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# *A csodálatos angol tánczcsoporth*

[THE WONDERFUL ENGLISH DANCE TROUPE]

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## I.

When I became acquainted with them, “the famous English dance troupe,” they were without an engagement. Makói introduced me to them and jokingly remarked that I would be able to get them in somewhere.

A young man was already with them; next to the table was a champagne bucket and the gypsy fawningly playing from afar. The girls gathered around with exuberant gaiety and discombobulated me with a hundred questions. Whom did I know? Which manager? Where could I get them in? And the eldest snatched up her small handbag, took out photographs in which the costumed, sparkling troupe shone forth.

In the heat of the moment I did not dare to admit how little I had to do with artistes and furthermore that I hadn’t any connections that would be useful to them. I only made excuses with exaggerated, but completely understandable modesty.

Their passionate desire for an engagement was at last set to rest, the unknown young man became my good friend and the revelry flowed back into its previous quietly merry channel. On that evening I didn't talk a lot, although, to judge by their behaviour, it was apparent that the girls accorded me special attention. This was a little worrisome, but then I began to pay attention to them with decidedly intensifying cheer. I soon knew that there was absolutely nothing English about them, and that only Annie understood a little English, I liked Annie the best and to my good fortune she fell to me, because Makói was with Clara, and Sáros, the young man who was already seated, occupied himself with Mary. As far as I could see, they were on very good terms.

Annie seemed like a cheerful and talkative girl. She was the smallest and the youngest. Still, she, as well as Clara, doted on Mary, the middle one. Annie was always smiling, her forehead exuded clarity while her hair gave off a fresh scent. In those days I would soon get slightly worse for drink and at such times would become quite happy. Now as well, after a couple of glasses, I sat so cheerfully that my face strained from the self-satisfied smile fixed onto it. Annie's chin jutted forward so provocatively, her face flushed so red, that I would have loved to take a bite out of her. However, I guarded the sweet thought and looked at the other two girls with the pleasure of concealed appraisal. Makói had a disgusting habit of drinking nothing but champagne; the next two glasses stoked me up still higher and already I began to fear I would misbehave. As I remember, Annie slapped my hand away three times. Clara's narrow oval face, her small blonde curls dangling on her forehead, her longish nose, very thin mouth and pointed chin made an unpleasant impression on me. Drunk as I was I could somehow only imagine her as an old woman with a thousand wrinkles on her withered face, and shuddering, I was wryly surprised that that ass Makói was wooing such an old prune. I turned my gaze from them and marvelled at Annie. What a charming, incomparably sweet little woman. As I glanced at Mary, I was actually taken aback. They, she and Sáros, submerged themselves in one another with such drunken enthusiasm and with eyes so inflamed, that perhaps they hadn't been drinking from just one glass when they clinked glasses with us, but from five. I grew serious and with uncertain hands I kept swirling the champagne, the little pearls danced wildly in the whirl, they jostled upwards, the small stirred spoon clinked sharply. These two must love each other.

"Aren't you drunk?" I asked Annie with curiosity.

"By no means," whispered Annie. "I'm just happy," and she flicked my nose.

"Very happy?" I inquired enthusiastically and I caught her wrist, at which she laughed with bubbling, sibilant gaiety. I myself couldn't resist this laughter and giggled along with her. From that moment we laughed at everything. The gypsy suddenly looked like a barrel, golden chains around its staves. I called some ladies cows as a joke. I think I must have been seriously drunk, because on hearing the word "nosy" I laughed so hard that my eyes started tearing, and I wasn't even able to tell Annie what I was guffawing about. Later we accompanied them home. 30 Liget Street, echoed in my head.

## II.

I didn't see the troupe for a while after that. Nor did I run into Makói. I didn't think about them. In retrospect, however, it seems to me that at the Octogon,\* taking the streetcar home, I once saw Mary and Sáros in the jostle, with arms around each other, laughing at the crowd, their faces shining with happiness and the secure feeling of belonging to each other. But being in a rush I only wondered about their familiar faces for a moment and so did not realize who they were. But that was a good while ago, perhaps two or three months back.

A few days later I passed by the Royal\*\* when unexpectedly among the photographs the three familiar faces flashed at me and the posters suddenly glittered with little ballerina skirts, snowy pink legs, and the sweet charm of the three girls' heads. It really was them:

MARY, ANNIE, CLARA

! 3 SISTERS 3 !

