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THOSE ARE AS BROTHERS

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The long, clear American summer passed slowly, dreaming over the Connecticut valley and the sound square houses under the elms and the broad living fields and over the people there that came and went and lay and sat still, with purpose and without but free, moving in and out of their houses of their own will, free to perceive the passage of the days through the different summer months and the smells and the sun and the rain and the high days and the brooding days, as was their right to do, without fear and without apprehension.

On the front lawn of the white house on the river-bank the two little boys came out every morning and dug holes and hammered nails into boards and pushed the express wagon around filled with rocks; their skins were filled with the sun, with the season, and they played all day, humming tuneless songs under their breath. In June their mother came out and watched them from the hammock under the maple tree, but in July the tension was easing out of her muscles and she began to laugh at the things they did and when they came across to her to show her turtles they had found, or delivering rocks at her station, she got up freely and without looking behind her and played their games with them for a little while. Up the road at the gardener's cottage of the big house where nobody lived, the gardener, who was unmarried, a short stout man who was a Jewish refugee, tended the borders of the garden and painted the long white fence and worked on the driveway; in the summer morning sun he sang too, in German, as he did his neat work.

In the evenings after supper when it was dusk and the only light was left in the red sky on the other side of the river, he would come walking down the road to the house on the river-bank, to call on the German governess who took care of the two little boys. His footsteps could be heard walking, hard and quick, down the road. Fräulein would be sitting on the stone front steps. He would stop short in the road in front of her, dressed in his clean clothes, his body round and compact and his black hair brushed down, and bow. "Good evening," he said. "How are you?" Fräulein said. Then he would come and sit beside her on the steps and the conversation would continue in German, because although he could understand sufficient English, Mr. Loeb could talk hardly any.

Fräulein was friendly to him because she was a friendly woman, but always a little superior because he was a Jew and she belonged to a family of small merchants in Cologne. She was sorry for him because he was a refugee and because he had been in concentration camp in Germany, and it was necessary to be kind to those who had suffered under that Hitler, but a Jew was a Jew; there were right German names and wrong German names; Fräulein's name was Strasser. She did not mind speaking her mind to him on the subject of the Nazis who were ruining Germany. There were no other Germans about, in this place, as there were in the winter in New York, who might be on the other side; to them she had only praise to speak of Hitler, for after all her family were still in Cologne and people suffered at home for what was said by their relatives in America—if it came to the wrong ears. But Mr. Loeb was a Jew and safe to talk to, to tell exactly what she thought of those people, those Nazis. He never said anything much back, just listened and nodded; his face was round and florid.

In the evenings Mrs. Mason sat in a garden chair out on the lawn and listened to the crickets in the marshes and watched the red fade beyond the river. Or, if it was one of the nights when she could not enjoy the evening sounds, the smells, when a little of the

tension and fear clung to her mind and twisted it about, she would sit inside in the living-room, on one of the chintz-covered chairs under a light with a book to read. She read all sorts of books, novels, detective stories, and the papers and magazines that were full of the news about Europe. On the bad nights, the nights when peace was not quite at her command, she noticed that whatever she read seemed curiously to be about her, always to fit her situation, no matter what it was meant to be about. And especially all the books, the articles, about the Nazis. She did not know if it was morbid of her, but she could not help always feeling he had stood for the thing that was the Nazis, that spirit, and she had been a country being conquered, a country dominated by those methods. It was so like; so very like. When she read of those tortured in concentration camp, of those dispossessed and smashed to the Nazi will, she knew, she felt, how those people felt. She had been through a thing that was the same in microcosm. Her life was a tiny scale-model of the thing that was happening in Europe, the ruthless swallowing the helpless. By a miracle, by an overlooked shred of courage, she had escaped and was free here. She was a refugee like that man out there talking to Fräulein who had escaped too, by another miracle, for only miracles saved people from that spirit. In refuge peace and assurance were coming back slowly like strength to a sick body, and the fear, the terror that was once everything, was draining away drop by drop with the days of safety. The same thing must be happening to him, the man out there; confidence and a quietly beating heart, in this calm summer country where there was nothing any more to fear.

Only the habit of fear; only the uncontrollably quickened pulse for no reason any more, the fear that came out of nothing because fear was a poison in the blood and passed in and out of the heart again and again and again before it was finally worked out, if it ever was. Perhaps, she thought, it never was. If you were infected virulently enough with that poison perhaps it never left you, but

recurred forever like some tropical fevers, forever part of you and in your blood though you were a thousand miles away from the source of infection. He was nearly a thousand miles away, too, and there was no reason why she need ever see him again; but perhaps the fear would stay with her though there was nothing left to fear.

