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Washington, D.C., 1888

THAT YEAR THERE was a particularly fine Indian summer. For those foreign residents of this capital city who had alternately burned and sweated profusely during July and August and who could not afford to leave for cool cottages on Cape Cod, it was doubly welcome. Mind you, here in the old colonial city of Georgetown with its splendid trees, relief from the usual breathless days could be obtained. Lucy Graham lay back in the swing beside the man she loved more than anybody or anything in this whole world and idly watched the blue sky appear and disappear behind leaves. Just round the corner the Bliss Estate with its friendly name, Dumbarton Oaks, ran from high ground all the way down to the waters of Rock Creek. A bridge from the Dumbarton Oaks side straddled the clear waters of the creek and gave access to Virginia: home of fine horses, gracious living and, of course, several presidents starting with George Washington.



‘Maybe I should have put Washington first,’ thought Lucy idly, ‘before the horses.’

She spoke for the first time in several somnolent moments. ‘Have you ever met anyone who was born and bred in this city, Father?’

Colonel Sir John Graham lay back in the garden seat beside his daughter and considered the question.

‘No,’ he finally said. ‘Can’t say I have. Everyone at the embassy is a foreigner. All the politicians, too, come from other states.’

With his heel he set the swing in motion again, and father and daughter drifted back and forward under the massive trees watching the sun chasing its beams in and out of the leaves above them. They revelled in the time that they could be alone together. Beside them, Amos, Lady Graham’s general factotum, finished sweeping the afternoon’s drift of leaves while he listened to their gentle well-bred Scottish voices. He loved the sound and paid little attention to the content, unless it was directed at him. It would never have occurred to him to say, ‘Look at me, colonel, sir. I been born here, and my daddy and my daddy’s daddy.’

‘Not many more days of sitting outside, Lucy.’

It was September and already chill winds were blowing down from the north.

‘Mother will be pleased. She finds swinging with one’s own father a complete and utter waste of time.’

They laughed together.

‘Not that I agree with her,’ Lucy went on lazily. ‘Poor mother. To be stuck with a bean-pole for a daughter.’

‘A delightful bean-pole.’ Colonel Graham stopped the swing and looked measuringly at his daughter. ‘You have my height, Lucy, but your mother’s looks and her grace. I can’t understand why this garden isn’t swarming with teenage boys sporting boating blazers and carrying tennis rackets. There are enough of them in the diplomatic community.’

‘I inherited your brains too,’ said Lucy flatly. ‘I cannot simper.’

‘You refuse to simper.’

‘I cannot chatter.’

‘You refuse to chatter.’

‘Would you have me different?’

‘Not me, my darling child. A woman like you, Lucy, is rare as a butterfly in December.’

A butterfly in December. How sweet he was, and how poetic for a soldier. She looked at his clear-cut profile.

‘We must look for a collector of rare butterflies,’ she said lightly and watched him laugh.

‘Auguste Arvizo-Medina?’

Lucy started up from the swing in mock horror. She was enjoying this repartee, knowing perfectly well that they could not speak so boldly and openly if Lady Graham were

present. 'Good heavens, no. Would you have me mother of at least five fat babies in as many stultifying years?'

'He says he is fascinated by you.'

'I would bore him to distraction when I refused to turn into a brood mare. I should have been a man, Father, and then I could have, could have . . .'

'Followed me to military college?' The colonel spoke the words lightly, rather as though he and his daughter shared some absurd joke.

'Rather to Oxford.'

There, she had said it. Lucy looked at him from under her eyelashes, but there was no shock on his face.

'It's not the way of our world, my dear. Don't despair.'

'American women go to college, Father.'

'My dear child. I will not have my only daughter labelled a blue-stocking and, besides, there is something so unfeminine about the college girls we have been obliged to meet.'

'Perhaps because they have had to fight like men for a place they should have by rights, although you must agree that Americans have been so much more modern in their thinking than we Scots. It's perfectly acceptable for well-bred American girls to be educated. Mount Holyoke Female Seminary must have been in existence for almost fifty years – and there's Vassar Female College, and Wellesley, and Smith.'



RICH GIRL, POOR GIRL

‘You’re remarkably knowledgeable, Lucy,’ said Sir John drily and decided to change the direction of the conversation; he was a brilliant strategist. ‘You can still use that not inconsiderable brain.’

‘How?’ Lucy almost jumped from the swing and he registered, with appreciation, the compelling picture she made as she walked about the garden. ‘By deciding how much chicken feeds two hundred guests, or how much cream is needed to pour over those peaches Amos gathered this morning? Women have brains, Father, and I have been luckier than most. Because of Kier, I am as qualified as any man to enter a university.’