THE WONDERFUL ENGLISH DANCE TROUPE.

I decided then and there to look them up and renew the old acquaintance. I didn't succeed. I received a telegram that I would have to go away on official business; later some relatives arrived; then I didn't feel well and that condition dragged on for about two weeks, meanwhile, however, it was constantly running through me that finally I should go, finally I should go, until *finally* I did get there.

Annie was still the old charmer; Clara smiled rather affectedly, and it was on their own like this, that it became apparent that she was the

head of the family, the nurturing, doting one, but I scarcely recognized Mary. Her face was shrunken, her eyes downcast, her mouth as if narrowed and her glance was so strange, absent-minded, that my heart constricted.

"How are you, Mary? Mary?" I asked with an anxiety not even entirely comprehensible to myself.

"Oh, I'm all right," she said and something of a fearsome beauty spread over her face as a faint smile shone upon it.

Annie nudged me under the table. I looked at her. She made a sign for silence. I was surprised. She pressed a small note into my hand. "Tomorrow afternoon at five by the Memorial." I was a little indignant: why didn't she wait for me to extort this rendezvous? But my vanity immediately overcame my astonishment. She wants to meet with me. *With me!* And all evening long I flirted with the next day. The girls spoke about their contract, about life abroad, about their acquaintances, asked some questions about Makói, at which point Sáros came to mind: Well, where is that black-haired boy? Annie immediately knew who was meant and looked alarmed. Also horrified, Clara threw back her head, warning me with wide open eyes, and looked at Mary, who with downcast eyes, absent-mindedly fiddled with her napkin. I still hadn't come to my senses: "What's going on? Why?" Annie shoved my leg, reproachful that she always had to remind me (and I began to feel shame at this myself) and with ebbing enthusiasm related how they had starved in Brno, how very badly they had eaten, and they were there for three weeks, but that they had still managed to spend 1200 crowns of their savings just for meals. Imagine! I imagined it in my discomfort and felt weighed down by the forced cheer.

Later a railroad official came to the table, bringing Mary flowers and sugar. We introduced ourselves. The girls must have known him well for a long time, because all they discussed were household matters. The official apologized that the coal could not be delivered that day, but there was no one at the co-operative. They should let him know again if they needed more lard and he went on about trivial matters that didn't interest me nor, I noticed, Annie. Mary continued to sit solemnly, only Clara brightened up a little, despite the fact that the railroad man was evidently paying court to Mary addressing her in a gentle, respectful tone.

I was fired up about the next day and felt uncomfortable. I didn't believe that the evening would bring anything new that was any good, at most yet more awkwardness and excuses. I leaned towards Annie.

“Who is he?”

“Her fiancé!” and raised a precautionary finger to her mouth.

Aha, her fiancé! It dawned on me and I regarded them. The fiancé was what one would consider a “good-looking” young man. His small, black, curly moustache was the focal point of his face and his other, rather less sympathetic features branched out from it. And yet the face as a whole, his ordinary forehead, neither too high, nor too low, assured one of some tranquil goodness.

The veins showed through Mary’s wan skin, branching out on her temples like crestfallen, hazy saplings and shrubs emerging from some fog. The large, crimson mouth glowing on her pale face and the clear blue of her eyes flooded me. A regal, beautiful woman, I mused, and a chill ran through me. I looked at my dear Annie and sunshine and blonde gold showered me intoxicatingly.

“What about Sáros?” I asked.

Annie became serious. She encircled her left ring finger with the fingertips of her right hand.

“Married!”

The light-bulb finally lit up in my head. Now I understood: Sáros abandoned Mary, who is still in love with him. Does this explain this evening’s alarm-bells and sheltering gestures? The wound still aches. “Now I understand,” I nodded repeatedly. “I understand completely.”

But none of this was amusing. I was a bit bored. If I conversed with my dear little Annie, Clara looked at us so intently and earnestly, that the possibility of any kind of closeness, hand-holding, caressing, was excluded. This was annoying. After all they’re only dancers—I thought to myself, and we’re at the Royal, in a booth. Well, what do you expect?—And the drunken vision of an old woman rose up again. You old prune, jealous ...? I fumed. If Annie’s mouth hadn’t been so provocative, flaming with so much passion, the promise of so much pleasure, I would have gone home long ago. But then the following day came to mind and the possibilities of our walk home ...

