

"Then go home and bring her happiness," I counseled. "Do not keep her waiting."

He went. I did not see him for days, and when I called his man told me that he was very busy, so I took myself away without disturbing him. A business trip carried me to Chicago, where I spent a toilsome week, to return to my own good city worn at the edges and badly fagged. In my sad state the creature man was uppermost. I pined for the sausage of Touraine and I drove to Suzanne's. Within was Durant, disheveled and wild, the components of the deadly drink about him. He seized my hands between hot, feverish palms.

"She loves, she loves, she loves," he half-sobbed. "Ah, man, she loves him so. Every fiber of her is crying out for him. She is yearning for him now."

I was tired and a bit roughened. "The woman?" I questioned.

"The woman! The angel! The light of life!"

"Then you do her small credit to sit here with that villainous stuff. Come, get into my hansom and go home to her."

He climbed in, still trembling and choking. "She loves him so," he whispered, as we turned on to the asphalt. "She loves him so. Oh, dear God, I shall lose her."

"But he is you," I protested.

"You fool!" he cried shrilly. "Can't you see that is why?"

"You're drunk!" I snapped. "Here's your quarters. Now go to bed."

He stood shaking on the pavement, his lips quivering on his white teeth, his fingers writhing. "I must save her tonight," he gasped. "I must not sleep. I must save her tonight, or— or— She loves him! She loves him! Her heart is throbbing for him, her blood is leaping for him. Rose of fairest heaven, she loves him. Ah-h!"

"Be good to her," I said, as gently as a tired man could; then to the cabby, "Go on!"

It was nearly ten in the morning before Jenkins heard and got me out of bed. I went to Durant's rooms as fast as an electric could carry me. Reynolds, the club secretary, and a fussy little doctor with gray whiskers and spectacles were already there. Durant lay on the couch. His eyes were staring wide at the ceiling, his fists were clenched and his mouth was open. He was not good to see. The doctor was rummaging about the manuscript. "Drank like a fish, they tell me," he snorted. "Absinthe, too. Here's his last drink." He picked up the glass on the table and sniffed suspiciously. "H'm-m-m, chloral. I thought so. All the signs. High nervous temperament and drink—but he must have had some reason."

I picked up a sheet which lay apart. It was the last he had written. I read the closing lines and I shuddered. I, too, had known the goddess woman.



THE HAUNTED BRANCH

MINE eyes the leafless world did search,
And found for flagging hope no stay
Save yonder branch—the finch's perch
Through all a songful Summer day.

The bird was forth—it had no care—
Was flown, as birds and Summer will.
How lone the skies, how bare the groves—
But ah, one branch was singing still!

EDITH M. THOMAS.