



HELENA'S PATH

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by
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Based on the celebrated novel by
Anthony Hope

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A GATE AT DAWN

It's a perfectly ordinary wooden gate set in a rough stone wall. Gently, a breath of wind pushes the gate open and reveals...

A FOOTPATH leading across a green meadow. It winds through tall grass, heather and an abundant variety of wildflowers, eventually migrating past an English country house. What NAB GRANGE must have looked like when first it was built, with freshly-cut freestone and fiery brick, one can only imagine. For Time, which deals unkindly with most works of man, has not been generous to the Grange. Vigorous ivy now obscures every aspect of the architect's detail.

And yet the path persists quite plain to see. It continues straight across the meadow, meeting the high stone wall which encloses the Grange property to the south. A gate in the middle gives access to the bold bluff of SANDY NAB and thence down a steep ridge and onto a thin strip of sand. Beyond that, a silver grey mist hangs over the sea.

Two figures, barely visible to the eye, stand at the top of the bluff.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANDY NAB - DAWN

A fatherly old man and his young son brace themselves against the stiff breeze. From their manner of dress, they are plainly in Victorian England. In fact, the old man is the very symbol of the Empire: brave features framed by a ferocious handlebar moustache and bushy white eyebrows. The boy is all pale skin and knobby knees; small in stature, but with large mischievous eyes.

The elderly gentleman descends the precipitous trail, now and then aiding his balance with an ornate HAND CARVED CANE. The boy's scrawny hand grabs the tail of his coat and he follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Two sets of clothes are neatly folded on the rocks.

In the water, father and son enjoy a most cherished ritual. They float side by side - their naked bodies rocked softly by the recurrent beat of the surf.

Awakening from nature's spell, the old man splashes some water in his face and wades back to shore.

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CONTINUED:

His son lingers on, savoring every moment. Finally, he snaps to attention and heads to the beach. As the tide rolls back, it exposes... his slim shoulders... his bare back... his spidery legs... his SHOES AND STOCKINGS!

CROMLECH (V.O.)
AMBROSE CAVERLY was odd.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH PATH - MORNING

Pint-sized brown leather shoes tramp along - water SQUISHING out with every step.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
Now someone who is odd and knows it may be proud, but he will be careful; he may swagger, but he will take precautions.

Ambrose's feet dance out a little two-step.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
Ambrose had no idea he was odd. He followed his nature - in all its whims - with equal fidelity and simplicity. This is not to say that he was never amused at himself; every intelligent observer is amused at himself pretty often; but he did not doubt merely because he was amused.

Ambrose charges ahead and hops on the bottom rail of the half-open GATE, swinging it shut. Without breaking stride, the old man stretches out his cane and snags the back of Ambrose's collar. A sharp tug pulls the gate (and Ambrose) out of his way, and the old man calmly walks on.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
He took his entertainment over his own doings as a bonus life offered.

Ambrose jumps down and chases after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR CASTLE - MORNING

An ancient gray building, square and massive, stands on an eminence high above the Grange.

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CONTINUED:

Dignified would be the most suitable adjective - a restrained dignity that carries not one hint of false modesty.

Up the gravel drive march Ambrose and his father. They are dwarfed by the Castle's enormous facade.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

Some say that we are different
people at different periods of our
lives, changing not through effort
of will, which is a brave affair,
but in the easy course of nature
every ten years or so.

The boy picks a sprig of HEATHER, stuffs it in his pocket and hopscoches across the flagstones to the entrance way.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

I suppose this theory might explain
the many paths of Ambrose's life,
but I don't hold with it.

Two servants attend the old master. While COLTSON takes his coat, DAWSON serves him a glass of port from a silver salver.

Ambrose streaks for the door, but is collared again by the cane. Reluctantly, he plunks down on the cold granite steps.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

I think one remains the same person
throughout, merely passing, as it
were, in these lapses of time from
one room to another, but all in the
same house.

A pair of wet shoes is handed up to the father, who passes them to Coltson, who drops them on the silver tray.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR CASTLE - MORNING

Now in stocking feet, Ambrose tiptoes into the Great Hall. Not surprisingly, Scarsmoor is as immodest on the inside as it is on the outside.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

If we unlock the rooms of the far
past we can peer in and see
ourselves busily occupied in
becoming you and me.

With a running start, the boy slides across the marble floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CROMLECH (V.O.)

Of course, common opinion said that Ambrose ought never become Sir Ambrose Athelstan Caverly, Baronet, Baron Lynborough of Lynborough in the County of Dorset and of Scarsmoor in the County of Yorkshire; he ought to have had a pound a week and back bedroom in Bloomsbury. Only then would he become an eminent man.

He collides with the newel post of a massive oak staircase. Dutifully, he trudges up the stairs.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

So much for common opinion.

Five generations of Caverlys line the stairwell. Even on canvas these men project a fierce nobility. All appear to be staring at the young heir (and none too pleased at what they see).

CROMLECH (V.O.)

There have been plenty of eminent men - generals, judges, cabinet ministers, to say nothing of bishops, bankers and the British Academy.

IN THE UPSTAIRS LANDING

Above a walnut WRITING DESK, hangs A WOMAN'S PORTRAIT. She is fresh-faced and beautiful, with a hint of mischief in her eyes - Ambrose's eyes. A brass plaque is affixed to the frame. It reads:

EMMA WYNDHAM CAVERLY, LADY LYNBOROUGH

Ambrose places the sprig of heather on the desk, then pauses, as if waiting for his mother to thank him.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

No, Ambrose was something much more uncommon; it is not, however, quite easy to say what. Let the question be postponed. Perhaps the story itself will answer it.

Lady Lynborough watches her son scurry down the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY - DAY

The walls are decorated with an impressive collection of hunting trophies - elephant, rhino, gazelle and springbok.

From behind a chair, an enormous twelve bore SHOT GUN takes aim at a mounted TIGER'S HEAD.

AMBROSE
(imitating a gunshot)
BANG!

The sights are trained on a BEAR RUG.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
BANG!

The proud huntsman emerges. Striking a heroic pose, he slams the butt of the shotgun to the floor.

BOOM! The gun discharges, blows the tiger's head to bits and knocks Ambrose on his... peerage.

Tiger fur and taxidermy stuffing sprinkle down onto Ambrose's shoulders. He sits motionless, hoping against hope that no one has heard.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR CASTLE - DAY

An army of servants, loaded with suitcases and steamer trunks, parades down the front steps in good military order. Ambrose's father sternly reviews the procession.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
His father, LORD LYNBOROUGH, though devoted to him, was by now apprehensive of his doings. After all, Ambrose would someday be a man of great responsibilities.

The last piece of luggage is followed rather sheepishly by Ambrose. He issues his father a sturdy handshake and trots down the steps. A moment later, he rushes back and wraps his arms tight round his father's waist. He pulls away and clambers into a waiting CARRIAGE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the coach rattles down the drive, there appears, for the first time, the tiniest crack in Lord Lynborough's great stone face.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN ROAD - DAY

The haggard facade of Nab Grange regards the departing carriage; its expression of disinterest remains unaltered.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

And so he started Ambrose on a new path - in a series of institutions of unimpeachable orthodoxy.

CUT TO:

EXT. ETON - DAY

Black morning coats swarm across a brick schoolyard.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

First came Eton.

One lad wanders a bit aimlessly; his chubby, bespectacled face buried in a fat textbook. This is our narrator - CROMLECH STABB.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

I was in my third year, and already settled in a life of research. Enrolled as Master Leonard Stabb, I'd quickly gained the sobriquet of 'Cromlech' owing to my elaborate monograph on ancient relics. Even my unlearned classmates called me 'Cromlech' Stabb.

Suddenly the book is knocked from his hands! Three bullies (Masters BUNION, BLISTER, and BLEMISH) have Cromlech surrounded. Blemish plucks the thick lenses off his nose and tosses them to Blister, who throws them to Bunion. Owing to his sizable mass, Cromlech is always a step behind.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

Tombs, crypts, burial sites - the dead had always appealed to me more than the living. That is, until I met Ambrose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Bunion pitches the glasses, his legs are kicked out from under him! SPLAT! Ambrose looms above, grinning! Bunion crawls to his feet. Blister rushes in. Ambrose is in-between. Bunion dives, Blister swings, Ambrose ducks. CRACK! Blister's fist shatters on Bunion's chin! Blister HOWLS with pain. Bunion is out cold. Blemish wants no part of this. He and Blister collect what's left of Bunion and stagger off.

Ambrose helps Cromlech to his feet, dusts off his book, then throws open his right hand. Somehow in the melee he's snatched the glasses! Ever so carefully, he slides them back onto Cromlech's face. Master Stabb is speechless.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
We became friends for life.

They join arms and walk off together; Ambrose executes a two-step to get in sync.

CUT TO:

INT. ETON LIBRARY - DAY

Ambrose and Cromlech sit across from each other. Both are deeply immersed in research.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
The faculty regarded my
companionship as a certain
safeguard to the heir of Scarsmoor.

The HEADMASTER passes in magisterial silence. He nods his endorsement.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
The validity of this idea proved to
be doubtful.

If only the Head had looked more closely: The title of Cromlech's book: SECRETS OF ANCIENT CHINESE DIALECTS; the title of Ambrose's: SECRETS OF ANCIENT CHINESE FIREWORKS.

CUT TO:

EXT. ETON - NIGHT

Rather like the headmaster, THE STATUE OF HENRY VI watches over the main courtyard in magisterial silence.

There is no light out here, no movement of any kind - save for a small flicker in an upstairs dormitory window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly the flicker erupts into a blazing fury! Every manner of bright device - SPARKLER, STREAMER, and ROCKET - shoot out from the window! A thousand-thousand firecracker flashes animate the night sky! Rainbow-colored FIREBALLS crisscross the courtyard! It is Chinese New Year, Guy Fawkes' Night, and the 4th of July all rolled into one - only louder!

And 10 seconds later it is all over.

Now begins the second eruption: BELLS, SIRENS, BARKING DOGS, and the general commotion of 500 terrified boys. Amidst all the clamor, one small voice:

AMBROSE (O.S.)

Oops.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Through the headmaster's door: The SNAP of a birch rod on bare skin.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

He left that great school of mental culture and bodily discipline, not with a whimper - that metaphor would be ludicrously inept -

The door opens. Ambrose's shoes - still smoldering - limp into the passageway.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

But with a bang!

The door SLAMS shut on his heels.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Sharply creased trousers are tucked under a row of school desks.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

Having exploded from Eton, he managed to enter Oxford.

One student casually crosses his legs - and it's easy to see why. Crib notes are scribbled across the sole of his shoe. He cocks his ankle to get a better look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Too bad he's not the only one looking. The DEAN appears beside his desk.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARADE GROUND - DAY

WELLINGTON BOOTS file past in perfect lockstep.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
Having been expelled from Oxford,
he marched placidly into the
Grenadier Guards.

The last pair of boots march to a cadence all their own.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
Well, I think you get the picture.

They execute a little two-step.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORTSMOUTH HARBOR - DAY

Reflected in a dockside puddle, a LUXURIOUS STEAMER is being readied for departure.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
And so he set off to see the world.

A pair of BROGUES stroll through the puddle, erasing the ship's reflection.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
A dozen years passed, but only
occasional rumors reached his
native shores.

As the water settles, the reflected spires of a MOSQUE appear.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
He was, for a time, allegedly in
Istanbul.

The brogues, a bit worse for wear, amble back across the puddle, obliterating the mosque. A HINDU TEMPLE comes into focus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CROMLECH (V.O.)
Then disappeared near Dar
Jeeling...

The brogues splash through again, this time transforming the temple into a stately JAPANESE PAGODA.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
...and resurfaced in Sapporo.

A pair of pale white feet emerge from the water which is now contained in a large WOODEN BATH TUB.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
Japan, with its peculiar customs,
particularly suited him. Ambrose,
you see, had always been uncommonly
fond of bathing. But more about
that later.

A beautiful GEISHA pours a bucketful of steaming hot water into the tub. Ambrose's toes curl in ecstasy.

(O.S.) A ship's WHISTLE blows.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIP'S QUARTER DECK - DAY

The brogues mingle with the other passengers - mostly pigs and goats.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
His means, by now, having become
quite limited, Ambrose contrived to
make his fortune.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE YUKON - DAY

Snow shoes tramp across a FROZEN LAKE.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
He crossed the Pacific to the gold
fields of Alaska.

The fragile ice CRACKS.

FADE TO BLACK:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(O.S.) We hear a SCREAM and a tremendous SPLASH.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE PANHANDLE - DAY

Under a scorching sun, an aging OIL DERRICK bores into the hard red clay.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
He migrated south to the oil fields
of Texas.

A deep GROWL echoes up from the drill hole. The ground SHAKES violently. Sounds like a gusher!

The dust-covered brogues rush over.

The shaking subsides. The earth heaves a loud dry BELCH. A single droplet of oil spits out onto Ambrose's shoe.

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

INT. SOUTH AMERICAN SITTING ROOM - DAY

An ancient ceremonial MASK is perched on an oak coffer.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
He journeyed to Mexico in search of
Aztec treasure...

A delicate pottery FIGURINE sits next to the mask.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
... to Honduras for Mayan
antiquities...

Beside the figurine - a small silver ALPACA.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
... and finally to Peru, the
ancient land of the Incas.

BANG! The silver alpaca is knocked over by a worn BROGUE! Its mate shatters the delicate figurine.

Two petite shoes - women's lace shoes - are already carelessly strewn on the floor.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
As usual, Ambrose was in less
ancient company.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Standing before the discarded shoes - BIG BROWN RIDING BOOTS. Their firm stance would seem to indicate... well, some displeasure. A high-pitched woman's GIGGLE starts up in the next room. The boots stomp off to investigate.

