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# THE TORRENTS OF SPRING

by FRANK WHITFIELD

As I stepped from the shade of the hotel, the sunlight was sharp as pain, and I had to pause to put on dark glasses before I set off up the steep, dusty road to the Sanatorium.

The heat wave that had gripped Europe for the last ten days showed no sign of easing, and already the perspiration was trickling down my face, and the clean shirt I had just put on felt damp and uncomfortable as the sun beat down relentlessly.

My heart sank at the sight of the road winding up ahead of me, but I must press on; I was late already, and I must not disappoint Max who would be waiting for me.

At the first wide bend of the road, I paused to catch my breath. Far away, stretching towards Italy, the mountains were sharply etched, glittering against the cloudless sky. «Like great slabs of wedding cake.» I said, then half glanced round guiltily as if someone might have heard. But I'm bored with Switzerland, I thought angrily, bored, bored, bored. It's too beautiful, too perfect, dull. I want to get home.

I forced myself on up the hill. Another fifteen minutes, I must keep going. The dust had coated my shoes, and my mouth and throat felt intolerably dry. Strange that in a place so famous for the cure of lung complaints there should be all this dust.

A car came slowly up the hill behind me; perhaps I should get a lift. But it went past me as if I did not exist, and I had to turn aside from the cloud of dust it raised. Miserable bastard, he must be going to the Sanatorium, he must have seen me.

As usual, my foot had begun to ache, at first little stabs of pain like tooth-ache, then with a steady relentless throbbing that made me dread each step, and I could feel myself tensing up against the pain. Several times I nearly gave up, but I gritted my teeth and limped on. This foot worried me quite a lot, and I knew it was getting worse. When I got back to England I would have another go at having something done for it. But up here it was hopeless, and I must keep it hidden from Max. He would insist that I went home, but I could not bear to think of leaving him here, ill and alone.

My progress was slower and slower as I dragged on, and by the time I reached the Sanatorium I felt quite exhausted and sick from the pain. I found a seat in the shade outside the building, and gave myself five minutes to recover. Presently I flicked the dust from my shoes, mopped my face and neck dry, and went into the quiet, cool building.

Max was lying on his balcony. I went quickly to him, talking at once so that he should not notice my limp.

«Sorry I'm late, Max dear, the heat slowed me up.»

«Come and sit here in the cool. Lucky this room faces east. The morning sun is wonderful, and it moves round before it gets too hot.»

I sat beside him, kissing him, holding him to me for a moment, feeling as always the sweet surge of affection. His hands resting in mine felt dry and fragile, so unlike the strong, capable hands I had known. We could always sit quietly together, quite content, feeling no need for words. But today I could not suppress my sadness. Oh God, I prayed silently, let him get well. Let things be as they were. Let Max get well. Almost as if he could read my thoughts, Max tightened his hands round mine, and smiled at me.

«You are a naughty boy, you know. You wear yourself out, dragging all up here in the heat. Why don't you have the hotel car?»

«At fifteen francs a time, not likely; it's robbery. The walk's good for me, and I'm quite cool now.»

He looked at me appraisingly with his quick, clever eyes that missed nothing.

«You're looking tired, I'm not happy about you. I ought to send you back to England. I'm a selfish brute to keep you here.»

«Do you think I'd go and leave you alone with that attractive young attendant? I'd be mad with jealousy; I'd never have a moment's peace of mind.» I grinned at him.

«What makes you think you needn't be jealous now? But seriously, it's not good for you being alone so much, meals alone, evenings alone . . .»

«And nights alone! I'm alright, Max. Just get well, that's all that matters.»

*But I am lonely—all the time. Oh, Max, get well soon, get us back home.*

I turned from him, so that he could not read my thoughts.

He was silent for a moment, then: «Well, I've news for you. No more toiling up the mountain-side to this place. I'm moving down to the French Sanatorium; I'm moving tomorrow.»

«No, Max, no. You're doing so well here. Dr. Carne understands you, you've said so a dozen times. It would be crazy to move now, just to save me a bit of a walk. I should never forgive myself.»

«It's all arranged; I go tomorrow. Dear old Carne fully approves. He'll still keep an eye on me. He's very friendly with Dr. Munier, who agrees. And Carne will still let me have that new American drug. Oh, come on, don't look so tragic. It will be an ideal arrangement, and Carne would never have agreed if it wasn't perfectly suitable, and if he didn't think me well enough. Think of it, cut down the meadow path, five minutes along the side of the lake, et voilà!»

