



KATHERINE
MANSFIELD

A NOVEL

JOANNA
FITZPATRICK

TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

About the Author

JOANNA FITZPATRICK was raised in Hollywood and when not living in a 16th Century hameau in southern France, she and her husband, musician Jim Payne, and their son perch in the St. Lucia mountains above Carmel Valley, California. She has been a screenwriter, artist manager, record company executive, and proofreader; an MFA graduate from Sarah Lawrence College; and, most recently, author of *The Drummer's Widow*. She is currently at work on her next historical fiction novel, *The Sketch Box* (She Writes Press).



KATHERINE
MANSFIELD

Sample Chapter 1

JOANNA
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Katherine Mansfield is a work of biographical fiction. Apart from the well-known people, events and locales that figure in the narrative, all names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to current events or locales, or to living persons, is entirely coincidental.

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à mon chéri

James

I live to write.

—KASS BEAUCHAMP, AGE 9, 1897

‘...as you ought not to attempt to cure the eyes without the head, or the head without the body, so neither ought you to attempt to cure the body without the soul’; and this said Zalmoxis is the reason why the cure of many diseases is unknown to the physicians of Hellas, because they are ignorant of the whole, which ought to be studied also; for the part can never be well unless the whole is well.

And Zalmoxis added with emphasis, ‘Let no one, however rich, or noble, or fair, persuade you to give him the cure, without the charm.’ And therefore if you will allow me to apply the Thracian charm first to your soul, I will afterwards proceed to apply the cure to your head.

—FROM THE DIALOGUES OF SOCRATES, 469–399 BC

I know not how it falls on me,
This summer evening, hushed and lone;
Yet the faint wind comes soothingly
With something of an olden tone.
Forgive me if I’ve shunned so long
Your gentle greeting, earth and air!
But sorrow withers e’en the strong,
And who can fight against despair.

—EMILY BRONTË, 1818–1848

Introduction

I discovered Katherine Mansfield at les fleurs bleues, a used bookstore in a village in southern France. I was flying home to the States and looking for a book to read on the plane. You know the one. Not too large or bulky but entertaining enough to get you through a dull flight.

On a high, dusty bookshelf stacked with English titles, I pulled out a slim, frayed book entitled *The Garden Party and Other Stories* by Katherine Mansfield.

Katherine Mansfield? Why did I know that name? Then I remembered a mysterious quote in Virginia Woolf's journal: "Katherine Mansfield created the only writing I was ever jealous about."

Perfect timing, I thought, I had a six-hour flight to find out why.

And I did. Ms. Woolf's jealousy was understandable. Every time I stopped to take a breath between stories, I thought, who is this extraordinary writer? Upon my return to New York, I read several Mansfield biographies and her voluminous diaries and letters. The more I learned about her, the more determined I became to bring Katherine Mansfield back to life so that others might find inspiration in her remarkable story.

Katherine Mansfield Beauchamp was born in Wellington, New Zealand on October 14, 1888. Her father, Harold Beauchamp, was the Chairman of the Bank of New Zealand and believed like all upstanding British "colonials," that his children should be educated in England. At age fourteen, Katherine and her two older sisters were sent to Queens College, in London, a renowned progressive school for young women, where they spent three years acquiring a liberal arts education. Katherine thrived on language, philosophy, literature, and music. She studied the cello, attended concerts, and frequented museums and galleries.

When her parents came to fetch her, she had no desire to return to provincial New Zealand, but they wouldn't allow her to stay in London without a chaperone.

On the voyage back to Wellington, she had a shipboard romance with a cricket player and back in New Zealand she gained a reputation

as the wild bohemian. She had brief affairs with both men and women, camped out with the Maoris in the jungle, and published scandalous stories under various noms de plume. Her explanation for her transgressions: *Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare fiddle?*

Finally she persuaded her father to pay for her passage back to London. He gave her a very small allowance, just enough to cover her room and board. A bastion of upper class conservatism, her father believed poverty would drive Katherine back home. He miscalculated. She was more than willing to live in poverty, if she could fulfill her dream and become a famous author from the Colonies.

On July 6, 1908, at nineteen, Katherine, without a chaperone, which was unheard of at the time, embarked from Wellington on a ship to England. She never returned to her homeland.