“Annie, have you ever read ‘Annabel Lee’? Poe wrote it, a beautiful poem.”

“No, no. Bring it along, Sanyi, will you bring it?”

“I will, I will. Tomorrow at five o’clock,” I forced my words through my teeth so that Clara would suspect nothing. I don’t know if she heard me. Not even her eyes showed any reaction.

"Oh, let's go home already!" whined Mary and then she stretched with pursed lips and fluttering eyes. "Let's go!"

Annie was in white, from head to toe. From her fluffed up fur only the tip of her nose appeared with merciless cheer. Why are the others here? Oh, to take her in my arms! To rush away! I shivered at the thought that I must take the lead with Annie. How could I avoid it?

"Onward, youngsters!" I commanded with a smile and pushed Mary and the railroad man with two hands to the fore. Clara? Ah, she'll remain with us anyway. My head drooped: there's no cure for death. I took Clara's and Annie's arms. Clara was a bit reluctant. Annie's hand reposed in my mine—I glanced sideways carefully: did her sister notice?—and impatiently, with finger-wringing excitement, I twisted, curled, clasped, and fondled her fingers within mine; unforgettable sweetness.

"Poor Annie Lee," I murmured and my hand slipped out of hers and flitted about beneath the fur in happy ardour and I felt the silk of her blouse and the velvet of her skin—Annie, Annie ... I became aware of the cool left side and began also to squeeze and knead Clara's hand.

Ahead of us Mary tottered peculiarly with her fiancé: they were also arm in arm, but at times Mary would pull an arm away, which would then swing up wildly. The stars glittered frigidly, the moon twinkled.

"Clara!" Mary turned back to her, "come here a moment," and they stopped. The girl went forward. They were right at the corner. We'll have to turn the corner. Trembling, we slowed down. I was almost angry with myself for being so excited and I vibrated with the useless counter-argument: "she's only a dancer," "she's only a dancer," "she's only ..." As her white skirts gleamed before the edge of the dark house, I swooped down to her mouth and not knowing what came over me, I thought I'd go crazy if I had to end this kiss. Languidly, reeling, I saw the pleasure smouldering in the girl, and was astonished, in the white heat of my passion, to feel her breast against my chest. Suddenly she pulled her mouth away from mine; like a light flickering out—Ann-ie—I caught my breath and she rushed 'round the corner after the others, dragging me helplessly after her.

"Sanyi, come on!" She pulled me with emotion, almost sobbing—"come on—do you love me?" Why didn't you come earlier?

### III.

I was at the Memorial at five o'clock. I waited for her until half past five. She didn't come. Yet hope penetrated the despair and anger. Her form

flickered at the end of the row of trees; then she seemed to appear by the side of the museum, behind the narrow bridge, perhaps she was the veiled lady? Trembling, my illusory glance rushed to and fro about the darkening landscape. It's so sad when one is duped.

Growing numb, I rambled among the trees alongside the Memorial. I made excuses for Annie and consoled myself. Surely Clara had not let her leave. Or visitors had come just then, or God knows what else? Annie would have come, would come, surely, only some important matter detains her. But is this really true? I was frightened and began to shiver with cold. She had stood me up.

In the evening I hung around the Royal. My pride wrestled with my feverish blood. I went in. On the stage, in the brilliance of the splendid, magnificent lighting danced the three sisters. Annie, the girlish adolescent, moved stiffly and earnestly, pulsating between her older sisters, her gestures mimicking those of a woman. My eyes teared up. Stirred up and furious, I went out for my overcoat. I wanted to punish myself for this weakness. Despondent, my head swimming, I went home.

For two days I didn't look in their direction. I worked restlessly. I wrote, I read without pause. In the evening it came to me that I hadn't understood the book. The unintelligible lines sailed away from my eyes and I would have to recommence each sentence four times so that it wouldn't slip, wouldn't drop from my brain. Later I went to dinner with my mother. But I must have been very distracted, because all I can recall is that I suddenly jumped up and took leave of my greatly surprised mother, dashing off to the Royal.

