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THE FAR-AWAY PRINCESS

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY
HERMANN SUDERMANN

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY
GRACE FRANK

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THE FAR-AWAY PRINCESS

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

CHARACTERS

THE PRINCESS VON GELDERN.

BARONESS VON BROOK, her maid of honour.

FRAU VON HALLDORF.

LIDDY } her daughters.
MILLY }

FRITZ STRÜBEL, a student.

FRAU LINDEMANN.

ROSA, a waitress.

A LACKEY.

THE PRESENT DAY.

The scene is laid at an inn situated above a watering-place in central Germany.

THE FAR-AWAY PRINCESS

The veranda of an inn. The right side of the stage and half of the background represent a framework of glass enclosing the veranda. The left side and the other half of the background represent the stone walls of the house. To the left, in the foreground, a door; another door in the background, at the left. On the left, back, a buffet and serving-table. Neat little tables and small iron chairs for visitors are placed about the veranda. On the right, in the centre, a large telescope, standing on a tripod, is directed through an open window. ROSA, dressed in the costume of the country, is arranging flowers on the small tables. FRAU LINDEMANN, a handsome, stoutish woman in the thirties, hurries in excitedly from the left.

FRAU LINDEMANN.

There! Now she can come—curtains, bedding—everything fresh and clean as new! No, this honour, this unexpected honour—! Barons and counts have been here often enough. Even the Russian princes sometimes come up from the Springs. I don't bother my head about them—they're just like—that!—But a princess—a real princess!

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

ROSA.

Perhaps it isn't a real princess after all.

FRAU LINDEMANN (*indignantly*).

What? What do you mean by that!

ROSA.

I was only thinking that a real princess wouldn't be coming to an inn like this. Real princesses won't lie on anything but silks and velvets. You just wait and see; it's a trick!

FRAU LINDEMANN.

Are you going to pretend that the letter isn't genuine;—that the letter is a forgery?

ROSA.

Maybe one of the regular customers is playing a joke. That student, Herr Strübel, he's always joking. (*Giggles.*)

FRAU LINDEMANN.

When Herr Strübel makes a joke, he makes a decent joke, a real, genuine joke. Oh, of course one has to pretend to be angry sometimes—but as for writing a forged letter—My land!—a letter with a gold crown on it—there! (*She takes a letter from her waist, and reads.*) “This afternoon, Her Highness, the Princess von Geldern, will stop at the Fairview Inn, to rest an hour or so before making the descent to the Springs. You are requested to have

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

ready a quiet and comfortable room, to guard Her Highness from any annoying advances, and, above all, to maintain the strictest secrecy regarding this event, as otherwise the royal visit will not be repeated. Baroness von Brook, maid of honour to Her Highness." Now, what have you got to say?

ROSA.

Herr Strübel lent me a book once. A maid of honour came into that, too. I'm sure it's a trick!

FRAU LINDEMANN (*looking out toward the back*).

Dear, dear, isn't that Herr Strübel now, coming up the hill? To-day of all days! What on earth does he always want up here?

ROSA (*pointedly*).

He's in such favour at the Inn.—He won't be leaving here all day.

FRAU LINDEMANN.

That won't do at all. He's got to be sent off. If I only knew how I could—Oh, ho! I'll be disagreeable to him—that's the only way to manage it!

(STRÜBEL *enters*. *He is a handsome young fellow without much polish, but cheerful, unaffected, entirely at his ease, and invariably good-natured.*)

STRÜBEL.

Good day, everybody.

THE FAR-AWAY PRINCESS

FRAU LINDEMANN (*sarcastically*).

Charming day.

STRÜBEL (*surprised at her coolness*).

I say! What's up? Who's been rubbing you the wrong way? May I have a glass of beer any way? Glass of beer, if you please!—Several glasses of beer, if you please.—(*Sits down.*) Pestiferously hot this afternoon.

FRAU LINDEMANN (*after a pause*).

H'm, H'm!

STRÜBEL.

Landlady Linda, dear, why so quiet to-day?

FRAU LINDEMANN.

In the first place, Herr Strübel, I would have you know that my name is Frau Lindemann.

STRÜBEL.

Just so.

FRAU LINDEMANN.

And secondly, if you don't stop your familiarity——

STRÜBEL.

(*Singing, as ROSA brings him a glass of beer.*) “Beer—beer!”—Heavens and earth, how hot it is! (*Drinks.*)

FRAU LINDEMANN.

If you find it so hot, why don't you stay quietly down there at the Springs?

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

STRÜBEL.

Ah, my soul thirsts for the heights—my soul thirsts for the heights every afternoon. Just as soon as ever my sallow-faced pupil has thrown himself down on the couch to give his red corpuscles a chance to grow, “I gayly grasp my Alpine staff and mount to my beloved.”

