

COUNTY HOSPITAL

It was one of those beautiful Fall days that only Indian Summer can bring, but not even the perfection of the day could erase the morose look from the face of the man looking from the second story window. His eyes wandered over the reddening maples below and the still-green grass which served as a foil for the last Fall flowers. Traveling upward, ~~they~~ caught a flash of blue in the window opposite. As he watched, the blue took on shape and he could see it was the attire of a woman, dark haired and oddly ~~Gypsy~~-looking.

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Peter turned to a nearby companion and inquired, "Do you know who she is?" indicating the young woman's presence by a nod. "Why, yes," was the answer. "That's Rosa Hanley".

Rosa had been at the County Hospital for nearly a year now, since that yellow telegram had come. Of course, time had healed much of the pain, but there were still those nights when she could not control her weeping. She wondered if it would always be this way--whether she would, as they said, "get over it".

As she stared out at the sunlit lawn, Rosa felt an odd compelling current--her eyes met a pair in the window across the way. That look stayed with her and, in the evening, Rosa asked the attendant nurse, "Who is the dark, rather attractive young man with such a brooding look? Is he a patient here?" "Oh, you mean Peter--in 217. He doesn't respond very well. He seems to have crawled into a shell and is hiding there."

It was a few days later that the thought came to Rosa. She would try to find some way to cheer Peter up. Then, late that afternoon, when most of the others had gone to dinner, she found him alone in the lounge. He was running his fingers over the keyboard of the piano, playing softly. She listened awhile, entranced by the moving music. He seemed to sense her presence and turned and she came over to him and said, "Such beautiful music. I enjoyed it. You are very talented."

Peter thanked her gratefully. He said, "I love to play, but didn't know if the others would like it." They talked briefly until the attendant called them to dinner. Peter asked hopefully, "Will you come again tomorrow?"

The next afternoon, Rosa hurried to the lounge. His music had stirred emotions in her that she had not felt for a long time and it soothed some of the pain that had been with her since that traumatic day. Peter was waiting for her and he played for her with such grace and feeling that even the nurses noted the remarkable change in him.

Their trysts continued. Rosa told Peter about the telegram informing her that her fiance had been killed, and her shock and subsequent lasting grief. After some time, Peter confided to her

that he had been the driver in an accident that had killed his brother. Telling it brought back the memories with a vengeance, but it also brought a kind of release of his tight emotions. Their daily meetings were therapy, so much so that within a few months Peter applied for his release from the hospital.

To the Superintendent, Peter explained, "Rosa has brought me back to life. I will visit often, and when she is ready, I will come back to get her." Taking her hand in his, he added, "and we will get married--if the lady agrees." and Rosa's happy smile answered for her!