Four young men sat at the girls' table. I was taken aback and circled around Annie's blonde head distractedly, but I didn't want to mingle with so many strangers. Annie caught sight of me and hurried over to me with a joyful mien. I stammered something; I didn't like the newcomers and quickly passed on to the burning question: Where was she the day before yesterday? Why hadn't she come? The girl grew serious and pursing her lips as if about to whine, stammered some lie, I no longer even know what sweet nothings. I was happy, but also excited and nervous, I couldn't find my bearings. I was loath to converse standing there among the tables, but I couldn't sit down with them, I hated the unfamiliar faces so much. I also heard her mention that she would have notified me, but she didn't know my address. I drew out a card and next to the address I added my telephone number. I said goodbye and bolted like a half-wit. I think I was feverish, but this

fever was pure, one that enhanced reason and intensified my senses. The scene of the two girls and four young men sitting at the table was fixed clearly in my consciousness. Mary leaned with resignation towards the sleek, stylish young man, who—face frozen—feasted his eyes on them. Clara stared worriedly and ignored the chattering, muscular youth whose weight nearly crushed the chair. The other two regarded Annie and me with the inane smile of the disappointed. The whole room etched itself sharply into my vision with its overflowing, foamy beer, gaping mouths and fluttering waiters; the definitively outlined pattern of a colourful kaleidoscope.

On the stairs I sensed that Annie, offended and on the verge of tears, stared at me dumbfounded. The sight of her dear blue eyes burned shame onto my face. I had never regarded her more warmly or with such intense longing and I beat my head at the thought that I would abandon the one I love the most in such a stupid manner. Even the cold wind couldn't bring me to my senses. My face burning, I hurried over the bridge, ghostly reflections of the lamplights undulating down below, and groaning, sighing, I threw myself on my bed.

The next day at three in the afternoon she telephoned me. I should bring along the poem this evening, the Ann Lee. "Couldn't we meet this afternoon," I asked? "No, no," and her voice sounded uncertain through the receiver. "Oh, why not?" I badgered, I insisted. "No, no, it's not possible. But you'll bring it this evening? You'll come, won't you?" she purred. I promised. But I wasn't able to go after all. I called for a messenger boy and sent the poem to her. But in the meantime I became completely delirious. Annie reeled before my eyes, a monotone orchestra clattered within me, this is no joke! I was panicking, this is no joke. I applied a cold compress to my head, I shivered feverishly, tomorrow I'd go to the doctor. By morning I had calmed down. By noon a tormenting restlessness came over me again. "Annie, Annie, Annie, Annie," I murmured, trying to soothe myself with the thought of her face, her snow-white body. 30 Liget Street—the afternoon swirled around me in eddies, but it was simply not possible to leave the office. Important work was stacked on my desk. The mass of numbers, the repetitious pages managed to narcotize me. Around six o'clock I was called to the telephone.

"Annie?" my heart stopped beating.

"Come. Mary drank sublimate. We've already called the ambulance!" she cried into my ear.



"Sublimate?" I stared into the dark mouthpiece, but the other apparatus had already clicked. She was gone.

The tram churned, clattered. As if carried by some icy channel hurling its dreadful flood at me, choking, gasping for breath, incapable of thinking I arrived at the house. The ambulance was already there. A crowd was around it.

A small, dark foyer. From within, from the bedroom, gurgling, splashing fragments of sound poured out. Through the open kitchen door to the left a crystalline flow of water from the open tap. Before me, something like a bathroom. The door burst open. An ambulance man came out with a basin. Annie beside him with red eyes.

"My God, my God!" she greeted me wailing.

In the bedroom's mire, the ambulance doctor's cap glimmered bluish. Next to the window, a sewing machine, in front of it on a small chair was Mary, on the floor a pink bucket. The doctor stood next to her, a red rubber hose in one hand, the other holding the poor girl's sunken head. Anxiously I drew back, the ambulance man went in, Annie remained outside with me.

"The poor thing is having her fourth stomach lavage," and she began to sob. "Imagine, in the afternoon she dissolved twelve tablets and drank them. We didn't notice. Around four o'clock she began to feel dizzy and fell on the sofa. "What's wrong? What's with you?" we asked, but she just said, nothing. Her voice was but a whisper by then. Her throat was completely consumed. At half past four she became very ill and in the bathroom Clara chanced upon the jar, its bottom completely red. Then we instantly saw what she had drunk. Oh no, what shall we do?" She began to wail without any transition. "Oh dear Sanyi, what a way to meet!"

