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Makers, Berlin

THE GUARDIAN'S SHORT STORY

Alicia's Home Coming

By Cecilia A. Leizaola

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"It isn't even as if you needed to do this, Alicia," Bob Kendall held his voice, to a cool, argumentative tone that made the girl before him still more indignant.

"Who are you that you should decide whether I need to do anything at all?" she blazed indignantly.

"I am your fiance, and— he was beginning when she interrupted him.

"If that is your excuse for such unjust interference with my wishes, I can at least relieve you of your duty." And she placed her engagement ring on the table between them. The young man glanced at it without seeming to see it. Then he looked sharply at the angry girl who was drawn to her full height.

"Alicia," he said gently, "you are too angry to realize what you are doing. Put the ring on your finger again. You don't mean this."

"Pardon me, I do mean it," said the girl icily.

The young man's face whitened, and a hazy look sprang into his steady brown eyes. Then he straightened up and squared his shoulders and set his strong chin firmly. When he spoke there was a note of hardness in his voice which the girl had never heard from him before and from which she shrank mentally.

"Alicia, do you realize what you are doing? We were to be married in May. Your trousseau is begun. I know. And you've given me every reason to believe you cared for me as much as I do for you. And now, because I ask you to do this one thing—for your sake as well as mine—you are going to give all this up?"

The girl turned suddenly and went to the window, where she stood looking out into the dripping garden. She felt her lips quivering, and she must not let Bob see.

Bob looked at the crown of dark red hair against the deep green of the window draperies, and his voice softened.

"This is all I've ever asked of you, Alicia. I've been too confident of your love for me after you confessed it. I've believed in you too utterly ever to be jealous of your flirtations, as many another man would have been—and rightly too. I've submitted cheerfully to being 'trailed' in public because it was you who did the trailing."

Alicia turned and faced him again, her foot tapping the floor impatiently.

looked wearily at the sparrows on the soaked lawn Bob felt his throat tighten and brushed his hand across his eyes.

"She couldn't mean it," he muttered as he turned and picked up the emerald ring and slipped it into his vest pocket. "It is too close to May for her to mean that." Then he sought for paper and pen and sat down at the table.

He wrote:

Dear, if I have been too harsh forgive me. I have said too strongly, perhaps, what I believe to be true, and all I want is to spare both of us the pain any failure of yours would be sure to cause. Think it over well—before you decide. What is your answer to me? Write to your house in all done. The last workman has left. I am enclosing a key—there are only two—and I beg you will go there and think it all over at least once before you decide finally.

He enclosed the key and on his way out, handed the envelope to the butler to "be taken up to Miss Alicia."

As for Alicia, she had gone straight to her desk and had written the following note:

My Dear Mr. Courtenay—I have decided, as I promised I would by today, upon the concert ticket. And as I have been the only one to object to the longer trip you planned I withdraw my objections to that also. Under your management I feel sure we shall be successful. Sincerely,  
ALICIA LEE FAIRALL

When she had heard the closing of the outer door she gave the note to the butler and took from him the envelope Bob had left. With it in her hand she went slowly upstairs and sat down before her state bed. She felt her anger melting away, and by the ache in her throat knew that tears were not far off. She tore open the envelope, hoping to find some stimulus to her indignation, but at the gentleness of the words and the sight of the key to the home she and Bob had so eagerly, carefully planned the party came with a rush, and, burying her face in the arm of her easy chair, she cried herself to sleep.

Press notices of "a concert to be given in the near future by the best amateur talent the city afforded" began to be frequent during the next few weeks. Then came the programme and pictures of the principals. Alicia was oftenest mentioned, and one Sunday paper contained her picture, a theatrically posed, full length affair, with her head over one shoulder and her lips as if speaking. Bob's heart sank and turned sick. She did mean it, then.

As the time drew near he thought he would go to the concert, and when the night finally came he dressed early and edged miserably till time to start. Then, suddenly changing his mind, he had himself driven to the door of the little new home he and Alicia had planned together. Bob let himself into the house with his key, which he always carried, and walked through the empty, desolate rooms, which by now should have been furnished and ready for the bride's home coming. He roamed clear through the house, drawing the shades and fighting all the chandeliers till every room was black

ing with light. Then he turned them all out and lit a blazing fire in the dining room grate, and sitting down on the high settee built into the niche by the fireplace, he closed his eyes and deliberately conjured up the presence of Alicia.

He was almost asleep when he heard the front door open and close and the click of high heeled slippers on the bare floors, accompanied by the unmistakable swish of a woman's silken skirts. Then he heard a match scratched and an impatient exclamation as something was dropped. Then, with his heart pounding violently, he laid his head back against the settee and closed his eyes.

He heard the steps come to the dining room door, heard Alicia's voice say "Oh!" in a frightened, breathless surprise, felt his heart beat almost to suffocation, and then he heard the steps recede with a rush to the hall and the front door open. He was about to call to her when he heard her say to someone on the porch:

"Tell Mr. Courtenay I am sick or dead or buried—anything you like only that I shall not sing tonight." Then the door closed again and Bob immediately went to sleep. It seemed to be a very sound sleep, for he did not open his eyes, though Alicia coughed three times. But when she could stand it no longer and shook his shoulder he woke up with a most excellent look of surprise on his face.

"Is it too late?" she asked breathlessly.

Looking at her as if dazed, he pulled out his watch.

"Oh, I don't mean for the concert! I mean"—but Alicia could get no further, and, dropping to her knees beside the settee, she leaned her head against his arm and cried.

"I guess it isn't too late for a wedding," said Bob, "but we'll have to hurry."

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A mother's work and worry in caring for her little ones is great indeed, if she has on hand a safe remedy for the ills of indigestion, colic, vomiting, constipation, diarrhoea, simple fevers and the other little ailments that are apt to come to children suddenly. For this reason, Baby's Own Tablets are better than any other medicine. They are made by laxative, prompt in their action, and they do not usually leave the child in perfect health. They do not contain any atoms of opiate or poisonous coloring stuff. They always do good—they cannot possibly do harm and may be given with the greatest safety to the new born infant, or well grown child. Mrs. Reginald James, Fenwickville, Ont., says: "I have used Baby's Own Tablets and find them unequalled as a medicine for children. They promote sleep and general good health. You can get the Tablets from your drug store by mail for 25 cents a box—sent by The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Rockville, Ont."

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Yours etc.  
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C. ASHBY, P. R. I.  
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SARAH JANE HENDERSON,  
North River, P. R. I.

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