As the summer wandered by the young man from across the river came over more and more often to see Mrs. Mason. He came in a boat with an outboard motor; she would hear it buzzing across the water, and the sound of the motor cut as he came up to the dock; then there would be silence while he tied up, and then he would come walking up the lawn, very tall with his fair hair cut short all over, catching the light from the sunset in the quiet dusk.

"Hello, Fräulein," he would say as he came up the steps. "Hello, Mr. Loeb."

Mr. Loeb always got to his feet and bowed smartly. Fräulein said "Good evening, Mr. Worthington." Then he would come in and the screen door would slam and the sound of German being spoken quietly would begin again and he would walk into the living-room and grin at Mrs. Mason.

He used to sit in the chintz-covered chairs with his long legs stuck out in front of him, smoking cigarettes. Sometimes he took her out on the smooth dark river in his boat. Once they struck a log in the darkness on the water and she started violently and cried out. "What are you afraid of?" he asked her. "You're so lovely, I don't see why you should ever be afraid of anything." It was impossible to explain to him that she was not afraid of the log, nor of the water, nor of anything; that it was only a reflex that she was helpless to control, without reason; just fear. "You know I'd take care of you, if anything ever happened, don't you?" he said. "If you'd just let me." And she knew he would, but that did not make any difference. Nobody could help because nobody could possibly understand the irrationality, the uncontrollability, of fear when it was like this, in the blood. Any help had to come from within, the self learning

through days, perhaps years, of peace that nothing of all that that was over would ever happen again. Talking to it was no good; no young man's protectiveness penetrated to it; it had to learn slowly by itself.

The young man was falling in love with Mrs. Mason through that long summer. But it was inconceivable that she should fall in love with him. No matter how kind and strong he was, no matter how much more each day she saw him she saw how good he was, how there was none of that spirit in him, it was inconceivable that her muscles could ever grow slack enough for her to look at him quietly, a man, and fall in love with him. She had been naked once, and vulnerable to everything that had happened to her; now, and perhaps forever, something in her clutched the coverings of tension, of reserve, of aloneness, having learned what happened when they were dropped. Her mind could say that it would not happen with this young man, who was all gentleness and generosity; but the inner thing did not believe that, it believed nothing except what it had learned.

When they sat on the lawn smoking in the twilight, or inside in the big cool living-room, the German talk went on quietly on the front steps. Mr. Loeb was a quiet man, and Fräulein did most of the talking. She told him when she had said her say about the Nazis, about the children, how Hugh was as good as an angel and Dickie was just as different, a sweet child but always up to something, just a busybody. The big June-bugs and the moths banged against the screen door behind them, and the light from the house came soft and yellow through the door and lay upon the stone slabs of the steps.

After a while, when she knew him pretty well, Fräulein told him about that Mr. Mason, what a bad man he was and how glad she was that they did not live there any more.

"That poor lady," she said. "She took plenty of unhappiness from him, I can tell you. My, what a place! I can't tell you what a man he

was. You wouldn't believe it. She never said anything, but I knew what went on. I don't mean maybe beating her, I know husbands get mad sometimes and beat their wives, that's all right, but that man! I tried to keep the children from knowing anything about it, and they certainly saw him little enough; and she helped me to do it. Not that I ever discussed it with her. She's that kind of a lady, very proud, and I never saw her cry, only heard her sometimes, nights when he was very bad. She had such a look in her eyes in those days; she doesn't have it any more. I can tell you I'm glad she got rid of him. In this country it's very easy to divorce, you know."

"Yes," Mr. Loeb said quietly in the darkness.

"Well, she's got rid of him now and I'm glad. It would have killed her, a life like that, and my poor children, what would have happened to them? She's got rid of him, thank God, and now she can just forget about him and be happy."

Mr. Loeb said nothing. He didn't smoke because he was saving money out of what he earned as a gardener. He just sat there in the darkness, and he smelled a little of sweat. Fräulein made allowances for his smell, knowing that he was a laborer and a Jew.

In the middle of the summer Hugh had a birthday and there was a big cake with seven candles, and one to grow on. Mr. Worthington came across the river for the little party, and both children were allowed to sit up till ten. After supper Mr. Loeb came walking down the road as usual, and Mrs. Mason called him in.

"Won't you have a piece of cake?" she said, holding out a plate to him. "Here's a piece with a candle in it."

Mr. Loeb made his bow and took the plate. Mrs. Mason smiled at him and he smiled at her and they did not say anything.

"We're going to play games in the living-room," Mrs. Mason said. "Do you know any games, Mr. Loeb?"

The children were wild with excitement and ran round and round the room. Mr. Worthington showed Hugh a game with a piece of paper and a pencil, where he could guess any number of

a total if he knew the right hand numbers of the other lines. It was very mysterious. Dickie didn't understand at all, and stamped and yelled to make them stop and do something else.

