

Shadow Shapes

(Memoirs of a Chinese Student in America)

ANONYMOUS

PART III

MADONA

LEE could not understand why he had suddenly become particular in the way he dressed, the way he combed his hair. Just a matter of habit, he told himself. He could not see how he could be in any way interested in Edna, or Josephine.

One afternoon the girls told him they would have a party that evening. They insisted that Lee should be there. He declined their invitation on the excuse that he could not dance. The girls instantly assured him that with a little practice, he could dance at the party. They seemed to have a great deal of fun coaxing him. Lee never liked parties, but he did not like them to think he was not a good mixer. If he only wanted to, he said to himself, he could be as peppy as any of them.

Edna, Josephine and Gertrude took turns in the instruction. One would drag Lee across the floor while the other two watched, criticised, and put on new records. And after Lee went home for supper, the girls had declared him fit for the party.

All his courage gave way in the evening. Lee grew frightfully shy. Edna and Josephine seemed to be changed, not the ones he knew. The sight of them whirling around in other men's arms was almost unreal to him. Lee unconsciously avoided them. He refused to dance with them. He said he was too tired.

The boys and girls at the party, to Lee, behaved like children. They talked nonsense and laughed over nothing. The whole thing was repulsive to him. A blonde girl whispered to him, "you dance

wonderfully!" He felt like throwing her out of the window. Sitting in a corner of the room, he watched sullenly at the dancing couples. When the party was at the height of its merriment, Lee slipped out of the room and went home unnoticed.

He was through. He wondered, when lying in bed, why he had not made an end of it when he moved from the Pitkins. Anyway, he would end it now. Telephone was ringing. A call for Lee. It was Edna's voice:

"Tom, what's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Why did you go away so soon? We were looking for you all over the house. What's the matter? Tell me."

"Nothing. Really nothing."

"I know there is something," Edna insisted.

"Didn't you have a good time?" Lee was trying to evade her question.

"Yes, but why did you act that way at the party?"

"Edna, you had a good time. You like to be with that crowd. But I don't belong there. I feel out of place—what's the use? You don't understand."

"No, I don't, but I can't see why you should feel that way. Are you coming tomorrow night?"

"I may, but don't expect me," Lee hated to tell her he was not going.

"We'll wait for you at the usual time then, seven o'clock."

"Goodnight." Lee hung up. All he had to do was to stay away from them. Easy enough. His mind was made up. He would have nothing to do with that bunch of flappers and cake-eaters! As

he ran upstairs, he bit the lower lip till it bled. The salty taste of blood in his mouth pleased him, as though this self-inflicted pain proved he had some will power.

Two weeks passed. Thomas Lee tried to go on with his studies. In spite of all his efforts to remain calm and indifferent, he was not his former self. He lost enthusiasm in his work. He was brooding too much. And yet he would not call the girls over the phone and to patch up their differences.

It seemed incredible to Lee that his effort to stay away from Edna and Josephine could have caused him so much misery. He began to wonder whether he ever wanted to be alone. No, he wanted to talk to someone who could understand him. Not the Walkers, not the Davieses. It was hard to keep himself from going back to the girls, but his pride revolted. He was too stubborn to yield.

The third week found Lee sick in bed. Loss of sleep, a severe cold, nothing serious. Once a while he would get up and take a walk, but he never could get rid of a terrible headache. The doctor gave him some medicine. It did not help any. Another week was about gone when he received a note from the Pitkins:—

“This is to inform you that the Pitkins, Josephine, and Edna are still alive, and hope to see your smiling face soon.

From
THE OLD GANG”

Lee recognized Edna's handwriting. He thought the note was very cute, and that it was possible now for him to return to the Pitkins without wounding his own pride. Their differences were forgotten. Doubtless he had been rather silly about it. He would take a walk some afternoon and stop for a few minutes at the Pitkins'.

Lee grew frightfully nervous as he pressed the door bell. He was seized

with the notion to run away, but before he could make up his mind, Edna stood smiling at the door. They were too excited to say anything. Inspecting each other from head to foot, each was anxious to see if the other had changed.

“Tom, there are dark rings around your eyes!” Edna noticed that Lee was thin and pale.

“I have a cold, I guess.”

“You ought to be in bed,” she said as she helped him to take off his overcoat.

“What's the use of going to bed when you have to get up three times a day to get your meals. You know, I room and board at different places now.”