She sat down again beside him and he set the swing into gentle motion. They did not speak but Lucy knew that her father, Colonel Sir John Graham, military attaché to her Britannic Majesty’s embassy in Washington, D.C., had to be thinking, like her, of the son of their neighbour in Scotland. Kier Anderson-Howard had been Lucy’s friend since early childhood. Having had a bad riding accident when he was twelve years old, for nearly five years he had been unable to continue his education in the public school system. Because his parents did not want him to be educated alone, they had invited their neighbours, Sir John and Lady Graham, to send along their daughter to share Kier’s tutor.

A new world had opened for Lucy: Latin, Greek, Mechanics, German, Philosophy, Mathematics, a world



away from the History (abridged), French, English literature (censored), and Drawing, which was the bulk of what Miss Bulwark had been able to teach her.

‘That prissy girls’ school where you were enrolled would have collapsed from shock at your ignorance if you had ever joined them, Lucy,’ Kier had teased after their first morning together in Herr Colner’s classroom.

‘I’m glad dear Mr Colner did not,’ Lucy had said seriously and had gone on to astound herself, her friend, and their tutor with the remarkable agility of her mind. By the time Kier was pronounced strong enough to return to Fettes to take the entrance examinations for the university, Lucy was as ready and as able as her schoolmate. But in 1886, no one considered sending young ladies to university with their brothers.

She had joined her father in his appointment to Washington, where she received long interesting letters from Kier who did not try to spare her maidenly blushes – knowing she had none – and told her about everything he experienced, first at Fettes and later at Oxford University.

‘What of Kier, then?’ asked the colonel into his daughter’s silence. ‘You will come out next winter and then . . .’ He did not add that his daughter, even at sixteen, should be thinking of a future with a good husband.

‘Kier is my best friend,’ said Lucy, and then, because he was her father and she had always known that she could

tell him absolutely everything and anything and never be judged, she poured out her feelings. 'I love him desperately. I think I always have . . . even before the accident, I mean. That changed everything. Not just my education but . . . my relationship with Kier. That first year when he couldn't move, I did so much for him. I saw him in so many moods, dealing with pain, with fear, being sick. There's little romance left when someone has wiped up your vomit.'

She lost herself in her memories and her father looked at her in wonder. His sheltered, protected daughter cleaning up vomit! Her mother would faint at the very idea.

'I read to him in the afternoons sometimes when Herr Colner would rest. He was ill too, you know, some wasting sickness from years of privation: the Jews have never been well treated, have they? I wonder why that is? I hardly think God chooses to punish them for eternity for denying Christ.' Lucy shook away that thought impatiently. 'Anyway, Father,' she went on, 'Kier could not bear his mother about him – she fussed so, and wept constantly over his broken bones. It was easier to clean him up and dispose of his soiled nightshirts than to send for her. I cared deeply, but somehow I was able to do what had to be done for him with the minimum of hysteria. Still, I doubt that he sees me as a delicate flower; a butterfly, if you will.'

‘He will see quite a change when we return home next Christmas. You will be sixteen; your hair will be up. Your flashing eyes will devastate him.’

Two years in one of the most sophisticated and richest cities in the world, albeit one that was still classed as a hardship post by Her Victorian Majesty’s Government, had had quite an effect on Lucille Graham. Her father could hardly wait to see the effect she would create in London and Edinburgh salons.

‘Sir John, stop filling the child’s head with nonsense.’ They had not heard Lady Graham glide elegantly out of the French doors, managing her skirts with a grace that Lucy would always envy. ‘Senator du Pay and his son have called. Lucille, I would like you to meet the du Pays. They are very wealthy and, what is more important, very influential.’

‘I’d like to meet them, Mamma. Max du Pay is the one with the matched bays.’

Lady Graham threw up her head – almost, thought Lucy wickedly, like one of those self-same horses. ‘Not one word about horses.’ Elizabeth Graham looked at her daughter, almost ‘out’, and all that was in her head was books, horses, and books again. Where had she gone wrong? John’s influence. Not for the first time she wished that she had been able to give her husband the son they had both wanted. ‘Go and tidy yourself, Lucy. Max du Pay

is already at Harvard. He is used to sophisticated young women, not hoydenish schoolgirls who can think only of books and horses.'

Lucy went upstairs, but not to her room. She went to the circular landing where she and her father had their favourite indoor retreat. It was no more than an enlarged landing really, and was full of huge, comfortable, but decidedly unfashionable, armchairs, bookcases and dog baskets.

From the huge windows, almost as tall as the room, which flooded the staircase with light in all but the depths of the Washington winter, she could see the street and, more importantly, the horses Max du Pay was driving today. She caught her breath. Oh, such beauty!

'Aren't horses the most beautiful creatures God put on the earth, Digby,' she told the elderly Sealyham who had merely raised one eye by way of greeting. 'If you weren't too old you would adore to chase this pair; they're black as night and they shine like polished jet, like Mamma's mourning beads. Oh!'