The icy flood kept gushing within me, already racing through my throat. And not a word about why?

"I'll go to the Charité and get a bed for her!" I said and was already giddy from the acrid, salty damp that slicked my forehead.

An hour later she was at the hospital.

"She went down to the car on her own two feet," Annie whispered. "She didn't allow us to carry her."

Clara didn't say a word. She sat there at the head of the bed and looked at Mary's colourless, convulsed face distorted in pain.

"I really want to live!" she breathed.

She couldn't talk, the sublimate had completely ruined her larynx. "I really want to live!"

We were quiet and looked at each other surreptitiously.

"I can't bear this!"

I went out into the corridor with Annie. Clara looked at us aghast. We stood in the large bay window. She pressed her head against my chest and her trembling, twitching little breast kept beating against my arm. I nervously caressed, calmed her and my body burned.

"That wretch! ... Sáros ... son of a bitch ... rascal!" she was crying.

Yes. Sáros. Or me! ... I thought to myself. Truly we were despicable.

Clara opened the door. I blushed. We went in on tiptoes. Mary was talking in a confused way. Clara choked back her tears. I saw that her eyes were bleary.

"Now my feet are getting cold!" panicked Mary. "The ... now my legs ... oh ... now my stomach ... now my..."

She flung her head back into the pillow. Clara caressed and stroked her.

"Nonsense! You'll be all right. Even the doctor said that everything is fine now."

Mary breathed deeply and painfully.

Annie turned her tearful eyes to me and I thought of Sáros' cold, sharp-featured face when I first met him. What sort of coldness was it then? I asked her as if in trance. He just mirrored the girl's happiness.

I hung my head. What was I doing here? I looked at Annie, the picture of devotion, and the other two "dancers," one struggling with death and the other a haggard old maid. I was afraid of them. Ungrateful girls! They pay for love with death. And I was afraid of Annie, too.

I slunk out of the room and ran down the corridor so quickly that I became dizzy at the confluence of the disappearing and reappearing glare of the windows. I stopped a moment on the street and pondered: what? why? The railroad official—oh, helpless fiancé!—his drawn, frightened face shocked me as he stormed past. I threw myself into a tram and I let my head, my tired, tortured head bounce, rattle along with the flickering coach.

The next day I read that Mary had died. Since then I have not met with the girls. Once Annie telephoned. I wanted to go to the telephone, but on the way my legs failed me and became so heavy that I had to sit down and like a coward, trembling, I had them telephone her back that I was no longer in this office.

## NOTES

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\*A well-known public plaza in Budapest.

\*\*A well-known Budapest hotel and cafe.

## Óra.

108 szíve: óra, dobog el a dal,  
Amely az éjben is, nemcsak fed.  
Minélhöz az élet dalban van.

Fars bura alatt bukkonva állsz,  
108 szíve: óra, vándor, éj,  
Kinek szíve az éjben dalban van.

108 szíve: óra, éjben angyal,  
Ki a búr percekben élve,  
Tudom, hogy az éjben dalban van.

Tizenkét óra megáll, a szél szél,  
Hogy az éjben dalban van...  
És imádkozni két órára.

Falu Tamás.

## A csodálatos angol tánczosport.

írta: NÓRÁLY NAGY LÁSZLÓ.

## I.

Mikor megismerem őket, a széres angol tánczosportot, épp szerződés nélkül állnak. Mászartól be nekik és félre az odavetve, hogy majd bejuttatnak én őket valahova.

Egy fustalembert volt már velük; az asztal mellett pengés vödör s a cigány masszirt töltésükre huzta. A lányok kitérő vidámsággal fogtak körül és szűz kérdéssel ejtettek zavarba. Kit ismerik? Melyik igazabb? Hova honnan be őket? S a legidősebb főlaptá kis táskáját, fényképeket húzott elő, melyeken kosztümöket, csillagva jelenkedett a csoport.

Hirtelenben nem mertem bevallani, hogy kevés közöm van az artistákhoz s még kevésbé, hogy olyan ócskárítottatam, melyhez hasznukra lehetnek, nincs, csak szabadkozom, talált, de teljesen érthető szerénységgel.