“Tom, why can't you——” Edna hesitated for a few seconds then continued, “why can't you stay here for a couple of days till you feel better? Your old room is vacant. You can stay in bed, while we bring your food up on a tray.”

“Yes, Tom, why don't you do it?” she insisted, then ran into the kitchen and was back almost instantly with Mrs. Pitkin, Josephine and Gertrude behind her.

“Yes, please stay. You need a rest.”

Before he could voice his protest, the girls were dragging him upstairs. They pushed him into his former room, and closed the door behind him.

“Get into bed quick! We'll be right back,” Edna whispered through the keyhole.

Josephine came in. Seeing his eyes open, she sat down on the bed and chattered noisily. She ran her fingers through his hair, while she was humming a song-hit she newly learned. Soon Edna appeared. She brought him some supper on a tray.

Lee watched Edna without stirring, without even moving his lips to thank her. But in his staring eyes, which seemed to see nothing, the image of the girl was graven. She was a changed woman. Instead of a flirting and jazz-age girl, he found her appearing in

Madona-like grace and purity. Lee was surprised to have noticed these qualities in Edna. Every movement and speech of hers seemed to have come from a different being. She came silently and noiselessly and laid the tray on the table by the bed and stood with her arms close to her sides and her head down. She had none of those fond observations which all women instinctively produce for the benefit of an invalid.

She stood there beautiful eyed and fragile. He saw her as something bewilderingly clean, different, vividly different from Josephine or Gertrude. There was an innocence about her that extended beyond her body. This and her fragility haunted Lee.

His youth had caught the vision of the shadow dreams in her eyes toward which her soul seemed to be flying. The Edna he knew—gay, dance-mad, emotionless, smiling a normal goodby at him, was a contrast which deepened his interest in this dream girl.

The thing was unbelievable. Her serene eyes looked at him eagerly as if to tell him he must forget her former self, and that she was different now. Lee understood nothing and remained staring at her. His manner proclaimed frankly that he was bewildered.

"What the deuce has happened to her?" Lee mused to himself. She had never looked that way before. Yet nobody else in the room seemed to have noticed the sudden change in Edna. Maybe he was only dreaming. But perhaps it was the beginning of something.

Lee wore himself out in trying to understand. His eyes closed in utter exhaustion. The girls watched over him, then seeing that he needed rest, they tiptoed from the room.

Now there was no world outside, but a darkness without faces or streets. He was alone. He could never remember having been so lonely before. But now there was a difference. He smiled. Of course, it was Edna. Her Madona-like image returned to his mind. It sudden-

ly seemed pleasant to be lonely. Bewildered and dreaming, he laughed and his lips murmured, "I don't know. I don't know!"

IN THE SWINGS

Two swings stood facing each other in the yard. As Thomas Lee rocked to and fro in his swing, gazing at the slender form of Edna lying in the other, he was experiencing the loftiest of human emotions on earth—spring time and youth.

His heart sang over the beauty of lovely flowers growing in the angles of the fences. The moods of his boyhood days came back to him, his love of winging butterflies and birds.

A feeling of mutual interest had grown between the two since his recent illness. The speed of his recovery surprised even his physician. In spite of the vigorous protest of Josephine and Edna, Lee returned to the Walkers' after a week's rest at the Pitkins'.

Nevertheless, he was with Edna almost every day. He was interested in her not so much from the point of view of looks, though she was charming enough. Her simplicity and innocence allured him. And she wanted to be with him. It was only natural that they soon confided to each other more and more of themselves.

Edna's mental and emotional life was stable. In the conventional sense, she was a thoroughly good girl, honest, truthful and virtuous. Marriage and children, to her, are the fate and duty of all women. Being Irish and a devoted Catholic, she was a born stoic and a believer in the goodness of God. There was no questioning of ordinary notions of right and wrong. She had a distinct preference for those who conformed themselves to the given and conventional standards of life.

Though she was outwardly cold and indifferent, there was a deep current of passion in her which she felt would never be satisfied. No man would ever

understand her. None that she had met. But she knew she had a great capacity to love. If someone would come along and who would be worthy of it, how she would love and sacrifice! It seemed, however, that she was destined to be disappointed. She had now passed twenty-three, and she had not met the right one.

Lee was young in age, but older in certain forms of knowledge, and potentially greater than she could ever comprehend. With Lee, convention meant nothing. He set for himself, his own standards of good and evil. Cynical and egoistic, all existing institutions tumbled under his ruthless criticism.

