He kissed her mouth while his hand worked between her thighs, getting her ready for him, as ready as her virginal sheath would allow.

He got on his knees, the blankets clinging to his shoulders, and lay himself on her. She put her hands on his chest, and opened in welcome as he settled himself between her thighs. He hesitated at her entrance, pressing against the wet opening, looking down at her face with an intense expression.

Aurora felt the first touch of his hardened flesh and trembled, her anticipation mounting to raw desire. There was a restraint in him she could hardly understand. Then he slowly pushed inside, getting the head between her half-opened lips. He kept pushing steadily, looking down at her face cautiously. She was tight and closed. Suddenly something seemed to give way inside. Sharp pain

tore through her flesh as he slid inside her, joining their bodies for the first time. Her head fell back against the soft pillow, stunned, as pleasure dissolved into misery. He didn't move, his body pressed flat against hers, his flesh throbbing deep inside her.

"Are you all right?" he asked, his lips brushing her ear. His voice thick with concern, drew out some of the sting. Her first impulse was to push him out, but she swallowed back the pain and nodded.

"I didn't want to hurt you, but . . . God, I knew I would." He shifted, trying to get comfortable. She was tight, very tight—it felt almost abrasive. But if it was uncomfortable for him, it was agony for her.

"It'll get better, Aurora, I promise," he said. He lifted his hips, withdrawing until all that remained inside her was the tip of his invasion. He pushed all the way in again and she held her breath, softly complaining, closing her eyes. He kept looking down at her, sliding in and out from her torn flesh with strong even strokes, her flesh screaming for him to stop. He could see by the spasm of pain which passed over her beautiful face, that it was still painful to her, but, restraining his passion, he worked very gently, although his lust was so maddening that he could barely restrain himself.

"Put your arms around my neck. Just keep kissing me," he said. He moved his mouth over hers with prolonged, adoring kisses.

She was loosening up, but just a bit, and was getting moist down there. Holding him close, a sweet ache replaced the ragged pain of a moment before. Aurora opened her eyes and watched his face. Her body was started to move in rhythm with his, a part of him stroking her deep inside, healing her, quickening her. Her soft complaining groans drew out into long pleasurable moans. He kept the pace slow, allowing time for her to absorb each new sensation. She clutched at the shirt on his back, and she suddenly wished they were more naked. He paused briefly to tear his shirt off, his pants had already been kicked aside. She gasped at the ache inside when he withdrew to help her slip her nightdress off over her head. Then he lay on her again. There was brief moment of pain as he pushed inside again, then they fell into the same haunting rhythm. She ran her hands down his smooth naked back as he moved; slow, steady thrusts, long and deep, that quickened inside her when she raised her hips to meet his. Smoothly and often he changed his rhythm, circling inside her, then dipping in and out, deeper each time, until she was hanging on to each of his movements. Each long stroke sent her closer to the edge, closer to the unknown.

She gripped his shoulders frantically, trying to pull him into her, seeking more and more friction.

"I can't hold off," he whispered against her neck, his voice husky and ragged. "Come with me."

She ground herself against him faster, more desperately, as his movements began to become shorter, staying deep. It remained just out of her reach.

"I can't," she said, frustration sharpening her voice.

"Yes, you can. Just let go," he said. "Come for me."

Through a thick haze of desire and desperation she felt him grow rigid, his body strain and convulse then go limp, as he gave in to the pulsing pleasure, that she had just missed out on. She clutched him close to her palpating breast, overcome with shock and a little bit of disappointment. She'd been teetering on the verge of something powerful, now turned to torment, and she throbbed dully, aching for release. Suddenly, now that everything was still she was ashamed of all the little noises she had made, all the moving, and sobbing and crying and whatever else she had done. She covered her face with her hands. Rafe looked at her with a flushed, yet somehow drained face. His hair stuck to his damp forehead.

"That's normal," he said, lying still above her.

"Normal?" she said.

"Most girls don't make it the first few times."

She stiffened and twisted, trying to get out from under him. "Get off me," she said an agonized sound escaping her lips, a sob of anger and pain.

"What's wrong?" he said, not budging. Anxiety twisted like a knife in his belly as he stared at her face. "You asked me to."

"I know—I know!" she said. Her pale skin held the ruddy blush of his lovemaking, her breasts still taut with desire, but her eyes were tortured.

"I don't understand," he said, helplessly.

She had stopped trying to get him to move off, and lay limp, looking up at him, searching his face, and said, "I feel all wrong, out of balance."

"Out of balance?" he said, perplexed. "You just need to come."

He suddenly got off her and she instantly wanted him back, to cover her. It felt like an abandonment. But then he lay between her legs again, his face down between her thighs, so close to where his prick had been moments before. With a rag he cleaned away as much of the warm glutinous spendings as he could, then said, "Can I kiss you here?"

She lay before him in a dreadful state of anticipation, her beautiful face all blushes of shame, her lips slightly open, then she closed her eyes, sighing, as he put his mouth to her gaping flesh, kissing and tonguing her. Then he carefully slid his finger inside, and the sheath being now well lubricated, he commenced tenderly to frig her while he continued to lick and suck. All her pain was forgotten, the wounded parts soothed by the flow of his semen now only revelled in the delightful friction; she seemed to boil over in spendings, as he thrust in and out with his fingers, bringing on a feverish excitement she could hardly

understand. Then, he must have hit a nerve or something, because she gripped the sheets in her hands and arched her body, pushing her beautiful breasts upwards, and her head back, as she let out the most beautiful ecstatic cry he could ever hope to hear.