Végre elült a szerződéses heves vágya, az ismeretlen fustalembert is jó barátom lett s az előbbi csendes-vidám mederben folytatódott a mulatós. Akkor este nem sokat beszéltem, bár a lányok medován látszott, hogy megkülönböztetett figyelemmel bírnak velem. Egy picit aggasztott ez, de aztán határozottan növekvő derével figyeltem őket. Nemcsak tudtam, hogy még az újjak még se angol s anghol csak Annika ért úgy-ahogy. Nekem Annika tetszett legjobban s szerencsémre ő is jutott rám, mert Klárával Mikós, Maryvel pedig a már ott üldöző én, Sáros, foglalkozott. Nagyon jóban voltak, ahogy láttam.

Annika vidám és csapogó külsőnek tetszett. A legkisebb volt s a legfutsalább. De azért ő is, meg Klára is, Maryt becézték, a lélepszé. Annika állandan mosolygott, a homloka türelmesen, a haja friss illatot árasztott. Ő, mostanában hamar be szoktam csújni s olyankor igen neki-vidámsággal, most is, két pohár után, olyan vidáman üldöztem, hogy az arcuk szinte feszült az állandó elgúlt mosolytól. Annika állt meg oly ingerlően agadt előre, azra oly pincsa tűnt, hogy legjobb szeretteim volna beharagpi. A kedves gondolatot azonban tülekkellet őszintem s a rejtett bírálata gyönyörűségével néztem a mosók két lányt is. Minként utaltak arra, hogy

a peragót csak erre engedni inni; a lövőtárs két pohár még jobban fűtött s már-már magam kezdtem fűlni, hogy rendeltetkedni találtok. Ugy emlékszem, Annika háromszor ült a kezem. Klára keskeny ovilancra, homlokába lógó szőke fűtőcső, hosszú és orra, tulvokony szája, hegyes és álls kellemetlen be-nyomást kellett bennem. Kétszáz fűtő valahogy csak öcsényesnek tudtam, elidővel, ezer ránczozal ki-asztott ábrázatán és meghörzögve, fanyarul csodál-koztam, hogy az a szarú Mikós ilyen vén szűcsnek udvarol. Elhordítottam rájuk a szemes s Annikát bízattam, milyen bájos, utóéletlenül aranyos nőke. Ahogy Maryre esett a pillantásom, szinte megdöbbentem. Talán ő, ő meg Sáros, nem egy pohárral ittak, mikor velünk kocsmáztattak, hanem mindig öttel, olyan részeg hűvel, lobogó arcukkal merültek egy-nyába. Elkomolyodtam és bizonytalan kérelme kavargattam a peragót; a gyöngyöcskék vad forgatagban táncoltak, tülekkellet fölélt, a sodrott lánklia meg élesen cseregett. Erek szerethetik egymást.

— Maga nincs beragva? — kérdeztem kíváncsián Annikától.

— Dehogy! — vágta Annika — csak épp hogy jó kedvem van — és orrom frisskánott.

— Nagyon jó? — érdeklődtem bűzben és megfogtam csuklóját, amin begyűrődött, pírulós vidámsággal kacagott. Magam sem tudtam ezt nevetés nélkül megállni s együtt vihogtam vele. Ettől a peragót kezdve mindenem nevetésként. A cigány hordósok látszott, deugli körül aranylancra, néhány szesznyű écsen-ten telenek kerestem, gondolom, hogy konyhán beragadtam, mert ezen a szén: kandi, asztalra rögzít-tem, hogy a kényem is kicserült és Annikának meg sem tudtam mondani, min barátságok. Aztán hazaküldték őket. Liget-utca-ra, zavarogt lejtőben.

## II.

Sokáig nem láttam aztán a csoportot. Mászartól sem találkoztam, megfellestem rájuk. Most utólag rémlik ugyan, hogy az Októberben a villanyóra szűlős tülekedésben láttam egyszer Maryt és Sáros, amint egymásba karolva nevettek a telonglalt és arcukon a boldogság, az egybetartozás biztos órné tündök-ölt, de épp siettem s csak percig tűnődtem ismerős arcukon s végül sem jöttem rá, hogy kik. De az jó régen volt, 2—3 hónapja talán.

A Royal-ből mentem el pár nap múlva és egy-szerre szemembe villantott a fénylépek körül a három ismerős arc s a plakkók is hirtelen rámelegültek: balleriná-szoknyósokkal, hamszónsain láttam s a három lányd kedves kellemével. Tényleg ők voltak:

MARY, ANNIE, CLARA

I 3 SISTERS 3 I

A CSODÁLATOS ANGOL TÁNCZOSPORT.