—*Joanna FitzPatrick*

KATHERINE
MANSFIELD



P R E L U D E

Wellington, New Zealand

Here then is a little summary of what I need—power, wealth and freedom.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD BEAUCHAMP,
AGE 19—MAY, 1908

I SHALL KILL MYSELF, Katherine proclaimed, as she stared out her third-floor bedroom window onto the Wellington harbor. *I've been back home for eighteen months, fifteen days, and six hours and it's intolerable. Pa keeps promising to talk about it but he never does. Mother says, 'talk to your father.' Jeanne, Chaddie, and Vera turn away saying, 'Give it up. Pa will never let you return to London. He's too afraid of the trouble you'll get in.' And my dear sweet little brother Leslie just smiles and says, 'Pa will let you go. Be patient.'*

Why did Grandmother Dyer have to die just when I needed her most? She's the only one who could convince Pa that I have to live in London or die. And she'd be the only one who'd miss me. That is except Leslie. He'd miss our walks in the woods and my bedtime stories.

No one understands how much I want to be a famous author like my cousin, Elizabeth. How can I do that if I stay here? You would think after all the trouble I've caused Pa, he'd be delighted to get rid of me.

I've certainly convinced Mother. She giggled. Especially after I published that story about my childish romance with Edith. How I adored her. Who wouldn't? She's beautiful. Talented. And she adored me. But that week we spent at her cottage was so boring. And then I met Maata! Exotic Maata. A real Maori princess. I never should have asked Pa's secretary to type that story for me, but I did warn her that she might find it shocking. She giggled again. So did Pa.

She posed in the mirror. And you call yourself an independent woman. You'll never survive in London if you don't stand up for yourself now, here in this house.

She turned to face her posh bedroom. The lace curtains. Doilies on the tables. Pink bedspread. *I'm so sick of this child's room. I'm so sick of this life*, she moaned.

A horn blasted from the harbor and she hurried to the window to watch the travelers wave good-bye to their families on the dock. *Oh why aren't I on that ship? Why did Pa promise me I could go and then say no?*

She turned the knob to go downstairs to confront her father. Abruptly, she returned to the window and glared at the ship slipping away.

Coward. You pretend otherwise but you're really a coward.

Katherine picked up the framed family photo taken five years ago aboard the cargo ship *Niwaru*. It had brought her and her sisters to Queens College in London, where their parents dropped them off.

It's their fault. They're the ones who sent me to England for a proper education. Didn't they realize that after I spent three years in London studying and feeling the rhythm of that exciting city that I could never live in this boring town again?

And what's wrong with Vera and Chaddie? Why don't they want to go back to London with me? Pa would never say "no" to the three of us. I tried to convince him that Leslie should go to school in London and I'd be his chaperone. No, said Mother, he's too young. Has she forgotten that I was only fourteen when she sent me there?

On that voyage to London, Katherine had been daddy's girl, sitting with him on the deck in *longue-chaises* gazing at the stars. Then, three years later on the return voyage, after her "scandalous behavior" with the charming cricket player, her father told her to stay in her cabin.

I should write to Elizabeth and ask her to convince Pa. She shook her head. *No, I wrote her before and she never answered. She has no time for her peculiar cousin.*

I even suffered through those classes in typing and bookkeeping at that dreary technical school thinking he'd let me return to London if I could make a living on my own. But he said I was too spoiled and could never afford to live on a minimum wage.

He just doesn't understand me. I don't care about all this frill. I'll go through my wardrobe right now and throw out all those silly evening gowns. It's Mother who insists that I never wear the same gown twice.

She swung open her wardrobe closet. But one glance at the silver chiffon she wore recently at the ball given in honor of her nineteenth birthday changed her mind. She returned to pacing her room and complaining to herself.

I have to get out of this house before I suffocate. I'll go visit Julia. No I can't do that. After she heard what people were saying about me being a "wild girl" and my "sinful behavior," she walks on the other side of the street when she sees me.

I could visit the Trowells, if their entire family hadn't moved to London. I so much miss my cello lessons with Mr. Trowell. And his son Arnold, my dearest Caesar. He never answered my last letter telling him that I dreamed of his embraces and yet before he left for London he told me I was irresistible.