FRAU LINDEMANN (*scornfully*).

Bah!

STRÜBEL.

Oh, you're thinking that *you* are my beloved? No, dearest: my beloved stays down there. But to get nearer to her, I have to come up here—up to your telescope. With the aid of your telescope I can look right into her window—see?

ROSA (*laughing*).

Oh, so that's why——

FRAU LINDEMANN.

Perhaps you think I'm interested in all that?—Besides, I've no more time for you.—Moreover, I'm going to have this place cleaned right away. Good-bye, Herr Strübel. (*Goes out.*)

STRÜBEL (*laughing*).

I certainly caught it that time! See here, Rosa, what's got into her head?

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

ROSA (*mysteriously*).

Ahem, there are crowned heads and other heads—and—
ahem—there are letters *with* crowns and letters *without*
crowns.

STRÜBEL.

Letters—? Are you——?

ROSA.

There are maids of honour—and other maids! (*Giggles.*)

STRÜBEL.

Permit me. (*Tapping her forehead lightly with his
finger.*) Ow! Ow!

ROSA.

What's the matter?

STRÜBEL.

Why, your head's on fire! Blow! Blow! And while
you are getting some salve for my burns, I'll just— (*Goes
to the telescope.*)

(*Enter FRAU VON HALLDORF, LIDDY, and MILLY. FRAU
VON HALLDORF is an aristocratic woman, somewhat super-
cilious and affected.*)

LIDDY.

Here's the telescope, mother. Now you can see for your-
self.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

What a pity that it's in use just now.

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

STRÜBEL (*stepping back*).

Oh, I beg of you, ladies—I have plenty of time. I can wait.

FRAU V. HALLDORF (*condescendingly*).

Ah, thanks so much. (*She goes up to the telescope, while STRÜBEL returns to his former place.*) Waitress! Bring us three glasses of milk.

LIDDY (*as MILLY languidly drops into a chair*).

Beyond to the right is the road, mother.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Oh, I have found the road, but I see no carriage—neither a royal carriage nor any other sort.

LIDDY.

Let me look.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Please do.

LIDDY.

It has disappeared now.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Are you quite sure that it was a royal carriage?

LIDDY.

Oh, one has an instinct for that sort of thing, mother. It comes to one in the cradle.

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

(*As MILLY yawns and sighs aloud.*) Are you sleepy, dear?

MILLY.

No, only tired. I'm always tired.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Well, that's just why we are at the Springs. Do as the princess does: take the waters religiously.

MILLY.

The princess oughtn't to be climbing up such a steep hill either on a hot day like this.

FRAU V. HALLDORF (*more softly*).

Well, you know why we are taking all this trouble. If, by good luck, we should happen to meet the princess——

LIDDY.

(*Who has been looking through the telescope.*) Oh, there it is again!

FRAU V. HALLDORF (*eagerly*).

Where? Where? (*Takes LIDDY's place.*)

LIDDY.

It's just coming around the turn at the top.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Oh, now I see it! Why, there's no one inside!

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

LIDDY.

Well, then she's coming up on foot.

FRAU V. HALLDORF (*to MILLY*).

See, the princess is coming up on foot, too. And she is just as anæmic as you are.

MILLY.

If I were going to marry a grand-duke, and if I could have my own carriage driven along beside me, I wouldn't complain of having to walk either.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

I can't see a thing now.

LIDDY.

You have to turn the screw, mother.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

I have been turning it right along, but the telescope won't move.

LIDDY.

Let me try.

STRÜBEL.

(*Who has been throwing little wads of paper at ROSA during the preceding conversation.*) What are they up to?

LIDDY.

It seems to me that you've turned the screw too far, mother.

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Well, what shall we do about it?

STRÜBEL (*rising*).

Permit me to come to your aid, ladies. I've had some experience with these old screws.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Very kind—indeed. (STRÜBEL *busies himself with the instrument.*)

LIDDY.

Listen, mother. If the carriage has almost reached the top the princess can't be far off. Wouldn't it be best, then, to watch for them on the road?

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Certainly, if you think that would be best, dear Liddy.

STRÜBEL.

This is not only an old screw, but it's a regular perverted old screw!

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Ah, really?—(*Aside to her daughters.*) And if she should actually speak to us at this accidental meeting—and if we could present ourselves as the subjects of her noble fiancé, and tell her that we live at her future home—just imagine what an advantage that would give us over the other women of the court!

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

STRÜBEL.

There, ladies! We have now rescued the useful instrument to which the far-sightedness of mankind is indebted.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

Thanks, so much.—Pardon me, sir, but have you heard anything about the report that the princess is going to make the journey up here to-day?

