

"All he does is sit by that window," whispers the parlor maid, Edyth, of Harchester Castle, to the butler, Reynolds, as they stand at the drawing room doorway.

"As Shakespeare's Brutus cried, 'My heart is in the casket there with Caesar, and I must wait till it come back to me.'"

"Well said, Reynolds."

"Miss April!"

Blushing at the sound of her voice, the startled butler turns. "I didn't know you were..."

"Of course you didn't," April Dodge smiles, smoothing the velvet collar of her riding jacket. "I'm like the fog rolling in on little cat's feet."

"Ah, the literate flapper," teases her brother, Oliver, bounding down the spiral staircase behind them all.

"Uncle would have it no other way, if we are to gossip about him at all."

"Right you are, April," Oliver bows and shifts his attention outside, "Now, about our little competition."

"You will lose gracefully, I dare say," says April, pulling at the massive door of the castle as Reynolds rushes to open it for her. "To Burton-upon-Stather and back!"

Reynolds nods to Ames, the elderly stable manager, who is at the gate between two coal black Irish racing horses, each standing eighteen hands. The brother and sister rush to mount Warlock and Cannon, putting the steeds through their paces in a paddock ringed with stone walls. Without a word, April prods Warlock to jump the paddock wall, and they are off.

"Not playing by the queen's rules, I see," Oliver shouts, following suit.

April's laugh trails behind her. Oliver urges on Cannon in hot pursuit, and is nearly in line with Warlock when they clear the first of three crumbling stone walls between the castle and village. A thick drape is brushed aside within the castle as the lord of the 15th Century estate watches the race.

"Good show!"

"Sir?"

"My niece and nephew are racing again."

"I'm happy to see you enjoying yourself, sir," says Edyth. She stands on tiptoe to polish the tear-shaped crystals hanging from a fireplace luminary. "Perhaps you'll have a stroll in the garden?"

"Oh, I don't know," sighs Gideon Harchester. He glances about the high-ceilinged room, at its panoramic 17th Century Flemish tapestry, the hand-painted silk lampshades and Chinese lamp bases, Indian incense burners and Venetian lanterns, Italian Renaissance cabinets and carved Circassian walnut door.

"I rather like it in here," Gideon whispers, stroking his salt and pepper beard. His foot taps on the Persian rug as he lifts binoculars to glimpse at the riders at the crest of the hill.

"Jolly good to have the two of them here to enjoy the estate."

"Miss April even looks like Lady Katherine, doesn't she, sir," says Edyth, nodding at a portrait of Gideon's deceased wife above the marble mantel.

"Oh no. Not at all. Why, Lady Katherine was far more beautiful, Edyth," says Gideon with some irritation. "She had hair that flowed to her waist, not chopped off around her ears like these Cake Eaters or Flappers, whatever April is."

"Yes, sir," whispers Edith.

"I brushed her hair every evening of our married life."

"I meant no harm, sir," the maid says, dusting with great fury.

"Katherine's skin was soft and pink, not tanned to leather from weeks lazing on the Mediterranean."

"I'll be going to polish the silver now, sir," Edyth says, wiping her brow and fleeing.

The grumbling Lord Gideon stares out the window at a large swatch of his ancestral home. He busies himself observing a gardener trimming hedges that form an archway to his once-adored rose garden. His gaze moves past the stooping gardener to rest on a flock of sheep grazing on the same hill April and Oliver's horses had thundered across moments earlier.

The view calms Gideon. Someday, he supposes it will prod him out to the garden again, then to ride and jump the stone walls, to greet merchants in the village, and dutifully drone hymns in the local minster.

Just a few months earlier, Gideon had set aside these elements of his well-ordered life... to grieve. The lord approaches grieving as an unwitting apprentice. His life had been so graced by robust health and his Lady Katherine's unfailing good humour that he has no skills to handle her sudden, if not wholly unexpected loss. Now awake each dawn, Gideon gropes about for the proper attitude. Grimly, he forces his shoulder to the heavy wheel of another twenty four hours without his wife. Afternoons, the butler reads aloud from "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare." Edyth, Lady Katherine's former gentle maid, recites passages from the King James Bible at night. In between barely touched meals and fitful sleep, Gideon converses in whispers with the dead Katherine.

"Remember when we first sat together at the Captain's table on the voyage in 1903, darling, you the loveliest 19-year old on the whole Atlantic. I bribed a cabin boy to find out that you were an orphan traveling with your aunt, and the young man with you was your brother Matthew, thankfully not my rival, or I would have had to toss him overboard."

Gideon continues recollections aloud when he dines with April and Oliver, son and daughter of Katherine's brother who had stayed abroad to make a fortune in Edinburgh.

"Your Great Aunt Daphne was determined to return Katherine to Montana after a summer abroad, and I was equally keen on never letting her out of my sight.."