She picked up the cello propped in a corner and then put it back down again. She sighed and declared to herself, *From now on I will love only myself.*

In the full-length mirror, she studied her profile. *I'm eating too many desserts. And look how pale I am. Oh, I really will end up killing myself.* She returned to watching the harbor from the large bay window. *Yes, that's it. Jump. Wave to Pa before I hit the ground beneath his window.*

Stop it! she raged. *Stop this moaning and complaining. Go downstairs and talk to him. Now!*

She stomped down the staircase and burst into the library. "Pa!" She stood over him at his desk. "Pa, have you been thinking about what I said last night?"

"You mean about your passage to London?" he mumbled, without looking up from his papers.

"Yes."

"I haven't given it a thought."

She plopped down in a chair and stared at him. *Patience. Patience. Everyone tells me to be patient. All right here I am being patient. I'll just keep drumming my fingers on the desktop until he pays attention.*

At last, he looked up.

"I know I've caused you and Mother a lot of trouble since I returned from London. But don't you see how miserable I am? My life is passing by and, besides the few stories I've published, I'm completely unknown

and will remain so unless I publish in London. Why did you say yes, and then change your mind? Why?”

“Your recent behavior has shown your mother and me that you are not responsible enough to be on your own. I have some control over your behavior here, but in London, who knows what trouble you will get yourself into?”

“I only get into trouble here because I’m so completely bored!”

“How can you be bored with all the parties you attend? I just saw the accounts of your dress shop expenses. Those hats you had made to your design? They were very expensive.”

“Those bills aren’t mine alone. It’s true I get many invitations, but so do Vera and Chaddie. They are far more extravagant than I am and spend much more on clothes than me. Let me go to London, Pa, and as soon as I’m a published writer I won’t need your help. I’ll even pay you back when I am famous.”

“Kass, I have no problem giving you money. Have I ever been anything but generous to you?”

She thought it better not to answer that question and turned her gaze upon another ship slipping out of view. *How many more ships must I watch disappear from the harbor before I am a passenger?*

She turned back to him, her eyes teary. “Please let me go.”

“Do you think you can manage to keep yourself off the scandal page?”

“Of course, Pa. The only talk of me in the papers will be when my novels are reviewed.” The ship slipped out of view. Desperate, she leapt up from the chair and climbed onto his lap.

“Pa. Please let me go. I promise to be good. I’ll even report weekly to Mr. Kay at your London bank so you can keep a watch on me.”

“Stand up, Kass. You’re behaving like a child.” She slumped back into her seat. He shuffled his papers until he found what he was looking for and said, “Here it is. A letter from your uncle Henry.” He handed it to Katherine. “He has recommended a boarding house in London that lets rooms to young, unmarried women pursuing their artistic endeavors. It appears there is a room available for a well-behaved, serious young lady.”

She jumped in his lap again and wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him. “Thank you, Pa.”

Embarrassed by her show of affection, he said, “Now off with you. I have work to do.”

She hesitated at the door. “Pa, when will I leave for London?”

He’d returned to his paperwork and didn’t answer.

KATHERINE WANTED TO LEAVE immediately but Mrs. Beauchamp didn’t want anyone to think they were sending their daughter off because she had gotten into trouble. There were tea parties and a formal dance given by the Prime Minister’s daughter, where Katherine performed a few mimes and sang. The *Wellington Courier’s* social column described what the young guests, including Miss Beauchamp, wore and ate.

When her father finally handed her a passenger ticket for departure on July 6, 1908, he said, “I’ve spoken to the ship’s captain and asked him to keep an eye on you as you are traveling without a chaperone.”

What could be better than being alone on a ship without a chaperone? thought Katherine, but she said, “Thank you, Pa. I do so dread taking this voyage on my own. Do you think Mother could accompany me?”

Katherine knew her mother would say no. Anything to do with her impetuous daughter was an irritation and an interruption from her busy social calendar.

At the embarkation dock, Mrs. Beauchamp embraced her daughter stiffly. “Please behave, Kass. I don’t want to read any reports in the London papers that will embarrass our family and make me come and fetch you home.”

Katherine waved to her parents until they disappeared from her view. The sudden shift in the ocean current forced her to grip the railing and brace herself against the gale winds. As she plunged toward the open sea, she tossed back her head and shouted, “I’m free!”