She remembered that her mother was waiting for her and without doing a thing to her appearance, ran downstairs. She had time to stop and compose herself before entering the drawing room and, because she was late, the guests were already drinking tea and she had the opportunity to look at them before they saw her. She knew

Senator du Pay by sight, but she had never seen his son before. *What do they feed them on in the South?* she asked herself, for if her father and the American senator were tall, this young man was a giant.

He turned and looked at her and the oddest feelings ran through Lucy.

‘Why, here is your little girl, colonel, sir,’ drawled the young man and his eyes, as he looked at Lucy, registered her blush and laughed at her.

She lifted her head and ignored him completely.

‘Senator du Pay. How do you do, sir. Father and I were just analysing your dissertation to Congress this week.’

The senator took her hand and tucked it into his arm as he led her to a seat in the window. ‘My dear young lady. I can’t believe such a beautiful young woman bothers her pretty little head with such dull stuff. Lady Graham, you British mothers are to be congratulated. Beauty, charm, and brains too. Why have I not met this delightful young lady before?’

Lady Graham revelled in the game the senator was playing; he and his son could tell the tale being told by the long hair dancing on Lucy’s shoulders and catching the light from the candles already burning on the tables. ‘Senator, you know perfectly well our daughter is not yet out.’

He pretended surprise. ‘Why, ma’am, she will lay waste this city with her beauty as her compatriots once wasted it with their bullets.’

Lucy looked at him. She was not unused to such silly talk; it was the way all her parents' elderly friends flirted with her, but the senator's son said nothing and Lucy was intensely aware of him. He was laughing at her. Why? She put her nose – classically straight, thank heaven – even higher in the air.

'I will be too busy to take Washington, sir. Why, Father and I were discussing college this very afternoon.' Not completely true, but she would not have Maximilian du Pay look at her as if she was nothing but a silly schoolgirl allowed for a moment to a grown-ups' party.

'Together with Father's speech.' He laughed down at her, down. Lucy was used to looking into the eyes, if not over the heads of most men.

Why was he teasing her? He made her uncomfortable. Never, ever, had she been so aware of a man. She threw herself into the verbal fray.

'And many, many more important things.'

'Oh, shush, Lucy.' She had gone too far and even Father was angry. But he said nothing; that would come later.

'Lucille, would you go to the kitchen and ask Amos to bring those peaches we picked from the glasshouse this morning? I would like the senator to try them.' Lady Graham was ushering her daughter to the door. 'And then you go straight to your room, young lady,' she whispered as she opened the door.



Lucy almost ran to the kitchens. She was angry and embarrassed and she hated that supercilious, overbearing Maximilian – what a stupid name – du Pay. It was his fault that she had been rude. She would never, ever, ever speak to him again. He would beg but she . . .

From the kitchens came the sound of a crash, a scream, a muffled groan. Lucy picked up her skirts and ran. She opened the door and saw the cause of the commotion. Female, the young black maid, had obviously tipped over a kettle of boiling soup and it had splattered Amos as he was in the act of slicing some of the splendid peaches. The knife had slipped and buried itself, not in a peach but in his hand. Lucy did not even pause to think.

‘Stop screaming, Female, and get me some water. Sit down, Amos, and keep your hand up.’

‘This ain’t no job for you, Miss Lucille,’ whispered the old man. ‘What will your mamma say?’

Lucy knew perfectly well what her mother would say, but she lied. ‘She’d say that we should get you to a hospital as soon as possible. (Hospital: doctor. How did one staunch blood? Should the knife come out or be left embedded in the wound? Tell me, tell me.)’ ‘Female, go to the drawing room and ask Sir John to come down.’ She did not wait for the girl’s flustered protests: ‘The drawing room. I doesn’t go in there when there’s white folks there,’ but calmly went on staunching the blood with a



cloth. 'Right now, Female.' The girl threw her apron over her head and ran.

'I hope she doesn't bump her head on something,' she said and in spite of the pain Amos grinned. 'She know her place, Miss Lucille, and it ain't in your mamma's drawing room.'

They could hear the servant girl shrieking out her story and in a minute or two the kitchen was invaded. Lucy ignored the du Pays.

'An accident with a knife, Father. We'll take him to George Washington, or would Georgetown be better?'

The four men, three white, one black, looked at one another, and one of the white faces flushed.

'It don't make no never mind, colonel, sir,' said Amos gently. 'I can't go to them fine hospitals, Miss Lucille; that's for white folks. I thank you for your help: she didn't swoon or nothing, colonel, sir. I can take care of it myself now, Miss Lucille. Female can sew it up with the thread she been using to sew up that chicken. The knife ain't cut nothing important, and now she's stopped screaming she'll do a good job. Won't you, Daughter?'

Female wiped her tear-stained cheeks and nodded. 'Pappy's learned me lots about wounds, colonel, sir, Miss Lucille. I'm sorry I yelled so; I just hates the sight of blood. How can you stand it, Miss Lucille? Ain't it indelicate in a young lady – and a white one at that – not to swoon?'