"Father told us he and Aunt Katherine once stole away from a London hotel to stay in the village and rendezvous with you," says Oliver.

"Yes, I looked out the drawing room window one morning and there she was, riding bareback, Western-style across the hills from the village, her hair flowing behind her."

"She was so pretty and gay," April sighs. "I always wanted to be just like her."

"Everyone adored her in the village," sighed the widower.

"The poor children she arranged to stay the summers loved her, too," Oliver says. "She played games with them and had parties and led such very intricate treasure hunts."

"Oliver, remember all the young friends we made from Leeds and Manchester when we came to visit," asks April. "We thought Aunt Katherine was a fairy godmother to so many children when she couldn't have ...I mean."

"Oh, it's a blur of faces and seasons at the moment," says Lord Gideon, ending an awkward silence. "Twenty-two years of entertaining here, traveling the world, collecting beautiful things, of Katherine's fawning over Christmas presents and beagle puppies,

whipping me at lawn tennis, almost at croquette." Gideon falls silent.

"Uncle, may we listen to my gramophone?"

Gideon, handsome in dinner jacket and scarf, smiles faintly across the candlelit table at the animated face of his niece in frothy lavender flapper's gown. He closes his eyes and listens to her lilting voice as she relates the wicked details of her race with Oliver.

"I positively throttled him."

"There's always tomorrow," says Oliver. "I dare you to beat me starting on your mark."

"Come with us, Uncle!" April says, leaning across to pat his arm.

Mesmerized, Gideon agrees with a nod.

But next morning Edyth is ringing her hands as Gideon dons his velvet riding hat. His boot heels tap on the marble floor as he paces, waiting for a tardy April and Oliver.

"But I thought first you could have a garden outing, sir."

"Another day."

"It looks cloudy today."

"Edyth, I am going riding and that is that!"

Lord Gideon would tell no one he feels terribly shaky when mounting Ivory, Katherine's wild-eyed favorite ride. Prancing in the paddock with the two whinnying buddies, Warlock and Cannon, a skittish Ivory snorts and rears. Gideon leans forward, gently patting and talking to the steed until he calms him enough to obey the rein. April and Oliver are waiting by the stables.

"Uncle, we don't have to race," says Oliver, glancing back at Edyth, arms folded across her chest in the castle doorway.

"Nonsense, let's go."

"You'll stop if it gets tedious, right Uncle?" calls out April, now uneasy about the morning plans.

But Gideon is too far ahead to hear April. Edyth watches the three riders cross the first meadow, galloping for the crest of the hill. The black race horses pass Ivory and seem to fly across the wall. Gideon presses Ivory for speed and a high jump. But the horse fails to clear the wall.

"Reynolds!" Edyth cries out as she runs to find the butler.

"He's fallen?"

"We must fetch the doctor."

Reynolds and Edyth watch Ames driving a horse drawn cart into the meadow toward the fallen rider and his grazing horse. April and Oliver are doubling back and reach their uncle as Ames halts his cart.

Nearly unconscious, the pale Gideon is unashamedly toying with death. He imagines Katherine is calling him from beyond this world. Hallucinations of her mix with flitting glimpses of the humans who carry him to the cart and speed to the castle. Edyth and Reynolds hover over Lord Gideon from the castle's courtyard to the drawing room couch. They are startled as he points insistently to his window chair. He leans his head against the burnished leather, and allows the servants to set his feet upon a needlepoint-covered stool. Reynolds pulls off his boots.

"And Ivory?"

"Ames is checking Ivory, sir," says Reynolds.

"Can you tell us where you are hurt?"

At those words, tears spring from Gideon's eyes, rolling down his cheeks to hide in his

beard. He waves away the circle of loving and concerned faces. When Cecil Barnes, the village physician, arrives at the castle, the butler takes him aside before he opens the drawing room door.

"You may find him rather stoic, Doctor."

Dr. Barnes opens the door, and crosses the room to Gideon, sighing. "Not long ago I came here for Lady Katherine, and a sad day that was."

"Indeed, the grave markers around hers in the family cemetery are for people who lived to be forty and fifty years older, so I would say you are right, Barnes." Gideon winces.

The doctor frowns at the odd tilt of the lord's arm. "Off kilter, it is?"

"Yes."

"Let's have a look."

With the doctor's help, Gideon shrugs off his riding jacket, nearly fainting with the effort.

"This won't do," says Dr. Barnes. "I'll have to strap it in place."

"Have done with it."

A few moments later Lord Gideon leans back again, his face beaded with sweat and tears.

Dr. Barnes signals Reynolds to come forward with a tray of brandy and snifters. The doctor settles onto the couch, sipping his brandy.

"Would you tell me if anything else hurt?"

"My heart."

"Good God, man!"

"I don't mean physically, Barnes, I am sick at heart."

"Expect that, Lord Harchester," he says, nodding. "Grief works itself out in its own time."

