

THE GLASS SLIPPER ♦

[Hurries to take it, puts it away, rushes back bringing jacket.]

SIPOS. Don't want it now.

IRMA. Back?

SIPOS. Back.

IRMA. Sleeves?

SIPOS. Sleeves. [rolls up his sleeves.] Water.

IRMA [rushes to washstand]. Water. Fresh.

[Pours it in.]

SIPOS. Soap.

IRMA [hands it to him]. Soap.

[SIPOS washing his hands.]

"Faded flower of the Spring
Beaten blossom in the rain
All the leaves are whispering—"

SIPOS. Towel.

IRMA. Clean towel. "Beaten blossom in the rain."

SIPOS. What? [Drying himself.] Slippers.

IRMA [brings them, panting]. Slippers.

SIPOS [sits down]. Shoes.

IRMA [takes off one of his shoes]. One shoe.

[Pats his leg.]

SIPOS. What are you doing?

[Still drying himself, extends other foot.]

IRMA. It's fate, Mr Sipos, it's fate.

SIPOS. Other shoe.

IRMA [taking second shoe off]. Other shoe.

SIPOS. First slipper.

IRMA [puts it on]. First slipper. And . . .

SIPOS. Second slipper.

IRMA. And second slipper.

[Putting it on him.]

SIPOS [stands up, holding towel in mid-air]. Towel back.

IRMA. Towel back. [Takes towel, pours water from wash bowl into

slop bucket.] Pouring out, putting back wash bowl.

SIPOS. Coat—

IRMA. House coat.

SIPOS [sits down to table meanwhile]. Newspaper.

IRMA [brings it from window]. Newspaper.

SIPOS [reading]. Soup.

IRMA. Soup.

[Rushes out, leaving door open.]

SIPOS [hollers while reading paper]. Door!

IRMA [rushes back]. ~~Door!~~

[Throws kiss, closes door from outside. Short pause. SIPOS reading paper. Enters with soup.] Soup.

SIPOS [stirring soup]. What kind?

IRMA. Noodle.

SIPOS. Cold?

IRMA. Hot.

SIPOS [after tasting it]. Cold.

IRMA [reaches after plate]. Take it back, and put it on fire?

SIPOS. No. Leave it here.

[Drinks soup. IRMA rushes out into court, picks sunflower, rushes back, takes jar from washstand, puts flower on table.] What's that?

IRMA. Just to make the table pretty, Mr. Sipo.

[IRMA takes napkin out of napkin ring, places it before him, pushes salt nearer, puts bread in place.]

SIPOS. What the hell are you jumping around for? [Eats.] You do everything with twice as many jumps as necessary. Now go easy about it. Slowly, like this: one, coat; two, water; three, soap; four, shoe; five, slipper; six, soup;—slowly. [Eats.] You might have learned as much as that in eight years.

IRMA. I was only eleven eight years ago.

—START

SIPOS. Well, what of it?

IRMA. You said I could have learned that much eight years ago. Well, now I'm nineteen years old, then I was eleven.

SIPOS. What is this? Trying to make conversation?

IRMA. Just a little happy chat, Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. Don't you open your mouth again.

IRMA. I won't open it. It's closed.

SIPOS. See here!

[Eats. Pause. IRMA is standing looking at him happily.]

IRMA [after pause, softly]. Begging your pardon.

SIPOS. Where are you going?

IRMA. Nowhere. Begging your pardon.

SIPOS [stares at her]. Why do you keep on begging my pardon?

IRMA. Out of respect.

SIPOS. Then take this plate out, out of respect, and bring the meat, out of respect.

[Reaches for newspaper.]

IRMA. Yes, Mr. Sipos. [Takes plate.] Veal cutlet with spinach.

SIPOS. I didn't ask you.

IRMA. No. But the others are getting only hash. Only Mr. Sipos gets cutlets.

[IRMA goes out.]

SIPOS [without turning]. Door.

IRMA. I haven't even left it open yet!

SIPOS. You will.

IRMA. No, no.

[Opens door, from threshold, throws kiss, forgets to close door, hurries away.]

SIPOS. Door!!!

IRMA [frightened, rushes back]. Door! [Slams it from outside. SIPOS

shakes head, continues reading. Comes in, with seltzer and steak.]

Ice cold. Beautiful, blue bottle. A little bit after the soup. [Putting meat before him.] Steak with potatoes.

SIPOS. Just before you said, "Veal cutlet with spinach."

IRMA. That's what I thought, but stupid Irma was mistaken. Excuse me.

SIPOS. That's a grave error.

[Starts to eat.]

IRMA. Why?