"I show you," Mr. Loeb said and hesitated. He asked Fräulein how to say something in English.

"He shows you a card-trick," Fräulein said. Mr. Loeb's face was round and red and smiling. He took the pack of cards Mrs. Mason handed him and took out two aces.

"You see," he said to Hugh. "This is the farmer's cow." He pointed to the ace of hearts. "And this is Mrs. Sisson's cow." Mrs. Sisson owned the big place where Mr. Loeb was gardener. The card was the ace of clubs.

"Now I put them back again," Mr. Loeb said, shuffling the pack. "Now. Which cow you want to see? The farmer's cow? Mrs. Sisson's cow?"

Hugh deliberated, standing on one leg.

"Mrs. Sisson's cow," he decided.

"Then go to the barn and look for it!" cried Mr. Loeb.

The children were enchanted. They screamed and rolled on the floor; Dickie kept crying, "Go to the barn and look for it!" Everybody was laughing.

"That was a very nice trick," Mrs. Mason said.

The children, after a while, fell to playing with the cards in a corner on the floor. Their two little round butts stuck up in the air, and their two little boys' heads were close together. From time to time they would break apart and shout about something, then go back to their game.

Mr. Loeb finished his cake and took out a folded handkerchief and wiped his mouth. He put the plate down carefully on the desk near him.

"Thank you very much," he said to Mrs. Mason. He was still standing up, politely. Now he moved towards the door.

"Don't go away," she said. "Stay and talk. Sit down, please. You're part of the party."

"Thank you very much," he said.

"Understand you had a bad time with those Nazi fellows," Mr. Worthington said gently. "Were you really in one of those concentration camps?"

"Yes, I was. It was very bad."

"I was in Germany once," Mr. Worthington said. "The thing I kept noticing was, they were such damned bad losers. One night I went out drinking beer with a lot of fellows, me and a Frenchman I knew. They seemed all right guys. But about two in the morning when we'd all drunk a lot of beer one of them said, let's have a footrace. Down the main street there, it was all quiet. Well, we started, and in a minute or two this Frenchman was way in front, and I was just behind. They just quit. Started walking along. Wouldn't admit they'd been racing. But if they'd been ahead you can bet they'd have rubbed it in. They want to be on top, that's it, and they take it out on the fellow underneath. If *they* get licked, they won't admit they were playing at all."

"Yes," said Mr. Loeb.

"You'd see fellows pick fights all the time, late at night, but you never saw them pick a fight unless they thought they could win. I played a lot of tennis over there, and of course, you know, American tennis. . . . They just wouldn't play again. Fellow over here would say, 'Let's play a return match and I'll lick you.' Not them."

"Yes," said Mr. Loeb.

"Those concentration camps, now. Just the fellows on top doing it to the fellows underneath. It must have been a job keeping your courage up."

"I did not keep my courage up," Mr. Loeb said.

Mr. Worthington looked embarrassed.

"I don't blame you," he said. "The things you hear about those places, they just break your spirit, I guess."

"Yes," Mr. Loeb said.

Fräulein sat under the light with her hair parted smoothly from the middle. She looked from Mr. Worthington to Mr. Loeb with

self-assured eyes, not entirely understanding nor especially interested. Mr. Worthington twisted his long legs around one side of his chair.

"Anyway," he said. "It's all over for you and I bet you're damned glad. You can just forget about all that stuff. This is a free country and you can do what you please and nobody can hurt you. It's all over and finished for you."

"For many it is not," Mr. Loeb said after a minute.

"Yeah, that's right. Poor devils."

"But," Mr. Loeb said hesitantly, "I have thought, I do not know how you say it; the more and more that are all the time—surrendered?"

"How do you mean?"

"He means oppressed," Mrs. Mason said. Mr. Loeb bowed to her.

"The more and more that are oppressed all the time, the more there are who know together the same thing, who have it together. When it is time and something happens to make it possible, there is something that all of these have had together and that will make them fight together. And now Frenchmen too, Belgians too, Flemings. If you have been in a concentration camp it is more together than that you might be of different countries. I speak very badly," Mr. Loeb said.

"No," Mrs. Mason said. "A common cause."

"Please?" Mr. Loeb asked. Fräulein spoke to him in German.

"I do not think that it is what you call cause, just. But knowing the concentration camps together. And what happens. That they were all crying together and no—courage. It makes them love."

"I don't see what you mean, exactly," Mr. Worthington said.

"I do," said Mrs. Mason. "They all remember the same thing together."

"Yes," Mr. Loeb said.