What did tiredness, a little loneliness, an aching foot matter, when I had Max. I put my arm round his shoulders, pressed my face against his. We sat there in silence, quite content.

Down the meadow path, along the edge of the lake, it was all so easy. I found Max happily settled in his new quarters, a large, airy room with windows overlooking the end of the lake. Beyond that were the green lower mountain slopes.

«It's lovely here,» I said. «The view is quite different, so green and fresh. And look up there, far, far up, that tiny shoulder of snow. Oh, now it's gone.»

«They call that Sainte Croix. It's nearly always hidden by a little cloud. The villagers say that if you see it, you will have good luck.»

«And I've seen it, so that's luck for me. Of course that means that you will soon be well. You will get well here, Max, I'm sure you will. I'm so happy that you have come here.»

I did not stay long. Though Max was in great spirits, I felt that the move might have tired him, and he might sleep. In the afternoon, he was to have a session with Dr. Munier, so I arranged to look in that evening, before he settled down for the night.

There was plenty of time before lunch, so I found a seat at the lake-side. The sun was brilliant, and today there was a slight breeze which made the heat more bearable. I sat there lazily, watching the reflection of the mountain slopes shimmering in the water. I felt much more relaxed and peaceful. Maybe the move was the answer for both of us.

Presently I was aware that someone was leaving the water and coming toward me. I recognised him as a young German who had arrived at my hotel a few days before. He was tanned a glorious golden colour, his brown hair was lightly bleached by the sun, his brown eyes were warm and humorous. As he stood there with the drops of water glistening on his wide shoulders and muscular limbs, he looked handsome, rugged, friendly.

«Hullo, there. I think we are both staying at the Sport Hotel.» With a swift, lithe movement he sat on the ground beside me, then held out his hand. «Karl Vogel.» His hand clasped mine strongly.

«It is so nice to find you here. I am quite alone, and I am such a talker. I began to think I must talk to myself.»

I told him my name, and he repeated it carefully, as if to make sure he would not forget it.

«It was wonderful in the water, so warm. You have been swimming?»

«I've been visiting a friend in the French Sanatorium. I've only just left him.»

*And silently I added: «I don't swim. If I were not lame, if I had your splendid body, it might be different.»*

«Perhaps another day you will come with me. To have a companion is so much more pleasant.»

He stretched himself, setting the muscles rippling under his golden skin. For a few minutes he lay with his eyes closed, his body relaxed and quiet, then quickly he jumped to his feet.

«Just one more swim. I really must. Now we have met, I shall look for you at the hotel.» With a smile and a wave, he plunged into the water and swam strongly away, churning through the water with powerful, easy strokes. And watching him, I felt a strange melancholy.

For a while I remained there, looking at the Sanatorium. I could not decide which was Max's window, but I pictured him there, resting quietly, and suddenly I longed quite desperately to be there with him. I wanted to talk about England, about the

garden, of plans for the autumn. But should we be home in the autumn? When we arrived here in the spring, we talked about the summer, how we would be home in time for the roses, the strawberries. Now, I supposed, we would discuss picking and storing the apples. Sitting there in the hot sunshine, I could see our small orchard, could see the dogs raving round madly, barking up at the trees as we picked. And I yearned for the soft autumn smell of leaves, of bonfires. I wondered if the dogs were alright, did they think about us, miss us? Would they be pleased to see us back? As I walked back to the hotel, I was still lost in thoughts and hopes.

That evening, there was dancing on the hotel terrace, and when I returned from my visit to Max, I went out to watch for a while. The scene was quite charming, rather like something from a musical comedy of a few years back. A number of people had come in from other hotels, so that the large terrace was quite crowded. Coloured lights lanterns, and the pretty dresses of the girls added to the picture.

I soon saw Karl, dancing with a pretty Italian girl who was staying at the hotel with her parents. They danced easily, confidently, and again I felt that touch of envy. How I wished I had the courage to walk up and ask someone to dance. But who would want to limp round with me? It would be too painful, too embarrassing for both of us. No, I must just watch, and envy.

When the dance ended, Karl soon came across to me.

«Ah, there you are. I wondered where you had vanished to after dinner.»

«I went to spend a little time with Max at the Sanatorium.»

«Again? If ever I am ill, I hope I shall have such a faithful friend.»

Another dance started, but he made no move to leave me, and presently we ordered drinks. I found Karl easy to talk to, and he told me something of his life and work in Germany.

«Now tell me about yourself—and Max. You live together?»