D E C E M B E R , 1 9 1 8

The Elephant House—London

*Grant me the moment, the lovely moment
That I may lean forth to see
The other buds, the other blooms,
The other leaves on the tree...*

A LITTLE GIRL'S PRAYER—KM

KATHERINE SHIVERED and put on her canary yellow bed jacket, tying its white silk ribbons to keep out the winter chill. She pulled the eiderdown up around her parched throat and waited for the sun to follow the early dawn and wake the household.

Across the room, LM breathed steadily, her oversized body, too large for the loveseat, squeezed into a child's pose.

When they first met in school fifteen years ago, LM's real name was Ida Baker, but she had adopted her mother's maiden name, Katherine Moore, when she was studying to be a cellist.

The fourteen-year-old Kathleen Beauchamp had also taken the name Katherine as her *nom de plume* and thought if they were to be good friends it was too confusing for them both to be *Katherines*. Instead, she called her Leslie because of her fondness for her brother Leslie. In time she shortened it to LM. Only in anger or in public did she call her devoted companion, Ida.

Katherine listened to Jack snoring on the other side of the wall. He had recently moved into the spare bedroom. His work was very demanding and he couldn't have his essential sleep interrupted by her hacking cough.

To muffle the mantelpiece clock's dreary ticking, she reached for Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* on her bedside table, but a stabbing spasm in her spine jerked her hand and *Tale* and several other books fell onto the floor. She smothered her cry into her pillow and with nothing else to do until the sun rose, she counted sheep until she finally fell asleep.

KATHERINE AWOKE to LM's irritating, chirpy voice. "Good morning, dearie, did you sleep well?" Her round face was hidden behind a breakfast tray weighted down with a full tea set, a stack of buttered toast and marmalade. LM set it down on the bed and Katherine's cat Charlie (named after Charlie Chaplin) stretched out her thick, black and white, furry body and sat up.

"Off!" shouted LM, shooing her off the bed, just before her pink tongue lopped off the cream.

"Don't shout at her. What do you expect a cat to do when you put a pitcher of cream in front of its nose. I don't mind if she has a taste."

"She's fat enough already."

"Come here, Charlie. Don't let LM scare you away." The cat leapt back on the bed and took a lick from the pitcher before settling back down at Katherine's feet. "She might be pregnant, you know. Haven't you noticed her swelling teats?"

LM turned away without answering. An irritating habit among a list of others, thought Katherine, glaring at her caregiver's back.

"What a lovely autumn day," said LM, looking out the window over London's rooftops, not considering that Katherine couldn't see the day from her bed. "What a shame you can't take a walk on the Heath. It would do you good but it's too cold, isn't it, my dear Katie?"

Katherine closed her eyes and argued with herself: You're the one who thought the three of you could live in harmony. You're the one who convinced Jack that no one but LM knew better what you needed, that there was no one more loyal and dedicated.

"Careful, dearie, you almost knocked over the tray," said LM, towering over her, blocking the sun's warmth. "You know you mustn't dally today. Did you forget you have an appointment with Dr. Sorapure this morning?"

"No, I haven't forgotten," she answered, miming LM's birdlike voice, quickly forgetting to be nice.

"Here, dearie, drink your tea while it's still hot."

"Is Jack awake?"

"Awake? It's ten o'clock, Katie. You're the only one who sleeps late in this house. He's down in the basement setting the type to print your short story."

"How do you know he's not printing his book of poetry?"

“No, no. He said it was your story.”

“Which story?”

“I think it’s the one you wrote in Bandal. The one with the French title I can never pronounce correctly.”

“*Je ne parle pas français?*”

“Ah, oui,” she chuckled. “That’s it, though I could never say it like you. Heavens no, not like you. Now what was I just saying... oh yes, his brother Richard has designed a wonderful cover for Je-nee—”

“What?” She coughed into her hankie before adding, “but I must approve the cover before it goes to print!”

“Please Katie, calm down. You don’t want to bring on a fever. We all remember very well how furious you were when the Woolfs published your other story without discussing the cover with you. What was it called? ... you know the one I mean.”

“*Prelude, Ida! Prelude,*” rasped Katherine. “For someone who constantly tells me how wonderful my stories are you might think you’d remember their titles.”