He lay himself on her again, and she revelled in the warm weight of his body. He sucked deeply on her breasts, squeezing them with his hands; he lapped gently at her erect nipples. The soothing attention slowly brought her down from the peak. He kissed her lips. She was all soft and pliable, easy now with satisfied passion. He gently sucked her tongue while it was in his mouth. She made low, satisfied sounds, holding his face between her two hands. She was just like a baby that had finally been sated.

She was so relaxed and content, she didn't complain when he slipped out of bed. He retrieved and glass a wine for them each to restore them, then he joined her in bed again. They were clasped silently together. It was only for a few moments, then he could feel her trembled beneath him with voluptuous ardour, and the restorative now kicking in, they commenced a delightful bout of ecstatic fucking. That night they spent three or four times in a delirium of voluptuousness, till he was fairly ruined by her intensity, and begged her to be moderate, and not to injure herself by excessive indulgence.

"Is that possible?" she sighed, hugging him around the neck, luxuriously. That licking had evidently done

her very great good, despite the nature of their temporary arrangement. He put her off him, but held her close in his arms, and soon they both were in a deep sleep, from which they didn't wake till morning.

* * *

When they reached Rafe's house, Aurora practically leaped out of the carriage. She couldn't believe how lovely the little home was. The craftsman-style home fostered tranquility with its gorgeous views of the garden and fishpond from the front porch.

"This is our home," he said, pretty pleased with himself.

"It's perfect," she said, turning, and hanging off his neck. She was wearing one of her normal dresses. The wedding gown had been discarded and packed away now that she was no longer a blushing bride, but a wife. Rafe walked her to the front door but they didn't make it inside before he took her in his hands. He turned her so her back was to the wall, and shoved her against it, hard. He leaned in on her, stooping a bit so his hard prick pushed against her pussy. His hands passed up and down her sides, all the while mashing his mouth onto hers. They handled each other in an ecstasy of delight, which ended in them throwing off all their clothes, and having an ecstatic fuck on the lounge floor. She still couldn't quite

make it to that critical point when he was on top and it frustrated her.

"Wait just another minute," she said.

"I can't," he gasped.

She looked up at him in disappointment before he collapsed on her breast, panting. Once he could catch his breath, he said, "Don't worry. There'll be plenty of opportunities, you are to sleep with me in my room every night."

* * *

It was so beautiful here, and in his arms, she wanted to give herself over to him entirely. But it was utmost in her mind that none of it was real. At first it was only a nagging sadness. Then she began to feel she could not go on. The blanket, the sheets, the pillows, everything smelled of him. She couldn't get away from him. Yet she couldn't give herself to him. She didn't belong with him and was withheld to the point she couldn't reach climax unless he persisted to exhaustion, and even then only with direct stimulation to her clitoris with his tongue. He had noticed, and made violent physical efforts to bring them together. He could not bring her off, however much he violated her, because she was closed against him. In a sombre, violent excess he tried to kindle her desire for him. But she was set in anguish against him, and he felt as if he were in a dark, violent haze. He began to hate this

in her. A sense of failure grew between them. And after a week of hopeless lovemaking he said to her suddenly one night, just as they were going to bed, "When I come to you, you don't really want me, do you?"

"I do!" she replied quickly.

He looked at her. "No," he said. "I can only make you come with my tongue."

"You probably shouldn't do that anymore," she said.

"It's always too much shock?"

"No, because we should keep things in perspective. It has no purpose."

"You're going to start treating me like a hired stud now?"

"That's exactly what you are."

His face fell slightly, his lips compressed, and he looked at her as if he hated her.

"Would it make you feel better if I pretended it was something else?" she said coldly.

"I don't know why you're acting this way," he said, getting up. "But it's foolish." He grabbed his pillow off the bed. "Go to sleep," he said. "I'm sleeping downstairs."

He went downstairs and got a fire going in the hearth. He wouldn't go back to her. If they were going to make love again, and he knew they would, she would have to be damn tender to him. He felt . . . used. In a minute Aurora came and quietly stood behind him.

"You see," she said, pressing her face to his shoulder, "you see—as we are—how can I get used to you? It's not a natural circumstance."

She stood in silent sorrow, looking at his back. He wouldn't move.

"Dear," she said softly, pressing her lips to his shoulder. He began to struggle with himself to respond.

He turned to look at her. "You mean, right now it's always too much shock?"

"Yes—and—"

"You are always held away from me."

She was trembling with agitation. "You see," she said, "I believe that loving, in *that* way, is supposed to be held in the highest regard."

"That's why you never want it? you don't hold me in the highest regard?"

"Don't say that! You don't understand." She hugged herself in distress. "Don't I want your child?"

"But not me."

"Because it's all temporary. It would come all right if we were really married."

"Let's be really married, then. I want you to have my children."

He held her hand anxiously. She mused over it sadly, watching him.

"It's hard to know. It's for so long—so *long!*"

"That's the best part of it . . . I'll have you always."

“You really want this to be sincere?”

“I’ve had time to think about you, how much you mean to me,” he said. “It may well be that for some reason you don’t wish I to be yours or you mine. But even if you give me no rights over you, I’ll place myself in your hands; and every day I’ll love you more than I did the day before—if your answer can be yes.”

At these words she trembled, having no desire to refuse the gift. He slowly, very gently took her in his hands. She let herself be taken. Then as she lay against his shoulder, she said quietly, “This wasn’t supposed to happen, but I’m so happy it did.”