«Max has a house in the country, small but delightful, with a most lovely garden. I went there to stay about four years ago when he was dramatising some stories of mine for television. By the time the work was finished, we had become so friendly that I just stayed on. It has been an ideal arrangement.»

*But of our love, of all that Max has been and will be to me, I do not tell you. How did I live, what did I do before there was Max?*

«So now I know a famous writer.»

«Not famous. Very far from that.»

«You are writing something now?»

«A little, but here it is not right for me. I can work in London, the country is better still, but here—the ideas do not come.»

«So soon you will starve.»

«Not quite. Luckily the television series was lucrative, and Max—well he has money. He is generous.»

«And lucky too, I think, in his loyal friend.»

At last Karl rose. «I must do my duty once more.»

I watched as he went to a rather plain girl, saw her look of confused pleasure as he spoke to her. I was pleased to see that she danced extremely well, so Karl's duty was not a painful one. Soon after that I went up to my room.

It was still very hot, and I undressed quickly and had a cold shower, then slipping on a thin bathrobe, I turned off the light and went out onto my balcony. It was a glorious night, very warm and still. The full moon had bathed the world in silver, and picked out the mountains sharply against the dark blue night sky. Though I could not see the terrace, the music came up quite clearly. They were playing an old tune that Max and I always liked, and listening to the simple, haunting little melody, I found myself singing the words softly:

«Darling, don't make the old mistake

Of thinking it's too late.

Just let your sleeping heart awake,

And don't resist your fate . . .»

I remembered how Max used to sing it to himself as we worked, and a wave of sadness and loneliness surged over me. Would those days ever come again, or were they lost forever?

I had just turned back into the room, and decided to go to bed, when I heard a knock on my door, soft but insistent, then repeated. I opened the door to find Karl there.

«Oh good, you are not in bed; I was afraid you might be. Forgive me for disturbing you, but have you any cigarettes? I am quite without, and I'm too lazy to go down again.»

«Yes, I've plenty. Come in for a moment. Let's see, where are they? Look, take these; I've another packet here.»

«May I really? How kind. Remind me tomorrow to repay you.» He came in and shut the door. «What a lovely room, much nicer than mine. It must be the best in the hotel.»

I remembered how Max had insisted on this. «If you are to be a prisoner here on my account, at least you shall be comfortable.»

«You have a splendid view. The mountains look close enough to touch. I think it's hotter than ever; do you mind?» He slipped off his coat and shirt, grinning at me as he did so. «I worked really hard on that dance floor.»

«I think you enjoyed it.»

«Not really. They all have one basic idea, you know. They all want the same thing, but I'm the wrong boy for that.»

For a moment I did not know just what to say, then: «How clearly one can hear the music.»

«I didn't see you dancing. You should have done your duty, too.»

«I don't dance.»

«Oh, come. You only need to shuffle round and talk to them, keep them happy.»

I felt a twinge of resentment, unreasonable and at once suppressed. «Hadn't you noticed, I'm lame.»

«So little, so very little.» He moved over to me. «Try now, see how easy it is.»

«No, no, I can't.»

«Listen, a waltz, slow and lazy.» He put his arms round me. «Just follow me, quietly, easily...»

For a moment I resisted, but he held me so close to him that I was compelled to move with him. After a few faltering steps, I found myself being drawn smoothly round with him. Gently, easily we moved round the room; rhythm seemed to flow through my limbs.

«That's splendid! Who can't dance? Who is lame?»

The music stopped, and laughingly we joined in the little spatter of applause from below.

«I'm so hot, I'm on fire.» Suddenly he slipped off the rest of his clothes. «You too, please, then I shall not feel embarrassed.» Quickly he took off my robe, and threw it aside.

«How white you are beside me. It must be the moonlight. You make me feel like a coloured boy.»

Disturbed, I tried to turn aside, but he seized me again, whirling me round with him. «A quick-step! Splendid, a real test for you.» Faster and faster we went, and strangely, there was no pain in my foot. I was aware only of the heat of his body against me, the strength of his arms holding me to him, so closely that we seemed almost to be one. I tried to break away, but he was much too powerful, laughing at me, spinning me round and round, half carrying me.

«Karl... Karl.» I whispered. «You had cigarettes. Downstairs, your case was full.»

«I had cigarettes. Of course I had cigarettes. There must be an excuse.» He kissed me fiercely, holding his mouth against mine, forcing my lips open with his tongue.

«No, Karl, no.»

