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And that Saturday night when I met her at the Rex, as our usual arrangement, they were playing *The Masquerade is over* when she came in with Bessy from the cold –ineffably beautiful as never before, with dew drops in her black hair like little stars in her eyes, and rosinness effulging from sweet laughs tinkling one after another- She was feeling god again, beautiful and unwinnable again forever-like the dark rose.

Her coat smelling of winter and joy, in my arms. Her coquettish looks everywhere- impulsive quick looks at me to laugh, comment, or criticize, and straighten my tie. Suddenly throwing her arms around my neck and pulling up her eyes to my face, her own, seized like a sob to squeeze me, plead love out of me, own and possess me greedily, whispering in my ear- Cold wiggling nervous hands in mine, the sudden grip and fear, the vast sadness all around her like wings- “Poor Maggie” I thought- looking for something to say(...)

Side by side we stared at the dance, the two of us dumb and darkened. Adult love torn in barely grownup ribs.

25

Maggie by the river- “Poor Jack”, sometimes she laughs, and fondles my neck, looks deep into my eyes, rich and snug- her voice voluptuously breaking on a laugh, low- her teeth like little pearls in those red gates of her lips, the rich red gates of summer...- “Poor Jack”- and now the smile has faded from her dimples, , passing her cold palm over my cheek in a sudden caress so tender the winds of May would understand...and the “oo” of her lips making some silent little blow word to me, like “you”-

My eye’d fall looking right in hers- I wanted her to see the window of my secret. She accepted it- or didn’t-She wasn’t decided-she was young-she was cautious- she was moody- she wanted to reach something in me and hadn’t done it yet-

33

April came. It joined with March in forming mud in the woods, long flying streamers of flags hung from the circus... My birthday party was over; I grew more fond of Maggie as she grew less fond of me. The season had swung on some invisible pivot of its own.

Thing was- Maggie wanted me to be more firm and binding in my contractual marriages of mate and heart with her- she wanted me to stop acting like a schoolboy and get ready to be busy in the world, make headways for her and our brood, our breed.

Now I’m going to find out how my love for Maggie fares. Not too well.(...)

Bending her head to me- “So you really don’t want to get mixed with someone like me- you may not think so now but I don’t think ...it’ll...work....out....” I couldn’t believe her just hung around to neck some more(...) “You don’t love me” she’d say with my lips on her throat. Okay, I said nothing. Sometimes, like my little sister sued to do, I’d pretend to be asleep when Maggie said mad things. I didn’t know what to do.

34

One night- impossibly sad how came my shadows- seeking the balm and ruby of her arms, lips- we had a date, had arranged it on the telephone. For weeks, I’d been finding harder and harder to get dates, but she had developed another crush- Roger Rousseau, who used to play shortstop for the Kimballs.

Larsen was 6 foot 4, blond, had shown interest in Maggie but never took it seriously.(...) Larsen and I were buddies- I made catches for him- we were going to defeat Maggie. “Give her nothing! Let her worry! Let her call you up! Don’t mind her- pay no attention- you got ball to play, boy! She’ll come around again.” Everybody gave me advice.

Then at night after supper I’d come along the river- well she got tired of all that. Finally that night we had a date she broke it herself and just wandered off to talk to Roger R. in the bushes by the railroad bridge- in the sexy sand-....

It was too much for me, my heart broke.