Lucy ignored everyone but her father. She was hardly aware of Maximilian du Pay leaving the room.

‘It’s bleeding badly. He should see a doctor. I just don’t know what to do.’ She turned to her father, the soldier. ‘You must have dealt with wounds?’

‘I got a ointment for bleeding, Miss Lucille,’ said Amos before the colonel could answer. ‘You’ll see, I’ll be fine tomorrow. Female’ll go get her mother when she’s done sewed me up and Abra will look to everything here.’

The young American came back, his indolence gone. ‘I’ve arranged the carriage, Father. I’ll take him to Freedmen’s myself, with your permission, of course, colonel. It’s 13th and V Street, I think? I’ve never been before.’

Was that a glance of admiration he gave Lucy? She could not be sure. More likely it was surprise, distaste even. Hadn’t he heard Female say her behaviour was indelicate? Well, she didn’t care. Look at them, look at them just taking over, putting the little woman back in her place. She followed the men out of the kitchen and wearily made her way up to her bedroom to await the tirade that was sure to come. She felt certain that she could write the script herself.

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In the end, it was not her mother who came to her room but her father.

‘Mother must be furious,’ said Lucy lightly when she saw his set face.



RICH GIRL, POOR GIRL

‘You amazed us both this afternoon, Lucy, and we’ve talked. Mamma loves you and she wants for you the things she enjoyed – a coming-out, new dresses, parties, dancing. But she is broad-minded enough to see that those treats don’t interest you . . .’

‘They do, Father, of course they do, but . . . not so much as . . . as doing something really special with my life.’

‘I can think of nothing more splendid for a woman, Lucy, than being a good wife and mother,’ said Sir John seriously, ‘but we’ve decided – to use a horsey term – to give you your head for a while, till it’s out of your system . . .’



A few weeks later, Lucy found herself a very young student at the very young Smith College for women in Northampton, Massachusetts. She decided not to think of Maximilian du Pay and the extraordinary effect he had had on her, and after a few months she forgot all about him and everything else that kept her from learning, learning.



She loved Smith; she loved New England. She both loved and hated being surrounded by so many people. Lucy had never been to school; her largest class had had one classmate. Here there were dozens of bright, articulate, young women. Classes of five, ten, twenty girls were uncharted waters for Lucy and she set sail eagerly. Often, though, she had to steal away from the laughing, loving companionship and seek solace and a kind of inner rebirth. For this she



would wander in the grounds among the age-old trees. At all times of the year, the college was lovely. In the autumn – the Fall as her American classmates called it – the grounds were breathtaking. How was it possible for leaves to turn those colours, and all with an intensity that she had seen nowhere before? Yellow, red, brown . . . but yellow, red and brown that had been ignited by a fire that was only to be found in these New England states. The trees burned their way into winter. The leaves crackled on the branches as they struggled to free themselves from their tenuous hold on life and they crackled under Lucy's soft leather boots as she wandered among them. She wrote long letters, weekly to her parents and monthly to Kier Anderson-Howard. She told him of her delight in the formal education for which Herr Colner had so ably prepared her. She told him of her pleasure in joining five, ten, fifteen alert brains in healthy argument and discussion.

I loved being educated with you, Kier, but I have just realized that because of that education, I have knowledge but no friends besides yourself and I did not know what I missed. I would not have it different, but now I am happy to catch up with my own sex. Already I have been invited to spend an exeat weekend with a classmate who lives in *New York City* and I have invited another, who lives in

Oregon – which, as you know, is about as far from Massachusetts as it is possible to go without falling into the Pacific Ocean – to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with us in the capital. What fun to introduce an American to her own historic buildings. Mirabelle, from New York, is to take me to the Opera and to dine in a *restaurant* with her huge family of brothers. How decadent I am become – exactly what Mother feared!

In a later letter she asked him what on earth she could do with the degree she would soon earn. Even to Kier, she could not mention the only real idea she had had, which was growing so strongly that it threatened to blot out everyone and everything. She felt that she was two different people: Miss Graham who lived in Massachusetts, and little Lucy who lived in Washington, D.C. Little Lucy went home at the holidays and did the things her mother wanted her to do, although the trip to Scotland and the presentation at court had had to be sacrificed on the voracious altar of further education. On her last Thanksgiving holiday from Smith, Lucy returned home like every other student but, unlike most students, she found herself heading for a recital at the Russian embassy.

They had almost been late. Female, Amos's daughter, had been announced to be in a *delicate* condition.

Female was unmarried and Lucy found herself fascinated and wanted to know the whys and the wherefores. Her unseemly interest in something that had caused friction between her parents – Lady Graham wishing to dismiss the girl and Sir John more interested in keeping excellent servants like Amos and Abra happy – had caused Lady Graham to remember Lucy's own wayward and unfeminine behaviour several years earlier; she had never really mentioned this, no matter how hard it was, but it had gnawed at her occasionally. Now she lapsed from self-imposed virtue a little.

