*A Deadly Sorrow*
by A. H. Snodricker

“Five years ago to-day Booth Stanfield, a detective friend of mine, committed suicide,” remarked a Scotland Yard detective, who had joined our party around a table in the “Chelsea Gardens,” one hot evening, when a half dozen of the force were gathered there.

“‘Was he insane?” I asked.

The Scotland Yard detective blew the froth from a foaming tankard, and drank long and deep of the famous brew and heaving a sigh which was expressive of the satisfaction which the cooling draught had filled him, he replied: “No; it was a deadly sorrow!”

“Tell us the story.”

“I would that it were only a story, but if you gentlemen will keep quiet, ask no questions until I get through, I will do so.”’

“Go ahead, we’re mum.”

“All right! Booth Stanfield was one of the keenest men on the yard—a strange man, but a strong one among the strong ones. In person he was over six feet in height, and well proportioned, and for muscular power he beat anything I ever saw in my life. Yet, somehow, in looking at his face I could not get over the thought that he had suffered some great sorrow, or had some great wrong to avenge; however, in the latter supposition I was entirely mistaken. I told him one day how he seemed to affect me.

“‘Booth,’ said I, a trifle nervous, ‘I may have presumed, if so, I crave your pardon; but the sorrow that sits upon your face tells me that you are pining under some great trouble—a trouble that is slowly destroying your life.’

“‘Yea, Mort’, he replied, ‘I have a trouble—a lingering sorrow—that is stealing my life away, and yet I long to die; but see here, Mort, I must trust some one or this thing will drive me mad.’

“‘Booth,’ said I, ‘if I can be of any service to you, I’m yours to command.’

“He told me his story, which made an impression on my mind that can only be effaced by death, and I will endeavor to relate it in his own words.

THE DETECTIVE’S STORY

One day I was bending over my desk, in our chief’s office, writing busily, when all at once something fair and white stood before me; a slim figure in floating draperies, a face that was perfect, and a pair of wondrous eyes gazing upon me, while a sweet, low voice asked gently.

“Is my father—is Mr. Larrimer in?” Then as she observed my glance of surprise, she added: “I have just returned from school, and must see papa.” And the sweet voice had a ring of impatience in it.

Of course I provided her with a seat; Mr. Larrimer would soon return, and Miss Larrimer chose to wait for him. Sitting there we chatted pleasantly, and before we scarcely realized it we were on friendly terms.

A heavy footstep and then Lionel Larrimer, my chief, the most haughty, purse-proud man in the great city, made his appearance and had his daughter in his arms, kissing her tenderly.

I stood aside until the meeting was over, then I noticed that the girl had whispered something to her father; he turned to me,

“My daughter, Miss Lillian, Mr. Booth Stanfield!” he said, hurriedly, and there was a careless indifference in Mr. Larrimer’s tone that galled my pride inexpressibly—it was as though I was an inferior and my presence just tolerated.

“Come, Lillian,” said her father, “let us go home. It is such a comfort to have you back again. Mr. Stanford”—turning to me carelessly—”you will please call on Mr. Mortimore and see what you can learn from him about that diamond robbery and report when I return, an hour so later.”

I bowed. Then Larrimer moved away, and she, with a bow and a sweet smile, followed her father.

“Ah, by the way,” he added, languidly, as they were about to leave the office, “my daughter, Miss Larrimer, intends giving a reception on the 20th inst., and has invited you.”

I bowed in acknowledgment. The invitation was extended as one flings a bone to a dog.

“Miss Larrimer is very kind,” I responded. “I shall take pleasure in accepting.”

He bowed stiffly, and then I was left alone; but between my pen and the paper before me, there came the vision of a fair face, and clouds of yellow hair, the face of the woman whom I was destined to love until I died.

The night of the reception came. I ascended the marble steps of Mr. Larrimer’s stately mansion with a wildly beating heart, and not long afterward I was ushered into the grand drawing room.

A glitter of jewels, the rustle of silks and satins, lovely faces all around, and over all the perfume of rarest flowers.

Behind a screen of blossoming plants, a band of music was discoursing sweetly, and as I entered they were playing “Mon Reve.”

Ah, mon reve, indeed; it was but a dream after all in which I lived that night.

A glimmer of pale blue satin and frosty lace, the faint perfume of wood violets; I glanced up; a small gloved hand was shyly extended and a sweet well-remembered—alas, too well remembered—voice spoke my name. I was in her presence once more!

She danced with me—not once, but many times—quite ignoring her father’s black looks and the evident dissatisfaction of more than one eligible party. She seemed to note their disappointment with girlish delight, and my heart grew cold, for I thought that so in time she might deal with me; but I determined to be happy for one night, after that, Heaven only knows what might tear us asunder.

But the hours flew by as only happy hours can fly, until at last the reception was a thing of the past.

After that, Lillian and myself were frequently thrown into each other’s society, and a passion strong and deep—at least on my part—sprang up between us.

We were inseparable, and we had sworn only to live to be united. We read classic tales to each other, and when the “Sorrows of Werther” were traced line by line she would shed tears of grief. Ours seemed an ecstacy of love and passion that could never die.

One day I was detailed on a case that compelled me to cross the Atlantic, and after an absence of six months, in which I was successful in “working up” the case, I returned and left for Lillian’s home, full of love and hopeful anticipations.

On reaching there I saw Lillian’s face looking from a window. Her face, with long black hair hanging negligently before her breast, seemed the fairest on earth to me. I tried to climb up the vines as I saluted her with a kiss from my hand.

When she saw me, her face grew paler and she looked at me with a cold stare, saying:

“You come too late, I am married to another. Do not let your sorrows be as deadly as those of poor Werther.”

She laughed a low, mocking laugh as her face disappeared from the window, and I thought I heard a fall.

That was my death wound.

I went to my room and sat with my face to a great bay window that opened upon a beautiful park, and brooded over my terrible loss.

The next day I again crossed the park, and as I neared the house of Lillian, I met her father, who said, as if he menaced me.

“Lillian is dead! She spoke to you last. Why did you come here?”

I turned on my heel and walked rapidly away. They said that Lillian fell dead after she told me not to let my sorrows be as deadly as those of Werther.”

Since that day—ten years ago—my life has been a broken one. At times the agony has been so deep in my heart that I take my pistol”—and Booth raised his weapon, cocked it and put the barrel to his temple—“and feel like ending my sorrows as Werther did his!”

I sprang quickly forward, but I was too late, a loud report followed, blood flowed from Booth Stanfield’s right temple, and his fine face, disfigured with powder and ball, was turned towards the heavens.

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