

**REBECCA BROWN / from The Mortal S**



knows as well or better than I! Nature does all that she can for you – later on you can send us money for the child if you like – but on the farm for the first year or two, there is not enough for a child. Whenever you wish you can come up here and see it. Do you not yourself think it would be a good idea for you to go up there? And for you also – with your career to make – if the child belongs to us, up here, rather than down there, in the city, where nowadays there seem always upsets, and the man belongs to himself or to his family any more?"

"It would be safer!" Freya admitted slowly. She drank milk and gazed out over the balcony rail, across the quiet air to where the Lärchenkägel stood cloaked in soft shadows.

"We skied down there," she said after a long silence, "and I – the first day we met! I was thinking – how the run was – so satin-smooth and free! It is a long run, we were down it in a flash! We did not think of trouble – could end it!"

"Nab! Nab!" Frau Breitner murmured compassionately. She took away the empty bowl into the kitchen and washed it. Back, she started peeling the potato. "You were always strong on his feet – Hans!" she observed. "This one of yours will be as strong! I think it is sensible; eat many apples and drink milk. Love children are almost always strong! What child can be healthy if a mother's heart is against her man? You will not have that trouble, Freya, for you loved my son!"

"This child may be a girl, of course! I have nothing against girls – though life is hard for them, as you will find. I had two myself – one died at birth after a cow had kicked me – the other – lost with diphtheria when she was five years old. Her name was Marie. Her father carried her in the little coffin he had made for her. I shut her side of the Friedhof – on the other side of the wall – a heavy journey even for a strong man, but he wanted to carry her for the last time."

## The Mortal Storm



Our sake this child will be a boy, for he  
will be the same as his father!"  
Freya whispered, "I too would like him to be the  
same as his father!"

Her eyes filled slowly with easy tears, though she had  
shed without anger, since Hans was killed.

Here, in his home, with Hans' mother still living in  
the sunshine, Freya lost the sense of hatred that had  
filled her heart. Grief seemed a simpler and more  
natural thing.

Frau Breitner broke the companionable silence that had  
settled down upon them, to remark: "I hear that your son has  
died. We need not tell them yet! But before long I must tell  
Karl. He will be pleased. He had spoken often of Hans, but  
I told him that I knew Hans had been satisfied with his life  
and eyes — he had lived. *Gott sei Dank* — before he died."

Freya bowed her head. A warm and happy smile spread  
over her empty heart. She knew now that she was more  
loved by Hans' mother for whatever addition he had  
brought to Hans.

When the others arrived, Freya rose to meet them with  
outstretched hands and a new assurance in her manner. It was  
curious to think that up here, alone with Karl and the laws  
of the fact of Freya's unmarried motherhood, rather than her  
dignity and strength, while down below — in the  
world — the same fact would make her feel ashamed and  
despised.

They were all kind to her, even Anna, who now  
knew that Hans was dead. Freya was no longer in a favored position,  
she was less fortunate than Anna, who already had Hans.  
Even though she had also to put up with a hard and  
unattractive appearance which did not justify the expectation of  
any other lover.

None of the family put themselves out to inquire what they  
had done on Freya's first visit. Since four o'clock in  
the morning they had been at work in the fields, and had climbed several

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I am tired

"I shall wake up suddenly and remember it all  
if I sleep,"

"I have given the medicine,

"I have given the medicine,

"I have given the medicine,

"I have given the medicine,