

JOHANNES KERKHOVEN



Stuffed!

SHORT STORIES

Love on the double

When the door chimes sounded, Basil Thorncroft was lying back on the recliner, drink at hand, and he was bored. Bored with the harbour view, with the whole damned decor of the penthouse, with himself and with the world. This often happens to rich people who have not had to work for their money. It could be traced to a grandfather and father who had taken up every new issue of BHP shares offered.

The boredom had nothing to do with age. He was only thirty and all of Sydney was outside for him, but here he was alone. The women the city housed were of good shape and substance and willing, but he had a dream to which none could measure up – of a girl named Denise who two years before had upped and offed with a grazier from Deniliquin.

The rich – £200,000 a year in regular dividends – are not given to dreams of the unattainable, however, when they are, they may take it badly. Denise whom he loved so very much, had left him without warning and his ego, which is always stronger when guilt-edged, refused to recover. Part of this was because, in what his friends accepted as an agony of remorse, he had locked up his oils, canvases and easels and forsworn a promising painting career, much to the chagrin of his art-dealer and friend Jonathan Blake who wanted his pictures among his merchandise.

Basil had since regretted the pose of abandoned lover, but had maintained it as it gave him a certain romantic cachet. Rich young men whose lives and careers have been ruined by a love affair are rare enough to excite interest and he had no trouble in finding solace with sympathetic females who wanted to take over Denise's role, all the more as Basil fitted the looks of the rejected lover, being tall, lean and long of face. The phone therefore rang frequently for discreet appointments.

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