«Liebster, I've been crazy for you. Ever since I first saw you.»

He kissed me again, on the mouth, the throat, the eyes, ignoring my struggles to break away.

«Max? He is not here, he is sick, no good to you. How long since he loved you? Months, many months. Ah, Liebster, Liebster.»

His breath was the honeyed south wind, his body the sun. Deep inside me the frozen snows that had bound me for so long were thawing, melting...

«Karl... oh, Karl...»

He was lying with me, taking me with him in a rhythm, exciting, relentless. One last fragment of me fought him, resisted, but in the blazing splendour of the sun the frozen wastes became the thunderous torrents of spring that tore me, battered me, drowned me in their ecstasy.

Later, in the hot darkness, Karl slept, his body heavily across mine, trapping me. And in my heart, I wept for Max.

*Please understand . . . please forgive. I have been alone so long.*

Karl stirred and woke, and at once his body was alive, demanding.

«No more, Karl. You must go. Please go.»

He laughed, finding my mouth with his. «Not yet, Liebster. There is so much of the night for us yet. This is our first night; it must be splendid.» His body held mine, his mouth, his hands were everywhere. I could not resist, but I would not respond. At last he was still, and slept, but I lay there, sleepless, unhappy.

In the early dawn he rose and lit a cigarette, then went to the window and stood there smoking for a while before he came back and sat on the edge of the bed, taking my hands in his.

«Have I been too violent? I forget sometimes how strong I am. You are very sweet; I shall love you very much.»

He dressed quickly, then came back to me. «I will go now, before anyone is about. May I come here tonight?»

I turned my face from him. «Not tonight, Karl, not any night. This is finished.»

He sat beside me again. «Finished? We are only beginning. There is so much we can do.»

I did not answer him.

«You don't mean this? I think you do not really mean it. I shall come here at the same time tonight. If the door is locked, I shall know. But don't lock it.»

When he had gone, I went across and turned the key. As I lay back in bed again, I realised that I was lying in the hollow still warm from his body, and turning over, I buried my face in the pillow, racked with sudden desire for him, torn between memories of the splendour and excitement and the desperate feeling that I had failed Max.

But as the day wore on, my guilt lessened. If Max never knew, did it matter so much? It was bound to happen sometime, but not again, never again.

«What's happened to you?» Max asked when I went to see him.

«Happened?»

«Something's brought you alive. You've been so flat lately, I've been worried about you. Now you've come alive again. I know you've started writing.»

*Should I tell him? Confess? Get it over? I hesitated, and the moment passed.*

«Oh yes, that old idea about the couple in Tangier, do you remember? I'm trying it from a different angle, through the eyes of the arab boy. I think it may go well that way.»

An easy lie, unprepared, convincing. Max accepted it, but it would not have deceived him in the past.

«Good idea. Bring me some to read when it's ready.»

I should have to pretend it would not run. I knew I should not even start it. Writing here was impossible.

My lie seemed to have cheered Max up, and we had a happy time together, full of remembrances, full of plans and hopes. As he seemed so well, I stayed to have early dinner with him. But when I rose to go, he took my hands in his and looked at me, not speaking for a few moments. «If anything happens to me, you'll be alright, you know. The horse will be yours, and enough to keep it going.»

«Max, Max, nothing's going to happen to you. Except getting well and taking me back home. Max, don't say, don't even think such things.»

I strolled for a long time by the lakeside. Now that I had left Max, my thoughts were filled with Karl, and I felt myself quickening with excitement as I remembered the previous night and all that had happened. He certainly was a thrilling person, a wonderful, ruthless lover. But I must end it. Tonight, every night my door must be locked. Blame last night on hunger, sheer need, but it must be just an episode, ended and forgotten. My place was with Max, now and always.

No dancing at the hotel that evening; the terrace almost deserted. And no sight of Karl. Just as well, I decided, after a first slight disappointment. I soon went up to my room, and firmly turned the key.

But I could not sleep. I tried to read, but could not concentrate. After a while, I got up and went out onto the balcony, smoking cigarette after cigarette. In my mind I could hear again the dance music from the terrace. I remembered how Karl had come in, his pretence about the cigarettes, the first easy waltz, the strength of his body against mine, the mad, whirling quick-step, the mounting excitement, the ecstasy . . .

«Karl.» I whispered, «Oh, Karl, Karl, I'm not strong enough, not strong enough...» My limbs trembled as I went to the door and unlocked it. Then I lay on my bed, waiting.