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

EXT. MISTY FIELD - DAWN

The worn BROGUES stand heel to heel with the boots. A GENTLEMAN counts off...

GENTLEMAN
Uno... dos... tres...

Brogues and boots pace off in opposite directions.

GENTLEMAN (CONT'D)
... ocho... nueve... DIEZ!

(O.S.) Two GUNSHOTS ring out!

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

INT. SCARSMOOR CHAPEL - DAY

Robed in black, a Vicar, the REVEREND MR. TULLOCK, delivers a eulogy. Before him, leaning against a flower draped casket, is Lord Lynborough's hand carved cane.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
Old Lord Lynborough's death occurred suddenly and unexpectedly, at a moment when Ambrose had not been heard from for almost a year.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR CHAPEL - DAY

The MOURNERS file out. One in particular looks familiar. Though he's aged fifteen years, there's no mistaking Cromlech Stabb: Same spectacles, same weight problem.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
And so, I set off in search of the new Lord Lynborough.

Cromlech slides Lynborough's cane under his arm and strides off purposefully.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CROMLECH (V.O.)
 By this time, most of our friends
 concluded that he must be dead - or
 in prison.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON - DAY

Steel bars intersect a damp stone floor.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
 Happily, the latter explanation
 proved correct.

Behind the bars, two brogues - scuffed, mangled, oil-stained
 and torn - pace fitfully.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
 Ambrose had put a bullet in a man's
 arm - in a fair fight, as he saw
 it. Nevertheless, Ambrose and the
 law had come to loggerheads. From
 that day, he swore never to employ
 an instrument so hateful.

Chubby WHITE OXFORDS appear in the corridor. The brogues rush
 over to greet them.

CUT TO:

EXT. GANGPLANK - DAY

The oxfords waddle up the rickety gangway accompanied by a
 new pair of button-downs; the hand carved cane taps along
 side.

CROMLECH (V.O.)
 I couldn't see Ambrose taking up
 the life of a country gentleman.
 It seemed so... common. Ambrose,
 being Ambrose, had ideas all his
 own.

As they reach the fore deck, we hear Ambrose's voice for the
 first time:

AMBROSE (O.S.)
 I must go home and take up my
 responsibilities.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CROMLECH (O.S.)
You really think you'd better?

AMBROSE (O.S.)
It was my father's wish.

CROMLECH (O.S.)
But... you'll be thought of as odd
over there, Ambrose.

Now, finally, our first glimpse of the adult Ambrose is afforded. He is everything we would have imagined - and more!

AMBROSE
Odd? I, odd? What the deuce is odd
about me?

One thing I forgot to mention: On Ambrose's head, set at a rakish angle - a South American CHULLO HAT. At the moment, he looks more like a llama herder than a country gentleman.

CROMLECH
(taking in this sight)
Well... everything.

Ambrose scrutinizes his reflection in a nearby porthole. You could think of a hundred words - NORMAL wouldn't be one of them.

AMBROSE
I don't see it. Besides, if I'm odd
it won't be noticed. I'm going to
bury myself at Scarsmoor. I'm
thinking of writing my
autobiography.

CROMLECH
Aren't you a trifle young to be
writing your memoirs?

AMBROSE
People who are old enough to write
their memoirs have usually lost
their memory. You will come with
me, won't you Cromlech?

CROMLECH
I must be totally undisturbed. I've
a great deal of material to get
into shape.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AMBROSE

There'll be nobody there but myself
and a secretary, I daresay.

CROMLECH

A secretary? What's that for?

AMBROSE

To write the book, of course.

CROMLECH

You won't write your autobiography
yourself?

AMBROSE

Not unless I find it engrossing.

They lean onto the railing. Before them, the vast expanse of
blue water awaits.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

Thus, Ambrose returned to his
'responsibilities'. I wondered,
even then, what that dignified word
would prove to describe.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR CASTLE - DAY

After twenty years absence, Ambrose's luggage makes its way
back into Scarsmoor.

Ambrose and Cromlech review the parade. Happily, the new Lord
Lynborough has traded his previous headgear for a more
fashionable HOMBURG.

Coltson, the ever-faithful servant, is poised to take their
coats.

AMBROSE

(handing over his cane)
Coltson, by heaven, is it really
you?

COLTSON

Still above ground, my lord.

Ambrose deposits his hat on the aging servant's head and
moves to the next man in the receiving line. He's a boyish
clean cut chap - ROGER WILBRAHAM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBROSE

And you must be my secretary.
Mister... Wilbraham, isn't it?

ROGER

Roger Wilbraham, my lord, and very
glad to make your acquaintance.

AMBROSE

Thank you. It's good to be home.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR - DAY

A shoeless Ambrose skates across the polished marble floor.
Up the stairs he goes, past the gallery of ancestral
Caverly's and onto THE SECOND FLOOR LANDING.

From his inside breast pocket, he removes a sprig of heather
and places it beneath his mother's portrait. So many years
have passed, yet these two remain frozen in time. Lady
Lynborough is forever beautiful; Ambrose is her eternal
little boy.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR BALCONY - DAY

Ambrose is greeted by the fine free open view. He fills his
lungs with the fresh salt air, closes his eyes and begins to
sway to the distant recurrent BEAT of the ocean waves.

CROMLECH

(joining him outside)
'Lord' Lynborough. That will take
some getting used to.

Ambrose doesn't respond; the voices of the sea are singing to
him.

AMBROSE

Listen, Cromlech, do you hear it?

CROMLECH

Hear what?

His eyes snap open.

AMBROSE

Old friend, if God knew time, that
might be His clock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Not knowing how to answer, Cromlech decides to change the subject.

CROMLECH
Well, my lord, what may I ask is
your first command?

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN ROAD - DAWN

The sun is kissing the eastern horizon.

Ambrose, brimming with energy and good cheer, arrives at the base of Scarsmoor's driveway.

AMBROSE
(signaling over his
shoulder)
Come, gentlemen. Let's not dawdle
the morning away.

He charges down the road. Cromlech and Roger draggle after him, wiping the sleep from their eyes.

ROGER
(trying to catch up)
Excuse me, my lord, but I was
wondering, where exactly you are
taking us?

AMBROSE
Not where, Roger. Why.

ROGER
Why?

AMBROSE
Why to bathe, of course.

ROGER
In the water?

AMBROSE
In the sea, Roger.

ROGER
By way of the path?

AMBROSE
By way of Beach Path.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROGER

My lord, I think I should warn you
that...

AMBROSE

(pointing with his cane)
Look at it, gentlemen. The picture
it paints. With the dawn just this
color - and the sea, so remarkably
large, and the light glimmering off
the path, like a river returning
home.

ROGER

Yes. It's about the path...

AMBROSE

Beautiful, isn't it?

ROGER

No, it isn't...

AMBROSE

No?

ROGER

No, I mean, yes. But, no that isn't
what I wanted to tell you.

AMBROSE

What could you possibly tell me of
Beach Path, Roger? Everyday of my
childhood I walked that path. I
know every stone.

ROGER

But...

AMBROSE

(his hand on Roger's
shoulder)

Dear Roger, you have an acute and
ready mind. But there is no poetry
about you - no wild yearning for
the unattainable. Do you never
'weep, you know not why?'

Ambrose struts ahead, leaving young Wilbraham to ponder this
last statement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As the three men top a low ridge, Nab Grange comes into view. It has been completely remodeled; the roof is repaired, the windows replaced, the grounds manicured.

AMBROSE

New tenants at Nab Grange I see.

CROMLECH

New owners, Ambrose. The Grange was purchased last year.

ROGER

That's what I wanted to tell you.

AMBROSE

Anything you like, Roger.

ROGER

Well, it's just that...

AMBROSE

(cutting him off)

There's always something seductive in looking at a house when you know nothing about the people in it.

ROGER

But I know a good deal about them.

Ambrose is not a man to be put off by intrusive facts. He admires the Grange's freshly painted walls.

AMBROSE

(framing the image with his hands)

The blank wall of a strange house is like the old green curtain at the theater. It may part at any moment and show you - what? Now what is there at Nab Grange?

CROMLECH

A lot of country bumpkins, I expect.

ROGER

No, no, she's a Marchesa. The Marchesa Di San Servolo.

AMBROSE

What's there? I don't know. But I like not knowing.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AMBROSE (cont'd)

I don't want to know. We won't visit at the Grange, we will idealize it.

CROMLECH

Bosh! There's sure to be a woman - and I'll be bound she'll call on you!

AMBROSE

Call on me? Why?

CROMLECH

Because you're a lord.

ROGER

But she's somebody herself.

AMBROSE

Everybody's somebody. And it's a very odd arrangement. Can't be regarded as permanent, eh Cromlech? Immortality by merit seems a better idea. And by merit, I mean originality. Yes, original - that's just how I picture her.

CROMLECH

Picture whom?

AMBROSE

Why, the Lady of the Grange. Shall I describe her?

CROMLECH

I expect you must.

AMBROSE

She is, of course, tall and slender; she has, of course, a rippling laugh; her eyes are deep and dreamy, yet lighting to a sparkle when one challenges. All this may be presupposed. It's her tint, Cromlech, her color. That's what's in my mind this morning; that is her most distinguishing, her most wonderful characteristic.

ROGER

That's what the Vicar told me! He said that the Marchesa had a most extraordinary complexion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

AMBROSE

Roger, you substitute the Vicar's impression for my imagination. Is that kind?

ROGER

It's such a funny coincidence.

They are rapidly approaching the gate which connects Beach Path to the Main Road.

AMBROSE

I've always known that I had to meet that complexion somewhere, so why not on Beach Path?

ROGER

But you're not going to meet her on Beach Path.

AMBROSE

And why not?

Ambrose stops dead; he can't believe his eyes.

The gate to Beach Path is shut tight. A large PADLOCK dangles from a chain around the wooden latch.

ROGER

Because Beach Path is closed, my lord. I tried to tell you earlier.

AMBROSE

(welling with anger)
Closed? Closed by WHOM?

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE BEDROOM - MORNING

A KEY RING sits on a mahogany table.

NELLIE, a sleek tabby cat, pounces on the key ring as if it was a mouse. A hand - soft, graceful, refined - begins to caress Nellie's velvety coat. Delicately, the key ring is wrested from her paws.

From the ring, a winding key is selected. It's inserted into an elegant CLOCK FACE. The clock CHIMES to life. On the mantel beside it, there sits a PHOTOGRAPH of a dashing gentleman. He is removed from his gilt oval frame; the empty frame is placed back on the mantel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The rusty lock to an old CEDAR CHEST clicks open. A black crepe dress, neatly folded, is placed inside followed by a black veil, black shoes, the mantel photograph and lastly a WEDDING RING. The lid CLUNKS shut!

CUT TO:

EXT. BALCONY - MORNING

An exquisite slender figure slips out of the bedroom and into the brilliant sunlight. It is her Excellency, HELENA VITTORIA MARIA ANTONIA, MARCHESA DI SAN SERVOLO. No doubt about it, this is the woman Ambrose imagined.

With infinite delight, she surveys her new home, unconcerned that Nellie is pawing for attention at the hem of her dressing gown. Frustrated, the cat begins to CRY.

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE DRAWING ROOM - MORNING

Four of the Marchesa's house guests have gathered downstairs.

VIOLET DUFAURE has a face of unusual sweetness and a mind of childlike innocence. Beside her, reading a very weighty novel (Anna Karenina) is LADY NORAH MOUNTLIFFEY. She is possessed of a quick wit, a frank nature, and fiery red hair. The senior member, MISS JENNIE GILLETSON, patiently knits, secure in the knowledge that 'Miss' shall always precede her name. At her feet, gnawing on a ball of yarn, is BRUTUS, her small fox terrier.

Nellie's muffled CRIES filter into the room. To Violet, they sound decidedly human.

VIOLET

Poor Helena.

MISS GILLETSON

Yes, I've been so worried, Violet.
A widow at her tender age - it's
unthinkable.

LADY NORAH

The Marchese has been dead for a
year, Jennie. Time to stop thinking
about it.

VIOLET

Have a bit more consideration,
Norah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LADY NORAH

You're right, Violet. Since the Marchese was considerate enough to die, the least I can do is feign a little sadness.

MISS GILLETSON

(dropping a stitch)
Norah, you're impossible!

LADY NORAH

Because I refuse to view the passing of that Tuscan goat as a tragedy?

VIOLET

He came from one of the noblest families in Italy.

LADY NORAH

Respectable relations are a prerequisite to any successful career of debauchery. If he hadn't been so respectable Helena's father wouldn't have married her off.

MISS GILLETSON

Helena understood her duty.

LADY NORAH

Is marriage a duty?

VIOLET

Mother always said that marriage wasn't invented solely to make people happy.

LADY NORAH

I suppose she's got an argument there.

MISS GILLETSON

Fiddlesticks!

LADY NORAH

Then you'd rather Helena was still sitting in that Roman palazzo having her inheritance trolloped away?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MISS GILLETSON

I admit there were certain deficiencies in the Marchese's character. But you're wrong about Helena, she's heartbroken.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A HEART-SHAPED JEWEL BOX is unlatched.

Helena removes a silk fan and with great flourish, snaps it open. Coyly, she whispers to a nonexistent gentleman and then cocks her head to hear his response. Apparently, he's made an invitation. She steps back and makes him a little curtsy. The invisible suitor takes her right hand. Her left hand twines around his waist and they begin to waltz.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAWING ROOM - MORNING

The chandelier rocks back and forth.

