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Green and White Love

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Green and White Love . . .

. . . Richard Hauck

It *was* a very fine shotgun. It was old, but it was beautiful in its age. Each barrel was carefully engraved and gold inlaid, but only a little, just enough to make it near-perfect. He had bought it second hand from a friend who had inherited it. It was not too old to be used; it had white-powder steel, not twist or Damascus barrels, but was indeed a beautiful weapon.

For a hundred skins, he thought, it *should* be beautiful. It was very fine; in his hands it was comparable to a faultless idea, clean and strong.

He looked at the gun and then he looked out at the marsh where the first light of grey morning was only beginning to create visibility and he thought, very typical marsh, this one, creek bed, yards and yards of weeds and tangles to hunt through, steel mill's stacks sticking out from behind those trees downstream.

He had hunted it many times, this Jersey marsh, and every year he saw a little more of it disappear under the Valley's industrial boom. Soon, he thought, I will have to hunt the salt marshes; and I will hate that because a gun will rust in an hour down there.

There were rabbits in the marsh edge and he had startled one or two. Perhaps, he thought, a couple of those in my coat would round out nicely a brace of fat, corn-fed mallards. But first, the ducks, for they will not wait long. Lord, the marsh is full of ducks this morning!

And they *were* there. Their sleepy garble dominated the marsh sounds. He knew that they were anxious to take leave of the creek and its hunter peril and seek the safety of the protected corn fields, where they could gorge themselves on the fallen silage cuttings. They did not stay long in the marsh and he would have only a few shots.

Beautiful, peaceful, he thought. Need this break from the scholarly grind. School is mighty rough this term.

A pair of wood ducks flashed by; he heard their first *peep peep peep* and he did not wish to shoot them, for they were scarce, and he was not sure that there was an open season on them this year. They were through instantly and gone in the mist.

Last Thursday night, he remembered. Damn! Why did that have to come up in my mind to spoil a nice morning? Out here it is different; out here the animals love and recreate and it is very simple and clean.

But those animals in the dorm . . .

The woodies came around again . . . *peep peep peep* . . . and set their wings and pitched into a pot hole not far from him.

I wonder if anyone told the Dean. That wasn't much of a fight. One punch. Probably nobody told.

The shotgun was indeed beautiful.

Up in the dormitory room there had been four or five of them shooting the bull and it hadn't been ten minutes before the subject

was women and the physical conquest of same. As usual, he thought.

He moved out into the shallow water and worked quietly and very very slowly from hummock to hummock to avoid the deep, soft-bottomed holes.

Typical thought of the modern collegiate, he reflected as he stopped and listened. Well, I was going along with the jokes until that pig got funny.

His stomach knotted when he thought of the remarks.

That bastard . . . *Wish I had a woman like your's*, he'd said. *She'd keep me nice and happy.*

I told him to shut up, but he kept on . . . He felt his stomach knot tighter.

He had walked over to the pig's chair and said, "*Watch your sewer mouth, damnit!*"

Then the pig had said, "Hey, man, when are you going to share your woman with me?"

He'd hit him. Right in the face he'd hit him and the pig had his feet up on the desk, leaning back in the chair and when the fist squashed his nose he had fallen over backwards chair and all and had landed on his head.

Lord, I thought I'd killed him . . . Indeed, there had been blood on his knuckles and on the floor, but the pig came around right away and his friends had helped him down to the john and had cleaned him up.

They never think of beauty or real love, only sex and their own satisfaction. They should hear what God must hear. He must hear those fifteen-year old girls crying in their sleep because they had had hopes and desires and very pretty dreams and they had all been slain and they had found only bitter hurt and shattered illusions. *Oh, God*, she says, *I'm not a virgin now, O God.* And God says *Was It Right?* And she sobs *no, Lord it hurt.* And the mark is permanent.

Damn them all. They are damned.

Two mallards blasted out of the reeds in front of him and woke him and startled him. A drake and a hen, he could see immediately, and he pulled down on the drake and touched off the right barrel. Feathers flew and the bright green head twisted back under the body and the bird spun splash into the water. He covered the susie and got her squarely with the left barrel and knew she was dead when he fired. He felt great.

The drake had not been hit hard, though, and when he approached, loading, it floundered away and the old shotgun misfired and the duck was lost to him in the tangles. He never found the hen either, for it would not flutter as a wounded bird would, and her brown body had become as the color of the marsh. He felt sick.

He hated himself for the act, so he thought of his girl and how she would understand the way he felt now.

I'll bet she would like a diamond . . . a little emerald cut . . . so what if little diamonds *shouldn't* be cut square? It was to keep, not to sell; if square is prettier than round to her, then it shall be square. I wonder if I am that sure I love her? I wonder if I should cut my

throat that way? kkkkkk and I'm out of circulation. I wonder if she would have me.

She is very different. *Of course we want each other*, she had said, *but babies must have parents and care and when they grow older they must have respect for themselves and respect for their parents. If it were only us, you see, it would not matter, Love would be enough. But we are not by ourselves, and we have to add many things.*

Well, he thought, maybe she is just tricky, but I know better. she is very wise. And he did respect her because that was the way he loved.

He looked for the ducks for almost an hour and then quit and was sick about losing them. He waded to the bank and started for his car.

A rabbit bounced out of a windfall and headed for the marsh. It stopped, for he had not frightened it by his silent movement. He raised the gun and sighted down between the barrels at the rabbit's ears. The cotton tail bounced towards the marsh; its bottom mostly higher than its head until it stopped and became bottom-down again.

Oh, what the hell.

He lowered the gun; he could not kill the rabbit because it was useless and the ducks were gone and all the rabbit wanted to do was reach the marsh. He tossed a stick and watched the cottontail scramble and then he turned away and began to walk out of the fringe-woods.

She would only hug him when he gave her the ring; she would put her face into his sweater against his chest and he would kiss her spun-copper hair and he would have hanged himself for sure, but their Love would be sealed.

Funny world, he thought, with diamonds for love-tokens. Someone must make a lot of money.

He didn't care. He had never felt so glad about anything as he did now because he had not killed the rabbit.

Chanson de Printemps . . .

Brise fraîche
arbre naissant
feuilles vertes
C'est printemps.

Une fleur
isolée,
Une image
de beauté.

Un chant doux
d'un oiseau
en plein air,
très nouveaux.

Une idée
puis un mot,
puis l'amour
viendra tôt.

. . . Diane Peacock