In the moonlight, Karl was whispering: «Is this good? Aren't I better than Max? He isn't like this. See how I can hold you, like this... like this. Try to escape. See, you can't. See how dark my legs are, against yours; they look black. You can't escape from them. You like that, it excites you. Aren't I big, hard. Max isn't like this.»

*I can't help it. Oh God, I need it so. Oh, Karl... Karl...*

His passion was a flower, that grew, turned to fire... flamed... died... I lay in his arms, drugged, submissive.

Much later: «When I return to Germany, you will come with me.»

«No, Karl, not possible.»

«I have a nice flat; you will like it very much.»

«I must stay here, with Max.»

«I have a good job, I earn plenty for both of us. Oh, Liebster, love me... love me.»

We strained together, closer, closer.

*Max, would you understand? It was never like this for us, a madness, a fever. But it was sweet, true. I love you, Max, I do love you. Oh, Karl, Karl...*

«I have many friends there. You will like them, you will be happy. If you find someone else, I shall not mind... as long as you come back to me.»

«I can't, Karl. Don't you see? I must stay here.»

«I have told Max. He accepts it.»

I tore myself from his arms, sitting up, switching on the light. Confused by the sudden glare he shielded his eyes, looking absurdly young, boyish. Golden boy.

«You say you have told Max?»

He nodded sheepishly.

«You have seen him? When?»

«Liebster, don't look so fierce. Come back to me.»

I evaded him. «Karl, when did you see Max?»

«This evening, after you had left him. I knew you were there. I waited until you left. I had to pretend to be his nephew to get in.»

«What did you tell him? What did you say? You knew he was not to know.»

«I told him about us, what had happened, that you would come with me.»

«And Max?»

«Oh... well, he was upset, of course. But he is sensible, he realised that he must not expect...»

At that moment I hated him more than I would have thought possible.

«You devil, Karl. How dared you? This is my life. Max is my life. This... this is nothing, an episode, nothing.»

«Liebster, don't be mad at me.»

«I will never go to Germany with you. Please go now.»

With a laugh, he leaned past me and flicked off the light.

«Nothing? I will show you.»

What use to struggle when my arms were twisted so easily, my body moved this way and that as he willed.

«This is what you like, Liebster, isn't it. Fight me, fight me if you want to. I like it that way too. This is yours for always, whenever you wish.»

What use to struggle? But I would not respond. Through all the violence I seemed to see only Max's face, the desperate hurt in his eyes.

*Not true, Max. Believe me, there is only you, only you.*

I would not resist, would not try to escape. Deep inside, the real me had gone away from him. My body was aware of his strength, his passion, even made automatic response, but I had escaped from him.

«Come back to me, Liebster. Oh, Liebster, Liebster.» He was moaning, as if some thing were being torn from him, like some desperate animal, then suddenly it was all over, he released me, half weeping.

*Max, believe me, my love, this was nothing. Naked need, but nothing, nothing. I will prove to you, Max...*

I suppose I must have slept, for it seemed much later that I started up, then realised that someone had knocked on the door. A few moments later it was repeated.

I opened the door slightly, not putting on the light. «Who is it?»

«The telephone, Monsieur.» I saw it was the night porter. «From the Sanatorium; they say it is urgent.»

«A moment.» I slipped on my bath robe and followed him down the stairs. I realised that I was shivering as if it were very cold.

The voice on the telephone seemed very far away. «It is Mr. Renton. I think you should come at once.»

My lips felt quite numb, and I had difficulty in speaking.

«What is it? What is the matter?»

«Will you please come. It is important that you come at once.»

A dreadful shadow seemed to move darkly across my mind. I said something, I don't know what, and rang off.

The porter was waiting nearby. «Monsieur would like the car?»

«Yes. Yes please. In five minutes.»

I went up to my room and dressed quickly, not putting on the light for fear of waking Karl. Just then I did not feel able to speak to him.

Within a few minutes the car was there. I recognised the driver, a pleasant young Swiss who had driven me before.

«To the French Sanatorium. Quickly, please.»

The moon had gone, leaving the night strangely empty. All was darkness, all silence. The lake as we passed was like a clouded mirror.

«I am very sorry to have disturbed you.»

«It is nothing, Monsieur. I hope . . .» his sentence tailed off awkwardly.

At the Sanatorium, several of the windows showed lights. It seemed that none of this was real.

«Shall I wait, Monsieur?»

«No thank you. Go back to bed, and thank you for bringing me. I'm afraid I have no money with me. I will see you later.»

