

## LITTLE HUNGARY

*Woodlawn, New Jersey, April 9th.*—  
Life seems to have caught its breath, to have moved away from me. And yet I must live, must test it all, go through it all, set all these pines, and the scent of them, and the barbarous sunsets, and the metallic stars to some *motif* of reality—infuse them with life.

The very scarlet flooding of the Jersey marshes at night, the jutting flames from the monstrous chimneys that plume beside the canals, the red infernal sky, the stripes of reflected wet fire—I look at them and know I am blind, blind; that there is some secret I have not yet learned that might let me feel the full beauty of that transfigured burning, the far sky and factory



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fires. I strain to catch something that is outside myself, unlived.

New York, the monster that lies at the edge of the sea, and pushes its scaled length towards Europe, is suddenly a skeleton of bare cathedral bones, and the stark ribs of naked buildings open to the sky. It is divested, wind-torn, hollow. The sunsets wave through its openings, the lighted snakes of elevated trains coil about it at night. At night the sky is a dark pall sown with sharp star-points meant to hurt. It is webbed, vast, like the wings of a bat, horror-stricken although the sun is shining.

I feel hushed, baffled, silenced, held over an abyss of decision that will make my life memory a regret—or the actuality of new knowledge. This is the real climax with women; not the things we do but the manner by which we forget them.

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*May 12th.*—The other night, when his fingers closed on my arm, the sea had engulfed planets: I was held by the fire of the Immortals—I *was* Immortal. There was no death, there wasn't even life. All the universe was burning in corrosive ecstasy.

And it has been only twice; but the other existence lies behind as dry and dead as a crackled, brittle leaf. This was life veined with blood and rounded by palpable flesh—palpable flesh—my arms and throat have yet the great black bruises from his kisses. It is enough to tincture a whole century with love, passion enough to create a universe. I hardly dare separate the memory of it into the different moments out of the great flaming shafts of radiance that intoxicate every sense and are beating around me yet. He did not seem human, it was more than the mere



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meeting of man and woman. Life could hardly bear much of such ecstasy.

The minute I came into the drawing-room of the hotel I had a confused sense of the crimson brocade and the gilt-built mirrors, and then of him standing by the white marble pillars of the mantel-piece and fastening the button of one of his gloves. I saw then the face that I had seen in all the centuries since the world began.

We both wanted to get outside the radius of ordinary life. We left the carriage at the edge of the slums and walked. I think the angels from Paradise walk so when they come to earth. I saw the teeming thousands of humanity, the impish children, the filth of the streets, the windows filled by hideous heads sprouting out of these dens for air in the hot May night.

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His voice enticed me, led me, seized me, swayed me, mastered me. I had met my master. I was conquered, his voice walled me. I was defenceless, unresisting; I never dreamed of resisting. There was nothing to resist. I was myself, and he had always owned me, always had been my possessor; he had always known I would respond, since the world began.

"It is in the cellar: are you afraid—aren't you afraid I shall murder you for your jewels?" he laughed when we came to Little Hungary. Afraid! I would have followed him into Hell. The flames would be no hotter than the whirring madness that spun the world around us into fire.

We got up at last, he and I together, to the street, which, even though it was a



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slum, had the curved serenity of the night sky, the wildness of open air.

But we had not driven far through the empty obscure streets—so obscure to us that we might have been in the midst of a desert—till my relaxed mood—I was at the end of my strength—made me turn and meet his eyes and tremble down, under, not away from his kiss. This was made with the world when life was given from God to man.

Only a moment, and we moved apart—shaken, tumultuous, shocked, with a feeling as of the first swoon of ether that lifts your veins into rivers of light before it transforms you into extinction. The stars slipped over us as we moved, slipped under us, dripped from my hands as he caught my hands and clung over me and begged and whispered and devoured my heart.

“Stay with me, you love me, you love me, trust me!” and I swayed to him, gasp-

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ing, as he crushed my lips—my lips that were shaped to his, made for his, formed for him to kiss; and then a carriage passed, and he crushed my face down on his breast so that I would not be seen. “Stay with me, stay with me!” and my “No” was spent under his lips.

He slipped down on his knees beside me, and drew my face down to his. “You have never been kissed like this—stay with me!”

But I couldn't, I couldn't; I loved him so that I denied myself him to gain him.

*June 3rd.*—I remember the long walks past the pine hills, just as day was passing into night, and the stars were coming out in a blue sky, yet stained with the sunset on the days before I wrote. I was willing that the days in between should pass. I had to grow accustomed to the transfiguration of his kiss before I saw



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him again. He made me real, and imprisoned my heart bar after bar of the minutes we were together and locked by his last kiss.

It flashed out into life in the midst of May, part of the perfume and wind and stars of the world. All the dreams I surmised of eternity have waved over me in one thunderous night. I have got the best out of life that life can give. I was satisfied with the measure of the hour; the future did not exist, there had been no past.

We could see the trees in the square from the deep windows of the room, the stars hung like pendants of pink rubies in the luminous air. There was no wind, the transparent green leaves were motionless, and between the grass and the sky pierced the molten shaft of electric light

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moving and feeling the darkness with its sharp edges.

He stormed at me, battled with me, laughed at me, struggled with me; I was bewildered, tired, broken. I burst out crying, and flung my arms on the table and buried my face in my arms.

No matter what life could do or deny, it cannot take these hours from me; they are myself, marked on my soul; are my soul. It is the triumph of the immortal; I have been immortal; I have been in the eternal fountains. He has made me alive.