STRÜBEL,

The princess? The Princess of the Springs? The Princess of the lonely villa? The Princess who is expected at the iron spring every morning, but who has never been seen by a living soul? Why, I am enormously interested. You wouldn't believe how much interested I am!

LIDDY (*who has looked out, back*).

There—there—there—it is!

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

The carriage?

LIDDY.

It's reached the top already. It is stopping over there at the edge of the woods.

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

She will surely enter it there, then. Come quickly, my dear children, so that it will look quite accidental.—Here is

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

your money. (*She throws a coin to ROSA and unwraps a small package done up in tissue paper which she has brought with her.*) Here is a bouquet for you—and here's one for you. You are to present these to the princess.

MILLY.

So that it will look quite accidental—oh, yes! (*All three go out.*)

STRÜBEL.

Good heavens! Could I—? I don't believe it! Surely she sits—Well, I'll make sure right away— (*Goes up to the telescope and stops.*) Oh, I'll go along with them, anyhow. (*Exit after them.*)

FRAU LINDEMANN (*entering*).

Have they all gone—all of them?

ROSA.

All of them.

FRAU LINDEMANN (*looking toward the right*).

There—there—two ladies and a lackey are coming up the footpath. Mercy me! How my heart is beating!—If I had only had the sofa re-covered last spring!—What am I going to say to them?—Rosa, don't you know a poem by heart which you could speak to the princess? (*ROSA shrugs her shoulders.*) They're coming through the court

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now!—Stop putting your arms under your apron that way, you stupid thing!—oh dear, oh dear——

(The door opens. A LACKEY in plain black livery enters, and remains standing at the door. He precedes THE PRINCESS and FRAU VON BROOK. THE PRINCESS is a pale, sickly, unassuming young girl, wearing a very simple walking costume and a medium-sized leghorn hat trimmed with roses. FRAU VON BROOK is a handsome, stately, stern-looking woman, in the thirties. She is well dressed, but in accordance with the simple tastes of the North German nobility.)

FRAU V. BROOK.

Who is the proprietor of this place?

FRAU LINDEMANN.

At your command, your Highness.

FRAU V. BROOK *(reprovingly)*.

I am the maid of honour.—Where is the room that has been ordered?

FRAU LINDEMANN *(opens the door, left)*.

Here—at the head of the stairs—my lady.

FRAU V. BROOK.

Would your Highness care to remain here for a few moments?

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THE PRINCESS.

Very much, dear Frau von Brook.

FRAU V. BROOK.

Edward, order what is needed for Her Highness and see that a room next to Her Highness is prepared for me. I may assume that these are your Highness's wishes?

THE PRINCESS.

Why certainly, dear Frau von Brook. (THE LACKEY, who is carrying shawls and pillows, goes out with ROSA, left.)

THE PRINCESS.

Mais puisque je te dis, Eugénie, que je n'ai pas sommeil. M'envoyer coucher comme une enfant, c'est abominable.

FRAU V. BROOK.

Mais je t'implore, chérie, sois sage! Tu sais, que c'est le médecin, qui——

THE PRINCESS.

Ah, ton médecin! Toujours cette corvée. Et si je te dis——

FRAU V. BROOK.

Chut! My dear woman, wouldn't it be best for you to superintend the preparations?

FRAU LINDEMANN.

I am entirely at your service. (*About to go out, left.*)

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

FRAU V. BROOK.

One thing more. This veranda, leading from the house to the grounds—would it be possible to close it to the public?

FRAU LINDEMANN.

Oh, certainly. The guests as often as not sit out under the trees.

FRAU V. BROOK.

Very well, then do so, please. (FRAU LINDEMANN *locks the door.*) We may be assured that no one will enter this place?

FRAU LINDEMANN.

If it is desired, none of us belonging to the house will come in here either.

FRAU V. BROOK.

We should like that.

FRAU LINDEMANN.

Very well. (*Exit.*)

FRAU V. BROOK.

Really, you must be more careful, darling. If that woman had understood French— You must be careful!

THE PRINCESS.

What would have been so dreadful about it?

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

FRAU V. BROOK.

Oh, my dear child! This mood of yours, which is due to nothing but your illness—that reminds me, you haven't taken your peptonised milk yet—this is a secret which we must keep from everyone, above all from your fiancé. If the Grand-Duke should discover——

THE PRINCESS (*shrugging her shoulders*).

Well, what of it?

FRAU V. BROOK.

A bride's duty is to be a happy bride. Otherwise——

THE PRINCESS.

Otherwise?

FRAU V. BROOK.

She will be a lonely and an unloved woman.