Violet, Miss Gilletson and Lady Norah all turn a quizzical eye toward the ceiling. Even Brutus is curious. He skitters out the door and up the stairwell.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Every object in the bedchamber is an eager suitor. Helena does the mazurka with her mirror; the polka with her pillow.

She pirouettes over to the window and wraps herself tight in the drapes, as if being held in a man's arms.

Nellie HISSES.

Brutus is perched in the hallway, watching; he obviously finds this scene completely ridiculous.

Helena marks the chaotic condition of her boudoir. Maybe Brutus has a point. She untangles herself from the curtains and straightens her dressing gown.

Behind her, through the window, two men on horseback are approaching the house.

CUT TO:

INT. DRAWING ROOM - MORNING

The horsemen enter. COLONEL WENMAN is a square jawed, square-minded middle-aged man. His companion, MR. STILLFORD is a little older and not so rectangularly constructed.

MISS GILLETSON
Good morning Colonel, Mr.
Stillford.

COLONEL WENMAN
(full of bluster)
And a devilish fine morning it is,
Miss Gilletson.

He eyes the cover of Norah's book.

LADY NORAH
Have you ever read Tolstoy,
Colonel?

COLONEL WENMAN
Bless me, I don't go in for
feminine literature!

A servant, MURDOCH, appears with a whiskey and soda.

COLONEL WENMAN (CONT'D)
Ah, reinforcements.

The Colonel snatches his morning rouser off Murdoch's tray.

COLONEL WENMAN (CONT'D)
Stand to, Murdoch. There's a good
fellow.

MURDOCH
Anything else, sir?

COLONEL WENMAN
That'll be all.

As Murdoch retires, Wenman pops the cork to the soda bottle, douses his whiskey and downs a stiff belt.

VIOLET
You gentlemen been riding?

COLONEL WENMAN
(mopping his upper lip)
On reconnaissance, eh Stillford.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. STILLFORD
We've been inspecting the
Marchesa's new property.

COLONEL WENMAN
A beautiful estate, Miss Gilletson.
A devilish beautiful estate.

MISS GILLETSON
Awfully remote for a young widow
living alone.

COLONEL WENMAN
(cautiously)
Maybe she isn't planning on...
er... being alone.

VIOLET
That's right. She did invite
everyone here for the summer.

LADY NORAH
(without looking up)
That's not exactly what the Colonel
meant, Violet.

MISS GILLETSON
Mr. Stillford, certainly you don't
approve of this house?

MR. STILLFORD
Buying this estate may have been
ill-advised, but it's not for me to
say.

LADY NORAH
You can hardly blame Helena -
you're her legal adviser.

MR. STILLFORD
(defensively)
Helena wished to return to England,
and she instructed me to purchase a
suitable residence. I gave her
advice and I daresay it helped her
to make up her mind.

LADY NORAH
(chiming in)
In the opposite direction.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. STILLFORD

Just so.

MISS GILLETSON

Fiddlesticks! It's just uppishness!

COLONEL WENMAN

Come, Miss Gilletson, don't be so down on this affair. It's an uncommon nice place. Why, all the things a man could want!

LADY NORAH

What things might those be?

The Colonel's broad body plops down in the overstuffed chair by the fireplace.

COLONEL WENMAN

Not that romantic stuff you read in them books, Lady Norah. Bless me, no! Don't get me wrong, moonlight and serenadin' are very nice indeed, but they're no practical use to nobody.

He pours more soda into his glass.

COLONEL WENMAN (CONT'D)

Give a man a big armchair and a good fire and a glass of hot whiskey and water, eh?

LADY NORAH

And someone on the other side of that fire, I suppose?

COLONEL WENMAN

Of course! A handsome woman, but a sensible woman too, mind you. One who knows your ways - and hasn't got too many ways of her own. Quiet, respectable... dignified.

HELENA (O.S.)

Is that really how you should describe me?

Every head turns, every jaw drops. What is this vision gowned in blazing red satin? A queen? An empress? No. The Goddess of Fire!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HELENA (CONT'D)
 (gliding into the parlor)
 Good morning ladies. Mr. Stillford.
 Colonel Wenman.

MISS GILLETSON
 Helena... your dress???

HELENA
 (drifting onto the settee)
 One cannot remain in mourning
 forever.

COLONEL WENMAN
 (salivating)
 Indeed!

The Colonel inches toward the settee and sits down next to her - although at quite a respectable distance.

HELENA
 Besides, that black dress was
 simply inkpat!

MR. STILLFORD
 Inkpat?

HELENA
 Yes. It always reminded me of my
 husband. Carlo was hopelessly
 inkpat and there's an end of it.

MR. STILLFORD
 I'm not sure I...

HELENA
 Mr. Stillford, when a thing is
 running in your head day and night,
 you can't use that great long word
 you lawyers use. Besides, it's so
 horribly impartial.

MR. STILLFORD
 (mumbling)
 Inkpat... inkpat... Oh, you mean
 incompatible?

HELENA
 That's it, Mr. Stillford -
 incompatible.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HELENA (cont'd)

You see it's far too long, so I call it by a pet name of my own. That makes it come over to my side, don't you see?

MR. STILLFORD

Well... not quite.

HELENA

Incompatible means that Carlo and I couldn't get on with one another and hints that it was probably just as much my fault as his. But inkpat is the thousand and one unendurable things he did and said to me.

MISS GILLETSON

(disappointed)

You were fond of him once, weren't you?

HELENA

Oh, I don't know. I suppose it's only in stories that people are in love when they marry.

LADY NORAH

And then it's generally with somebody else.

MISS GILLETSON

Norah, really!

HELENA

I'm sorry to bother you with the seamy side of things, Jennie.

She lets out a deep sigh.

HELENA (CONT'D)

How I wish, for your sake, that I'd inherited more of my mother's sensible English nature. But sometimes the paternal half of me - the Italian half - has to speak her mind. You do forgive me, Colonel?

COLONEL WENMAN

I'm awful glad to help... er... if I can.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HELENA
 (pouting her lips)
 Can anyone help? I wonder.

COLONEL WENMAN
 Bless me, I'd have thought a young
 woman would find this country
 life... er... stimulating.

HELENA
 Young women ought to have a good
 time in England, since all the
 pleasant things are forbidden them.
 But it hasn't worked out that way.

Helena lays her hand on the Colonel's knee and looks deep
 into his eyes.

HELENA (CONT'D)
 You'll hardly believe it, Colonel,
 but I often pass a whole day - a
 whole day - without encountering a
 single temptation!

Wenman's knee begins to shake uncontrollably.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE GARDEN - DAY

A game of tennis is in progress - the Colonel and Miss
 Dufaure versus the Marchesa and Mr. Stillford.

No one would ever confuse this match with Wimbledon. A net
 stretches haphazardly across the lawn. The competitors (and I
 use the term loosely) knock the ball around the makeshift
 court. Actually, the court is only an occasional target.
 Tennis balls ricochet off trees, into plants and through open
 windows. Mr. Stillford is getting annoyed about this. The
 Colonel couldn't care less; he's too busy eyeing Helena. And
 Helena - she's too busy posing for the Colonel.

The cheering section is also rather disinterested. Norah has
 reached chapter twelve of Anna Karenina; Miss Gilletson
 thumbs through the local newspaper. Only Brutus watches,
 although he probably wishes he could read.

Helena hits an easy lob to the Colonel. He plants his feet,
 swings mightily... and whiffs it!

CUT TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE GARDEN - LATER

Everyone gathers around Murdoch, who has brought out a tray of lemonade. They each take a glass.

COLONEL WENMAN

Hang me, I've never played so badly before!

LADY NORAH

Really? You've played before then?

The Colonel doesn't answer, but his expression says all that can be said in a civilized society.

Violet and Mr. Stillford take a seat. The Colonel offers Helena a chair, but she, instead, folds her legs and sets down on the grass. Colonel Wenman tries to do likewise. Never did a man look more uncomfortable.

MISS GILLETSON

(examining the newspaper)

Helena, I see that Lord Lynborough arrived at the Castle on Friday.

HELENA

(sipping her drink)

Did he, Jennie?

MISS GILLETSON

(reading from the paper)

Lord Lynborough, accompanied by his friend Mr. Leonard Stabb, the well known authority on pre-historic remains, and Mr. Roger Wilbraham, his private secretary...

LADY NORAH

Thank goodness!

HELENA

Why Colonel, you haven't been amusing Norah.

LADY NORAH

On the contrary, I find him terribly amusing!

The Colonel's face puckers into a frown; perhaps his lemonade has gone sour.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL WENMAN
(turning to Helena)
I hoped that I, at least, was
engaged on another task - though,
alas, a harder one.

Helena bats her lashes in reply. Norah doesn't want this to go any further.

LADY NORAH
(to Helena)
Perhaps you should pay a call on
Lord Lynborough?

HELENA
(staring at the Colonel)
And why should I do that?

COLONEL WENMAN
I ... er ... might call on him. He
was in the service, you know. And
that makes a bond. Queer fish he
was, by heaven.

HELENA
In that case...

MISS GILLETSON
Helena can't call on him - and I
don't suppose he'll call on her.

LADY NORAH
He'll get to know her if he wants
to.

HELENA
(annoyed)
Do I have any say in this matter?
I think I shall call on this Lord
Lynborough.

MISS GILLETSON
My dear, it isn't done. It isn't
done.

HELENA
Should I consider that a serious
objection?

MISS GILLETSON
That's a childish answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LADY NORAH

I thought it sounded rather uppish.

HELENA

(jumping to her feet)

If it's childish to be independent,
to have a mind of my own, then I
am!

MISS GILLETSON

This is positively indecent.
Helena, I forbid you to call on
that man.

HELENA

Jennie, you were my late mother's
dearest friend and I shall never
forget that. But you cannot order
me about.

She stomps away from the others.

HELENA (CONT'D)

(facing Scarsmoor)

From now on, no one shall ever
order me about!

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - DAY

A NOTE is sealed in an envelope.

AMBROSE

There now, I've put it all right.

He turns to Cromlech and Roger, who are engrossed in a game
of chess.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Will you men bathe tomorrow?

They exchange a confused glance. Is he serious?

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

(before they can respond)

Excellent! Six o'clock then. We'll
go by way of Beach Path.

ROGER

But the path's stopped.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBROSE

(holding up the letter)
I've asked her to have the
obstruction removed.

ROGER

If it isn't?

AMBROSE

We have hands.

ROGER

Hands? What about the law?

AMBROSE

The law, Roger, always considers
the facts. Take the path! It
happens to be a fact that my
grandfather and my father and I
have always used that path. That's
important to the law and I daresay
to the Marchesa - because she,
being a woman, would be
unappreciative of pure reason.

ROGER

Forgive me, my lord, but are you
saying that you rely on the law to
support your actions?

AMBROSE

In my own mind I stand on reason
and natural right. Is it reasonable
that I, living half-a-mile from my
bathing, should have to walk two
miles to get to it? Plainly not.
Isn't it the natural right of the
owner of Scarsmoor to have that
path open through Nab Grange?
Plainly yes. That, Roger, is the
way in which the question presents
itself to my mind - and I'm sure to
Cromlech's.

CROMLECH

(considering his move)
Not the least in the world to mine.

AMBROSE

(waving the letter)
She'll get this tonight.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AMBROSE (cont'd)
Will she read it, I wonder, with a
flushing cheek?

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE DRAWING ROOM - EVENING

Flushed is not exactly Helena's complexion; it is more like
beet red.

HELENA
Listen to this!

She reads Ambrose's declaration to her house guests.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Lord Lynborough has learnt, with
surprise and regret, that a padlock
has been placed on the gate leading
to Beach Path. Lord Lynborough and
his predecessors have enjoyed the
use of this path for fifty years
back, and must therefore request
that the padlock be removed before
six o'clock tomorrow morning - at
which time Lord Lynborough intends
to proceed by Beach Path to the sea
in order to bathe.

She slaps the letter down on the table.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Do you hear? I'm to surrender
before six o'clock tomorrow
morning!

COLONEL WENMAN
Cheek of the fellow!

MISS GILLETSON
I shouldn't so much as answer him,
Helena.

HELENA
But I shall answer him - and tell
him that he'll trespass on my
property at his peril. Isn't that
the right way to put it, Mr.
Stillford?

MR. STILLFORD
It would be a trespass, that might
be one way to put it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. STILLFORD (cont'd)
But the rights in this matter are
not as clear as we could wish.

HELENA
When I bought this place, I bought
a private estate - a private
estate, Mr. Stillford - for myself -
not a shortcut for some local
Hottentot!

COLONEL WENMAN
I... er... wouldn't stand it for an
instant!

LADY NORAH
You might at least give him leave
to walk through.

HELENA
(furious)
I might - if he asked for it. But
he doesn't. He orders me to open my
gate - and tells me he means to
bathe! As if I cared whether he
bathed or not! What is it to me
whether the man bathes or not?

MR. STILLFORD
Aren't you getting a little off the
point?

HELENA
No, I'm not. I never get off the
point. Do I, Colonel?

COLONEL WENMAN
Well, I've never... er... that
is...

HELENA
There!

From her desk drawer, the Marchesa removes a sheet of blue
STATIONARY.

HELENA (CONT'D)
(dipping her pen)
I shall be courteous, but quite
decisive.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR SMOKING ROOM - EVENING

Roger and Cromlech take their ease after supper. At least, Cromlech is at ease.

ROGER
(pacing the floor)
Is Lynborough in his right senses?

CROMLECH
The point is doubtful.

ROGER
Are you in yours?

CROMLECH
I am sane, but very highly specialized.

Coltson enters with two brandies.

ROGER
(taking a snifter from
Coltson's tray)
Then answer: Is it a public path?