SIPOS [pours drink]. Because now I have to switch my stomach over to steak and potatoes. When you said I'd have veal with spinach, then the stomach got ready for . . . [Drinks.] . . . veal and spinach.

IRMA. What?

SIPOS. That is to say, it started that chemical action which is necessary to veal and spinach. Now it's received a sudden surprise. It was preparing for calf and it receives cow; now it must manufacture different digestive fluids such as are suitable to a cow.

[Eats.]

IRMA. You have a beautiful mind.

SIPOS. Don't be flattering me all the time.

[Eats. Pause.]

IRMA [without any reason]. Dear, beautiful aviator.

SIPOS. Who is the aviator?

IRMA. Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. I am a carpenter.

IRMA. For me you are an aviator. All people who have beautiful dreams are aviators.

SIPOS. What do you know about my dreams?

IRMA. You are my soul's most beautiful dream. You are my avia-

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tor who flies down from the clouds to the flowery meadow, to seek his bride.

SIPOS. What the hell are you talking about?

IRMA. Every night I dream that my bridegroom is an aviator and he flies up into the clouds and falls into the sea. And in every one of my dreams, the aviator looks like Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. And falls into the sea. And what do you do?

IRMA. I roam up and down the seashore in a white sheet and my hair is flying in the wind—I hold out my arms toward the sea and sing my mad songs to the storm. Like this—
[Sings.] Isn't that beautiful?

SIPOS. What! That—

IRMA. No. Everything. Life is so beautiful but so sad and my dreams are so sad. And Mr. Sipos is always in—

SIPOS. In the sea.

IRMA. No, in my dreams.

SIPOS. What you need is a good spanking, my child. You've begun to fidget too much. I'd know how to stop your dreaming, if I were your father.

IRMA. Oh, if you were only my father, Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. That's all I'd need.

IRMA. Filial love must be so beautiful. You darling aviator.

SIPOS. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Trying to flatter me.

IRMA. I'm not ashamed of myself, Mr. Sipos, I'm very proud that I can flatter Mr. Sipos. Dear, beautiful aviator.

[Takes plate and goes out, leaving the door open.]

SIPOS. Door!

IRMA [frightened]. Yes. Door.

[Closes it. SIPOS pours wine and seltzer, reads paper. IRMA comes in with dessert, whispers close to his ear.] Jelly pudding with nuts and sugar.

[Puts it down.]

SIPOS. Stop tickling me. Jelly pudding.

IRMA. Sure. The others got it with bread crumbs, but only Mr. Sipos is getting nuts.

SIPOS [eating]. Ah yes, that reminds me. All over the city they're saying that you danced naked in the yard at dawn.

IRMA. They're talking about it there, too?

SIPOS. I had some business in City Hall to-day and the mayor was talking about it.

IRMA. Oh—oh—

SIPOS. The members of Parliament were mentioning it, too. The government offices were also full of the news.

IRMA. The government offices?

SIPOS. All, all the secretaries of state talking of nothing else.

IRMA. Mr. Sipos, you are joking, I know. But I know where you got this from. Mr. Szasz is saying all these things about me, although it was in secret that I bathed in the rain barrel. Nobody could have seen me.

SIPOS. Yes, yes. And who was it that adopted the kitten? You were nursing the kitten and the whole neighborhood is laughing at you.

IRMA. They're talking about that, too?

SIPOS. Every one in Budapest.

IRMA. That is Mr. Szasz's doing, and I know why—he tried to kiss me.

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for things on account of you, and I get only kicks from everybody because no one understands my broken heart. And my soul is panting near your lips and all you want to do is to spank me.

[Leans against wall ~~as~~ **START** she weeps.]

SIPOS [a little embarrassed]. Stop your snuffling and get out of here.

IRMA [bawling]. It's all the same now, anyway.

SIPOS [embarrassed]. Don't you dare let me see you again.

IRMA [starts out, pauses on threshold, crying]. I know, I know: "Door!" [Closes door behind her.]

[SIPOS crosses to window up center, takes pipe, at left of table.

ADELE enters.]

ADELE. Here's the black coffee!

SIPOS. We mustn't keep this child here another moment. She has no mother, no father, you are her nearest relative, we are responsible for her. Now she is beginning to be a woman. She is restless, and all that theatre-going is not doing her any good.

[Crosses back to chair left of table. Sits.]

ADELE. Well, why shouldn't she go to the National Theatre? Anyway, I let her see nothing but the classics.

SIPOS. That's where you find most of the dirt.

ADELE [above table]. Well, I didn't write them.

SIPOS. Soon she'll be twenty years old. And some fine morning she will wake up and find that some one has—

ADELE. I think some one has already.