THE PRINCESS (*with a little smile of resignation*).

Ah!

FRAU V. BROOK.

What is it, dear? (THE PRINCESS *shakes her head*.)
And then think of the strain of those formal presentations awaiting you in the autumn! You must grow strong. Remember that you must be equal to the most exacting demands of life.

THE PRINCESS.

Of life? Whose life?

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

FRAU V. BROOK.

What do you mean by that?

THE PRINCESS.

Ah, what good does it do to talk about it?

FRAU V. BROOK.

Yes, you are right. In my soul, too, there are unhappy and unholy thoughts that I would rather not utter. From my own experience I know that it is best to keep strictly within the narrow path of Duty.

THE PRINCESS.

And to go to sleep.

FRAU V. BROOK.

Ah, it isn't only that.

THE PRINCESS.

Look out there! See the woods!—Ah, to lie down on the moss, to cover oneself with leaves, to watch the clouds pass by high above——

FRAU V. BROOK (*softening*).

We can do that, too, sometime.

THE PRINCESS (*laughing aloud*).

Sometime!

(THE LACKEY *appears at the door*).

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

FRAU v. BROOK.

Is everything ready? (THE LACKEY bows.)

THE PRINCESS (*aside to FRAU v. BROOK*).

But I simply cannot sleep.

FRAU v. BROOK.

Try to, for my sake. (*Aloud.*) Does your Highness command——

THE PRINCESS (*smiling and sighing*).

Yes, I command. (*They go out, left.*)

(*The stage remains empty for several moments. Then STRÜBEL is heard trying the latch of the back door.*)

STRÜBEL'S VOICE.

Hullo! What's up! Why is this locked all of a sudden? Rosa!—Open up! I've got to look through the telescope! Rosa! Won't you?—Oh, well, I know how to help myself. (*He is seen walking outside of the glass-covered veranda. Then he puts his head through the open window at the right.*) Not a soul inside?— (*Climbs over.*) Well, here we are. What on earth has happened to these people? (*Unlocks the back door and looks out.*) Everything deserted. Well, it's all the same to me. (*Locks the door again.*) But let's find out right away what the carriage has to do with the case. (*Prepares to look through the telescope.*)

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THE PRINCESS enters cautiously through the door at the left, her hat in her hand. Without noticing STRÜBEL, who is standing motionless before the telescope, she goes hurriedly to the door at the back and unlocks it.)

STRÜBEL.

(Startled at the sound of the key, turns around.) Why, how do you do? (THE PRINCESS, not venturing to move, glances back at the door through which she has entered.) Wouldn't you like to look through the telescope a while? Please do. (THE PRINCESS, undecided as to whether or not she should answer him, takes a few steps back toward the door at the left.) Why are you going away? I won't do anything to you.

THE PRINCESS (reassured).

Oh, I'm not going away.

STRÜBEL.

That's right. But—where have you come from? The door was locked. Surely you didn't climb through the window as I did?

THE PRINCESS (frightened).

What?—You came—through the window?—

STRÜBEL.

Of course I did.

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THE PRINCESS (*frightened anew*).

Then I had rather— (*About to go back.*)

STRÜBEL.

Oh, my dear young lady, you just stay right here. Why, before I'd drive you away I'd pitch myself headlong over a precipice!

THE PRINCESS (*smiling, reassured*).

I only wanted to go out into the woods for half an hour.

STRÜBEL.

Oh, then you're a regular guest here at the Inn?

THE PRINCESS (*quickly*).

Yes—yes, of course.

STRÜBEL.

And of course you drink the waters down below?

THE PRINCESS (*in a friendly way*).

Oh, yes, I drink the waters. And I'm taking the baths, too.

STRÜBEL.

Two hundred metres up and down every time! Isn't that very hard on you? Heavens! And you look so pale! See here, my dear young lady, don't you do it. It would be better for you to go down there—that is— Oh, forgive me! I've been talking without thinking. Of course, you

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

have your own reasons— It's decidedly cheaper up here I know how to value a thing of that sort. I've never had any money in all my life!

THE PRINCESS (*trying to seem practical*).

But when one comes to a watering-place, one must have money.

STRÜBEL (*slapping himself on the chest*).

Do I look to you as if I drank iron? Thank Heaven, I can't afford such luxuries! No; I'm only a poor fellow who earns his miserable pittance during vacation by acting as a private tutor—that's to say, "miserable" is only a figure of speech, for in the morning I lie abed until nine, at noon I eat five, and at night seven, courses; and as for work, I really haven't a thing to do! My pupil is so anæmic—why, compared to him, *you're* fit for a circus rider!

THE PRINCESS (*laughing unrestrainedly*).