Cromlech rubs the spot on his scalp where his hair ought to be; he is considering his answer carefully.

COLTSON
Excuse me, sir. Not exactly public as I understand, sir. But the Castle has always used it.

ROGER
By legal right, do you mean?

COLTSON
(serving Cromlech)
I don't think his lordship will trouble much about that, sir.

The perceptive Coltson bows, and exits.

ROGER
What does the man mean by that?
It's a purely legal question -
Lynborough must trouble about it.
If it's not a public right of way,
then she's got a good case.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CROMLECH
 (sniffing his brandy)
 Do you know, Wilbraham, I don't
 much care. But in regard to her
 complexion...

ROGER
 What the devil does her complexion
 matter?

CROMLECH
 The human side of a thing always
 matters. Pray, sit down Wilbraham -
 standing up and talking loud prove
 nothing.

ROGER
 (slumping into a chair)
 But she'll go to law if he uses the
 path.

CROMLECH
 As for her, I cannot honestly say.

ROGER
 And what of him?

CROMLECH
 Ambrose will never go to law - but
 he will go to bathe!

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE DRAWING ROOM - EVENING

With calm deliberation, Helena closes the lid to her inkwell
 and sets her pen back in its tray.

HELENA
 (reading from the page)
 The Marchesa Di San Servolo has no
 intention of removing the padlock
 which she has placed on the gate to
 prevent trespassing. Further, the
 Marchesa is not concerned to know
 Lord Lynborough's plans in regard
 to bathing or otherwise.

She slips the thin blue notepaper in a matching envelope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA (CONT'D)

I call that businesslike. Don't you, Mr. Stillford?

MR. STILLFORD

I don't know about that last sentence.

HELENA

Oh yes! That'll make him angrier than anything else!

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE DINING ROOM - EVENING

Dinner is being served a la russe. A butler carries a platter of game hens around to all the guests.

VIOLET

Rather funny he should call it Beach Path?

HELENA

I don't know whether it's funny or not, Violet, but frankly I don't care what he calls it. He may call it Piccadilly if he likes but it's my path all the same.

Having finished the loop, the butler exits by the pantry door. Brutus slips through his legs unnoticed and sneaks under the table.

MR. STILLFORD

When did you have the gate locked?

HELENA

Last week. I wanted there to be no mistake from the very first. That's the best way to prevent any unpleasantness.

The terrier crawls over to Helena and cuddles up to her shoe.

Helena is startled, but pleased. In her mind, the Colonel is making a bold advance!

COLONEL WENMAN

(aware of Helena's interest)

Completely sensible.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL WENMAN (cont'd)
A woman living alone surely has the
right to protect herself from...
er... unwelcome intrusions?

MR. STILLFORD
Possibly. Still, I think you should
put up a notice board.

Brutus shifts his hind legs to get comfortable.

The Marchesa shifts as well - to get closer to the Colonel.
She had no idea he was such a rascal!

HELENA
Now that I've given warning that
should hardly be necessary.

MR. STILLFORD
Your right to shut him out is very
doubtful.

HELENA
(trying hard to look
pitiful)
Such a difficult problem for a
widow to sort out on her own.

LADY NORAH
(rolling her eyes)
Can't Helena have him taken up if
he trespasses?

MR. STILLFORD
Well hardly, Lady Norah. The remedy
would lie in the civil courts.

Brutus rubs his nose against the Marchesa's leg.

Helena giggles. Rascal? This man is an absolute devil!

HELENA
Shall I bring an action against
him? Is that it? Is that right?

COLONEL WENMAN
That's the ticket, eh Stillford?

MR. STILLFORD
Suppose you leave him to bring the
action. When he does, you can fully
consider your position.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HELENA
(nudging Wenman)
But if he insists?

MR. STILLFORD
He'll hardly do that.

The dog starts to lick her ankle!

No man is that talented! Helena peeks under the tablecloth and discovers Brutus busily at work.

MR. STILLFORD (CONT'D)
You'll probably get a letter from him asking for the name of your solicitor. I shall obtain the name of his solicitor and we shall settle it between us - amicably, I hope, but in any case without further personal trouble to you.

Helena scoots her chair back, folds her arms and drops her chin to her chest.

HELENA
That's how it will be, will it?

MR. STILLFORD
That's the usual course - the proper way of doing the thing.

HELENA
(scowling at the Colonel)
Well, we certainly wouldn't want to do anything 'improper' would we?

Murdoch enters the room.

MURDOCH
Your pardon, Marchesa. Your letter has been delivered.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR TERRACE - NIGHT

Ambrose finishes perusing Helena's ultimatum, then slips it into the welt pocket of his vest. Cromlech strolls out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBROSE

Oh Cromlech, Haunter of Tombs,
 Lover of Men Long Dead, there is a
 possible - indeed a probable chance
 - there is a divine hope - that
 life may breathe here on this
 coast, that the world may move,
 that our old friend fortune may
 smile, and trick, and juggle, and
 favor us once more. This,
 Cromlech, to a man who came home to
 assume - what was it? Oh yes -
 responsibilities!

Over Nab Grange, the stars twinkle roguishly.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Ah, the sweetness of the game!

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

INT. HELENA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The empty picture frame occupies its place on the mantel, as
 does the clock. It CHIMES nine.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELENA'S TERRACE - MORNING

Helena brushes Nellie from the thick cushion of her wicker
 chair.

HELENA

(reclaiming her chair)
 Off you go, Nellie.

As the groggy cat goes in search of a new bed, she passes
 Helena's maid, CARLOTTA, who is toting a mysterious BROWN
 PAPER PARCEL.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Bon Giorno, Carlotta.

CARLOTTA

Bon Giorno, Marchesa.

Carlotta sets the package on the tea table.

HELENA

Cose e questo?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLOTTA

No lo so, Marchesa... A man, he
leave it at the door.

Helena takes up the parcel and cuts the string which binds it. With a metallic CLINK, there falls on the table - THE PADLOCK! To it is fastened a note:

WITH LORD LYNBOROUGH'S COMPLIMENTS.

HELENA

Bring me my field glasses!

As her maid retreats into the bedroom, Helena focuses on the path. Is something there? She shields her face from the sun. There is something there!

Carlotta rushes back. The Marchesa rips the FIELD GLASSES from her maid's hands and looks.

The gate hangs open on its hinges. She scans up the road:

Three silhouettes enter her lenses; a large stout shape, a short spare form and in-between - swinging a cane - a lithe lean figure. The center figure performs a little two-step.

HELENA (CONT'D)

WAR!

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - DAY

Two chess pieces - an elegant white QUEEN and a medieval black KING - face each other in the center of a large marble chess board. A white KNIGHT is placed next to the queen.

AMBROSE (O.S.)

Miss Violet Dufaure.

Ambrose is hunched over the board. Slyly, he examines a formidable looking ROOK.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Colonel... er... Wenman.

Another KNIGHT - a red maned stallion - is set by the rook.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Lady Norah.

He positions a squat PAWN beside the knight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Miss Gilletson.

One more to choose. But which one? Ambrose selects a BISHOP.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Mister... Mister...

Coltson makes his presents.

COLTSON
Your pardon, my lord. A Mr.
Stillford to see you.

AMBROSE
(placing the bishop)
Of course! Mr. Stillford!

The five pieces form an imposing phalanx around their queen. Ambrose snatches up the black king and stuffs it into the pocket of his satin robe.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR DRAWING ROOM - DAY

The game begins.

MR. STILLFORD
(presenting his card)
The Marchesa does me the honor to
place her confidence in me; and it
occurs to me that, before this
unfortunate dispute...

AMBROSE
Why unfortunate?

MR. STILLFORD
Surely it is - between neighbors?
The Castle and the Grange should be
friends.

His suggestion elicits no response; Ambrose isn't divulging his strategy so early.

MR. STILLFORD (CONT'D)
What I mean is, it occurred to me,
that, before further annoyance or
expense is caused, it might be well
if I talked matters over with your
lordship's solicitor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ambrose attacks.

AMBROSE

You can't talk with a non-existent person.

MR. STILLFORD

What?

AMBROSE

Sir, saving your presence, I don't like solicitors. I have no solicitor.

MR. STILLFORD

But proceedings are the natural...

AMBROSE

I see nothing 'natural' in any of this.

MR. STILLFORD

Then you'll conduct your case in person?

AMBROSE

If you hale me to court, I shall. Otherwise there's no question of a case.

Stillford attempts a counter-attack.

MR. STILLFORD

We shouldn't hesitate to take our case into court.

AMBROSE

Since you're wrong, you'd probably win. But as far as I'm concerned, I should as soon appeal to the Pope as to a law-court, sooner in fact.

MR. STILLFORD

You've no right to assert rights if you don't intend to support them.

AMBROSE

I do intend to support them.

MR. STILLFORD

By force?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AMBROSE

Prisons are not strange to me.

MR. STILLFORD

I beg your pardon?

AMBROSE

The man who shoots first goes to prison, regardless of who started it, doesn't he? Just like the law! As if that had anything to do with the merits.

MR. STILLFORD

By supporting your claim I meant supporting it by legal action.

Helena's legal adviser is in full retreat.

AMBROSE

You want to know whether I'm going to law or not, don't you? Well, I'm not. I hate the law.

MR. STILLFORD

So do most people for whom prisons are not strange.

AMBROSE

Apostles - and so on?

MR. STILLFORD

I hardly recognize your lordship as belonging to that category.

AMBROSE

That's the worst of it - nobody will. I've tried for fifteen years. Yet some day I may be known as St. Ambrose! St. Ambrose the Less. Yes, I'm afraid the less. Saints and Apostles are much handicapped in these days.

Ambrose hears a dog BARKING. Glancing out the window, he sees Brutus pursuing a terrified Nellie across the north lawn of Scarsmoor, and an exasperated Violet trying to corral Brutus.

MR. STILLFORD

(sensing the game is lost)
You've nothing more to say?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AMBROSE

(as he watches Violet)

I don't know that I ever did. You must have gathered before now that I intend to use Beach Path.

MR. STILLFORD

I make a last appeal. The Marchesa could be prevailed upon to grant permission...

AMBROSE

I'd just as soon ask her permission to breathe.

Checkmate! Mr. Stillford pivots on his heels and stomps off.

The HOWLING resumes. That sends Ambrose speeding out the door and up the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. AMBROSE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Ambrose adjusts his tie ring, his jacket and his homburg, then exits.

Again, Brutus BARKS.

Ambrose hurries back, reaches into his top dresser drawer and produces - a CRICKET BALL!

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Court is back in session.

HELENA

(addressing the jury)

For all I see, he may use my path again tomorrow.

MR. STILLFORD

Now that I've lodged your objection that won't matter much legally.

HELENA

It will annoy me intensely.

Colonel Wenman senses an opening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL WENMAN
(bouncing to his feet)
Then we'll stop him!

MR. STILLFORD
What?!

COLONEL WENMAN
Politely, but... er... firmly.

Norah will have none of this chivalrous grandstanding.

LADY NORAH
Did he really say he would go to
prison?

MR. STILLFORD
(tapping out the bowl of
his pipe)
He did.

LADY NORAH
Pray, how did he look when he said
it?

HELENA
Norah!

LADY NORAH
Such a man to defend his principles
so gallantly.

HELENA
You talk of him as a kind of Saint.

MR. STILLFORD
(under his breath)
Saint Ambrose the Less.

They all throw a look in Stillford's direction, but he can
only shake his head in puzzlement.

LADY NORAH
Oh Helena, he must be delightful.
I'm sure he's just the sort of a
man I should fall in love with.

HELENA
Norah - after all, it's my path
he's trespassing on.

She stops before the window that faces Beach Path.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HELENA (CONT'D)

(softening)

Still, I imagine the wretch is handsome.

MR. STILLFORD

Uncommonly.

HELENA

Dark hair and bright hazel eyes...

MR. STILLFORD

How did you know?

HELENA

(steel in her voice)

Norah, I should like to have that man at my feet and then to trample on him. Oh, it's not only the path! I believe he's laughing at me.

LADY NORAH

He's never seen you. Perhaps if he did he wouldn't laugh. And perhaps you wouldn't trample on him either.

MR. STILLFORD

(wrestling out of his chair)

With your permission, I'll give your bailiff, JOHN GOODENOUGH, instructions to interfere if he tries to use the path.

HELENA

I suppose.

MR. STILLFORD

No more than strictly necessary force. We must make sure we don't overstep the law.

HELENA

The law again. I begin to think the law is rather stupid.

MR. STILLFORD

Lord Lynborough would agree with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HELENA

I'm thoroughly tired of Lord
Lynborough!

VIOLET (O.S.)

But Helena, he's charming!

Violet is standing in the doorway. Well, perhaps 'floating'
would be the more appropriate verb.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

You see, I took Brutus for a walk,
and the dear always does run away.

Brutus toddles into the room with the cricket ball wedged
firmly in his jaw. He drops it at Helena's feet.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

He ran after Nellie. I ran after
him. Nellie ran up a tree and I ran
into Lord Lynborough.

Helena shifts her attention to the fireplace. She grabs an
iron and prods at the burning logs.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

He must have known I was staying
with you, but he never so much as
mentioned you. He just ignored you.

Helena rams the poker deep into the fire. A shower of sparks
shoots up the flue.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

What a wonderful air there is about
him. Such a difference it makes!

The Colonel massages his brow; this talk of Ambrose is giving
him a headache.

HELENA

Pray you meet Lord Lynborough as
often as you please, but spare me
any mention of his name.

VIOLET

I didn't mean any harm. It was all
Brutus' fault!

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - DAY

Through a MAGNIFYING GLASS, Cromlech inspects a primitive African fertility goddess. Ambrose inspects his chessboard. He removes one of the knights; the queen's guard has been reduced to four.