Nyomán elhatároztam, hogy felkeresem őket és felajánlom a régi ismeretséget. Nem sikerült. Egy sár-lyant kaptam, el kell utaznom hivatalos ügyben; aztán rokonság értelek; egyszer én nem éretem jól magam és kószálból két hélig kúrdoltam az az állapot, közben pedig folyton motorkált bennem, hogy el kell végre mennem, el kell végre mennem, míg rége tényleg eljuthattam.

Annika a régi báji; Klára kissé megilletődve mosolygott, így társaság nélkül látszott igazán, hogy ő a család s a gorda, anyaké, csak Maryre nem

akartam ráismerni. Azon megfogott, szeme becsüdt, szája mintha megakasztott volna és tekintete oly különös, réveteg, hogy őszánarolt a szívem.

— Hogy van Mary? Mary? — kérdeztem magam előtt is érthetetlen aggodalommal.

— Oh, jól! — mondta a valami féltékeny szűzsgé áradt el az arcán, ahogy halvány mosoly csillámolt meg rajta.

Annácska megállt az asztal alatt. Részletem: Halgatót intett. Elcsodálkoztam. Egy kis csóválást nyomott a kezembe: állolap d. u. 3-10-er az Emlek-nél. Kicsit megürödtem: mit nem vár, meg én csúszom ki ezt a találat, de hiszem rögtön felül emelkedett a meglepetésben: ő akar velem találkozni. Velem? És egész este a másnapon fölégetem. A lányok mesélték a szerződésükről, lálföldi életükről, ismerősükről, kérdészködtek Mai dűről a ekkor eszembe jutott Sára; hát az a fekete su hol van? Annácska rögtön tudta, ki volt van az, lejt az aratát vigott. Klára is elcsúszott, hátrahapta a fejét és tágira nyit szemekkel, engem figyelmen kívül szent Maryre, aki lejtött szemmel, szórakoztatóan egy szalvétával babralt. Még jól sem eszedtem: mi az? miért? Annácska erősen megnyomta a lábamat, szemrehányt, hogy engem mindig figyelmeztetni kell (amit már kezdtem magam is törtélni) és felszólítandó büszkséggel kezdte, hogy mennyire éhesek Brünneben, milyen kegyetlen csóval éltek és három hétig voltak ott, de megakasztott pénzükkel előlétek csak a hoztra még 1200 koronát. Képrejtem. Zavartan előlétem a nyomtatott a kérszerű vidámag.

Később egy vasutas tiszt jött az asztalhoz, Marynek virágot és csokrot hozott. Beszélgettem. A lányok régebbre és jól ismerhették, mert csupa olyanok beszélgettek vele, ami a háttérükre vonatkozott. A tiszt becsúszott a két, hogy a szemet asnap nem küldhette ki, de a Szövetkezeten nem volt ember. Ha ziera lesz szűkségük, szőlőjének megint a csip-csup dolgotól, ami engem nem érdekelt és úgy vettem észre Annácskát sem, Mary tovább és komolyan ült, egyedül Klára vidult jól valamiképp, bár a vasutas szemmel láthatóan Marynek udvarolt és tiszteltetőjezen, gyöngyöden beszélgetett vele.

Engem fogott a holnapi nap és környelmenül éreztem magam. Nem hittem, hogy ez az este még valami új jót hozna, legfeljebb új ügyetlenséget és magyarázkodást. Annácska felé hajoltam.

— Ki ez?

— A völgyőnye! — és óvlag a szájára tette ujját. Ah! a völgyőnye! derengett bennem a figyelmem árt. A völgyőnye! szinosa én. Kis fekete, kunkora hajjára volt az arca körépenyja a színe ebből ágazt szét a többi kis-csokszavú vándor. De azért az egész arca, a szabványos: se magus, se alacsony homlok, valami nyugodt félszélű bíránykodott.

Mary halvány bőrén átrajolódtak az erek és mintha csüggött ködbevesztő feicikékké, bokokká lombosodott volna haláltékán. A színpad arcból kifő nagy piros száj és a szemek tiszta kékje elárult bennem. Fejedelmi, szép nő — tőperengtem és átfutott rajtam a hideg. Annácskára néztem és rapszódra és széke arany szelgett műmódon rám.