Oh, well, I'm rather glad I'm not one.

STRÜBEL.

Dear me, it's a business like any other.

THE PRINCESS.

Like any other? Really, I didn't think that.

STRÜBEL.

And pray, what did you think then?

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THE PRINCESS.

Oh, I thought that they were—an entirely different sort of people.

STRÜBEL.

My dear young lady, all people are “an entirely different sort.” Of course *we* two aren't. We get along real well together, don't we? As poor as church mice, both of us!

THE PRINCESS (*smiling reflectively*).

Who knows? Perhaps that's true.

STRÜBEL (*kindly*).

Do you know what? If you want to stay down there—I'll tell you how one can live cheaply. I have a friend, a student like myself. He's here to mend up as you are. I feed him up at the house where I'm staying. (*Frightened at a peculiar look of THE PRINCESS'S.*) Oh, but you mustn't be— No, I shouldn't have said it. It wasn't decent of me. Only, let me tell you, I'm so glad to be able to help the poor fellow out of my unexpected earnings, that I'd like to be shouting it from the housetops all the time! Of course, you understand that, don't you?

THE PRINCESS.

You like to help people, then?

STRÜBEL.

Surely—don't you?

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THE PRINCESS (*reflecting*).

No. There's always so much talk about it, and the whole thing immediately appears in the newspapers.

STRÜBEL.

What? If you help some one, that appears——?

THE PRINCESS (*quickly correcting herself*).

I only mean if one takes part in entertainments for charity——

STRÜBEL.

Oh, yes, naturally. In those things they always get some woman of rank to act as patroness, if they can, and she sees to it, you may be sure, that the newspapers make a fuss over it.

THE PRINCESS (*demurely*).

Oh, not every——

STRÜBEL.

Just try to teach me something I don't know about these titled women! Besides, my dear young lady, where is your home—in one of the large cities, or——?

THE PRINCESS.

Oh, no. In quite a small town—really more like the country.

STRÜBEL.

Then, I'm going to show you something that you probably never saw before in all your life.

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

THE PRINCESS.

Oh do! What is it?

STRÜBEL.

A princess! H'm—not a make-believe, but a real, true blue princess!

THE PRINCESS.

Oh, really?

STRÜBEL.

Yes. Our Princess of the Springs.

THE PRINCESS.

And who may that be?

STRÜBEL.

Why, Princess Marie Louise.

THE PRINCESS.

Of Geldern?

STRÜBEL.

Of course.

THE PRINCESS.

Do you know her?

STRÜBEL.

Why, certainly.

THE PRINCESS.

Really? I thought that she lived in great retirement.

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

STRÜBEL.

Well, that doesn't do her any good. Not a bit of it. And because you are such a jolly, good fellow, I'm going to tell you my secret. I'm in love with this princess!

THE PRINCESS.

Oh!

STRÜBEL.

You can't imagine what a comfort it is. The fact is, every young poet has got to have a princess to love.

THE PRINCESS.

Are *you* a poet?

STRÜBEL.

Can't you tell that by looking at me?

THE PRINCESS.

I never saw a poet before.

STRÜBEL.

Never saw a poet—never saw a princess! Why, you're learning a heap of things to-day!

THE PRINCESS (*assenting*).

H'm—And have you written poems to her?

STRÜBEL.

Why, that goes without saying! Quantities of 'em!

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

THE PRINCESS.

Oh, please recite some little thing—won't you?

STRÜBEL.

No, not yet. Everything at the proper time.

THE PRINCESS.

Ah, yes, first I should like to see the princess.

STRÜBEL.

No, first I am going to tell you the whole story.

THE PRINCESS.

Oh, yes, yes. Please do. (*Sits down.*)

STRÜBEL.

Well, then—I had hardly heard that she was here before I was dead in love with her. It was just as quick as a shot, I tell you. Just as if I had waited all my life long to fall in love with her. Besides, I also heard about her beauty—and her sorrow. You see, she had an early love affair.

THE PRINCESS (*disconcerted*).

What? Are they saying that?

STRÜBEL.

Yes. It was a young officer who went to Africa because of her—and died there.

THE FAR-AWAY PRINCESS

THE PRINCESS.

And they know that, too?

STRÜBEL.

What don't they know?—But that's a mere detail—it doesn't concern me. Even the fact that in six months she will become the bride of a grand-duke—even that can make no difference to me. For the present she is *my* princess.—But you're not listening to me!

THE PRINCESS.

Oh, yes I am!

STRÜBEL.

Do you know what that means—*my* princess? I'll not give up *my* princess—not for anything in all the world!

THE PRINCESS.

But—if you don't even know her——?

STRÜBEL.