He was swayed helplessly by emotion and desire. Though he was intellectual, in every sense of the word, at moments of great emotional strain, all reason was swept aside. In literature, realism appealed to him strongly. He loved to boast before someone who would admire him. In Edna's swimming eyes, he found a listener. To Edna, Lee was young, ambitious, imaginative and fascinating, vividly different from any man she had ever known.

He lay there looking at her wonderfully brown hair, her thin lips, and her light blue eyes. This was the right kind of girl, he thought to himself, clean, honest simple, attractive, not wild and frivolous like Josephine and Gertrude. Edna reminded him of a summer night on the West Lake.

During the days that followed he thought of Edna often. And it was also the time when he received his first letter from Ivy. The tone was formal enough. She wanted to know how he was getting along—he had never written to her since he came to America. Enclosed in the letter were some snapshots of her and of the school where she was studying.

Lee did not have the courage to tell her that everything was over between them. Poor little girl! It was cruel to break the heart of an innocent girl who

was the slave of a tyrannical tradition. What could she do under the circumstances? She wanted to hold him not for love, which she never knew, poor thing, but for her future, her family's prestige in the society.

What if he had told her that it was all over? Would she kill herself? The thought made him shudder. No, she would not do such a thing. They were never engaged. It was only an understanding. But who could tell? Suicide had happened in similar cases.

He jumped up and clenched the letter in his hands. The pathos of it all cut him to the marrow. Lee wondered if he had made a mistake in falling in love with an American girl.

There was the racial prejudice. Wherever they would go, they would be the victims of a social persecution. It was comparatively easier for a man to stand such things, but would Edna love him enough to do it? It practically meant that they would be social outcasts from both races. They would have no one but themselves to lean on. If she had cared for him, they could leave the world alone and should be contented with their love and devotion to each other. Even then, would they be happy?

Their religious differences constituted another obstacle. Lee had a respect for all religions. Edna could keep her religion when they were married. He held no ban on any particular religion, for he found merits as well as weaknesses in all creeds. His criticisms of the Catholic church sometimes irritated Edna. He did not want to hurt her feelings, but he hated to lie about it. They might manage to go through life without any serious trouble arising from his issue, and yet they might not.

There was little visible chance of Lee making a comfortable living in America. He would have a much brighter future in his native country. But would Edna be contented with the ways and customs in China? That was very problematical. Cities, like Shanghai, Peking and Tien-

tsin, would have all the conveniences of a modern city. In other places, however, the conditions would be entirely different. People there belonged to a different race and spoke a foreign language. The only thing she would know or understand would be her husband.

Of course there were other disadvantages to their marriage. Edna's health was a serious problem. Would she be strong enough to go through all the hardships which would surely come their way? Edna's marriage to Lee would result in her loss of American citizenship. It was also very improbable that they could get the consent of her parents.

But perhaps above all else was the question of their children. The babies cannot choose. They come into this world without their consent. The children of such a mixed marriage would probably suffer greater persecution than their parents. In school, they would be shunned by other playmates. In life they would be branded as "Eurasians." Would it be fair for the children to pay by a life-long struggle against overwhelming oppressions, for the selfish love of two? And a marriage life without children would never satisfy both.

Thus Lee struggled within him. He never cared for Ivy. But she was sweet in a way. She would be devoted and faithful to him. If she were there now, he could live with her. No, oh, no! That would not be fair. He would cheat himself, but he could not cheat Ivy. He did not see how, in the face of so great and clean a love as his for Edna, he could go on with Ivy.

The old world like a far-away song tortured him with its echo. They made figures out of clay and called them Life. He had tried to be different, but no more. He was one of them. Sprawled across his bed, Lee lay with his fevered eyes fastened on the window. As from a distance he heard himself weeping. When he grew silent he repeated to himself, "I'll go back. I belong to them."

A LITTLE COTTAGE

Thomas Lee had suffered deeply during those months. He had already loved Edna too much not to be overwhelmed by the hopelessness of his affection. His face wore a constant frown. He hated everything, most of all himself.

There was one consolation. He would leave in the fall to study at the University of Missouri. Time will kill anything, so people say. Perhaps Edna would forget him when he was away. They might never see each other again. This could not mean much to her. She probably had many lovers before she ever met him. Lee could not forget. No, he could not, that seemed to be pretty sure. Life held no charm for him, like a drift wood, rolling no place.

