

HERO WORSHIP

Frank Kelly, '48

"Mr. Grant will be in at three," said the girl at the reception desk. "Will you be seated, please?"

I nodded and seated myself in one of the plush chairs. A glance at the clock above the door told me I had twenty minutes to wait. That was not long for a young man who, after two years of studying at the Detroit School of art, was on the verge of breaking into the field of commercial illustrating. It had been pure luck in the first place, my having this appointment with Howard Grant, the best artist agent. I smiled as I thought of it. Kay Scott had been the best of our sketching class and the appointment really belonged to her. But for the fact that she had been married the day before she would certainly have kept it.

When she had phoned that morning to tell me she was just married and was giving up painting to become a perfect wife (a fine art in itself), I was, although pleased to hear of her marriage, somewhat disturbed at the thought that my profession was losing one so adept with the brush. Kay, I knew, would indeed be sorely missed. However, her offer that I take her letter of introduction to Grant was like pouring oil on troubled waters. Without any further ado I seized this opportunity of furthering my cause.

You may wonder how I could use someone else's letter of introduction and get away with it. It was very simple. Every year at the school the best pupil is given this letter which means a position handed to you as staff-artist on some paper or magazine. Kay had won it, and, as I now had it, I would have to take her name, just like a writer adopting a pen-name. That, by the way, is why I am now known in the illustrating business as Kay Scott.

I was having visions of success when I was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a big, well-dressed man of fifty or so who made his way to the receptionist and inquired, in a voice which reached my inquisitive ears, if Mr. Grant was in.

"No, sir," replied the girl, "but he's been expecting you. Will you please wait?"

"Ten minutes and no more," he answered, taking a seat beside me.

His curt way of speaking made an impression on me. Here was a man Mr. Grant wanted to see, not a man who wanted to see Mr. Grant. If he was an artist, I thought, he must be an extremely good one. Indeed he must be an artist, because no other people had business in this office.

The fact that I was sitting next to a great man of my future profession gave me a thrill. Indeed, thrill is a small word for my feelings then.

Turning, I gazed into his face with something like worship in my eyes. It was, to my disappointment, not the faced I had expected to see belonging to an artist. It did not resemble Norman Rockwell's, of whom I had once seen a picture, nor did it resemble Jan Whitcombe's at whom I had had a quick glance after a long wait outside the Artist's and Model's Annual Ball. It was a face, in truth, which challenged description, so I shall make no attempt to describe it there.

Distracted by my hard stare the face turned and looked at me, for I was bent over in my idolatry. With bated breath I listened as it spoke. "You paint?"

"Y-Y-Yes," I said, "I try to."

This humble attitude must have moved him to encourage me.

"Its a fine work, young fella. Keep at it. How long have you been doing it?"

"I have been studying two years," I said. Then gaining courage I decided to confirm my hopeful suspicion. "Are you," I asked, "an artist?"

He smiled patiently as though I had asked if Jimmy Doolittle could fly. "Yes," he said, "I am known as a master of the brush."

"Ah", I sighed, "and for whom have you painted?"

"Well, ever been down in the South Hills?"

"Yes, Yes", I lied.

"I painted down there," he said, "once for a Mr. Flynn and once for a Mr. La Salle."

These names were new to me but, I considered, they must be some art dealers of whom I had never heard.

"And", he added, "I painted for several city projects too."

His words had a deplorable effect on me. My eyes were popping like those of a fish. My tongue hanging out like that of a collie dog. In later years I often wondered why I had not frightened the man.

As he went on to tell me his experiences I made a mental effort to remember his words for the time when I would tell my envious friends of this great encounter.

He was in the middle of telling me Senator Peeley's fine opinion of his work, when glancing at the clock he cried, "Oh, oh, five to three! I'm late. Good-bye." And with that walked quickly out, leaving me in a state bordering on ecstasy.

I sat there in a trance-like position, causing the girl at the desk to look at me with some concern, till I suddenly remembered I had not asked him his name.

If I told my friends I had met a great artist and did not know his name they would laugh at me.

"Pardon me," I said to the girl, "but could you tell me the name of that man who just left?"

"Oh, him! He's Henry Phillips", she answered.

"He must be a great painter," I said.

"Yes, he's very good," she agreed, "though he and the boss have quarrelled lately."

"Oh, and why is that?"

"Well, you see Mr. Grant wants Phillips to paint his house white and Phillips says it's a terrible color for the city. What do *you* think?"



Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not themselves.

—(Lincoln)—

Be true to your word, your work, and your friend.

—(John O'Reilly)—