



Ephraim Moses Lilien (1874-1925), a woman

The Day I lost my Virginity

By

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I am caught unprepared on each anniversary, like a dry wadi by a sudden flood. The old memories become a messy, murky tide, rushing through the well-wrought ravines in my mind, drowning out my defences.

We grew up, my sister and I, in a mean household. My father could make a single Shekel go a long way. I was the eldest, somewhat plain, a bit shy. Always poring over rolled papyrus

while helping my father manage the books had weakened my eyes, so I was dubbed Tender- Eyed.

My younger sister's looks had given her a confident poise and engaging manners. She was renowned around our Land of the East as The Beautiful and Well- Favored. She would smile dismissively at me as we grew older, assuring my parents that she would gladly take it upon herself to provide a useful marriage. One that would enhance our house's fortunes.

And she did. A man came and fell for her, and she for him. Love at first sight for both. He abided by my father's demands and agreed to toil his way towards their marriage. There was much to be said for her choice as he was handsome, smart, with great prospects. I was secretly infatuated with him myself.

But my parents had decreed that they would not give the young one before the firstborn; it was not the way in our country. They arranged for my betrothal and picked the groom. I was a willing accomplice, for anything was better than staying at my

father's, forever beguiling his ledgers, destined to eternal spinsterhood, my worth less than that of a healthy mule.

The appointed date came.

The day I lost my innocence was warm but not too hot, the sky as blue and new as my soft imported Egyptian cotton tunic. Fifty years have passed, yet every moment sparkles in my mind with the bright hue of fool's gold.

My father sent my sister away. She was told to take the sheep herd to the farthest grazing ground, a trip usually lasting two days.

My mother directed the maids. I was bathed, combed, anointed with fragrant oils. Lathered with expensive myrrh, sultry cinnamon, and fresh bulrush, making me as soft and plush as steeped lamb.

Dressed and veiled I knelt on the woven rugs, alone in the frankincense perfumed wedding tent. I could hear the raised voices of the revelers. The commotion got closer, cheers and clapping encircling my place of vigil, eddying around the tent.

The vestibule flapped open. My groom stepped in and dropped it back, giving us the illusion of privacy. My virile husband hadn't kept me waiting long. After all, he was quite eager to get to me. *He* had worked and waited long enough.

He hunched next to me, his grin so wide and loving, reaching to raise my veil, itching to behold his bride.

In the nick of time, I whispered.

“I want to keep the veil.”

“As you wish, my love.”

He lifted my palm, placed his curved lips on the inside of my wrist, enticing a shudder that visibly ran through my body. He chuckled softly.

“Look how you tremble at my touch. How your breath is hitching. I'll be gentle, my love. I'll get you ready for me. I'll make sure you won't hurt.”

He bared my feet.

“I have dreamt about sucking your toes. Don't titter, it's the truth.”

He set out to lick and savor, administering small bites, spending long minutes darting his tongue between my digits. I threw back my veiled head and arched my back. Each swirl of his lithe mouth sent needy waves to a place between my legs that had hitherto been inert.

He thrust his head underneath my gown and inhaled deeply.

“I can smell how much you want me.” He said and he was right. To afford him better access I wore no undergarments, and even I could smell the unfamiliar moisture that had gathered at my center. I was so sensitized. Every wisp of air, coming from his clever mouth, was potent. Every caress of his lips.

He unlaced my dress and exposed me. He sucked my breasts, drawing out my hardened nipples.

“Look at these. These are mine.”

They seeped through. His kisses, his loving words marked my soul. They took root and spoiled me forever. Even now, half a century later, I still yearn.

“You are beautiful. More than I have ever imagined. In all the nights that I lay and counted the minutes to our union, I could never have guessed that my reward would be so...so glorious.”

I whimpered under my veil.

“Shhh... my dove.”

Like a blind man allowed a single glimpse of light, I wanted these moments, these stolen moments, to last forever.

“I love you so much... the years had seemed unto me but a few days...”

He hoisted himself between my spread knees.

“I’ll be gentle, my love.”

I was made for him. There was no pain.

“God, you’re so ready for me, so receptive...” It was wonderful and undulating. I moved with him, moaned with him, and felt his warm essence twitching into me. Afterwards he stayed sprawled, his weight welcome, his nose in the crook of my neck, breathing deeply.

“Was it good for you, my love? It seemed that it was. A few moments of rest and we can make love again.”

The wave that had flashed my body warm from belly to toe, that had made the blood pound in my ears, receded. I heard shuffling feet around the tent. Repressed laughs and loud whisperings permeated our small closed world.

“Is it done?” I heard my father’s voice.

“It is done!” Answered my husband. “She is mine.”

My arms were pinned so there was no way that I could have stopped him, but the charade was over anyway. My smiling, content husband lifted the semi-opaque veil.

And that was the last smile he has ever bestowed on me. His face turned into a hateful mask, and from then on he never looked at me in any other way. He wasn’t a man to hit women, but there are days I wish that he would.

“You!” He said. “You! You bitch. I thought you were your sister.”

He shot out of me and crawled backwards, creating distance between us. His hands clawed at his lips, then he sniffed at them. They must have carried my scent because he wiped them on his under tunic looking disgusted.

“From now on, whenever I come to you, you will wear your veil. Understood? You vile woman, you and your conniving father!” He was breathing heavily. He stood erect, gulped down.

“I will give you sons, Leah, but I won’t give you anything else.”

“Yes, husband.” I said.

He has kept his word.