I don't know her? Why, I know her as well as I know myself!

THE PRINCESS.

Have you ever met her, then?

STRÜBEL.

I don't know of any one who has ever met her. And there's not a soul that can tell what she looks like. It is said that there were pictures of her in the shop-windows

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

when she first came, but they were removed immediately. In the morning a great many people are always lurking around the Springs trying to catch a glimpse of her. I myself have gotten up at six o'clock a couple of times—on the same errand—and if you knew me better, you'd realise what that meant. But not a sign of her! Either she has the stuff brought to her house, or she has the power of making herself invisible. (*THE PRINCESS turns aside to conceal a smile.*) After that, I used to hang around her garden—every day, for hours at a time. Until one day the policeman, whom the managers of the Springs have stationed at the gates, came up to me and asked me what on earth I was doing there. Well, that was the end of those methods of approach! Suddenly, however, a happy thought struck me. Now I can see her, and have her near to me as often as I wish.

THE PRINCESS.

Why, that's very interesting. How?

STRÜBEL.

Yes, that's just the point. H'm, should I risk it? Should I take you into my confidence?

THE PRINCESS.

You promised me some time ago that you would show her to me.

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STRÜBEL.

Wait a second. (*Looks through the telescope.*) There she is. Please look for yourself.

THE PRINCESS.

But I am— (*She, too, looks through the telescope.*) Actually, there is the garden as plain as if one were in it.

STRÜBEL.

And at the corner window on the left—with the embroidery-frame—that's she.

THE PRINCESS.

Are you absolutely certain that that is the princess?

STRÜBEL.

Why, who else could it be?

THE PRINCESS.

Oh, 'round about a princess like that—there are such a lot of people. For instance, there is her waiting-woman, there's the seamstress and her assistants, there's—

STRÜBEL.

But my dear young lady, if you only understood anything about these matters, you would have been certain at the very first glance that it was she—and no one else. Observe the nobility in every motion—the queenly grace with which she bends over the embroidery-frame—

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

THE PRINCESS.

How do you know that it's an embroidery-frame?

STRÜBEL.

Why, what should a princess be bending over if not an embroidery-frame? Do you expect her to be darning stockings?

THE PRINCESS.

It wouldn't hurt her at all!

STRÜBEL.

Now, that's just one of those petty, bourgeois notions which we ought to suppress. It's not enough that *we* have to stick in this misery, but we'd like to drag her down, too—that being far above all earthly care——

THE PRINCESS.

Oh, dear me!

STRÜBEL.

What are you sighing about so terribly?

THE PRINCESS

Tell me, wouldn't you like to have a closer acquaintance with your princess, sometime?

STRÜBEL.

Closer? Why should I?—Isn't she close enough to me, my far-away princess?—for that's what I call her when I talk to myself about her. And to have her *still* closer?

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

THE PRINCESS.

Why, so that you could talk to her and know what she really was like.

STRÜBEL (*terrified*).

Talk to her! Heaven forbid! Goodness gracious, no! Just see here—how am I to face a princess? I'm an ordinary fellow, the son of poor folks. I haven't polished manners—I haven't even a decent tailor. A lady like that—why, she'd measure me from top to toe in one glance.—I've had my lessons in the fine houses where I've applied as tutor. A glance from boots to cravat—and you're dismissed!

THE PRINCESS.

And you think that I—(*correcting herself*)—that this girl is as superficial as that?

STRÜBEL.

“This girl”! Dear me, how that sounds! But, how should I ever succeed in showing her my real self? And even if I should, what would she care?—Oh, yes, if she were like you—so nice and simple—and with such a kind-hearted, roguish little twinkle in her eye——!

THE PRINCESS.

Roguish—I? Why so?

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STRÜBEL.

Because you are laughing at me in your sleeve. And really I deserve nothing better.

THE PRINCESS.

But your princess deserves something better than your opinion of her.

STRÜBEL.

How do you know that?

THE PRINCESS.

You really ought to try to become acquainted with her sometime.

STRÜBEL.

No, no, no—and again no! As long as she remains my far-away princess, she is everything that I want her to be—modest, gracious, loving. She smiles upon me dreamily. Yes, she even listens when I recite my poems to her—and that can't be said of many people! And as soon as I have finished, she sighs, takes a rose from her breast, and casts it down to the poet.—I wrote a few verses yesterday about that rose, that flower which represents the pinnacle of my desires, as it were.

THE PRINCESS (*eagerly*).

Oh, yes. Oh, please, please!

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

STRÜBEL.

Well, then, here goes. H'm—"Twenty roses nestling close——"

THE PRINCESS.

What? Are there twenty now?

STRÜBEL (*severely*).

