

The Kiss

Love Stories from North America

RETOLD BY JENNIFER BASSETT



With Audio

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OXFORD BOOKWORMS

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NOTE ABOUT THE LANGUAGE

In these stories some of the characters use non-standard forms, for example: *ain't* instead of *am not* / *is not* / *are not*; and double negatives, as in *You never gave him no chance*. This is how the authors of the original stories represent the spoken language that their characters would use in real life. These non-standard forms are listed in the glossary on page 61.

The Kiss

Kate Chopin



It was still light out of doors, but inside with the curtains closed and with only a little light from the fire, the room was full of shadows.

Brantain sat in one of those shadows; the shadow had moved over him and he did not mind. The darkness made him feel brave enough to stare for as long as he liked at the girl who sat in the firelight.

She was very good-looking, with that fine, rich coloring often found in women with dark brown hair and brown eyes. She sat calmly, with her hands resting on the cat that lay sleeping on her knees. From time to time she sent a slow look into the shadow where the man sat. They were talking of unimportant things, which were clearly not the things they were thinking about. She knew that he loved her – a simple, honest man, not clever enough to hide his feelings, and with no wish to do so.

For the past two weeks, at every tea party and every dinner party, he had been always at her side. She was sure he would soon ask her to marry him, and she meant to accept him. Brantain was dull and not at all good-looking, but he

was extraordinarily rich; and she liked and wanted the kind of life that a rich husband could give her.

During one of the pauses in their conversation about the last tea party and the next dinner party, the door opened and a young man entered. Brantain knew him well. The girl turned her face toward him, but did not realize that he had not seen Brantain. In three steps he was next to her chair, and bending over her – before she had any idea what he planned to do – he gave her a long, slow, burning kiss upon her lips.

Brantain slowly stood up. The girl stood up too, but quickly, and the young man stood between them, amused and embarrassed at the same time.



The young man stood between them, amused and embarrassed.

‘I ... I believe ...’ said Brantain uncomfortably, ‘I ... I see that I have stayed too long. I had no idea, that is, I must go, I ... I must say goodbye.’

He was holding his hat with both hands, and probably did not see that she was holding out her hand to him. She was deeply embarrassed, and could not trust herself to speak.



‘But I didn’t see him sitting there, Nattie! I know it’s very

embarrassing for you. But I hope you'll forgive me this once. Why, what's the matter?'

'Don't touch me, don't come near me,' she replied angrily. 'What do you mean by it? Why did you enter the house without ringing?'

'I came in with your brother, as I often do,' he explained coldly. 'We came in the side way. He went upstairs and I came in here hoping to find you. The explanation is simple enough. It was just an accident, a mistake. But do say you forgive me, Nathalie,' he said in a softer voice.

'Forgive you! You don't know what you're talking about,' said the girl. 'Let me pass. I have no idea – yet – if I will ever forgive you or not.'



At that next dinner party which she and Brantain had talked about, she walked over to him with a wide smile but with a worried look in her fine eyes.

'Will you let me speak to you for a moment or two, Mr Brantain?' she asked in a soft voice.

He seemed deeply unhappy, but when she took his arm and walked away with him, searching for a quiet corner, a little hope brightened the misery on his face. She spoke out bravely.

'Perhaps it was wrong of me to ask you for this talk, Mr Brantain, but – but, oh, I have been very uncomfortable, almost miserable since that little meeting the other day. I

wondered if you had misunderstood, and ... and perhaps believed things ...' Hope was beginning to win the battle over misery in Brantain's round, honest face. 'Of course, I know it means nothing to you, but I do want you to understand that Mr Harvy is a close friend of many years. Why, we have been almost like brother and sister, I may say. He is my brother's oldest, closest friend and he often behaves just like one of the family. Oh, I know it is so unnecessary to tell you this, it's of no interest to you at all,' she was almost crying now, 'but it makes so much difference to me what you ... what you think of ... of me.' Her voice was now very low and unhappy. The misery had all disappeared from Brantain's face.

'Then you do really care what I think, Miss Nathalie? May I call you Miss Nathalie?'

They turned into a long garden room at the side of the house, full of tall plants. They walked slowly to the very end of it. When they turned to walk back, Brantain's face shone with happiness, and hers shone with the light of victory.



Harvy was among the guests at the wedding, and he found her at a moment when she stood alone.

'Your husband,' he said smiling, 'has sent me over to kiss you.'

Her face flushed a deep pink.

'I suppose it's natural for a man to behave generously at

his own wedding. He tells me he doesn't want his marriage to break the close friendship between you and me. I don't know what you've been telling him,' he said with an unpleasant smile, 'but he has sent me here to kiss you.'

She felt she was playing her game successfully; this is what she had planned and wanted. Her eyes were bright and tender with a smile as they looked up into his; and her lips looked hungry for the kiss which they invited.

'But, you know,' he went on quietly, 'I didn't tell him this because it would be ungrateful of me, but I can tell you. I've stopped kissing women; it's dangerous.'

Well, she had Brantain and his million dollars. A person can't have everything in this world, and it was a little unreasonable of her to ask for it.



