

## LOVE IDYLL

Let me tell you of my little adventure; something I shall never forget even if I live to be 100. Perhaps you noticed it; a small booth near the Post Office with a large poster proclaiming the last day for sale of lottery tickets. You may have noticed it, but not being an inquisitive Kiwi like myself you didn't step up to make enquiries.

I don't know what I had in mind to say when I approached the counter, but believe me, I never said it. What I saw there made coherent speech impossible and my stammered "Hello" didn't sound like my voice at all.

She was beautiful. Mere words on paper seem so inadequate to describe such feminine loveliness. She was a natural blonde with that silky smooth delicate skin and eyes between the colour of blue and grey. Eyes that seemed to appraise me with a kind of wistful innocence, yet a humorous twinkle at my obvious embarrassment. Her soft red lips parted with a smile that would have won millions on the screen. It bowled me completely but when she spoke I found myself bowled, caught, run out and stumped.

"Do you want something?" was all she asked. I knew what I wanted alright but I was completely dumb. What rotated me was her voice, deep and husky with that delightful foreign accent which one could listen to all night.

How I said it I will never know but it was out before I knew it.

"Would you like to go dancing?" I blurted.

Again that wistful look, the soft smile and the glamorous voice.

"I am sorry, you see I cannot dance," she said.

"Can't dance?" I asked, some of my normal self assurance returning.

"No. But let me explain," she said. "I used to love to dance once, but I had a bad accident. You see we were in Malaya when the Japanese came, and when we escaped our ship was hit by a bomb and I was injured. I am a cripple" she finished simply.

I opened my mouth to speak but no words came. I couldn't believe that this lovely creature could be afflicted in any way.

"My brother Jan will call for me soon, would you care to have supper with us?"

she asked, and went on. "We live quite simply now you know, there are just the two of us left."

Before I had time to accept the invitation, a six foot four giant in the uniform of the Netherlands Navy appeared and as I quailed before his half hostile glare, I heard the girl say, "This soldier is coming home with us for supper Jan." And the big friendly grin that spread over his face reassured me. "O.K. Anna," he boomed as she prepared to close up the booth. As if the past few minutes hadn't been full enough of shocks, I was about to receive the biggest of them all.

Anna closed the window and called to her brother, who went around to the door at the back. He motioned me to follow and then I saw him lift the girl and begin to carry her towards the car parked nearby. It was then that I saw what made my heart miss a beat; something I will never be able to erase from my memory. The girl had no legs.

Dumbly I followed them to the car, and for the next few moments I was completely dazed by this outstanding revelation. The pressure of a soft hand brought me back to earth again and I was about to say something when Jan spoke.

"Good for you to have company" he said in halting English, "because I must leave you when I take you home. Have some fellows to meet."

My thoughts were hours ahead of me. To be left alone with this gorgeous creature was more than I ever dreamed of, but with the knowledge that she was legless I had mixed feelings of horror and pity.

Having seen us to their comfortable flat, Jan made an apologetic and hurried departure. I was standing admiring a picture when Anna called to me from the divan where Jan had placed her on our arrival. She had arranged herself among the cushions so that there was absolutely no sign of her unfortunate disability.

"Pour yourself and me a drink," she said. "Then bring them here so we can talk. We can have supper later." With trembling hands, I mixed a couple of John Collins at the well equipped cocktail bar. I placed them on the table by the divan and sat beside her.

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