My princess would not have interrupted me.

THE PRINCESS.

Oh please—forgive me.

STRÜBEL.

I shall begin again.

Twenty roses nestling close
Gleam upon thy breast,
Twenty years of rose-red love
Upon thy fair cheeks rest.

Twenty years would I gladly give
Out of life's brief reign,
Could I but ask a rose of thee
And ask it not in vain.

Twenty roses thou dost not need
—Why, pearls and rubies are thine!—
With nineteen thou'dst be just as fair,
And *one* would then be *mine*!

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And twenty years of rose-wreathed joy
Would spring to life for me—
Yet twenty years could ne'er suffice
To worship it—and thee!

THE PRINCESS.

How nice that is! I've never had any verses written to me b——

STRÜBEL.

Ah, my dear young lady, ordinary folks like us have to do their own verse-making!

THE PRINCESS.

And all for one rose!—Dear me, how soon it fades. And then what is left you?

STRÜBEL.

No, my dear friend, a rose like that never fades—even as my love for the gracious giver can never die.

THE PRINCESS.

But you haven't even got it yet!

STRÜBEL.

That makes no difference in the end. I'm entirely independent of such externals. When some day I shall be explaining Ovid to the beginners, or perhaps even reading Horace with the more advanced classes—no, it's better for

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the present not to think of reaching any such dizzy heights of greatness—well, then I shall always be saying to myself with a smile of satisfaction, “You, too, were one of those confounded artist fellows—why, you once went so far as to love a princess!”

THE PRINCESS.

And that will make you happy?

STRÜBEL.

Enormously!—For what makes us happy after all? A bit of happiness? Great heavens, no! Happiness wears out like an old glove.

THE PRINCESS.

Well, then, what does?

STRÜBEL.

Ah, how should I know! Any kind of a dream—a fancy—a wish unfulfilled—a sorrow that we coddle—some nothing which suddenly becomes everything to us. I shall always say to my pupils—“Young men, if you want to be happy as long as you live, create gods for yourselves in your own image; these gods will take care of your happiness.”

THE PRINCESS.

And what would the god be like that you would create?

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STRÜBEL.

Would be? Is, my dear young lady, is!—A man of the world, a gentleman, well bred, smiling, enjoying life—who looks out upon mankind from under bushy eyebrows, who knows Nietzsche and Stendhal by heart, and—(*pointing to his shoes*) who isn't down at the heels—a god, in short, worthy of my princess. I know perfectly well that all my life long I shall never do anything but crawl around on the ground like an industrious ant, but I know, too, that the god of my fancy will always take me by the collar when the proper moment comes and pull me up again into the clouds. Yes, up there I'm safe.—And your god, or rather your goddess—what would she look like?

THE PRINCESS (*thoughtfully*).

That's not easy to say. My goddess would be—a quiet, peaceful woman who would treasure a secret, little joy like the apple of her eye, who would know nothing of the world except what she wanted to know, and who would have the strength to make her own choice when it pleased her.

STRÜBEL.

But that doesn't seem to me a particularly lofty aspiration, my dear young lady.

THE PRINCESS.

Lofty as the heavens, my friend.

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STRÜBEL.

My princess would be of a different opinion.

THE PRINCESS.

Do you think so?

STRÜBEL.

For that's merely the ideal of every little country girl.

THE PRINCESS.

Not her ideal—her daily life which she counts as naught. It is my ideal because I can never attain it.

STRÜBEL.

Oh, I say, my dear young girl! It can't be as bad as that! A young girl like you—so charming and—I don't want to be forward, but if I could only help you a bit!

THE PRINCESS.

Have you got to be helping all the time? Before, it was only a cheap lunch, now it's actually—

STRÜBEL.

Yes, yes, I'm an awful donkey, I know, but—

THE PRINCESS (*smiling*).

Don't say any more about it, dear friend! I like you that way.

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

STRÜBEL (*feeling oppressed by her superiority*).

Really you are an awfully strange person! There's something about you that—that——

THE PRINCESS.

Well?

STRÜBEL.

I can't exactly define it.—Tell me, weren't you wanting to go into the woods before? It's so—so oppressive in here.

THE PRINCESS.

Oppressive? I don't find it so at all—quite the contrary.

STRÜBEL.

No, no—I'm restless. I don't know what—at all events, may I not escort you—? One can chat more freely, one can express himself more openly—if one— (*Takes a deep breath.*)

THE PRINCESS (*smiling*).

And you are leaving your far-away princess with such a light heart?

STRÜBEL (*carelessly*).

Oh, she! She won't run away. She'll be sitting there tomorrow again—and the day after, too!

THE PRINCESS.

And so that is your great, undying love?