The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky

Stephen Crane



The great Pullman coach of the California Express moved quietly and smoothly along the railway. It almost flew along. In fact, it seemed that the train itself was not traveling west, but that Texas was moving east past the train windows. Miles and miles of green grass, or brown and yellow rough ground, little groups of wooden houses, woods of tall young trees – all were traveling into the east, disappearing into the far distance behind the train.

A newly married pair had got into the Pullman at San Antonio. The man's face was reddened from many days in the wind and sun, and because of his new black clothes his red-brown hands were very noticeable every time he moved. He sat with a hand on each knee, like a man waiting to have his hair cut. From time to time he looked quickly and shyly at the other passengers, then looked away again.

The bride was not pretty, nor was she very young. She wore a blue dress, with a great many buttons here and there all over it. She could not stop looking at the buttons, and they seemed to embarrass her. It was clear that she had been a cook, and that she knew she would always be a cook, and

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The waiters knew all about the newly married pair already.

‘It’s seventeen minutes past twelve,’ she said, looking up at him with a shy, but playful, smile. Another passenger, seeing this smile, turned his head away to hide his own smile.

At last they went to the dining-car. Several black waiters in their white suits watched their entrance with interest. They knew all about the newly married pair already. One of the older waiters brought their food, and all through the meal he

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Except for the men in the 'Weary Gentleman' saloon, Yellow Sky was sleeping. The salesman, who was a newcomer to the town, sat by the bar talking and happily telling stories, knowing that nobody in Yellow Sky had heard his stories before.

He was in the middle of a long story about an old man, a desk, and some stairs, when a young man suddenly appeared in the open door. He cried:

'Scratchy Wilson's drunk, and is out in the town with a gun in each hand.'

At once the two Mexicans put down their glasses and disappeared quietly out of the back door of the saloon.

The salesman, knowing nothing about Scratchy Wilson, answered, 'All right, old man. Suppose he is. Come in and have a drink, anyhow.'

But the information had hit everyone in the room hard, and the salesman began to realize its importance. Everybody had become very serious.

'Say,' he said, puzzled, 'what is this?'

The three Texans got ready to speak, but the young man at the door was before them.

'It means, my friend,' he answered, as he came into the saloon, 'that for the next two hours this town won't be a healthy place to be.'

The barman went to the door and locked it. Reaching out of the window, he pulled in heavy wooden shutters and locked them too. Immediately the bar became a different

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a fly – nicest guy in town. But when he's drunk – whoo!

Everyone was still for a time. 'I wish Jack Potter was back from San Antonio,' said the barman. 'He shot Wilson up once – in the leg. He'd come in here and get things straight.'

A little later they heard from a distance the sound of a shot, followed by three wild yells. The men in the darkened saloon moved a little and looked at each other.

'Here he comes,' they said.

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A man in a dark red shirt came round a corner and walked into the middle of the main street of Yellow Sky. In either hand the man held a long, heavy, blue-black revolver. Often he yelled, and these cries seemed too loud to be just a man's voice. They rang over the roofs of a seemingly empty town, beating against walls of silence.

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with the gun.

The two men looked at each other, with only two meters between them. The man with the revolver smiled with a new and quiet fury.

‘Tried to sneak up on me,’ he said. ‘Tried to sneak up on me!’ His eyes grew wilder. As Potter made a small movement, the man pushed his revolver furiously into Potter’s face.

‘No, don’t you do it, Jack Potter. Don’t you move a finger toward a gun just yet. Don’t you move at all. The time has come for me to finish with you, and I’m goin’ to do it my own way. So if you don’t want a bullet in you, just mind what I tell you.’

Potter looked at his enemy. ‘I ain’t got a gun on me, Scratchy,’ he said. ‘Honest, I ain’t.’

His body was getting itself ready to fight, but in his head was a picture of the Pullman, the shining glass and silver, the beautiful sea-green material on the seats, the dark shiny wood – all the wonderful things that belonged to his marriage and his new life as a husband. He spoke again to his enemy.

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A Seashore Wooing

Lucy Maud Montgomery



Fir Cottage, Plover Sands. July Sixth

We arrived here late last night, and all day Aunt Martha has stayed in her room to rest. So I had to stay in my room and rest too, although I was not at all tired and really wanted to go out and enjoy myself.

My name is Marguerite Forrester – an impossibly long name for so small a girl. Aunt Martha does not like my name, but she always uses it in full. Connie Shelmardine used to call me Rita. Connie was my best friend last year at school. We write to each other sometimes, but Aunt Martha does not approve of this.

I have always lived with Aunt Martha – my parents died when I was a baby. Aunt Martha says that all her money will come to me when she dies – but only if I please her. This means – but, oh, you do not know what ‘pleasing’ Aunt Martha means.

Aunt is a real man-hater. Actually, she doesn’t like women much either, and she trusts nobody except Mrs Saxby, her maid. I like Mrs Saxby. She’s not as stony-hearted as Aunt, although she gets a little stonier every year. I suppose I shall



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