Unconsciously he picked on Edna over the least little things. Many times he would start a quarrel for no reason at all. They were sitting in the park one Sunday afternoon listening to a band concert. A boy living in her neighborhood, who was "a little off," walked near them and talked with Edna. After the boy had gone, Lee remained sullen and speechless during the concert. When she asked for the cause of his strange action, Lee said she should know better than to talk with a crazy boy before all those people.

"Why, I am surprised at you," Edna's temper broke loose. "Instead of picking on me, you should have sympathy for a poor boy like him. People don't laugh at me talking to him. They do think it funny for me to have such a cross companion! Besides, what do I care what others think? I do what I like. If you don't like it, you don't have to go out with me!"

They never spoke to each other on their way home. Lee knew he was wrong. He could not understand why he had fussed about it. Maybe he was just too irritable. Nevertheless, he would not give in. At the corner of her block, he stretched out his hand and muttered

a stiff "goodby." There was a marked note of finality in his voice.

Edna grasped both of his hands. All expressions of her aroused temper disappeared from her face. She was suddenly seized with the fear that he might leave her.

"Tom, you are not mad with me, are you?" she pleaded.

"I am awfully sorry for what happened this afternoon. I am no good anyhow. Every time I say something I make you mad."

"I just lost my head. I never wanted to hurt your feelings, Tom. I would not have spoken to that boy or anybody, if I knew that would hurt your feelings."

"Edna, I don't feel like talking. I shall ring you up tomorrow."

"You cannot fool me that way. I know you won't call me up, or come to see me. Tom, you know I don't want to hurt your feelings. Honestly, I mean it. Tell me you are coming tomorrow night. If you don't, I shall cry right here." Her eyes already glistened with tears.

"Yes?" Edna nodded her head questioningly.

Her innocence and child-like simplicity completely disarmed Lee. He wanted to fold her in his arms and to tell her that he would never want to leave her. As he nodded his head in consent, he pictured Edna and himself in a little wood that covered the hillside, and asked himself if earthly creatures had ever been so happy. The noise of a street car passing by brought him back to reality so brutally that he was still stunned with the fall.

Edna was overjoyed by their reconciliation, and laughingly wiped the tears off her eyes. "Mother will be here next week," she said "to spend the summer with me. We will take a little cottage out among the hills. You will come to see us every evening, won't you?" She was as happy as a little girl who had just found her lost doll.

"Yes, yes," Lee stammered, not knowing what he was saying.

On the slope of a green hill stood their little cottage with a semicircular railing, through the railing, in front of the house, a green lawn smooth as velvet. Climbing flowers clung about the doorway.

Lee had been particularly moody that night. He had come with the determined object of explaining everything before Edna. It was useless for them to go on with their friendship. Every time they were together, it hurt him to think of the hopelessness of their love and that he would soon never see her again. The agony was unbearable. He would ask her forgiveness. He would leave her! Farewell! He would go far away, so far that she would never hear of him again, and yet he seemed never to be able to spit the thought out of his mouth, with Edna sitting so close to him in a swing on the porch.

Edna was dressed in white. She leaned on the back of the swing and was playing with his necktie. He could not help from seeing in her mind an image of Edna leaning on his shoulder, saying over to him again under the starry sky the tender words she had said to him before, and far off the world went on its way, without darkening with its shadow the radiant picture of their youth and love. He shook in vain the dream from his eyes. Their love was too beautiful. That was the thing that hurt him. If only he did not love her as he did!

To hide his conflicting emotions, his tongue went on a rampage. Politics, philosophy, literature, religion, science—spared none.

"You say the moonlight is white," he heard himself speaking convincingly. "Another person may call it violet, and still another may say it is blue. Maybe all three of you are right, and maybe you are all wrong. Nobody knows. What is color anyhow. Who decided that a certain color was yellow and some other were red and black? If they had happened to take a different notion, we might be now calling red black and yellow brown."

Edna looked at him with swimming eyes, "I love to hear you talk. You have such wonderful ideas." She did not understand a word he said. Lee wished she would tell him, "You are a mad man. Get out of my house. I don't want to see you again." But she almost killed him with her admiration.

Outside the night rustled with an approaching storm. On the porch the rain began a rattle of water. A wind was weeping in the darkness. With the gathering storm his strength came. He could never remember what he said to her. Even if he did, he would not understand. He could only remember he had told her that he would not come to see her anymore, before he picked up his hat and dashed into the rain.

Suddenly a pain filled his heart, his fingers, his eyes. And the pain like a knife moving inside, frightened him. His action completely 'dumbfounded' Edna. She could not understand what it was all about, and looked at the running form with her lips wide apart. He was almost three blocks away and he was still running—his swiftly moving figure growing dimmer in the night.