I watched as the car moved away, suddenly afraid to go any further. Then I braced myself up, and went in. The night sister came to meet me; she looked very pale.

«Is he bad?»

«I'm afraid so, very.» I felt she was waiting for another question, but after a moment she continued. «The night nurse looked in, she saw his light was on. She went to put it off, then she saw that something was very wrong, and fetched me.»

«He is unconscious, Monsieur. Those special tablets, I think he has taken a great many.»

«Dr. Munier?»

«He is in Geneva, Monsieur, at a conference until tomorrow. Dr. Carne also. We have tried to reach them by telephone, but there is a fault in the line. We keep on trying. We have tried for Dr. Gerard, but he is on vacation. There is no one else. I very much fear . . .»

«You mean . . .?»

«It is the heart. The tablets are very strong, even one or two, but with so many . . . I think he knew, Monsieur; it was deliberate.»

«Knew?»

«That he could not get better. I think he may have wished to end his life.»

She saw the pain and incredulity in my face.

«He came to us a very sick man. We have known from the start that he could not recover. He is a shrewd man, Monsieur. My guess is that he came to know this also.»

«But have you ever thought that he might . . .»

«He gave no sign. Perhaps a sudden realisation . . . perhaps a sudden weariness, a despair.»

«Can't you help him? Can't you do anything?»

«He has had an injection to stimulate the heart. Now we wait for telephone contact with Dr. Munier or Dr. Carne. We dare not do more without instruction.»

She took me along the corridor to his room. At the door I paused.

«Sister. Last evening, after I left, he had another visitor. Did you see him after he had gone; did he seem to be alright?»



«But, Monsieur, there was nobody after you. You were permitted to stay late as a very special matter. Certainly no visitor would have been allowed after that.»

«You are certain of this?»

«Positive, Monsieur. I was in charge. He had no other visitor.»

*So Karl had lied. Why, why? Some streak of cruelty? Some idea that it would give him an advantage? But this meant that Max knew nothing of my connection with Karl. Even in that moment of pain, I felt a glimmer of relief. He did not know; it was not that.*

Now I was alone with Max. He was still unconscious, his face was drawn and gray, his breathing heavy and laboured. He looked suddenly an old, old man.

There was a bell beside me that I must ring immediately I saw any change in his condition. All I could do was wait. Sometimes he seemed to be fighting, sometimes not. And grief burned into my mind.

«Max, Max,» I whispered. «I am here. Fight, Max. Dearest Max, fight, fight.»

But the harsh, painful breathing went on and on; I could not reach him. I felt numbed, I could not even weep. Inside, I seemed to be weeping, but no tears came.

Time passed, an hour, perhaps more. From time to time the sister or a nurse looked in, but mostly I was alone, waiting.

Once I tried to pray, but there seemed no one to listen, my words failed.

Then suddenly his breathing seemed easier, quieter. His eyes opened, but he showed no recognition.

«Max, Max, I'm here, I'm with you.»

I saw then that he knew me. After a long time he tried to speak, but no words came.

«Don't try to talk, Max. Save your strength.»

That seemed to amuse him, for a ghost of a smile flickered on his lips.

I knew that somehow, somehow I had to tell him, I had to be forgiven.

«Max, dearest Max... Karl... I told you of him... Karl... Karl and I... Please believe that it was nothing. There is only you. Please believe, please forgive.»

At first I thought he did not hear me, then his hand, feather-light and dry, moved down and rested on mine. For a long while I thought that he slept again, then I realised that I could not hear him breathing, I knew that he was not there any more.

I could not move, could not take my hand from under his, then violently I rang the bell, kept on ringing. Futile; no one could do anything for him any more.

When at last I left the Sanatorium it was getting light. I went slowly to the lake-side and found a seat. I was very, very tired.

I sat looking at the Sanatorium, at the room that had been his. Soon they would take him away, a stranger would move in, it would be as if he had never been there. Presently I realised that this was the seat where I had first met Karl.

Soon I could leave, soon I could go back to England. Max would have wanted to be buried there; they would help me to arrange that. After that there was nothing to keep me here. I should not see Karl again, or if I did it would not matter. All that was ended too.

I turned and looked up the mountain slopes. The sun was rising, piercing the mist. And as I looked, the clouds parted, and I saw quite clearly the little shoulder of snow of Sainte Croix, shining in the sunlight of a new day.

I rose and started back towards the hotel. I don't think I had realised yet that when I got back to England I should be quite alone.

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