"But I just want to gallop through it and come out on the other side."

"When you're ready, sir, you tell your mind and body when that will suit you."

"I barely wish to breathe."

"One day you won't breathe." The doctor stands, clasps his black bag, and leaves the castle.

With so little resistance to his gloom in the day's ahead, Gideon mopes in the drawing room, waiting for his shoulder to mend. Bored, he agrees to play a game of cards with chatty April. Next day he notices a look of unease on his nephew Oliver's face, and presses him to know what troubles the young man.

"I'm not sure how father and mother will feel but I've rather fallen in love with a girl."

"They'll be happy for you, my boy."

"Aunt Katherine would be, but well, Mary is not what my parents would have in mind."

"Mary?"

"A girl I met here ten summers ago whose family lives in Leeds."

"Ah, one of Lady Katherine's ...children?" asks Gideon. "Well, invite her to tea."

Strangely warmed by Oliver's confession, the next day Gideon calls Reynolds to the drawing room to sift through piles of correspondence he had left to gather dust after Lady Katherine's death.

"Sir, this appears to be an invitation to a ball held last month."

"Toss it out."

"These are solicitations for Lady Katherine's pet charities, sir."

"The world still has such use for Katherine," says Gideon. "I probably should have been the one who died."

Oliver stands at the doorway. "Uncle, you made it immensely possible for Aunt

Katherine to spread her bounty of goodwill."

Smiling, Oliver leads a willowy young woman into the room, so graceful she seems to float.

"A privilege to see you again, Lord Harchester."

Gideon nods agreeably at Mary. "Forgive me, I don't remember."

"Sir, do you want me to show you the rose bushes we planted together?"

"I suppose around tea time we could stroll in the garden, but you two should walk now."

Outside the drawing room, Edyth gazes heavenward and smiles, a Cheshire cat. "Finally, he'll do a walk in the garden, my lady!"

"Reynolds, now let us make three piles of solicitations, Katherine's pet charities, her pride, and her promises," says Gideon. "We'll do something with all of them, I suppose."

The lord and his butler proceed through most of the mail until Lord Gideon lifts a letter bearing Katherine's handwriting. It is addressed to him. Paling, he waves the butler out, and begins to read.

"Darling, if you are reading this, you are making progress on the strange path life set before us. I beg you next to please, please take my place in the charities. There is so much to do for the poor children of the world. Second, I hereby challenge you to a game beyond the drawing room and my grave. In the spirit of a merry treasure hunt, I have arranged to hide messages to you. Be a good boy and listen to me. To begin with, they are in the garden, the conservatory and the stable tack room. Each contains a clue for the next hiding place, all the way to the village green and minster. When you arrive at our pew at the

minster, I will be there with you in spirit, darling, ever thanking heaven

I knew such a magnificent, kind and generous man. Get going, now.

Rose garden, first. conservatory, tack room, apple orchard. The rest is yours to discover in our game and your new life."

The lord stays alone for hours, but at tea Gideon surprises everyone by calling for champagne. He insists Edyth and Reynolds join the party and all raise their glasses, "To Lady Katherine!"

It is then Gideon takes young Mary's arm and strolls toward the gardens. "Let's get started," he says, patting her hand. "Katherine has my work cut out for me!"

. . .

"Please, Grandpa, we can't watch this whole dumb movie *again!*"

"Why not, sport, nothing better to do on a rainy day?"

"But I don't want to see it over and over!"

"Oh, pipe down! Your mother will be back from work soon, and you can go downstairs to your own TV."

"Then go to the part where he falls off the horse cause it's funny."

"How could you think it's funny a man gets hurt?"

"It's just a movie, Grandpa!"

"Hey, you two. What's going on?"

"I happen to like this old movie."

"And I don't!"

"Well, it's starting to clear up so let's all go out for a walk."

"To the park, Mommy?"

"How about by the pond?"

"Not me, but you two run along."

"Dad, you know mother would want you to go out and get some fresh air."

"I don't want to. When you come back, I'll play the home movie video."

"Like when Mommy was in school?"

"Oh, I've got movies going back years and years to when your grandmother and I were first married, and your mom was a baby in the crib."

"See you later, Grandpa."

. . .

"I don't know what I'm going to do, when all he does is sit grieving by that television."

"Dr. Barnes says grief works itself out in its own time."

"Who, son?"

"Cecil Barnes. Say, why don't we make Grandpa a treasure map from Nana?"

"A treasure map?"

"Yeah, so he has to go to the backyard and Home Depot and Burger King and..."

"So he gets out of the house!"

"And to church."

"Why, yes, we'll make it when we get home, kiddo."

"And to horse races."

"Let's just stop this hunt at church."

"Nana is there in spirit."

"Where do you get such ideas, honey?"

"It's the only thing left on Grandpa's TV."