'A girl in your position, with your advantages, should have nothing to do with such things, Lucille. I still can't bear to think what the du Pays thought when they found you alone in the kitchen with a black male servant . . . I'm quite sure their friendship cooled a little.'

'Mother, how can you ignore Amos's very presence one minute and the next be so conscious of it?' Lucy had teased.

'They found you doing what no well-brought-up young woman should even contemplate doing.'

'Florence Nightingale is a lady, Mother, and she did a great deal more than bind up a bleeding wound.'

'One admires Miss Nightingale. One does not necessarily wish one's only child to emulate her. Besides, she did it for our soldiers.'

‘Oh, and of course none of them was black. I wonder if it would have made a difference to her.’

The colonel stirred on his seat. The quarrel between his wife and his daughter was becoming a little too heated. ‘Lucille, your mother is right to concern herself with the opinion the world has of you.’ He laid his hand gently on Lucy’s satin-covered knee and she decided to argue no more.

‘I’m sorry, Mother, but I’m sure you didn’t want poor Amos to bleed to death. He is, after all, an invaluable servant.’

‘And could have been looked after by other servants: that hysterical daughter of his, for instance, with the ridiculous name.’

‘Feh-ma-lay,’ smiled Lucy, drawing out the syllables the way their servants did. ‘It’s rather sad, actually, that they couldn’t pronounce Female, couldn’t read . . .’

‘And where, by the by, was Abra during that incident?’ Lady Graham interrupted, a sense of injustice gnawing at her. She had been quiet for too long; she would have a little satisfaction now, and Lucy had brought it on herself. ‘Now that I think about it, I don’t remember giving her time off mid-week.’

‘We did discuss all this, Elizabeth,’ the colonel put in. ‘Remember, my dear, Amos had asked me when you were with your dressmaker. It seemed only fair; they do work such very long hours.’

Lady Graham sighed. Her husband would never learn how to treat servants properly; they would do exactly as they liked if she didn't keep a firm hand on the reins.

The carriage drew up at the embassy and Lady Graham was considerably cheered when she saw that her daughter was to be partnered with the very handsome and very wealthy Russian Count Fyodorov. She smiled complacently. Lucy could make a beautiful countess, if she so chose.

Lucy well knew what was going through her mother's mind, and because she loved her she decided to be good and to charm the count as best she could. There was another more compelling reason to shine with the Russian. Almost the first voice she heard as she entered the embassy was the low drawl of Maximilian du Pay and, what was worse, she found that he was to be seated very near her but, thankfully, on the other side of the table; she need not speak to him at all. She nodded stiffly, as if she vaguely remembered him but could not quite place him though would never for a moment be rude . . . and then decided to ignore him as best she could.

'I wish we were to have dancing after dinner, Miss Graham, instead of that dreadfully boring, and even more dreadfully fat, mezzo-soprano. I should insist that you dance every dance with me but, perhaps, while they prepare the salon for the entertainment, we could walk a little on the terrace. It is mild for November, no?'

‘It is mild for November, yes,’ agreed Lucy. ‘If others are strolling on the terrace, count, then I am sure we may join them.’

‘Not a good idea, Miss Lucy. I may claim the privilege of old friendship, may I not?’

Lucy was amazed. She had turned, as custom demanded, to the guest on her right, and had caught Max du Pay’s eye. Obviously the odious man had been listening to her conversation. It is one thing to flirt with a handsome Russian, it is quite another to be observed doing it by someone one loathes, and especially when flirting is completely against one’s principles. She blushed rosily.

‘Charming,’ he said. ‘I had no idea that empty-headed, rich young women could blush any more.’

Lucy was furious and she forgot all her mother’s rules for good behaviour. ‘How dare you! You know perfectly well that I am neither wealthy nor empty-headed.’

He laughed. ‘And being called empty-headed rankles more, I’ll be bound. But as I was saying, Miss Smith College, don’t stroll in the moonlight with the count. He is a most notorious philanderer.’

‘I think I’m capable of taking care of myself, Mr du Pay. No one would be invited here who was . . .’

‘Not *comme il faut*?’

‘Not empty-headed . . . I mean who was empty – oh, stuff!’ She heard the ridiculous words as she was speaking

them and would have drawn them back if she could. He saw her predicament and laughed.

‘You need have no fear to speak your mind around me, Miss Graham, although usually we Southerners prefer our women meek and mild.’

‘How nauseating.’ Again that unruly tongue.

‘I do believe you are right, Miss Graham.’ He laughed and turned away from her.