AMBROSE
(examining the knight)
Yes, Cromlech, a pretty girl, a
very pretty girl if you like that
petite insinuating style.

He chucks the knight in a drawer and picks up the queen.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
For myself I prefer something a
shade more - what shall we call it?

CROMLECH
Don't care a hang.

Ambrose commandeers the magnifying glass; he wants to analyze the queen more closely.

AMBROSE
A trifle more in the grand manner.
And she hadn't anything like the
complexion. I knew at once that it
couldn't be the Marchesa.

The queen is returned to her position on the board.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Do you bathe tomorrow morning?

CROMLECH
And get my head broken?

Ambrose notes his friend's considerable girth through the magnifying lens.

AMBROSE
Just stand still and let them throw
themselves against you.

Stabb grabs the glass back.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Cromlech, old chap, I'm enjoying
myself immensely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Through the library's south window, a lone figure on horseback is galloping across Sandy Nab.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Helena sits atop her chestnut mare. DUCHESS is a good-looking animal with large liquid eyes that seem to glow with intelligence, or even with fire, although, as a matter of fact, she has neither.

They move through dense woods, then cross the lazy creek which borders the Grange and ascend a steep ridge.

From the top, Helena has a commanding view of Scarsmoor to the west, the village of Fillby to the east and the broad carriage road which runs between them.

Not that Helena is interested in the view. She stares off blankly, lost in thought, when something catches her eye.

A CLOUD OF DUST is moving along the road. Helena heads down the ridge to investigate.

CUT TO:

EXT. EASTHORPE ROAD - DAY

The Reverend Mr. Tullock is behind the wheel of his shiny new AUSTIN ROADSTER. Decked out in goggles, gloves and white duster, this man of God fancies himself the very devil of the Petrol Age.

Helena trots up the embankment and begins moving parallel. They exchange a pleasant nod.

The Marchesa tries to move off the shoulder, but Mr. Tullock won't give her the room - HE OWNS THIS ROAD!

She spurs Duchess, trying to pass in front. Sacrilege! Mr. Tullock shifts from second gear to third. Duchess shifts from gallop to dead run.

The race is on! Helena has never been so determined, but there's trouble ahead.

An uneven STONE WALL, about four feet high, cuts across her path. She'll either have to give up or go over it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA
 (flattening her derby)
 Come on girl, we can do it!

They fly past the Reverend straight for the wall. Helena grits her teeth. She knows they can make it!

Alas, Helena isn't the one doing the jumping. Duchess rams her hooves into the dirt a foot short of the wall!

Helena's long skirt flips over her head. She rocks back just in time to swallow a mouthful of exhaust. The Reverend Mr. Tullock gives a final TOOT on his horn as he speeds away.

HELENA
 (stroking Duchess' mane)
 Duchess, my darling, sometimes
 you're just too much a lady.

They trot off in the direction of Nab Grange. Slowly.

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

EXT. MAIN ROAD - DAWN

Ambrose strolls along WHISTLING a fine happy tune (Edward German's 'Yeomen of England'). He reaches the gate. A NEW PADLOCK, twice the size, is hanging from the latch.

Without losing a step, he vaults the wall and continues down Beach Path. His WHISTLING grows louder.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANGE GATE - MORNING

Ambrose arrives at the south side of Grange property. The stone wall at this end is nearly twice as high, but the gate isn't padlocked. Ambrose pops the latch with his cane and gives it a push. He carries on to the sea, leaving the gate to sway in the morning breeze.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Ambrose lies in the water: Arms extended, head back, eyes focused on heaven. All emotion has vanished; he is at peace.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRANGE GATE - MORNING

Slicking back his damp hair, Ambrose hikes up the trail toward the Grange gate.

He freezes.

The gate is shut now. Poised behind it is Lady Norah - her elbows resting comfortably on the top rail, her pretty chin set upon her hands.

Lynborough approaches. With one hand he removes his hat, with the other he lays a tentative hand on the latch.

AMBROSE

I beg your pardon, but if it does not incommode you, would you have the great kindness to permit me to open the gate?

LADY NORAH

(standing her ground)

I'm filled with kindness this morning, Lord Lynborough, but this is a private path.

AMBROSE

You have me at a disadvantage.

LADY NORAH

Lady Norah Mountliffey.

AMBROSE

An honor. And now, if you will permit me.

His lordship tries to work the latch; her ladyship doesn't budge.

LADY NORAH

And be robbed of the pleasure of your company? I wouldn't dream of it!

AMBROSE

(intrigued)

Do you think you can stop me?

LADY NORAH

There isn't room for you to get over as long as I stand here - and the wall's too high to climb.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ambrose backs off a couple of steps to study the wall; it's nearly seven feet! It might be possible to scale, but he certainly wouldn't look imposing struggling at the feat.

LADY NORAH (CONT'D)
(sweetly)
Lovely weather we're having.

AMBROSE
Can't I persuade you to move. I really don't want to resort to more startling measures.

LADY NORAH
Force against a helpless female?

AMBROSE
I said startling measures - not violent ones.

He backs up another five paces.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Are your nerves good?

LADY NORAH
Excellent, thank you.

AMBROSE
You mean to stand where you are?

LADY NORAH
Till you've gone away.

Norah LAUGHS openly. Ambrose delights in the merry sound and the flash of her white teeth.

AMBROSE
It is a splendid morning, isn't it?

He shuts one eye and measures her slight frame with his thumb.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
I should think you stand about five-foot-two. You make such a charming picture at that gate.

LADY NORAH
(cocking her head)
Am I quite right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AMBROSE

Quite right. Now, please! Don't move!

LADY NORAH

Oh, I've no intention of moving.

Ambrose darts forward, springs off a large out-cropping of limestone and... JUMPS!

Lady Norah is spellbound as Ambrose sails only inches above her head! She wheels around - just in time to see him, hat in hand, bowing apologetically.

AMBROSE

I thank you for the pleasure of this conversation. If you'll excuse me...

He strides off triumphantly. Lady Norah hitches up her skirt and goes after him.

LADY NORAH

You got the better of me that time, but I've not done with you yet.

Ambrose quickens his step. Norah tries to give chase, but her heavy gown makes this nearly impossible.

LADY NORAH (CONT'D)

Oh, I can't catch you if you won't stop!

AMBROSE

I have only the right to pass and repass. I'm repassing now.

Norah falls to a walk.

LADY NORAH

Well, I'm not going to make a fool of myself by running after you.

Norah is beaten. Or is she..?

The Marchesa's bailiff, JOHN GOODENOUGH, approaches from the other direction.

LADY NORAH

Goodenough, stop him! This is Lord Lynborough!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Goodenough parks his husky legs dead center of the path.

GOODENOUGH

Beg pardon, m'lord, but I'm very sorry to interferences with your lordship, but...

AMBROSE

I only want to repass.

Ambrose moves to one side. Goodenough cuts him off.

GOODENOUGH

You can't come this way. Sorry. Excellency's strictest orders. You must go back.

AMBROSE

I am going back - or I was till you stopped me.

Ambrose shuttles to the other side. Once again, the bailiff's hulking physique bars his progress.

GOODENOUGH

Back where you came from, m'lord.

AMBROSE

I came from Scarsmoor and I'm going back there.

GOODENOUGH

Where you came from last.

AMBROSE

Really, Goodenough. At all events, her Excellency has no right to drive me into the sea.

Goodenough is bewildered, but faithfully obstinate.

GOODENOUGH

(folding his arms)
Then, m'lord, here we stay.

AMBROSE

(glancing back at Norah)
Just your tactics! But I'm not so patient of them from Goodenough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LADY NORAH

I don't know that you were very patient with me.

Ambrose inches forward.

GOODENOUGH

Please, I don't want no violence with your lordship.

AMBROSE

Remember the law, Goodenough. Sufficient force - neither more, nor less.

A cautious hand is placed on Ambrose's shoulder.

GOODENOUGH

Will this satisfy your lordship?

It doesn't satisfy his lordship one bit!

With the handle of his trusty cane, he tugs Goodenough's hat brim over his eyes. Ambrose's left leg twists about his. Gingerly, as though he was a little baby, Ambrose sets the sturdy fellow on the grass.

LADY NORAH

(clapping her hands)

Bravo!

Goodenough sits up; he's not quite sure what happened.

AMBROSE

Force not quite sufficient.

GOODENOUGH

(with a dizzy grin)

No, m'lord - not good enough.

AMBROSE

Just so. Now, I repass!

To Norah, Ambrose lifts his hat and takes a bow. Her expression is identical to Violet's the day before.

She kisses her hand and waves at the retreating Ambrose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Meanwhile, in the upstairs window of Nab Grange, the curtain is slightly pulled back. Someone has been watching. No need to ask who.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - DAY

The red-maned knight is removed from the chessboard. Two down and three to go.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE STREET, FILLBY - DAY

Ambrose strolls confidently down the foot-worn sidewalk. He passes from bakery to boot-maker, stealing quick glances of his stylish Norfolk suit in the reflections of the shop front windows. His progress is abruptly thwarted by an old man sweeping down his front stoop. Every time Ambrose tries to step round, the old man cuts him off. In desperation, he hooks the broom handle with his cane and pulls it aside.

AMBROSE

Pardon me...

As Ambrose passes, the old codger pops his head up. It's Dawson - the valet from Scarsmoor.

DAWSON

Master Ambrose..? I mean, your lordship?

AMBROSE

Dawson?

DAWSON

Right you are, my lord.

AMBROSE

(with a warm embrace)
Dawson, you're a shopkeep now?

DAWSON

A publican, my lord. Thanks to your father. Bless him.

Dawson points to the SIGNBOARD swinging above their heads:

THE LYNBOROUGH ARMS

Proud Dawson puffs out his chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

 DAWSON (CONT'D)
Would you favor me by sharing a
pint in memory of old times?

CUT TO:

INT. LYNBOROUGH ARMS - DAY

Stepping away from the long oak bar, Lynborough examines the room. It is a veritable shrine to the game of cricket - trophies, team photographs, framed newspaper clippings.

The centerpiece is an amateurish painting of Ambrose's father. Armed with bat and ball, he looks like the grand old warrior of the playing field.

 AMBROSE
 (admiring the painting)
My father, he was quite a good bat,
wasn't he?

 DAWSON
Best I've ever seen, my lord. Don't
suppose you've kept up your
cricket. I mean, being in foreign
parts so long.

 AMBROSE
Not since I was a dry bob at Eton.
Why?

 DAWSON
We're playing a team from Easthorpe
tomorrow and we're very short.

 AMBROSE
 (sipping his beer)
I daresay Mr. Wilbraham will play.
Mr. Stabb's no use.

 DAWSON
Everyone helps. We've got two of
the gentlemen from the Grange - Mr.
Stillford, a good bat, and Colonel
Wenman, who can bowl a bit - or so
John Goodenough tells me.

You can hear the wheels turning in Ambrose's head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBROSE

Well, I used to bowl a bit, too.
If you're really hard up for a man,
really at a loss, I'll play.

DAWSON

Would you, my lord?

AMBROSE

I'll tell you what else. I should
like to stand the lunch.

Now, Dawson's brain is making a considerable racket.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

A sort of feast to celebrate my
homecoming. The two teams - and
perhaps a dozen places for friends,
ladies, the Vicar and so on, eh,
Dawson? You see the idea.

It is unlikely that Dawson has ever seen any idea so clearly.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

And no need to quarrel about
figures.

DAWSON

Your lordship's always most
liberal.

CUT TO:

EXT. LYNBOROUGH ARMS - DAY

The two men come out onto the sidewalk.

AMBROSE

(buttoning his gloves)
Now mind, keep the tent empty till
the moment comes. Then display your
triumph! It'll be a pleasant little
surprise for everybody, won't it?

DAWSON

Indeed it will, my lord.

A loud CRASH startles them.

At the market across the way, Jennie Gilletson has knocked
over a crate load of cabbages.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As she bends down to pick them up, her bustle bumps a pyramid of RED APPLES. Two dozen winesaps tumble into the road.

AMBROSE

What the devil?

DAWSON

Miss Gilletson from the Grange -
the Marchesa's companion.

The GROCER races outside, alternately gathering up produce and hurling curses. Incensed, Miss Gilletson storms away.

AMBROSE

Good-bye Dawson. Remember - a dead
secret and rattling good lunch.

Ambrose crosses the street, retrieving apples as he goes. He passes them to the grocer, who offers one in thanks.

Arranging his fingers carefully around the red sphere, Ambrose pitches a perfect strike into Dawson's hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE STREET - DAY

Ambrose takes up a position on the sidewalk. Miss Gilletson heads his way.

He unbuttons his GLOVES, nonchalantly drops one to the ground, then turns, pretending to admire the store window. Almost immediately, the local CONSTABLE wanders over.

CONSTABLE

I beg your pardon, sir.

He hands the glove to Ambrose and carries on.

AMBROSE

(a little stunned)

Thank you.

He checks his victim's progress. She's stopped at a flower shop. Again he drops the glove... No luck. A tiny hand tugs on his pant leg.

TOWHEADED CHERUB

'cuse me, sir.

AMBROSE

(accepting the glove)

Thank you. Most kind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Where is that confounded woman? He glimpses over his shoulder. Miss Gilletson, BOUQUET in hand, is on her way.

Relieved, Ambrose drops the glove one last time.

Before he can turn, a KINDLY GENT steps in, reaches over... WHACK! Ambrose's cane pins the glove to the ground; his eyes screw through the top of the man's head. The gent pulls his hand away and exits. Fast.

Alone at last! Lynborough awaits his prey.