SIPOS. Who?

ADELE. What do I know? Mr. Cszasz . . . Mr. Szasz . . . Perhaps both of them.

~~SIPOS. Is there sugar in it?~~

~~ADELE. Two lumps. I want to talk to you.~~

[Crosses up for chair.]

SIPOS. Well, go on—

ADELE [brings chair and sits]. How are you feeling?

SIPOS. I always feel rotten on Sunday, even after dinner.

ADELE [takes toothpick]. Come to think of it, always. No matter how you feel we must settle this. Within two weeks you'll have to marry me.

SIPOS [puts down the spoon]. Do you mind saying that again?

ADELE. Within two weeks you will have to marry me.

SIPOS. You don't say!

[Continues with his coffee.]

ADELE. This is no joking matter. I am serious. It would be much wiser if you started to think this over instead of arguing about it now. Every moment is precious.

SIPOS. What's the hurry?

ADELE. Because—

SIPOS. Why?

ADELE. Because it's due.

SIPOS. What is it? . . . You mean that . . .

ADELE. No, no. I have just come to realize it. I know that you don't like to think about it, you just keep on letting it go by, day by day. . . . It will be the same to-morrow and the day after . . . but it can't go on. Some day you are up against it.

SIPOS. It isn't possible.

ADELE. Why?

SIPOS. Because I am a poor man.

ADELE. You were always that.

SIPOS. I can't have my wife support me. True, I haven't been pay-

ing for board. But at least I owed it to you.

ADELE. You'll keep on owing it to me. Or what do you think? I've got to maintain my position in this neighborhood. They think a lot of me, but every one knows that we are living together . . . and still you don't want to make me your wife?

SIPOS. We've always said that that was not necessary; you are free, I am free. It was better that way.

ADELE. I am free?

SIPOS. Well, no . . . not that way.

ADELE. In what way, then? You have all kinds of liberty, a woman has only one kind, that's certain. And in that one I am not free.

~~[Door opens, IRMA comes in.]~~

~~IRMA [excited. Crosses down above table]. Please, Mr. Sipos, Miss Adele told me that I should tell you that I was to the watchmaker's and that the watchmaker said that the watch isn't ready yet.~~

~~SIPOS. All right—~~

~~IRMA. It won't be ready until next week.~~

~~SIPOS. All right. [Long pause.] Well, are you going to stand there until next week?~~

~~IRMA. Next week? No.~~

~~[Goes out. Pause.]~~

SIPOS. Very well, I'll remember this and we'll talk about it in the fall.

ADELE. No, my boy, this isn't a question of the seasons or the way you usually do things. How can you expect to go on the way you're going? You have a few worries, too. Now you are angry because I got you out of the rut. I know you.

SIPOS. I'm not the kind that would make a husband. I am a born bachelor.

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ADELE. Well, I'm a born wife. And I gave you my best ten years.

~~SIPOS. But before those ten years, you had eight years which you did not give to me.~~

ADELE. You say that now, when I am reminding you of your duty.

SIPOS. I always said it. If not to you, to myself. Don't excite me. Because that's the most painful thing in my life, don't force me to speak of it.

ADELE. Well, then, when I was twenty, I was chambermaid for the Countess Seeburg and I became the mistress of the son of the Countess Seeburg, and the result of that for me was a house and child. Now you know.

SIPOS. Now I know what you mean when you say it as calmly as that. I can't speak of it as calmly as you do, because the blood goes to my head every time I think of it. Just to show you that I'm not trying to get out of this, perhaps I'll marry you if you want it so badly.

ADELE. It's your damned duty!

SIPOS. Look here, don't excite me any further. I am not damned and I have no damned duties, and I am a free being and I do what I please, do you understand?

[Taking wine glass.]

ADELE. You will marry me.

SIPOS. Are you trying to make me lose my temper?

ADELE. ~~I tell you.~~ You'll—

SIPOS. All right, maybe I'll marry you. It's what I ought to do. It's the moral thing to do. . . .

ADELE. Yes, and I've got the money.

SIPOS. You . . . I . . . I . . .

ADELE. Rest a little, my dear. There isn't a drop of blood in your

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cheeks. Don't stare at me so, I'm not afraid of you. You don't have to act before me. Inasmuch as you're going to marry me, in the end, you could have done it in a nicer way. But because you are a worn-out, old man, you're nasty about asking for my hand. You're nasty, and I had to force you even into that.

SIPOS. You never loved me.

ADELE. That's not true. Once I loved you for a week.

SIPOS. The first week.