— Hát Sára? — kérdeztem.

Annácska elcsomorodott. Bal gyűrűsujját körölgatta a jobbkeze ujjhegyével.

— Meghúskodott!

Most már teljes világossá gyűlt fejem. Most már érttem! Sára ottjárt Maryt, aki még most is szerelmes belé. Erre lát a ma esti riadósok, ővöz mo-

dultak? Fáj még a seb. Most már értem — bólogattam és is. Teljesen értem.

De minden nem szórakoztatott. Kicsit unatkoztam. Ha drága is Annácskával beszélgettem, Klára oly figyelmes-komolyan adott becsületet, hogy mindenféle közeledés, kényszer, simogatás lehetőséget kizárta. Ez bosszantott. Útösvégre, mégis csak tényszerű — gondoltam magamban és a Royalban vagyunk és szepárban. Mit akarsz hát? — és félreztet megint a réteg lítés őrgaszonyja — te vén szűz, trégy?... — dühögtem. Ha nem lett volna oly ingerlő, annyi csúval, forrószaggal töltött Annácska szája, rég hazamenem volna. De estebe jutott a másnap és talán a harakirémeti!...

— Annácska, olvasd magu már az Annabell Leet? Poe írta, gyönyörű vers.

— Nem, nem, hozza el. Sanyi. Ugy-e, elhozza? — El, el. Holnap délut. — ergettem fogaimon átszűrve a két szót, hogy Klára ne gyanakodhassék szemre. De nem tudom, hallotta-e? Nem felelt rá még a tekintetével sem.

— Jaj, gyönyörű már haza! — féjaldalmaskodott Mary és elbágydott ajakkal, szelvenye hupogó szemekkel nyugtázott. — Gyönyörű!

Annácska fehér volt, talpig fehér. A durradt prémből kíméletlen vidámsággal csak az orra hegye látszott. Hogy minek vannak itt minak is? Otte kapni: Elrohanni! Előre borongtam, hogy elő nem kell mennem Annácskával. Mit tehetnék ellene?

— Fiatalek előre! — kommandíroztam monolygva és két léssel teltem Maryt, meg a vasutat. Klára?... Ah, ugyis velünk maradt... Lelelődi fejem: halál ellen nincs erősség. Belekértem Klárába és Annácskába. Klára kicsit szabadkozott. Annácska keze — félreemelt óvatossan: a széje hája-e? — kezembem nyugodott és én türelmetlen, ujjfelelő ingommal csavartam, szűldeltem, köcskeltem, időközben ujjaimmal ujjait; feljéltetetlen kedvességg.

— Lee Annácska, szegény!... — mormoltam és kezem kicsúszott kezéből a már a prémből szűllongott boldog forrószagban a ház szelmet éretem s a bór bársnyit — Annácska, Annácska.... eszembe jutott a hívós halokál és megszorogattam, tördeltem Klára kezét is.

Mary furcsán imbolygott előttünk a völgyőnyével. Karolva mentek ők is, de Mary vad mordulattal kitértette sző a karját, amely ilyenkor föléndült a magába. A csillagok boldog szikráztak, a hold buzyorgott.

— Klára! — fordult hátra Mary — gyere egy pillanatra — és megállt. A lány előrement. Egy sarkot jött. Be leltett forduló. Részletre lassítottam, én szinte haragudtam magamba, hogy ilyen ingottt vagyok és hasztalan elnökövénként állandón vibráltattam belül: de hiszen csak tényszerű, de hiszen csak egy tényszerű, de hiszen csak egy... Ahogy elvillant előttünk a sötét ház és mellett a széknyak fehéje, riasztantam a szőjára és én nem tudom, mi történt velem, azt hittem, megőrülök, ha e csókot abba kell hagyynom. Tikkadtam, szűldeltem látiam, hogy gomolyg a lányból a gyönyörűség a meglepetésben, előlérdetett szemöldőjével éretem melleskélét mellem, egyzavre órástotta a száját a szájamra; mint a kilobbanó fény — An—e—e—e—e — fuldokoltam s ő rohant túl a széken a többiek után és engem tréltetlennél vonsorolt magával.

— Sanyi, de gyere! — kuszott felindulva és majdnem szókaga drázt a hangjából — jöjjen, szeret? Mert nem jött előbb?