Jennie putters up the walkway... and goes right past him! What happened? He checks the ground. No glove! He eyes her squat form:

The glove is flip-flopping out the bottom of her dress - its button hole hooked to the heel of her shoe!

Ambrose slaps his forehead. Can this go any worse?

AMBROSE
Pardon me, Miss...

No response. Miss Gilletson crosses the street.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Excuse me...

Nothing. His sights are zeroed in on the glove - it seems to be waving good-bye.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
... Miss Gilletson!

Contact! She turns.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
(signaling to her)
I hate to trouble you...

Miss Gilletson steps back onto the curb - and snags the glove on the gutter rail! It's amazing how quickly the basic forces of the universe - gravity, inertia, momentum - can transform a stout spinster into a charging rhinoceros!

IMPACT! Two bodies splatter onto the pavement.

AMBROSE
(uncrossing his eyes)
Good afternoon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Even in this position, he manages a polite tip of the hat.

MISS GILLETSON
(climbing off Ambrose)
Oh, I'm so dreadfully sorry.

AMBROSE
(staggering to his feet)
Not at all. A pleasure, Miss
Gilletson.

MISS GILLETSON
You know who I am?

AMBROSE
The fairest flower in all Fillby?
Allow me to introduce myself - Lord
Lynborough.

MISS GILLETSON
Are you the Lord Lynborough. I mean
the Lord Lynborough who's done all
those funny things?

AMBROSE
(bowing low)
I rejoice if the recital of them
has caused you any amusement.

He spots the pathetic remains of her flowers.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Dear me. Your bouquet is ruined.

MISS GILLETSON
It was for the Vicar's wife.

AMBROSE
Perhaps you'd let me replace them
with some of our Scarsmoor roses.

MISS GILLETSON
Oh, but if you're Lord Lynborough,
I - I really couldn't.

AMBROSE
(rubbing the his head)
I think we're well enough
acquainted. And who's to know
unless you choose?

She is completely under his spell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
 (whispering)
 Besides, there's nothing so
 pleasant as a secret shared with a
 beautiful lady!

She practically faints.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR GARDEN - DAY

Miss Gilletson is adrift in a sea of color; the garden is in full bloom.

Ambrose clips a PINK ROSE and passes it to the gardener, PETERS, whose arms are already full to bursting.

AMBROSE
 Peters, see these off to Mrs.
 Tullock, with Miss Gilletson's
 compliments.

Ambrose whispers something else in Peters' ear. The instruction acknowledged, Peters runs to the stables. Ambrose returns his attentions to Miss Gilletson.

MISS GILLETSON
 I should say good-bye now. But
 thank you so much for everything -
 it's been a perfect day.

AMBROSE
 You're not going?

MISS GILLETSON
 I really should. It's a long tramp
 to the Grange by way of the road.

Her eyes narrow.

MISS GILLETSON (CONT'D)
 That wretched gate! Really, Helena
 does cut off her nose to spite her
 face.

AMBROSE
 It's your nose that she's cut off.
 Such a beautiful nose too!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISS GILLETSON

If I were younger, I'd climb that wall. As it is - well - it's the road for me.

AMBROSE

(gesturing toward the stables)

Oh no, you needn't walk.

The gates to the CARRIAGE HOUSE swing wide (as does Miss Gilletson's mouth).

A luxurious VICTORIA issues forth, drawn by two admirable horses. It halts by Ambrose. The coachman, WILLIAMS, touches his hat; the footman, CHARLES, leaps to the ground.

AMBROSE

Put up the hood, Charles. The sun's very hot for Miss Gilletson.

CHARLES

Yes, my lord.

Miss Gilletson puts her pudgy foot onto the coach step and tries to hoist herself inside, but she rocks back to the ground. The footman offers a modest push. No luck. From directly behind, Ambrose positions his cane and fires straight up! Miss Gilletson performs a world class high jump.

AMBROSE

(flatly)

Sorry.

She stares back, dazed and bleary-eyed, but happy. Peters rushes up with another huge BOUQUET of pink roses.

AMBROSE

(presenting the flowers)

For you, Miss Gilletson.

MISS GILLETSON

(inhaling deeply)

Oh Lord Lynborough, you quite take a girl's breath away.

He signals to the Coachman.

AMBROSE

Slow and easy, Williams.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

With a CRACK of the whip the Victoria starts down the drive. Ambrose and Miss Gilletson exchange a final wave.

Cromlech has been observing this 'tender' scene. He crosses the front lawn and taps Ambrose on the shoulder.

AMBROSE

What brings the Crusader out here
amongst the Infidels?

Stabb presses something into Ambrose's hand.

CROMLECH

Tribute for the conqueror.

It's the PAWN from the chess set.

AMBROSE

(with a Cheshire grin)
Old friend, if I've reckoned right,
the loyalty of the ladies at Nab
Grange is tottering, tottering.

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE DRAWING ROOM - DAY

A very disloyal Lady Norah bounds from her chair.

LADY NORAH

What is all this?

VIOLET

Yes, Helena, yes...

HELENA

One of you pursues Lord Lynborough
to his own threshold - the other
flirts with him in my own meadow!
Rather peculiar signs of friendship
under the present circumstances -
don't you think, Colonel Wenman?

COLONEL WENMAN

(nervously)
Well... er...

HELENA

Kissing one's hand to a mere
stranger...

Norah is speechless.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA (CONT'D)

Do you deny it?

LADY NORAH

Deny it? I glory in it. I had a splendid time with Lord Lynborough. Oh, I did try to keep him out - but he jumped over my head!

Everyone else perks up; they've never heard this part of the story!

LADY NORAH (CONT'D)

And when I got John Goodenough to help me...

HELENA

(scornfully)

I shall prosecute him for assaulting Goodenough.

LADY NORAH

Goodenough touched him first!

HELENA

That doesn't matter since I'm in the right. That's the law, isn't it Mr. Stillford? Will he be sent to prison or only heavily fined?

MR. STILLFORD

I'm rather afraid... neither. You see he'll plead his right, and the bench would refer us to our civil remedy and dismiss the summons. At least that's my opinion.

LADY NORAH

Of course that's right.

HELENA

If that's English justice, I greatly regret that I ever settled in England!

VIOLET

It's the law, Helena.

HELENA

(ready to explode)

If that's the law, then the law is inkpat!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LADY NORAH
Inkpat again! Helena, you're
talking like a schoolgirl.

HELENA
(springing to her feet)
Is no one on my side?

COLONEL WENMAN
Nothing to be said for the
fellow... er... nothing at all.

HELENA
Thank you, Colonel. I'm glad I have
one friend left anyhow.

Helena slides back onto the sofa.

HELENA (CONT'D)
(to herself)
And dear old Jennie, of course.
She would never forsake me.

The windows begin to RATTLE - something BIG is approaching.

Helena stays glued to her seat; she knows when bad news has
come to her doorstep. The others rush over to see.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE - DAY

The footman helps Miss Gilletson down the coach steps. The
bouquet of roses covers her face, but no matter - we already
know what her expression is.

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE DRAWING ROOM - DAY

As the others gawk out the window, Helena tries to slip away.
Before she reaches the door, Brutus runs in front of her,
cricket ball at the ready.

HELENA
(through her teeth)
Traitor!

She scoots the dog aside and stalks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Duchess eats a bit of grass; Helena chews on a few things of her own. She scans the horizon intensely, as if expecting to see...

From a deep notch in the hillcrest, a TRAIL OF DUST rises. Helena tightens the reins and gives Duchess a sharp thump in the ribs.

CUT TO:

EXT. EASTHORPE ROAD - DAY

They lope up the embankment and trot along the shoulder of the road. Their old rival, the Reverend Mr. Tullock, pulls up beside them.

The Reverend accelerates into the lead. He is supremely confident - directly ahead looms the wall!

Duchess slows - she wants no part of that beastly pile of rocks. But Helena is in no mood to be beaten. She slices her whip hard into Duchess' flank!

HELENA

Come on, you harlot!

That did it! Duchess rockets ahead! She's moving so fast it's not clear whether she intends going over the wall or through it! At the last second, her hind legs push off.

The Reverend is astonished! Helena is astonished! Duchess is positively dumfounded!

Horse and rider glide down into the next pasture.

Undaunted, the Clergyman clamps down on the accelerator and plows up the next hill.

Meanwhile, the meadow is churned to bits under Duchess' quickening gallop. Mr. Tullock grows nervous; his Austin can't get much traction on the gravel road. Worse, the Marchesa has ceased to be in his rear view mirror; she's now in his peripheral vision!

How can he beat her? His mind frantically searches for an answer as he tops the ridge. Starting downhill, the problem rapidly begins to solve itself. Put simply - the motorcar is heavy and the grade is steep! He barrels back into the lead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

More trouble. Up ahead, the road veers sharply to the left, then crosses a wide STREAM via a one lane stone BRIDGE. The embankment drops off into deep water.

Everyone holds their breath as they hit bottom. The Austin skids off the road, but manages to round the turn. There is a nautical pitch as the vehicle mounts violently back onto the causeway and crosses the bridge.

Helena yanks Duchess in the opposite direction, cuts down to the stream and looks for a shallow place to ford.

The Reverend is now far ahead.

No choice. Duchess dives into the WATER, splashes across and shoots into the WOODS on the far side.

The Marchesa has one eye on the Austin, and the other on low hanging branches as she weaves through the trees.

She vaults a HEDGEROW, and lands in a rich green PASTURE. Up ahead, a FARMER spends a peaceful afternoon tending his COWS.

Helena screams at Duchess to keep going - and screams at the farmer, the cows and the world in general to stay the hell out of her way!

Helena and Duchess are gaining, but there's a solid barricade of heavy brush in front of them.

She slaps her partner hard on the rump and they vanish into the dense thicket.

Mr. Tullock eases up - apparently he's rid himself of these pesky females.

The bushes blow apart! Helena is holding on to Duchess for dear life. Or perhaps it's Duchess that's holding on to her.

They tear up the embankment and veer onto the road; the motorcar shoves them back!

Duchess' brain, which was never very clear, now ceases to work entirely. With mindless fury, she erupts off the ground!

A half ton of frothing beast flies over the bonnet of The Reverend's motorcar and pounds onto the road not six inches from his front bumper!

Tullock pulls the brake lever! Duchess roars into the lead, spewing gravel and dust into his windshield!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

It takes all of Helena's remaining strength to rein the horse in. They pull up and wait at the side of the road.

The Austin crawls past them - slowly, humbly, dustily.

With a grudging tip of his cap, the Reverend drives on.

Never did a victory taste so sweet. Helena hugs Duchess tight.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN ROAD - DAY

A KEY unlocks the gate to Beach Path.

Helena leads Duchess back onto Grange property.

She latches the gate, then closes her eyes and breathes deep. The wind rises, bringing a faint TUNE - a familiar tune. Helena pulls Duchess behind a hedge and spies up the road.

Roger Wilbraham is strolling toward Scarsmoor whistling a rousing version of Yeomen of England. A thick stack of PAPERS is cradled under his arm. He starts up the Castle driveway.

It seems Helena's newfound courage will not be rewarded. Or will it?

A blast of wind hits Roger square on, scattering his papers everywhere. Roger scrambles after them.

The breeze dies away. A single page flutters down just beyond the wall.

Seizing the opportunity - literally - Helena rushes through the gate, snatches the paper and deposits it on Beach Path.

The wind, her former ally, is now uncooperative. The paper doesn't want to stay. Roger is approaching fast. As a last resort, Helena stuffs it under a flat stone, and darts off.

Roger zigzags down the road, collecting pages as he goes.

ROGER

Fifty-four... fifty-five... fifty-six... fifty-eight....

His body stiffens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROGER
(frantic)
Fifty-eight? Fifty-eight!

He sifts through the other papers - page fifty-seven is not there! His eyes shoot in all directions.

The missing page sits in the middle of Beach Path.

He scouts the enemy's territory - the coast is clear. Guardedly, he starts to scale the wall.

HELENA (O.S.)
The gate isn't locked.

Up pops Helena. Roger is thunderstruck; never did he imagine any woman was quite so beautiful.

ROGER
I... I... I'm staying at the
Castle.

HELENA
Well, I certainly shouldn't hold
that against you. Come in.

Helena slips open the latch. Her rich, dark eyes command Roger to enter. He obeys.

He stumbles over to the paper, and pulls it from under the rock. (A thinking man might wonder how a sheet of paper can fall under a rock, so let's be clear on this point: At present, Roger is not a thinking man.)

HELENA
I suppose you've been taught to
think me a very unneighborly person
haven't you, Mr. Wilbraham? You
don't look old enough to be that
learned Mr. Stabb everyone told me
about. Though I've heard Mr. Stabb
is absolutely delightful. How I
should love to know him, if only...

ROGER
Yes, my name's Wilbraham. I'm Lord
Lynborough's secretary. That is,
I'm helping him write his
autobiography.

He holds up the messy stack of papers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROGER (CONT'D)

But... I... I don't think anything of that sort about you. And... I've never heard Lynborough say anything... unkind.

HELENA

Oh, Lord Lynborough!

ROGER

Of course I... I know that you think you're right.

HELENA

I do think I'm right, Mr. Wilbraham. But that's not it. If it were merely a question of right, it would be unneighborly to insist. I'm not hurt by Lord Lynborough's using this path. I'm hurt by his discourtesy. In Italy, where I grew up, women are treated with respect - even sometimes with deference.

ROGER

Well, you know...

HELENA

Oh, I can't let you say a word against him. As his friend and biographer that would be disloyal; and the one thing I dislike is disloyalty. Only I was anxious that you understand my position, and I shall be very glad if you and Mr. Stabb will use the path whenever you like. If the gate's locked, you can manage the wall.