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

STRÜBEL.

Yes, but when a girl like you comes across one's path——

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

(Hurrying in and then drawing back in feigned astonishment.) Oh!

LIDDY and MILLY *(similarly)*.

Oh!

STRÜBEL.

Well, ladies, didn't I tell you that you wouldn't find her? Princesses don't grow along the roadside like weeds!

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

(Disregarding him—ceremoniously.) The infinite happiness with which this glorious event fills our hearts must excuse in some measure the extraordinary breach of good manners which we are committing in daring to address your Highness. But, as the fortunate subjects of your Highness's most noble fiancé, we could not refrain from——

STRÜBEL.

Well, well! What's all this?

FRAU V. HALLDORF.

—from offering to our eagerly awaited sovereign a slight token of our future loyalty. Liddy! Milly! *(LIDDY and MILLY come forward, and, with low court bows, offer*

THE FAR - A WAY PRINCESS

their bouquets.) My daughters respectfully present these few flowers to the illustrious princess——

STRÜBEL.

I beg your pardon, but who is doing the joking here, you or——?

(FRAU V. BROOK *enters*. THE PRINCESS, *taken un-awares, has retreated more and more helplessly toward the door at the left, undecided whether to take flight or remain. She greets the arrival of FRAU V. BROOK with a happy sigh of relief.*)

FRAU V. BROOK (*severely*).

Pardon me, ladies. Apparently you have not taken the proper steps toward being presented to Her Highness. In matters of this sort one must first apply to me. I may be addressed every morning from eleven to twelve, and I shall be happy to consider your desires.

FRAU V. HALLDORF (*with dignity*).

I and my children, madame, were aware of the fact that we were acting contrary to the usual procedure; but the impulse of loyal hearts is guided by no rule. I shall be glad to avail myself of your—very kind invitation.

(*All three go out with low curtsies to THE PRINCESS.*)

THE FAR-AWAY PRINCESS

FRAU V. BROOK.

What forwardness!—But how could you come down without me?—And what is that young man over there doing? Does he belong to those people?

(THE PRINCESS *shakes her head*. STRÜBEL, *without a word, goes to get his hat which has been lying on a chair, bows abruptly, and is about to leave.*)

THE PRINCESS.

Oh, no! That wouldn't be nice. Not that way——

FRAU V. BROOK (*amazed*).

What?—What!—Why, your Highness——!

THE PRINCESS.

Let me be, Eugenie. This young man and I have become far too good friends to part in such an unfriendly yes, almost hostile, fashion.

FRAU V. BROOK.

Your Highness, I am *very* much——

THE PRINCESS (*to STRÜBEL*).

You and I will certainly remember this hour with great pleasure, and I thank you for it with all my heart. If I only had a rose with me so as to give you your dear wish!—Eugenie, haven't we any roses with us?

THE FAR - AWAY PRINCESS

FRAU V. BROOK.

Your Highness, I am *very* much——

THE PRINCESS.

(*Examining herself and searching among the vases.*)
Well, how are we going to manage it?

STRÜBEL.

I most humbly thank—your Highness—for the kind intention.

THE PRINCESS.

No, no—wait! (*Her glance falls upon the hat which she is holding in her hand—with a sudden thought.*) I have it!—But don't think that I'm joking.—And we'll have to do without scissors! (*She tears one of the roses from the hat.*) I don't know whether there are just twenty—(*Holding out one of the roses to him.*) Well?—This rose has the merit of being just as real as the sentiment of which we were speaking before—and just as unfading.

STRÜBEL.

Is this—to be—my punishment? (THE PRINCESS *smilingly shakes her head.*) Or does your Highness mean by it that only the Unreal never fades?

THE PRINCESS.

That's exactly what I mean—because the Unreal must always dwell in the imagination.

THE FAR-AWAY PRINCESS

STRÜBEL.

So that's it! Just as it is only the *far-away* princesses who are always near to us.

FRAU V. BROOK.

Permit me to remark, your Highness—that it is *high* time——

THE PRINCESS.

As you see, those who are near must hurry away. (*Offering him the rose again.*) Well?

STRÜBEL.

(*Is about to take it, but lets his hand fall.*) With the far-away princess there—(*pointing down*)—it would have been in harmony, but with the— (*Shakes his head, then softly and with emotion.*) No, thanks—I'd rather not. (*He bows and goes out.*)

THE PRINCESS.

(*Smiling pensively, throws away the artificial flower.*) I'm going to ask my fiancé to let me send him a rose.

FRAU V. BROOK.

Your Highness, I am *very* much—surprised!

THE PRINCESS.

Well, I told you that I wasn't sleepy.

CURTAIN.

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