Since Count Fyodorov was still engaged in conversation, Lucy studied the American, safe in the knowledge that, since he was giving an inordinate amount of attention to the very sophisticated but married woman on his right, he could not see her. What had he been doing for the past year? He must be finished at Harvard. She had been to balls at that prestigious college twice during this heady year and had never seen him – had tried, oh, yes, she had, not to look for him. She had forgotten how tall he was and how fair. His hair, which was too long for fashion, was almost bleached by the sun, and his face and hands showed that he spent rather too much time outside in all weathers. She was so busy watching the man she had resolved to ignore that she almost missed the next move in the conversational game of bat and ball.

‘I detest Maximilian du Pay and I adore charming Russians,’ she said to herself and turned with a glorious smile to her dinner partner.



RICH GIRL, POOR GIRL

After dinner she found herself walking with him and several other people towards the glass doors that led to the terrace. Count Fyodorov solicitously wrapped her light voile scarf around her bare shoulders.

‘You should wear ermine,’ he said.

Lucy smiled. She could just imagine her father’s face if she were to ask for an ermine cape. His diplomatic salary made up the sum total of the Graham fortune, and a military attaché’s income did not stretch to ermine stoles for his daughter.

To her surprise, she found herself whisked behind an enormous urn and held tightly in a man’s embrace.

‘Miss Graham, Lucy, that smile. It tantalizes; how you are adorable,’ he said and, to her amusement, kissed her ruthlessly.

This was not the first time that Miss Lucy Graham had been kissed and, really, she chided herself, ‘You ought to be able to handle men better by this time.’ She pushed the count away and laughed. It worked; it always did. Nothing deflated an enormous ego more than laughter. At least, it had always worked with the college men who haunted the grounds at Smith.

Count Fyodorov visibly controlled his annoyance. He bowed. ‘Your servant, Miss Graham. May I escort you back to her ladyship?’

‘I’ll take her, count.’



‘Not nice, Miss Graham,’ said Maximilian du Pay in an amused voice as they watched the discomfited Russian walk away.

‘You had no business spying on me, Mr du Pay.’

‘Max, please, and I wasn’t spying. You’re lucky the entire diplomatic party did not witness your petty triumph.’

Petty triumph! Lucy could not believe it. She had been assaulted – well, not quite – and a second arrogant male called it a petty triumph.

‘Don’t bristle, for I won’t say you look charming when you pout . . .’

‘I never pout,’ Lucy broke in.

‘You led that poor man by the nose all through dinner, and then you act surprised when he accepts your invitation.’

Lucy flushed to the roots of her hair. Was there some honesty in what he said? A gentleman, however, would never have said it.

‘I think we have nothing further to say to one another, Mr du Pay.’ She would refuse his invitation to make free of his Christian name.

‘Au contraire, Miss Lucy,’ he smiled, ‘but not yet. I decided, and I never go back on my decisions, that when you have grown up a little . . .’

He did not say what he had decided, but he bowed courteously and turned away and Lucy watched him,

her mind in a turmoil. He was the rudest, most arrogant man she had ever met. She must make a real effort never to meet him again. She hurried back to the magnificent salon where seats had been arranged for the recital. Her parents had saved a chair for her and if they were surprised to see her unescorted they were unable to say anything.

In the carriage, on the way back to Georgetown, there were no such restrictions and, while her husband sat quietly in a corner, Lady Graham was able to allow a flood of recriminations to fall upon Lucy.

‘Two of the most eligible men in Washington beside you at dinner, Lucille, and you throw away the opportunity.’

‘Then you would have preferred that I submit to Count Fyodorov, Mother, pretend that I enjoyed his kiss.’ She would not ask about Mr du Pay.

‘Of course not, girl, but if you had not wanted it then it should never have happened.’ Lady Graham sat back in anger and then relaxed. ‘Oh, Lucy, you are very young. You know we have nothing but Father’s salary. Count Fyodorov is related to the Tsar; his family is extraordinarily wealthy . . .’

‘Then they should have spent a little more on his education,’ said Lucy quietly.

Lady Graham pretended not to have heard. ‘And he specifically asked for you at the dinner.’

‘Definitely not a butterfly collector, Lucy,’ said Sir John, and then when he felt rather than saw his wife’s growing anger he turned to her and added, ‘But you must admit, my dear, that Max du Pay seemed taken with our daughter. We have all been invited to join the Thanksgiving Hunt this year.’

The Thanksgiving Hunt! Lucy had not expected an invitation to one of the social season’s most prestigious events. She conveniently forgot how much she detested the Southerner.

‘Oh, how wonderful!’ She clapped her hands together in excitement like a small child. ‘Can we go, Father?’

‘You will hill-top with me, Lucy,’ Lady Graham answered for her husband.

Hill-topping: following the horses by carriage and watching their progress from the tops of hills. Great fun, but not so much fun as sweeping across the Virginia countryside on the back of a strong, spirited horse.

Lady Graham saw the disappointment in her daughter’s face. ‘Mrs du Pay has generously invited us to join her in her own carriage, Lucy. Every girl in Washington will be green with envy.’

