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## *Two Young Women*

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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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### Additional Keywords

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## TWO YOUNG WOMEN

by Arnold Cheyney

Two young women sit demurely in the bow of my boat. Which will I choose? Look at them - two cameos mirroring each other, framed by a parasol of yellow orange. Pure whites, yellows, and deep greens of water hyacinths capture beams of sunlight, reflecting on their faces. The skiff settles easily in the shallows, engulfed by plant life. My muscles tense in my arms, outlining themselves against the fabric of my long sleeved shirt.

Their eyes turn quickly aside when I look their way. What an interesting game they play. And what a dilemma for the unlucky one! Ah, but life is full of disappointments, as well as surprises.

I let the blades settle into the soft water foliage. May the moment never end. Julie and Laura. What beautiful sisters. God's gift to man. This man.

Julie is the younger and, perhaps, frailer of the two. Her cheeks hold the constant blush of sunset. The face narrows into a diminutive chin. A straw bonnet haloes her dark rich hair. Her arms ease gently from her shoulders. From the soft folds of her dress, long trim hands show the purest white, cool, soothing to the touch. Ah, surely, Julie would find me nonpareil.

The hyacinths struggle against my oars to no avail. I lift them slowly, steadily, allowing the water plants to slip silently from the wooden paddles into the green-gold morass. Julie looks my way, smiles. My heart stops, momentarily.

Then there is Laura. So feminine. But with flourish. A red rose graces her chapeau. Dark hair pulls away from her ears showing the whiteness of a slim neck. The nose turns upward, coquettishly. Lips straight, not full. A white organdy dress fits closely around her waist and clings tightly to her arms. Her hands lie languid. A picture of serenity and peace.

They are captivated with me, I'm sure. Neither talks. They smile. They hum. They have lived with each other so long they must know the other's thoughts.

Ah, but they cannot know that I will choose one to be my bride. Their father, a good man, although not prosperous, has given his consent.

He smiled, in anticipation I suppose. I know he wants them married. What father in his position would not? My business is secure, and I am not without good looks. My reflection in the pond testifies to that. And only twenty-eight, very eligible.

I shall decide before we dock.

*Laura. Can you hear me?*

*Of course, silly Julie. But don't look my way.*

*What do you think of him, Laura? He is rather handsome, wouldn't you say?*

*Well, he's not bad looking.*

*He's trying to decide which of us to marry.*

*Yes, I know. And father wants us married so badly. Oh, what will we do, Julie?*

*There are only three choices. He'll marry you...me...or....*

"Harold. See that large hyacinth over by the rock? I must have it or I die."

"Your wish is my command, Julie, my dear."

"Harold. There's another just behind it. Steady your foot on that rock. Be my prince. But do be careful, my love."

"Sweet Laura, I'd do anything for you."

Two young women sit demurely in the bow of a boat, eyes sparkling, bodies swaying mischievously to the soundless count of *one, two, thr....*