The door closed behind him. He stared at the dark room where he had slept and dreamed. "Edna—Edna. I love you. I ran away from you. Oh, God, why did I run away from her?" Another moment and the mist of her would be gone. He had found love, only to throw it away.

"Edna—I can't forget you. I want to remember you always! To remember, to remember!" he gasped. "Ah, to remember you! Can it be a dream? Who am I? Ah, to remember you among the cinnamon roses, when the moon drowns in Yellow Sea!"

His mind could not think. It was shattered to pieces. The world was unbearable. Cold, black, lonely. Everything was lonely around him. Life was a monument to his loneliness. "Edna—Edna—" like a far away voice

calling. He saw life in all its splendid glories only to see it vanish and disappear. Voices dancing around him. Tears choking his heart. The morning came down on him like a ghostly wind blowing him away.

RENDEZVOUS

Was it really a sacrifice? Was it not, on the contrary, only his duty to put an end to a love which would inevitably bring to him in the end unhappiness and suffering? Lee had returned to the protecting wings of his race, of his family, of the traditions of an old civilization.

Lee locked himself in his room the following morning, with his individual self struggling against the dogmas of two societies. He was fighting gamely but was steadily losing ground when in the afternoon his landlady knocked at the door and handed him a letter from Edna.

Dear Tom:—

Did you really think I would let you go away last night, in the rain, figuratively speaking too, without saying something myself?

What you said last night, I could not understand. However, it makes little difference. I knew you would leave me some day, but it never entered my head that our friendship would end so soon and in such a way. I had expected to write to you when you are in Missouri, and to hear of your progress from time to time.

Tommy, you may not believe it, we have only a few friends, in our lives. You are the best pal I have ever known. The year we spent together in Colorado were among the happiest days in my life. May I hope in the years to come, they will bring you pleasant memories?

I do not know whether you believe in prayer or not. Being a Catholic, I do. I promise you that every night before I go to bed, I shall say a

prayer for your success and happiness.

Please write to me before you go away and tell me that I am still a friend of yours and shall always be one. Promise me, Tom, won't you.

Your friend,
Edna.

When Lee read it through, line by line, with tears in his eyes, he rubbed his face against the glossy paper. But gradually a sense of shame took possession of him. She had offered him a pure and true friendship, and he ran away from her without even explaining his strange action. Her sweet innocence brought tears to his eyes, like a child's accusing finger. He remembered the summer evenings all full of sunshine. How she used to bring her knittings to the park, sat by the tennis courts all afternoon and watched him play! What happiness there had been at that time, what freedom, what hope! What an abundance of illusions! Nothing was left of them now.

Then Lee repented. He even asked himself why he had ever run away from Edna. Anyway, it was not fair for him to hide his true feelings from her. He loved her. He was going to tell her how he had suffered. She might laugh at his love, tramp it under her feet, but he would write to her. Why did he ever meet Edna? Why should she be so pure, so charming? Was it his fault? "Oh my God!" he said to himself, "No, no! Accuse only fate."

Every word in her letter recalled faces to him, certain gestures, the sound of a voice. Each line a caressing hair. Once, twice, and many more times, he re-read her letter. With the paper wet with tears and his hand trembling, he wrote:

Dear Edna:—

Forgive me, if you could. I ran away from you not because I wanted to, nay, God forbid! For months I had kept a secret suffering to my-

self and it had slowly torn my heart into shreds.

Edna, I love you so that you have come to mean everything in my life. But I have hid my feelings even from you, whom I love most, knowing it is more unattainable than an illusion. Everything is against me—racial prejudice, religious and social differences. I would rather let the pain slowly kill me than to see you turn down my love in scorn and ridicule.

You have taught me the meaning of love. I was entering upon marvels where all would be ecstasy, love, beauty. So at last I was to know those joys, that fever of happiness of which I had despaired, only to see them vanish from sight!

I have no plan to make for my future. It matters little now where I shall go. But remember, Edna, wherever you may be, somewhere in the world there will be a heart beating always for the love of you, and praying for Him to give you happiness.

"Now how am I to sign?" Lee said to himself. "Your friend?" No! "Tom"? Yes, that's it, just 'Tom'."

As he lay listening miserably to the noises of the city, he pictured in his mind how she would receive his letter. Perhaps she would tear it to pieces and remark irritatingly, "he is crazy!" A hand squeezed his heart till it hurt. He was sorry that he had written the letter. Why should he especially after having kept the secret to himself for months?