‘Except the ones on horseback,’ Lucy mumbled.

Lady Graham sighed and ignored the mumble. ‘The du Pays are one of the most important families in the South, and it is a great honour to be asked. And there is the ball,

Lucy. She will have to have a new gown, John; it will do for London too.'

'What did you think of Max this time, Lucy?' asked her father. 'Your first meeting had a rather unfortunate ending.' To his surprise Sir John saw his daughter blush.

'I didn't have too much conversation with him, Father.' Lucy was annoyed with herself. Senator du Pay was a personal friend of the ambassador and a good ally for Her Britannic Majesty's Government, and here was she crossing verbal swords with his son. 'He doesn't look like a . . . a . . . socialite,' finished Lucy for want of a better word.

'Rather unconventional: he's studying animal husbandry, but I think he's interested in art. I thought you would have liked him,' said Sir John. 'Never mind. You can adjust your thinking when you see him in his own setting.'

The rest of the journey passed in silence. Amos, as usual, was at the gates to meet them.

'Nice party, Miss Lucille?' he asked as he handed her down.

Lucy kept his hand in hers. 'Delightful, thank you, Amos, and how are you?'

'Lucille,' scolded Lady Graham when they had gone upstairs to prepare for bed, 'you really must not be so familiar with black servants. You treat Amos just the way you treated Annie at home, and she's been with us since before you were born.'

‘I really can’t see that his being black is relevant, Mother, and if Annie is part of the family in Scotland, then surely Amos and his family are part of our family here. Besides, I was merely enquiring about his health. Perhaps it’s just that I’ve been away from home so much, but he doesn’t seem quite himself. It’s odd, Father, but his skin looks a little paler and there’s a clammy feel . . .’

‘Lucille, I have had quite enough of this unhealthy interest in Amos . . . good heavens, do you realize the man doesn’t even have a surname?’

Lucy looked at her mother. How was it possible to love someone and be so annoyed and exasperated by them at the same time? She kissed her parents and went to bed. She would check up on Amos, quietly, in the morning.

The morning brought a posy of flowers from Max du Pay and a magnificent bouquet from the count. Perhaps even more exciting than the flowers was the note that accompanied the posy:

Should you care to ride in the hunt, Miss Graham, I should be delighted to provide a mount suitable for a thinking woman.

He was teasing; he had remembered their conversation but had conveniently *forgotten* that she had admitted to being both intelligent and poor. Sir John could not provide his daughter with a riding horse. But Max du Pay’s

horses . . . Lucy rushed to her mother's bedroom. Lady Graham was sitting up in bed looking delightful and quite young in a froth of pink silk as Lucy handed her the posy and the note.

'Aren't they lovely, Mother? I shall keep them in my bedroom.' She looked at her mother, who was smiling complacently as she read Max's note. 'There's a disgustingly vulgar bouquet from the count too.' Ah, that shot had gone home.

'Flowers from Count Fyodorov, Lucy. How very sweet.'

'A hothouse full of them. These are in such innate good taste, wouldn't you say, and I may accept the senator's offer, Mother. The horses must belong to him. Max is only a boy after all . . .'

She stopped at the look of consternation on her mother's face.

'A riding-habit, Lucy? We must get you a new riding-habit.' Lady Graham slipped from the bed, hurried across to her voluminous French wardrobe and began to rifle through the contents.

'Here, darling. We can get this altered.' She handed a dark blue velvet riding-dress to her daughter and looked at her carefully. 'Oh, Lucy, when are you ever going to . . . fill out?' she finished delicately.

'I'll look better in this than in the ball-gown Petal is making,' said Lucy as she held up the dress in front of her. Yes, dark blue was a very good colour.

‘Petal should be working on the dresses now. Run upstairs and beg her to get this finished for Thanksgiving . . . only two days . . . and then you may write Max a note of acceptance, and change your dress. It’s possible the count will call.’

Lucy picked up her posy and rushed upstairs to the attics where Petal, Lady Graham’s dressmaker, was doing wonders with yards of pale green silk – not such a good colour as the blue, but better than insipid white. She had hardly had time to make her request when Female followed her upstairs to say that a gentleman had called. Amos usually announced visitors, but Lucy was too excited by flowers and gowns and, oh, yes, a magnificent horse ‘suitable for a thinking woman’, to wonder why he had not.

The next two days passed in a whirl.

‘Why am I so happy?’ Lucy asked herself several times a day as she stood in her petticoat while Petal tried somehow to make her look more girl than boy. The riding-habit suited her slim figure. Max would notice. ‘I don’t care if he notices. I haven’t ridden in two years. I am excited by the thought of such horses and galloping, galloping, free of restrictions.’ She lowered the green silk over her head.

‘A dark Venus rising from the waves,’ was Sir John’s comment.