ADELE. No-o-o-o! Then I really didn't. There was another week. Or two weeks. You men never know these things. It was when you had pneumonia and I thought you were going to die. ~~You had high fever and you couldn't keep the food on your stomach and you said you'd get disgusted with me, now, now I disgust you, because you are disgusting.~~

During that one week, I loved you. And then many nights, when you thought that we were almost in heaven together, I hated you so that I cried until morning.

~~SIPOS. For the Count.~~

~~ADELE. Yes, for him.~~

SIPOS. And even now you don't love me.

ADELE. No.

SIPOS. And you want me to marry you?

ADELE. Yes.

SIPOS. Why me?

ADELE. Because I've made up my mind that you are to marry me.

SIPOS. And if I don't love you either? And if I hate you as much as you hate me?

ADELE. Even then you will be the one to marry me.

SIPOS [shouting]. Why?

ADELE. Don't shout. Because I

want it. I'm not crazy about you, don't be afraid, that's not the reason. You are the lowest man in this world.

SIPOS. You . . . Now, you listen to me. . . . My dear, now the great announcement is going to take place. Calmly and coolly. I'll not marry you. If you want it, everything can remain as it was; if not, I'll take my things and go. Do you understand? I'll show you that even I am a man. And now I've had just enough of all this. And if you'll say another word, I'll—I'll— [Rises threatening.] Well! Now you've heard it. I told you that you'd be surprised. Now you've heard it.

[The door opens, Lajos quickly comes in, stands at door a moment and goes out closing door.]

ADELE [pulls him back in chair]. It's no use working up such hatred in each other. Please sit down for a moment and let's be sensible about this.

SIPOS. Don't take it so lightly. Don't try to be roxy now. You are very scared now, because you know that you've gone too far and it's all up. It's better to talk nicely, quietly, and it is just as well that things came to a head, ugly or not, because now it's over, at least. It'll hurt you—oh, don't fear, it'll hurt me, too, but now, at least, we'll part, and then somehow we'll patch up our lives, you here, I there—

[Pauses.]

ADELE. Well, Lajos. Now, I'll tell you something. It's your fault, that I'm telling you. I didn't want to hurt you, but you're responsible. I've got to tell you something now. I'm in love with Pal Csaszar.

SIPOS [starting]. I know!

ADELE. Thank God. At least you can see that until now I was considerate, and now I'm honest.

SIPOS. That isn't true.

ADELE. What?

SIPOS. That you are honest. If you were honest, you would have confessed this the first day.

ADELE. What first day? Was there a first day? Which was the first day? There are days and I am in love and every day is the first day and every day is the last day.

SIPOS. You are his mistress!

ADELE. What a coward you are. How I'd hate you now if I loved you.

~~Is that the way to talk now? Can I be his mistress? Could all this that's happening here have happened if I were his mistress? . . . Lajos . . . Lajos . . . help me, help my old stupid brain . . . help my old heart, help me. I am in love with a young man. Do you know what that means? For love of God . . . don't make me leave you to run after him and lower myself. Don't make me give him money, and don't let him beat me, don't make me kiss his hands for it. . . Lajos, you are a wise man. . . I am thirty-six years old and he is twenty-three. . . Don't you see how this is going to end? Don't you know me? Can't you understand why I cried to you from the depths of my misery asking you to marry me? Take me away, protect me!~~

SIPOS [*wipes his forehead*]. There is only one question. How far did you go with him?

ADELE. Would you dare to ask me that if I had as much as looked at him? Who was it that told you the whole thing? Wasn't it I? Would I have told you?

SIPOS. I am an honorable man. If you want to, you can go to him without thought of revenge, but answer me honestly. Does he know that you love him?

ADELE. If he knew, I wouldn't let him stay a moment.

SIPOS. And there is one more question. He loves you? Does he love you?

ADELE. Don't torture me.

SIPOS. Answer, or I'll— He loves you, doesn't he?

ADELE. Terribly.

SIPOS. How do you know?

END A woman always knows that.

SIPOS. And why didn't you throw him out? Why didn't you tell me this?

ADELE. But I did tell you! I just now told you! I can't throw him out. He is acting decently—even though he is suffering. That was just what moved me so.

SIPOS. That's not suffering. Love is not suffering.

ADELE. No? Then what is suffering?

SIPOS. An operation is suffering. Where they don't put you to sleep. That's suffering. And if one is disappointed in some one in whom he believed. And there is still another question.

ADELE. God, why are there so many questions? Don't you know everything already? Don't you understand everything already?

SIPOS. Did you let him think that you love him?

ADELE [*lachrymose*]. I'd rather you beat me than ask me that—

SIPOS. He doesn't even suspect?

ADELE. How can he possibly suspect?