They walk side by side, not very quickly. Helena's very red lips show no smile - but they certainly have one in ready ambush.

ROGER

I'm most awfully obliged to you Miss... Ma'am... Marchesa, but...

HELENA

No more need be said about that, Mr. Wilbraham. You're heartily welcome.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HELENA (cont'd)

Lord Lynborough would have been heartily welcome too, if I hadn't received orders. I don't take orders - not even from Lord Lynborough.

She raises her chin proudly.

HELENA (CONT'D)

There - don't let's talk any more about disagreeable things. It's too beautiful an afternoon.

Lightly, she lays her fingertips on his arm.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Can you spare just five minutes?

She leads Roger to a patch of WILD STRAWBERRIES.

HELENA (CONT'D)

The strawberries are splendid, aren't they? I do want some, but it's so hot to pick them for one's self!

Against the Marchesa's practised art, Roger is helpless.

HELENA (CONT'D)

(picking a strawberry)
Only five minutes... Please?!

She bites into the ripe juicy berry.

The wind picks up again. One by one, the papers slip from Roger's hand...

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

INT. SCARSMOOR DINING ROOM - MORNING

Last night's port has given way to this morning's coffee. Rows of little spirit lamps warm rows of large silver dishes - ham, tongue, partridge, and ptarmigan. Next to these sit pots of China tea, trays of melon, fruits, and berries - especially STRAWBERRIES! A small porcelain bowl is overflowing with ripe wild strawberries.

Roger is still in his faraway dream world. Vacantly, he piles a half dozen strawberries onto his otherwise empty plate and sits down next to Ambrose.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ambrose isn't eating much either. Instead, he tries to make sense of Roger's biographical notes. The stack of papers lies next to him - wrinkled, torn and covered with dirt.

AMBROSE
(inspecting an abused
page)
Take a little care, Roger. This is
my life after all.

ROGER
Thank you.

AMBROSE
Is that all you have to say?

ROGER
(examining a strawberry)
So lovely...

AMBROSE
And why not? They're in season.

ROGER
So perfect...

AMBROSE
Do you plan on dreaming the day
away?

ROGER
Such a beautiful complexion...

AMBROSE
(a little annoyed)
What does its complexion matter?

ROGER
The human side of a thing always
matters.

Ambrose inspects the strawberry for himself. Could he have missed something?

The pantry door swings open and Cromlech blunders in.

AMBROSE
Where the devil have you been?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Never has Mr. Stabb appeared so untidy. His sleeves are rolled up, his jacket is slung over his arm and he is cradling his derby upright, as if he was carrying a bowl of soup.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Cromlech?

Cromlech is with Roger in that same faraway place.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Cromlech..? Cromlech..? Something
the matter old friend?

CROMLECH
(snapping out of it)
Nothing at all. Why?

With that, Cromlech reaches into his derby and plucks out - what else - A WILD STRAWBERRY. He takes a small bite.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE GARDEN - DAY

Two WOODEN BALLS collide!

A croquet course has been mapped out on the lawn and Helena is diligently aligning her next shot.

It's obvious the other competitors haven't played in a very long time. Mr. Stillford has converted his mallet into an arm rest; Lady Norah is using her mallet as a fly swatter; Colonel Wenman is sitting on his.

Their hostess is unconcerned. With deadly purpose, Helena lowers her sights on the Colonel's roqueted ball and smacks it into an azalea bush!

COLONEL WENMAN
(barely hiding his
irritation)
Nice... er... shot.

HELENA
(with fiendish glee)
Thank you, Colonel.

Helena sizes up another target. The spectators don't quite know what to make of all this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIOLET

I must say, it's nice to see Helena enjoying herself so much.

MISS GILLETSON

Uppishness - that's all I see going on here! Bad manners and uppishness!

LADY NORAH

I'm not sure.

She traipses over to Helena.

LADY NORAH (CONT'D)

Perhaps we should choose a new game?

HELENA

Why? Do you mind being beaten?

LADY NORAH

Certainly not! Do you?

HELENA

Yes, Norah, I do mind. Though I didn't realize it until only yesterday. From now on, I play to win!

Helena draws back her mallet and swings.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR BILLIARDS ROOM - EVENING

Two IVORY BALLS collide!

Cromlech and Roger chew on their pipes, and fretfully circle the billiards table. Whether they are actually playing or simply unleashing their anger on a half dozen innocent balls, it is hard to say.

ROGER

(lining up a shot)
If such a glorious creature...

CROMLECH

Such a thoroughly intelligent and most sympathetic woman...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROGER
 (stroking hard)
 ... thinks that she has a right,
 why, she probably has one.

Roger's shot rattles out of the pocket.

CROMLECH
 At any rate her view is entitled to
 respect - to a courteous hearing.

ROGER
 Then you agree that Lynborough has
 been a shade...

Stabb takes aim.

CROMLECH
 Ambrose is a spoiled child!

He misses the cue ball altogether.

ROGER
 (slamming down his cue)
 Mr. Stabb, can we, as gentlemen,
 allow this?

CROMLECH
 Shall you bathe tomorrow morning?

ROGER
 With Lynborough? No, I shan't.

CROMLECH
 Nor shall I!

In the corner of the open doorway, a SHOE TIP is barely
 visible. Ambrose has been eavesdropping.

He steps out and strolls innocently into the room.

AMBROSE
 Evening gentlemen.

CROMLECH
 (startled)
 Evening Ambrose.

AMBROSE
 Ready for the match tomorrow,
 Roger?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROGER

Why... um... Yes, of course.

AMBROSE

Excellent. You'll come too, Cromlech.

CROMLECH

Well, I hadn't planned...

AMBROSE

It'd be dull for you all by yourself here. Besides I'm sure there'll be some sort of lunch.

CROMLECH

I suppose.

AMBROSE

Excellent!

Ambrose curls his finger round his cane as if it's a cue stick.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

(taking aim)

Gentlemen, here's to the game!

He strokes hard.

CUT TO:

EXT. FILLBY COUNTRYSIDE - MIDDAY

A RED LEATHER BALL cracks off a bat!

The cricket match between Fillby and Easthorpe is underway. It's being played in a large field, pleasantly surrounded by a belt of trees and lying behind the Lynborough Arms. The men of Scarsmoor and the Grange are in the field.

There is a rapturous CHEER from the crowd.

Roger has yorked the first batsman and now faces WOODWELL, a mighty hitter. Young Woodwell immediately gets to business - but he keeps the ball low.

Other wickets fall rapidly. Still, Easthorpe's score is mounting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Roger takes the ball with an air of determination. Woodwell is playing for safety now - his fifty looms ahead! Ambrose, who is fielding 'in the country', has time to look around.

Across the field, a WAGONETTE arrives. Four ladies descend. Ambrose is too far away to see their faces clearly, but it is not hard to recognize their figures.

Two menservants begin at once to rig up a table under a spreading tree. If only Ambrose could get a closer look.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FILLBY COUNTRYSIDE - LATER

As Ambrose returns to his position, between the overs, he can see that the four ladies are now seated around the table. A tree blocks his view to one of them - the only one that he's interested in seeing!

[His lordship's reputation as a sportsman will inevitably suffer from this next portion of the narrative. Yet extenuating circumstances may fairly be pleaded.]

A new batsman, TREHERNE, is up. Ambrose focuses on his dangerous bat.

From across the field comes a gentle LAUGH - a siren's call. Irresistibly drawn, Ambrose turns his head. At the same instant Roger delivers a slow ball - a specious ball. Treherne hits it - but he hits it into the air.

The ball soars through high heaven straight towards Ambrose.

ROGER

Look out!

Ambrose spins round - and is instantly blinded by the sun! The ball begins to drop.

It falls into his hands; he catches - fumbles - catches - fumbles again - until at last it drops on the grass!

Through the GASPS of the crowd, one voice is clear:

HELENA (O.S.)

Who is that stupid clumsy man?

He wheels round sharply. Helena has already turned away.

CUT TO:

EXT. FILLBY COUNTRYSIDE - LATER

The luncheon bell RINGS! Both teams head for the tent.

CUT TO:

INT. LUNCHEON TENT - AFTERNOON

Stillford and Wenman saunter in. What a magnificent sight! Everywhere there is food and drink and good cheer.

COLONEL WENMAN

I suppose the... er... Marchesa is expecting us.

A steward, carrying a large joint of mutton, passes right under their noses. They both find a chair.

MR. STILLFORD

As umpire, um, I should lunch with the teams. I mean it would be deuced stand-offish of me not to join in, don't you think?

The last of their scruples vanish before a large jug of hockcup, artfully iced.

COLONEL WENMAN

(pouring himself a drink)

Well, she'll have the ladies with her, won't she?

Right on cue, the tent flap flies back, and the three ladies of the Grange enter.

Ambrose rushes forward to meet them.

LADY NORAH

Here we are, Lord Lynborough. The Marchesa was so kind, she told us to do just as we liked, and we thought it would be such fun to lunch with the cricketers.

AMBROSE

(bowing low)

The cricketers are immensely honored.

The Colonel has been noting this scene with decided misgivings. He downs a pint of courage and snoops over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

What, Colonel Wenman? What's the matter?

COLONEL WENMAN

The... er... the Marchesa. We can't leave her to lunch alone!

LADY NORAH

Oh, Helena expressly said that she didn't expect the gentlemen. She knows what the custom is, you see.

The other ladies nod in agreement.

With a relieved sigh, the Colonel resumes his place. The iced hockcup quickly settles his uneasy mood.

Mr. Dawson rises, pint in hand.

DAWSON

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm no hand at a speech, but I give you the health of our kind neighbor and good host today - Lord Lynborough. Here's to his lordship!

EVERYONE

- His lordship!

They all drink up.

COLONEL WENMAN

(nudging Mr. Stillford)
Is it his lunch?

MR. STILLFORD

Looks like. And we can hardly throw him over the hedge after this!

COLONEL WENMAN/MR. STILLFORD

(raising their tankards)
- To his lordship!

Ambrose's face wears a contented smile. Nab Grange has been captured - bag and baggage! He turns to share his triumph with Cromlech and Roger...

But their chairs sit empty!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AMBROSE
Ladies, would you excuse me please.

CUT TO:

EXT. FILLBY COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

As Ambrose steps outside, a merry peal of LAUGHTER wafts across the battlefield. He looks toward the sound; his eyes tell the truth plainly.

Three people are lunching under the spreading tree: The ponderous figure of Stabb; Roger, in his highly recognizable striped blazer, and between them, a young woman, half hidden by a parasol.

AMBROSE
Well played!

CUT TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE - EVENING

Ominous storm clouds hang over Sandy Nab and there is a distant GROWL of thunder.

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE DINING ROOM - EVENING

It is dinner time at Nab Grange. Tonight's menu includes hostility, partisanship, pique and disaffection. All are being served cold.

LADY NORAH
Stop playing these silly games!

HELENA
I'm glad you feel that my public humiliation is a silly game!

LADY NORAH
It was you who told us to do as we pleased!

HELENA
And your pleasure lay in abandoning me, in consorting with my enemy and in giving him his triumph!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL WENMAN
(defensively)
Well, what do you say about
Wilbraham and Stabb!

HELENA
I say that they're gentlemen. They
saw the position I was in - and
they saved my reputation.

LADY NORAH
Are you really asking us to believe
that you hadn't arranged it with
them beforehand?

HELENA
Oh, I don't ask you to believe
anything I say!

LADY NORAH
You're being very childish, Helena.
If you've got a right, go to law
with Lord Lynborough and make him
respect it. If you haven't got a
right, why go on making yourself
ridiculous and all the rest of us
very uncomfortable?

HELENA
I'm making you uncomfortable? Have
I any friends left? Or - in the
face of this - have I only the law!

COLONEL WENMAN
Perhaps, if you tried to view the
situation more... er... sensibly.

HELENA
I'm not interested in being
sensible!

LADY NORAH
At last we come to the truth.

Helena's face betrays no emotion. Calmly, she folds her
napkin, pushes back her chair and walks out.

The room sits in conscience-stricken silence. Miss Gilletson
scots away from the table, but Norah stops her.

LADY NORAH (CONT'D)
No. I said it. I'm the one to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. STILLFORD
 (grabbing Norah's arm)
 Don't urge her to go to law, I'm
 pretty sure she'd be beaten.

Norah understands; she starts after her wounded friend.

VIOLET
 Who could think she'd take it like
 that?

MISS GILLETSON
 She ought to give in and apologize.
 That would be right - and I will
 add, Christian.

COLONEL WENMAN
 (rearranging the
 vegetables on his plate)
 Well... er... humble pie ain't very
 good eating.

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE HALLWAY - EVENING

Helena's bedroom door is shut tight. As Norah rushes
 upstairs, she can hear Helena CRYING softly.

LADY NORAH
 (knocking)
 Helena... Helena..?

Norah reaches for the door handle, but hears the KEY turn
 from the inside. The lock SNAPS shut.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR DRAWING ROOM - EVENING

The ill winds have winged their way to Scarsmoor Castle.

ROGER
 (jumping to his feet)
 You're mad!

CROMLECH
 Roger, remember yourself!

AMBROSE
 It's alright, Cromlech. Please sit
 down, both of you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stabb and Wilbraham comply with the request.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Roger, your father's what they call a High Churchman, isn't he?

ROGER

Yes, and so am I.

AMBROSE

He has his Church. He puts that above the State, doesn't he? He wouldn't do what the Church said was wrong because the State said it was right?

ROGER

How could he? Of course he wouldn't.

AMBROSE

Well, I have my Church - inside here.

He taps his thumb to his breast.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

I stand where your father does. Why am I more mad than the Archdeacon?