“You’re so right, Katherine, I wish I had your brains. I just can’t remember anything. But how could you understand? You’re made so differently. In fact, I almost forgot to tell you that Jack won’t be up to see you before dinner.”

“Why? He’s too busy to visit his invalid wife?”

“Oh my, aren’t we grumpy today? Drink your tea, dearie. And after, shall I brush your hair? That always calms your nerves. And certainly you want to look presentable for that nice Dr. Sorapure. Which dress shall I put out for you to wear today?”

Katherine pushed the tray away and Charlie jumped off the bed and ran out the door. How she wished to escape with her.

LM brought the shawl hanging on the chair in front of Katherine’s writing table and wrapped it over her patient’s shoulders. “There now, we don’t want you to catch cold, do we?” She handed Katherine the half-empty teacup. “Finish your tea and then I’ll help you get dressed. What did you say you wanted to wear?”

“I didn’t say. Stop fidgeting, Ida. Can’t you see I’m too tired to dress. I was up most of the night.”

“Why didn’t you wake me? I would’ve brought you warm milk.”

“I wanted to give you a break from administering to me.”

“Oh, Katie, the way you have with words. I don’t *administer* to you, dearie, I take care of you. And may I say it gives me great pleasure every day to do so.”

“Well I don’t know how you bear it.” She took one sip and handed the cup back to LM. “It’s cold and weak. After all the times I’ve shown you, I’d think by now you could make a proper cup of tea.”

LM, used to her patient’s complaints after a bad night, leaned down to pick up the fallen pillows. “Why, who is this down here? Little Rib. Why are you hiding under the bed? Katie’s not angry at you, too, is she?”

She picked up the floppy Russian doll and gave it to Katherine. On the other side of the bedroom she sorted through the medicine bottles, then returned to pick up the books from the floor and return them to the bedside table, dusting them off with her apron.

Feeling a rush of guilt, Katherine softened her tone, and using the affectionate nickname she’d given LM, said, “Jones, please forgive me for being so unpleasant. I don’t want to be like this. It’s just I’ve been ill for so long that I’ve forgotten how to be kind. Please bring me my hairbrush. I’ll brush my own hair as I’d rather you go downstairs and greet Doctor Sorapure when he arrives.”

Katherine had just put the hairbrush away when she heard Dr. Sorapure’s light footsteps, followed by LM’s heavy plodding.

Dr. Sorapure was a middle-aged handsome man with a charming bedside manner. Katherine had become quite fond of him over the past months under his care.

He opened his satchel and carefully removed the tools of his trade. He laid them out on her bed: a stethoscope, a percussion hammer, a thermometer, and a small black notebook. How different from my trade, she thought, I only need a pen, ink, and paper.

He looped the stethoscope over his head.

“Is that new?” she asked.

“Brand new. And look at this,” he held up a rubber disc. “This fits over the metal plate as an anti-chill device so it isn’t cold on your chest.”

The first time Katherine had unbuttoned her blouse to have a doctor hear her lungs was when a pulmonary specialist examined her on her thirtieth birthday. After listening to her with his icy stethoscope, he shook his head and said, “You won’t reach old bones.”

Then came the second opinions. A procession of white jackets with stethoscopes hanging down from double-chins and grim looks like mourners at her funeral. They all shook their heads and threatened her with a few years left in her if she didn't enter a tuberculosis sanatorium.

That was when her night terrors had started.

It still amazed her that a slight infection in her lungs after a cold could become the harbinger of her early death. She'd read in the newspapers about tuberculosis killing a thousand people every week in England, but she never thought one of those people would be her. Not her. She'd only just begun to write stories that pleased her. And what about that novel she wanted to write?

Dr. Sorapure was the first doctor who understood her desperation and he also wore a fashionable tweed suit instead of a starched white jacket. From the beginning, she trusted his scientific knowledge and research. Their intellectual conversations about the immensity and wonder of the universe and the incomprehensibility of space had calmed her fear of death. He suggested a home cure rather than a sanatorium so that she could continue to write.

Dr. Sorapure pulled the chair closer to her bed as if they were old friends and he had come to talk about literature. LM was standing behind him, looking over his shoulder.

"Ida, would you please make us a cup of tea."