He thought of how unreal the year in America seemed, as unreal as the memories of his boyhood days. What had happened to him during the time he had been away from China? Nothing, and yet all the moods and turmoils of this one year would always dwell upon him like the brooding November landscapes. The world seemed to be a playground once. Now it seemed useless. He felt

like an exile wandering among scaffolds.

Lee, haggard of face, seemingly ten years older, his eyes dim and empty, refused to take any food the following day. He breathed heavily, his swollen eyes blinking in the light. The warm breeze of the evening and the rustle of the falling leaves evoked memories of the happy days and caused a new outburst of tears, amid which could be distinguished the words, "I love her, my Edna."

"It was so beautiful," he murmured, "like a dream." Everything they had said and done—every little thing, he remembered. He could never forget. Even the slightest word she had spoken. When they were apart, in the years to come, he would just live on the memories of the months in Colorado. It had been so perfect, so exquisite.

*And these are shadows of leaves,
that were your hair,
And these, that were your hands, are
a motion of the night-air.*

When the postman brought him a letter from Edna, he fairly flew to his room. There were some other mails for him, but he did not wait for them. He went quickly up stairs, breathless, and ever holding that dainty envelope between his fingers. On the second floor he stopped before the door of his room, that was closed. Then he tried to calm himself. He must read the letter at once. And where to begin? How? Lee pushed open the door and went in.

Dear Tom:—

I did not read your letter. I cried over it. Not having a room of my own here, I had to read it in the bathroom. No matter how much I felt like crying, Tom, I had to come out pretending as if nothing had happened.

Don't ever say that I shall think of your love in scorn and ridicule. I know I shall never find a love so true

and pure like yours. Love is the most beautiful thing God has given us in this life.

I had always been happy with you. Every evening I almost counted the hours till it was time for you to be here. I was happy and I never tried to analyze my feelings.

Don't ever let this interfere with your school work. "Carry on," like the soldiers used to say during the War. God is merciful, and He may help us to find a solution in time.

But I must see you at once. Meet me tomorrow afternoon at the southern entrance of the park at 2 o'clock. My mother does not know a thing about this. I am supposed to be going to the public library tomorrow.

Edna.

They greeted each other in conventional phrases. A strange calmness surprised them both. It was early in August. Hazy clouds hovered on the horizon between the outlines of the mountains. Others, rent asunder, floated up and disappeared. The lake, the willow trees, the children playing on the lawn, and the distant church steeples bathed in the glorious sunshine. Swinging hand in hand, Edna and Lee went along the skirt of a wood and took a bench beside the river.

At the noise of their conversation, frogs jumped away to hide themselves. Duckweeds made a greenness on the water. Lying motionless between the reeds slept the faded waterlilies. Silence was everywhere. Something sweet seemed to come forth from the trees. Then flowing water had its own magic. Its music mingled with the pulsations of their throbbing nerves. Across the river they saw again the same bench where they had listened to many concerts, the same pool where they had watched the children swim. Nothing around them changed, and yet for them something had happened more stupendous than if the mountains had moved in their places.

Lee began speaking to her of his love. He was calm, serious, melancholy. Edna listened to him with bowed head, and stirred the bits of wood on the ground with the tip of her foot. But at the words, "Perhaps I should never have come, it's so hopeless!" "Oh, no!" she stopped him.

"How do you know? I wanted you to come. I wouldn't if I didn't like you. You understand that, don't you? I am the first one, you said, that you ever loved. A girl of my age in America cannot say that. Once when I was fifteen years old, I thought I was in love, but it did not take me a week to find out that I was only in love with romance. I went out with many fellows since and had several boy friends. However, when I thought of marrying any of them, I could not stand the idea. I never loved them and I did not care to be with them. Once a fellow told me that he would not come

to see me any more if I did not treat him any nicer. I told him to stay away.

"I believe I love you, Tom, but I want to think it over. Give me a little time. We do have many problems to face. That's why I want you to give me time. Tom, you don't want me to marry you and then to leave you later. I don't promise you anything until I am sure that I shall never regret it."

She stopped. Having gazed at her for a few moments with an amorous look, he slowly shook his head and clenched his fists to feel his finger-nails cutting his flesh. She knew what he meant to say—they were up against something more hopeless and trying than she had imagined. She gathered his hands into hers. Stroking them gently, she said, "Don't you know the saying that a true love will always find a way?"

To be Continued