

Stormy Weather

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*"Life is bare, there's gloom an' misery
ev'rywhere,
Stormy weather;
Since my man an' I ain't together,
Keeps rainin' all the time."*

Kay finished her song and stepped slowly from the platform. She made her way through the dancing couples to a table where Brad, manager of the *Green Palace*, and Flossie, taxi dancer, sat, talking over two drinks. Kay sat down and lit her cigarette, watching the smoke drift about her. Flossie exchanged a quick glance with Brad. Neither of the three occupants at the table spoke for a few moments. Finally Brad, getting up from his chair placed his hand upon Kay's shoulder.

"Kay, if you don't want to stay here tonight and sing, it's jake with me. You can go home if you want."

"No Brad. I'll stay. I wanta stay. I wanta be here tonight."

"Sure baby. You stay here if you want. I'll have Joe bring over a couple drinks. That'll help a little. Flossie, you watch her."

"I'll be all right Brad. I'll be all right."

Brad left the table and walked towards the bar. The two girls remained. There was a dead silence. Then Flossie asked, "You wanta talk honey. It might help. I'm a good list'ner."

Kay gazed, rather absently, at Flossie, and pressed her cigarette hard into the tray.

"Talkin' might help to make ya forget some of the pain."

"There's no pain Floss. There's nothin' now."

"Sure honey I know,"

Joe—the bartender—approached the table and placed two drinks in front of the girls. He took hold of Kay's hand.

"We'll all miss him Kay. All of us."

Kay smiled sweetly at the old man, then turned again to Flossie.

"Ya know, Floss, Sam an' I first met here. Here in the 'Palace.' He'd just come in off a road job, an' I was singin'—singin' *Stormy Weather*. From then on we made that our song. Funny how people have songs which seem to hold 'em closer together. That's how our song was, an' that's how Sam and I were. Some folks might think it too silly. They might even think Sam an' I were silly, but we never cared. We had each other an' that's all that ever mattered. When you got some man to love you an' you love him that's all there ever needs to be, an' that's how we were. We used to sit here in the dark—remember Floss?—long after the place closed an' just hold hands, an' have a few drinks. Sam was a great one for that, but it never gave him no trouble. Me, I could just take one. Maybe a man's supposed to be better than a woman anyway. Yeah we'd just sit here for hours. Neither of us spoke for a long time an' then he'd turn to me an' put his arm aroun' me tight like an' whisper-kinda blowin' the hair from my ear,

'You're my gal, Kay. There's no one but you'. "Sam was sweet with words an' knew when to say things to make me happy. That means a lot. It did to me. I could never think of the right things to say, but he knew what I thought. An' then when he'd be out on one of his jobs I went aroun' here kinda dazed an' rememberin' the things he'd said to me before. That

kept me goin' when we were apart. Whenever I got too lonely I'd start to sing our song an' that brought him closer to me. Then after a few days—always right aroun' midnight—he'd come back. He always seemed to get here right when I was singin' our song. He like that. I know he did. We'd go back in the room behind the bar—Brad never cared—an' he'd be first to say, 'I missed you baby. Had a helluva time out there workin' an' thinkin' of you back here. I'm your man, Kay. I love you, baby'."

"That's all he ever needed to say an' he knew it. Ever'one liked Sam an' that made it all right too. Folks'd say when we walked by, 'There goes Sammy an' his gal. Atta boy, Sam.'"

"His gal. Yeah I really was. I guess in the life of every woman there's just one man an' Sam's mine. We both never had much, never really wanted too much—just each other. Ya can't measure love by money an' that kinda things. It just hits ya an' nothin' you can do 'bout it. Ya don't stop to ask questions either. Ya take hold an' try to get all there is to be had 'cause it only happens once. I guess I was lucky to find Sam so soon an' I thank God I had him even though it was for a short time."

"I been to see him every day at the jailhouse. We don't talk much. Just sit an' look at each other. We never need to hash words. Sam an' I are that way. Ever since the trial I been worryin' an' wonderin' what if he'd change, but he ain't changed none at all. He's still Sam, my 'stormy weather' Sam. He never meant to kill. He wasn't that kinda man. He had all he wanted. He had me an' a good woman who really loves her man is 'nough then they call him 'murderer'. What right for any guy. Somethin' said, a fight, an' has anyone to call Sam that? They don't

know him. There musta been a good reason. He wouldn't tell me why he killed. Kept sayin', 'Believe me baby I didn't mean to bring you no sorrow. I love ya too much for that. I love ya baby, I love ya.'"

"I never asked no more. Sam knows what he's doin', but the rest of 'em don't. They ain't got no right to take my man from me. I only had him for such a short time. Anyway at midnight Sam will pay for his crime, but why must we both pay? I guess I'm lucky though, Floss. At least I'll have my memories. The best memories any gal can ask for."

Kay lit another cigarette and left her chair.

"Thanks for list'nin' Floss. You're the best," she called back to the girl who sat—now alone—at the table vainly trying to hold back her tears.

The girl with the cigarette and wearing the low cut black dress made her way to the bar where Brad and a policeman were talking. Brad saw Kay and called out, "Oh Kay this fellow here has a note from Sam. He wanted you to have it before—he wanted you to have it."

The girl took the note, unfolded it and read the two sentences which were written in untidy manner upon the paper,

"Sing it Kay for your man. I miss you baby."

Kay again made her way through the dancing couples. The large clock above the bar began to ring midnight. She whispered the number to be played to the conductor of the four piece jazz orchestra and walked to the front of the platform. She stood there motionless for a few moments, until the clock read one minute after twelve, then turning to the conductor she called out,

"An' play it good an' loud Slim. I gotta man out front wants to hear this."