"Shouldn't I stay?"

"I'll be fine."

LM left but not before showing her hurt face to Katherine.

"So Mrs. Murry, how are we doing today?"

"Well, let's see. My back screams. My head moans. I have to crawl across the room to get to my writing table only to find my fountain pen is too heavy to lift. And oh yes, my right lung feels like someone is plunging a knife in it every time I breathe. Otherwise, Doctor, I'm just fine."

"Let's have a listen, shall we?" He rubbed his hands together so they wouldn't be cold on her skin. And the anti-chill disc was a miracle. She didn't feel like jumping out of her skin when he pressed it against her chest and said, "Breathe deeply."

He had her turn over and he tapped her back several times with his hammer, listening for sounds only he could interpret.

While she put her bed jacket back on and propped herself up against the pillows, he jotted down a few notes. When he looked up, he said, "You look very tired today. Haven't you been sleeping?"

From her bedside table, he picked up the green Bohemian glass bottle that he had given her when she'd admired its color.

"Why haven't you been taking the laudanum I prescribed?"

"Years ago I became addicted to Veronal. The withdrawal was very difficult. I don't want to ever put myself through that agony again."

"You must trust me when I tell you it's all right to take this tincture of opium to relieve your pain. I assure you, once we find a cure for your rheumatism, you will easily throw out the laudanum and fill this pretty bottle with perfume."

LM returned with a tea tray holding three teacups. Katherine threw her a dark frown and she only poured tea in two cups. The other cup she took with her.

When they were alone again, Dr. Sorapure said, "I've been studying your medical history and I think I know the cause of your rheumatism and why it has gotten progressively worse.

"But first I need to ask you a few questions. Questions you might find unpleasant, even disturbing. But I must ask before I can be certain of my diagnosis."

Unconsciously Katherine reached for her doll Rip and lay him next to her. "Patients have no privacy, Doctor. What do you want to know?"

"When did your joint pain start?"

"Ten years ago. After my surgery."

"Is the scar on the left side of your stomach from that surgery?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me a bit about your sexual experiences before the surgery?"

Katherine wasn't used being without words but when he opened his notebook with pen in hand, she hesitated. "Please trust me, Mrs. Murry. These are my private notes and I won't share them with anyone."

"Did you ever read Oscar Wilde?"

"Yes, when I was at University."

"I was sixteen when I read *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The narrator said that *the only thing worth pursuing in life is beauty and the fulfillment of the senses. The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it.* I was

under Wilde's influence when at the age of nineteen I left my home in Wellington, New Zealand, and moved to London to pursue a life of beauty and the fulfillment of the senses."

He helped her adjust the pillows so she could sit up straighter.

"If you are asking if I was sexually active before my marriage to John Murry, the answer is yes."

If he was offended, he didn't show it. His expression was one of curiosity and concern.

"When I arrived in London, I fell madly in love with a young musician. We were to be married, but his parents broke off our engagement for reasons you needn't know about.

"I was young and foolish and heartbroken so I turned to the first man who was kind to me. He was my elocution instructor, George Bowden. On our wedding night I realized what a stupid mistake I'd made and ran out of our hotel room before consummating our vows."

Embarrassed by her confession, she held her gaze on Rip who looked up at her with sympathetic black button-eyes. "My mother whisked me off to Wörishofen, a spa in Bavaria known for its cold water treatments to cure hysterical women. She left me there to fend for myself.

"Someone took pity on me and gave me the love I so desperately needed. I stayed with this man for several months in Wörishofen until I decided to return to my husband.

"I'd only been living with George for a short time when I became ill with excruciating stomach pains. George rushed me to the hospital. I don't remember much after that except the surgeon was most unpleasant." She smiled. "Not at all like you, Doctor.

"He told me that he'd have to operate immediately. Young and frightened, I didn't think to ask why. When I woke hours later, he told me the surgery was a success."

Dr. Sorapure wrote down a few more notes. "I'm sorry but I have to ask you one more question. Did the surgeon ask you if you'd been sexually active before your marriage to Mr. Bowden?"

Katherine hesitated again. "Yes he did. But how did you know that?"

"It's possible that one of your earlier sexual partners gave you an infection that has made you an invalid. If I'm right, your surgeon tested a sample of tissue taken from your stomach and found gonococcal bacteria that he then removed."