It seemed to her for a minute that she saw a sea of faces upturned, with the same look in all the thousands of them, the anguish, the

terrible humiliation, the fear. It was a vast and growing sea, a great host of the tortured and the outcast, who had known ultimate fear instead of death and had been together into the valley of living hell. Separately each of them had known fear, had felt it burning inexorably in their veins, but now that they were all together the common fear became something larger, because there were so many millions of them, because they were not alone; it was set in dignity like a brand of brotherhood upon their lifted faces, and there were more of them, and more of them; if there were any more it would be so large a part of all the people that there were at all, it would become strong by its numbers, and unshakable because of its suffering shared. This was something that she had never thought of before.

The children were sent off to bed at last, and Mrs. Mason went up to say goodnight to them. They lay in the two cot-beds holding still while they said their prayers and then releasing into a last wild activity before the light should be turned out on them. She pushed them back under their sheets and kissed them. When she came downstairs again Mr. Worthington was sitting alone in the living-room and the German voices were coming in softly through the screen door, from out in the warm darkness.

"Hello," Mr. Worthington said.

"Hello," she said. He reached out and took her hand as she passed where he sat, and kissed it. She stood still for a minute, and smiled at him.

"I love you from now," he said. She went on looking at his face, bent over her hand but with the eyes looking up at her. After a minute the consciousness of what he said, where she was, the consciousness of herself, came back over her and she drew away her hand. But for a moment she had lived in freedom, without watching herself.

In August Mrs. Sisson came back from California and opened the big house, and Mr. Loeb was much busier, doing all the things

that Mrs. Sisson wanted done. Mrs. Sisson was a woman of fifty with black hair and a big strong figure, who was very particular and liked her big place tended to perfection. Mrs. Mason did not know her except very slightly—to wave to when Mrs. Sisson drove along the road in her big black car with her initials on the Connecticut license-plate, and to speak to in a neighborly way when they met in the village. Sometimes now Fräulein started to tell her things about Mrs. Sisson, how badly she treated all her servants, that she didn't even feed them properly, and had had three different waitresses in just the time she had been back.

"Nobody wants to work for a woman like that," Fräulein said.

But Mrs. Mason thought she ought not to listen to gossip, and did not let Fräulein talk about it much.

One afternoon she came out of the house on to the lawn. Mr. Loeb was standing at the gate, talking to Fräulein. The two little boys were playing at the end of the lawn. Mr. Loeb was talking very fast in German, his voice much higher than usual, and Fräulein was looking at him and from time to time saying something calmly. Mrs. Mason walked down to the gate.

"Hello, Mr. Loeb," she said.

Mr. Loeb made his bow, but he looked distracted. His eyes were contracted and his face was even redder than generally. Mrs. Mason thought he looked almost as if he were going to cry. He looked at her and began to speak in English but stumbled and was silent.

"That Mrs. Sisson," Fräulein said. "She says to him she will report him to the Refugee Committee in New York so that he will never be able to get a job again."

"What did he do?"

"Nothing! She talked to him the way she talks to all the people who work for her, she bawled him out, he doesn't paint the fence quick enough, she says he's too slow. He's a foolish man, he pays attention to what she says. I tell him he ought to shrug his shoulders, what does he care, as long as he gets his pay."

"I cannot have her speak to me that way!" Mr. Loeb broke out. "I cannot have her call me those things she says. I cannot . . ."

"He pays attention," Fräulein said. "He gets his feelings hurt too easy. I tell him, what does he care what she says? She's nothing. But he says to her, she can't speak to him that way, he cannot have her speak to him that way, he cannot stay and work for her if she talks like that. So she says all right, she's going to report him to the Refugee Committee."

"What can she say?"

"She was terrible angry," Mr. Loeb said. "She will say I do not work. She will say I am a no-good worker. She will say I speak to her fresh."

He looked at Mrs. Mason with his frightened eyes, and she nodded at him. Their eyes met and she nodded again.

"I'll go up and talk to her," Mrs. Mason said. She did not feel at all afraid to do that, suddenly. She was not thinking about how she felt.

Fräulein shrugged.

"I don't think it makes any difference, you excuse me, Mrs. Mason. That Mrs. Sisson, she doesn't want Mr. Loeb to work for her any more because he talks back to her, and she writes the letter anyway."

"I'll write to the Refugee Committee too," she said. "I'll tell them that I know all about Mr. Loeb and he's a good worker and a nice man. But I'll go up and talk to her now anyway."

Mr. Loeb leaned against the fence and looked at her. She came out of the gate into the road.

"Thank you very much," Mr. Loeb said in his foreign, formal voice.

She smiled at him. The tension had gone away from his eyes, the look of fear that she recognized had gone.

"You don't have to worry, you know," she said. "I wouldn't ever let anything happen to you."

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