‘Petal has worked wonders,’ agreed Lady Graham, ‘and only just in time.’ She looked at her watch. It was already

Thanksgiving morning. 'We'll have Amos make up a basket for her to take home, and you must find a bonus, John.'

'The others are surely in bed, Elizabeth, and Petal must stay the night. She can't walk through the streets at this time of the morning. Come along, Cinderella, take off that beautiful gown and get some sleep or you'll be too tired to dance away tomorrow evening.' Sir John looked at his daughter, but Lucy was not listening to his banter. She stood, head poised like a deer who senses danger.

'I hear Female,' she said. 'Something's wrong, Father.'

She opened the door. Although it was so late all the lamps were still lit. 'You see,' she said triumphantly, 'Amos is still awake. He never goes to bed before we do.'

But it was Female who stood on the stairs, her voluminous nightgown disguising the bulge at her waistline. It was obvious that she had been crying.

'Ah so sorry not to be dressed, ladyship, colonel, sir. Ah been in bed, but Mammy says Pappy jist can't git moving although he sure done tried.'

'What's wrong, Female?' asked Lucy. 'We must go to their quarters and see, Mother.'

Lady Graham was furious. 'Female! How dare you walk around the public part of the house in your nightwear? Go downstairs and send your mother up here at once.'

Female burst into loud sobs and turned and ran for the servants' stairs.

'I'm sorry, Lucy,' said Lady Graham, looking at her daughter's angry face, 'but we must maintain standards. Please go to bed. Father and I will find out what's wrong and send for a doctor if need be.'

'I'd rather wait, Mother.'

Abra was a tall, slender woman, as neat at two in the morning as she would be at two in the afternoon. She came upstairs quickly.

'Amos has taken some kind of a turn, ma'am, Sir John. I'm sorry Female was in a state of undress. There ain't a brain in that girl's head.'

'What kind of turn . . . ?' began Lucy, but her mother was in charge.

'I will come to see Amos, Abra.'

She swept from the room and Lucy and her father sat down. They did not have long to wait, and one look at her mother's face told Lucy that Amos was seriously ill.

'I've sent Female next door to wake John-Joseph. He will bring some of their own people with a cart to take Amos to Freedmen's. I'm afraid he's seriously ill.'

'Surely we can do something. Get Professor Archibald . . . something?'

Professor Archibald was a close neighbour who was also on the staff at the nearby Columbia Hospital, a hospital established for the wives and widows of Union soldiers and sailors.

‘At this hour of the morning, Thanksgiving morning, for a negro! You are so young, Lucy,’ said her mother disparagingly.

Lucy refused to go to bed and sat in the drawing room and listened for the next-door servants to arrive. She did not notice how cold the room grew around her without the heavy diet of logs with which Amos fed the fire’s insatiable appetite. She heard her father’s voice and he went out – to do what, she did not know. It was only later that she learned that he had roused the coachman at the stables used by the Grahams, that he had driven to Freedmen’s hospital and had sat, one white face in a frame of black ones, while Amos gave up the battle against his exhausted heart.

Sir John had found her in the drawing room, still in her sea green ball gown. He had shaken her awake gently and told her the news, only half expecting the terrible outpouring of grief.

‘But Amos was only a servant, Lucy,’ he had hazarded, in an attempt to understand. ‘You hardly know . . . knew him.’

‘I couldn’t help him; I knew nothing, Father.’ She lifted her ravaged face to him. ‘It could have been you.’

And that, Lucy confessed to herself later when she was safely and anonymously back at Smith, one student among so many, was the real cause of her distress. Had it been

her beloved father who had continued to function with the weakness in his arms, the clammy skin, the alternate hot and cool skin, and eventually on that last morning the tightness in his chest – ‘not a pain, Miss Lucy, he said he didn’t have no pain’ – she would have thought that perhaps he had eaten something that had disagreed with him, or that he had over-indulged. She would have sent at last for a doctor, one who would perhaps have come at two o’clock in the morning because Sir John was a fairly important part of the British Legation, and Sir John would have been taken to Georgetown Hospital, and perhaps . . . perhaps, he would have recovered.

‘I will not give up the Thanksgiving Hunt at the du Pays for a servant,’ said Lady Graham, who had kindly given Amos’s family paid leave to bury husband and father, and who would willingly have accepted the hospital costs as one of the necessary expenses incurred by looking after good and valued servants.

There was no need for a family disagreement, however, for when the members of the family finally managed to get to sleep, they slept soundly through the hours of Thanksgiving morning and, in the afternoon, could find little for which to be wholeheartedly thankful.

‘I’m sorry, Mother, I just can’t go to a ball.’

‘I don’t feel much like dancing either,’ agreed Lady Graham.

RICH GIRL, POOR GIRL

‘Next year,’ said Sir John.

But next year saw Lucille Graham in Edinburgh, Scotland, and there were so many beautiful and talented girls at the du Pays Thanksgiving Ball that hardly anyone missed her, hardly anyone.