Katherine remembered the itchy discharge, painful urination, stomach cramps that started months before the surgery, but she was too poor and too embarrassed to see a doctor. She opened her eyes and turned to Dr. Sorapure.

“Are you saying I am to blame for my illness, Doctor?”

“No. You are not to blame. Unfortunately, women do not recognize the symptoms of gonorrhea, nor do their doctors. With men it’s quickly diagnosed and treated before it infects their bodily organs. Because your infection was not diagnosed it spread. I’m sure the surgeon thought he extracted all the bacteria, but I think during the surgery it leaked into your bloodstream, infecting your joints and other organs. It also weakened your immune system and made you vulnerable to tuberculosis, which is another bacteria.

“If he had known what we know now he would have first treated you with antibacterials and avoided risking surgery.”

He reached for her hand and held it. “If you’re willing, I’d like to try injections of organic compounds to kill the bacteria still growing in your body. Stop it in its tracks.”

“Will these injections also arrest the tuberculosis?”

“Unfortunately not. You have to be patient with us scientists and doctors. We keep learning more about how to cure disease. First, Pasteur discovered bacteria, and now we are discovering how to destroy the bad bacteria without damaging the good bacteria.”

“Does that have the same meaning as, there is the sky and the sea and the shape of the lily and then there is illness and death; there are parasites and bacteria that grow strong and kill and then are killed?”

“Yes.” He smiled. “But I much prefer your poetic description.” He reached for the green bottle and she didn’t resist when he poured a spoonful of the amber tincture and held it up to her mouth. She swallowed it.

“You’re a determined woman, but you can’t will away tuberculosis. If the injections for rheumatism give you relief from your crippling pain, at least you won’t be bedridden. Isn’t that worth something?”

“Do you think I’m a fool to pursue a cure for tuberculosis?”

“No. I don’t think any disease is incurable,” he said. “It’s more a question of time. The experiments of today will provide the link that will make all plain to a future generation. Each person plays but a small

part in the history of the world. What is incurable today will be curable tomorrow and you will have shared in that success,” he paused, “even if the cure comes too late for you.”

“Then I will live until that cure is found as I expect to recover—one has to, you know—from everything.”

LM came in just as Dr. Sorapure said, “Do you want me to arrange for your antibacterial injections at the hospital?”

“What injections?” blurted LM.

Dr. Sorapure turned to her. “We have seen success with injections of organic compounds. If it works, maybe one of Mrs. Murry’s illnesses will be cured and she will be able to walk and write again without pain.”

“If it works?” asked LM. “What if it doesn’t? Is this treatment dangerous?”

Katherine held her eyes on the wise doctor and said, “Ida, it’s all right. I trust Dr. Sorapure. Besides I am only a cog in the wheel. Right, doctor?” She half smiled. “These injections can’t be any worse than those electrical treatments I’ve been taking.”

Dr. Sorapure packed his bag and stood up to leave.

“Ida, after you’ve seen Dr. Sorapure out, please come back and close the curtains. I’m going to sleep now.”

“But Mrs. Woolf is coming to see you. It’s too late to send her a note.”

“Tell her that I’m sorry but I’m not up to seeing anyone today. If anyone would understand, it’d be Virginia.” Katherine heard her own voice fading. “I only want to see Jack.”

Dr. Sorapure’s tincture was having its effect. She felt herself falling into an amber pool but felt no fear of drowning and let go.

SHE AWOKE TREMBLING. She had been dreaming of white-uniformed soldiers marching toward a precipice where she teetered on its edge. Their hilted swords and medals shone in the sunlight, empty grenade holders banged against their hips. As they drew nearer to her, their hollow eyes beseeched her, enormous rough hands reached out to her as each soldier dropped off the precipice into the churning amber sea below.

The last soldier was her deceased brother, Leslie. As he drew closer she saw he was carrying a newborn infant bundled in sheets of handwritten paper, black ink dripped onto his pure white cadet uniform.

He handed the infant to her before he stepped over the precipice and joined his comrades. She was still holding the newborn over the abyss when she awoke.

She often had this dream and knew it was best to just lie still, breathe deeply, not move until the tremors stopped.

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