ROGER

But there's all the difference.

CROMLECH

All the difference that there is between being right and being wrong - and I know of none so profound.

AMBROSE

Can't you both see? If this contest remains in deadlock then still I am beaten. Unless the Marchesa acknowledges my right, my right is as nothing.

His friends are unmoved. Ambrose makes an outright appeal.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Gentlemen - I have made myself a champion of my sex. Shall I surrender?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CROMLECH
(shaking his head)
All this over some silly path.

AMBROSE
I don't care about the path!

Right now, you could hear a pin drop!

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Well, yes, I do care about it - for
my bathing in the morning.

Ambrose slaps his cane hard against his leg.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Heaven forgive me, but sooner than
be beaten, I'll go to law with her!

ROGER
(rising from his chair)
Lord Lynborough, I beg you to
accept my resignation, and I shall
be greatly obliged if you can
relieve me of my duties as soon as
possible.

Roger waits for no answer. With the merest indication of a
bow, he leaves.

AMBROSE
(smiling)
What to make of that!

CROMLECH
He isn't joking Ambrose, and
neither am I. This affair may amuse
you - it worries me. I'll be off
tomorrow, back to Oxford.

AMBROSE
(genuinely shocked)
You shan't go - the boy shan't go.

CROMLECH
I'm sorry. But I don't want to
stay.

Cromlech lumbers out of the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Ambrose purses his lips in a momentary whistle before clamping his pipe back in his jaw.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR TERRACE - NIGHT

Thunder RUMBLES.

Ambrose strolls across the terrace. He taps his pipe in the palm of his hand - slowly, as if thinking between each tap. He stops. Someone is behind him.

LADY NORAH (O.S.)
I thought you might be interested
to hear...

A silhouetted figure is at the edge of the terrace.

AMBROSE
Lady Norah?

LADY NORAH
Yes, it's me... I thought you might
be interested to hear that you've
made her cry - and very bitterly.

CUT TO:

INT. HELENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Helena ponders her reflection in the empty picture frame. This is not the face of a Goddess, nor a Queen, nor even a Marchesa. Who it is, she cannot say. Of one thing she is certain - her new courage has come at a terrible price.

Distractedly, her eyes stray to the KEY RING on the bureau. She snatches it up and bolts out the door.

The first drops of RAIN chatter across the bedroom window.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Ambrose and Norah warm themselves by the fire.

AMBROSE
And that, I suppose, ought to end
the matter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LADY NORAH

I thought you might like to know.

AMBROSE

Actually I believe I do like to know it.

Ambrose crosses to the far end of the room.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

You're mistaking my character, Lady Norah. I'm the villain of this piece. Consequently you must be prepared for my receiving your news with devilish glee.

LADY NORAH

You haven't seen it - and I have.

AMBROSE

Well put. How did it happen?

LADY NORAH

Over something I said - something horrid.

Norah's blue eyes are less bright than usual.

AMBROSE

Please, Lady Norah, I should like to know.

LADY NORAH

I said that if she had a good case, she ought to go to law and if she hadn't, she ought to stop making herself ridiculous and the rest of us uncomfortable.

AMBROSE

You spoke with the general assent of the company?

LADY NORAH

I think they all agreed - but she took it - well, in the way I've told you.

AMBROSE

How do you think I'm taking it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LADY NORAH

Taking what?

AMBROSE

Exactly the same thing from my friends. They tell me to go to law if I've got a case - and at any rate to stop persecuting a lady. And they've both given me warning.

LADY NORAH

Mr. Stabb and Mr. Wilbraham? They're going away?

AMBROSE

Carry back those tidings. Won't they dry the Marchesa's tears?

LADY NORAH

(brightening)

I didn't think she'd got along as quickly as that.

Ambrose leans in the doorway and stares out at the corridor beyond.

AMBROSE

It's a little unreasonable of her to cry under the circumstances. I'm not crying, Lady Norah.

LADY NORAH

It would all come right if only you knew one another! She's the most wonderful woman in the world.

His eyes wander up to the SECOND FLOOR LANDING - to his mother's portrait.

AMBROSE

(with renewed optimism)

You must tell her you've seen me.

LADY NORAH

I couldn't do that!

AMBROSE

You must - or here the matter ends, and I shall be forced to go to law. Tell her you've seen me, and that I propose an armistice. Not peace - not yet, anyhow - but an armistice.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AMBROSE (cont'd)

I shall not use Beach Path for a week, and before the end of that week I will submit a proposal.

LADY NORAH

You'll make it a pleasant proposal?

AMBROSE

She must inform me tomorrow morning whether she accepts the armistice.

He rushes out to the corridor and shouts upstairs.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Roger!

Roger's head cranes out his bedroom door.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

Come down. There's somebody wants to see you.

Ambrose ducks back inside.

AMBROSE

Please let him take you home. He wants cheering up.

LADY NORAH

He won't really leave you, will he?

AMBROSE

I want you to persuade him to stay during the armistice. I'm too proud to ask him for myself. I shall think very little of you, however, if he doesn't.

Wilbraham makes a timid entrance.

AMBROSE

Roger, here's a beautiful woman in need of an escort. Would you mind?

Norah passes Roger a very disarming smile. Roger is puzzled by the turn of events, but elated with his new mission.

ROGER

I... um... that is....

AMBROSE

Well said.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

He jams Roger's hat on his head and steers them both in the direction of the front door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR CASTLE - NIGHT

A CARRIAGE is parked in the rain-soaked driveway. As Roger and Norah take their seats, Ambrose shuts the carriage door.

AMBROSE

Remember our bargain, Lady Norah.

She nods in assent and the coach pulls away.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH PATH - NIGHT

The path has become a long gray river.

Helena splashes through the muck up to the gate. Her hands grab the lock and ram in a KEY. It doesn't turn. She twists hard. Nothing. Perhaps it's the wrong key.

She fumbles with the key ring, now and then wiping away the tears and the rain which cloud her vision. The key ring slips, and tumbles into the mud on the far side of the gate.

She threads her arm through the slats. Fully stretched, her fingers are just shy of the keys.

Some half mile above, the COACH descends from Scarsmoor. Helena huddles against the stone wall.

As the coach passes, a flash of LIGHTNING affords her a brief glimpse of the occupants.

Utterly defeated, Helena gets to her feet and staggers home.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - NIGHT

Cromlech stumbles in, his arms full of books, his eyes deliberately avoiding Ambrose.

CROMLECH

I think I left some of my belongings here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBROSE

Please... Cromlech... I....

A book spills out of Cromlech's hands. Ambrose reaches down to pick it up. It's a copy of "Secrets of Ancient Chinese Fireworks" - complete with burn marks.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

(with a quiet smile)

We may arrive at an accommodation.
Meanwhile, I do not use the path.

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE ENTRANCE WAY - NIGHT

Lady Norah shakes the rain from her umbrella. She is quite pleased with this evening's events. That is about to change.

A trail of MUDDY SHOE PRINTS leads across the parquet floor.

LADY NORAH

(racing up the stairs)

Helena! Helena!

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

EXT. NAB GRANGE - MORNING

SUITCASES are loaded into the back of a MOTORCAR.

A dejected Colonel Wenman ambles out the front door. He exchanges a handshake and a brief farewell with each of the house guests, then settles into the driver's seat.

As Goodenough crank-starts the engine, Helena finally makes her appearance. She charts a tentative course to The Colonel.

HELENA

I'm sorry, Colonel, but I just don't know your ways - and I've such a lot of ways of my own - countless ways - and I couldn't sit on the other side of the fire while you drank all that whiskey and water. And some day if you see me making somebody else very miserable - think how glad you'll be that you didn't... well, that we didn't...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLONEL WENMAN

You needn't give me a thousand and one reasons. Let's just say that we were... inkpat.

HELENA

(resting her hand on his)
Dear wise sensible Colonel.

He puts the car in gear and it sputters down the driveway. Slowly, Helena turns back to the others; only Lady Norah has remained.

John Goodenough interrupts.

GOODENOUGH

(bowing)
Beg pardon, Excellency.

He hands her the muddy KEY RING and makes a hasty retreat.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH PATH GATE - MORNING

A KEY slips into the lock and turns. It CLICKS open.

Helena slides the lock off the gate latch and tosses it unceremoniously into the bushes. Lady Norah approves.

They both lean onto the top rail.

LADY NORAH

(gazing off at Scarsmoor)
What will he propose, do you think?

HELENA

Mr. Stillford thinks he may offer to pay me some small rent, more or less nominal, for a perpetual right.

LADY NORAH

You don't sound very pleased.

HELENA

I'd surrender what I've childishly refused, in return for something I don't want.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LADY NORAH

Mr. Stillford wouldn't have you accept such an offer?

HELENA

What seems cruel to you or I seems perfectly reasonable to Mr. Stillford. Men have such a rigid sense of reason!

LADY NORAH

I don't believe Lord Lynborough means to pay you money. It'll be something - something prettier than that.

HELENA

What has prettiness to do with it?

LADY NORAH

You don't suppose he thinks only of that wretched path?

HELENA

He's never seen me.

LADY NORAH

No, but he's dreamed of you.

HELENA

Oh Norah, what will he propose?

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - DAY

A blank sheet of paper glowers at Ambrose from his desktop. He drowns his pen with ink and writes:

Ambrose Caverly.

Too informal. He scratches it out and begins again:

Sir Ambrose Caverly.

Still too informal. He draws a line through it.

Lord Lynborough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

That's a bit too grand. He crumples the page and tosses it into an empty WASTE BASKET.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE GARDEN - DAY

Mr. Stillford reclines in the arbor bench, fast asleep. Helena and Violet play a good natured, if unenthusiastic game of badminton.

Violet misses her stroke and the shuttlecock sails over her head. Softly, it drops into Stillford's lap. He doesn't stir.

The innocent Miss Dufaure trots over and reaches for the shuttlecock. Too late it occurs to her where she's reaching.

Stillford's heavy eyelids blink open.

As you can imagine, a man of Stillford's breeding does not often awake with a woman's hand shoved between his thighs. Finally, he notices the shuttlecock. He bursts out laughing. Violet giggles, drops her racket and sits down beside him.

The Marchesa watches.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - EVENING

The waste basket is about half filled. Another crumpled ball of paper drops inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE GARDEN - DAY

Helena is slumped against her croquet mallet.

And no wonder. Roger and Norah are out on the course together. In fact their hands are intertwined around the same mallet. Roger is obviously giving Norah a croquet lesson. Norah looks as though she'd like to teach Roger a thing or two. Anyway, they aren't much interested in croquet.

Helena drums her fingers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - EVENING

The waste basket is full to bursting. A sheet of paper, folded into an aeroplane, glides in on top of the pile.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE GARDEN - DAY

Brutus drops the cricket ball at Helena's feet. Helena gives the ball a half-hearted toss. Brutus dutifully retrieves it.

Pulling the ball from Brutus' mouth, Helena lobs it over a hedge. The faithful canine dives through the hedge and disappears.

This is taking far too long. Helena decides to have a peek.

The cricket ball is in plain sight, but Brutus is no longer interested. Rather, he is playfully rolling in the dirt with... Can it be..?

HELENA

Et tu, Nellie?

Helena turns toward Scarsmoor.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - DAY

Papers are everywhere: Crumpled papers, torn papers, folded papers; papers crammed under tea cups and stuffed onto food trays.

A faint sound - SPLASHING WATER - echoes through the room.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR BATHROOM - DAY

A PAPER BOAT drifts across a soapy ocean.

Ambrose squats in a too-small CAST IRON TUB. His back is arched and his knees are drawn up to his chest. Attempting to recreate his bathing ritual, he tilts his head back and gazes upward.

Achilles is battling Penthesilea on the painted ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

This isn't helping! He pries himself out.

CUT TO:

INT. SCARSMOOR LIBRARY - DAY

Ambrose tightens the belt of his satin robe and slumps his hands into the pockets. Six days has he spent in his library, and yet he hasn't solved the riddle. Or has he?

From his pocket he removes... a chess piece - the BLACK KING!

He storms over to his chess table.

The Medieval Queen rests in her place on the board. Her royal guard has been defeated. She stands alone. Ambrose sets the King beside her, then drops his chin onto the table, the better to look his opponent in the eye. He's got it!

He sweeps the clutter off his writing desk, and begins scribbling furiously.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR CASTLE - DUSK TO DAWN

The lights in Scarsmoor's library burn brightly all night.

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE DRAWING ROOM - MORNING

Lady Norah finds Helena playing a game of solitaire. She flips her next card over - the Queen of Hearts.

HELENA

How can he possibly spare me, save
by a surrender which he will not
make?

LADY NORAH

(placing the red queen on
the black king)
But if he found a way?

The CLATTER of horse's hooves pour through the open window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURDOCH
 (appearing at the doorway)
 Your pardon, ladies. The embassy
 has arrived.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE GARDEN - MORNING

Mr. Stillford ushers Cromlech and Roger onto the lawn. They advance with a gravity as befits the occasion and bow low to the Marchesa. Cromlech carries a PARCHMENT ROLL of impressive dimensions.

Cromlech passes the scroll to Stillford and finds his seat.

HELENA
 Neither of you know what's in it?

Both ambassadors shake their heads.

The Marchesa swallows hard. Casually, she places her right hand behind her chair and crosses her fingers!

HELENA (CONT'D)
 Pray, read it to us, Mr. Stillford.
 I should like you all to hear.

ROGER
 That was also Lord Lynborough's
 desire.

Stillford unrolls the paper. It is all in Ambrose's own hand - written large and with fair flourishes.

The audience MURMURS.

CROMLECH
 (sternly)
 Silence while the document is read!

Everyone snaps to attention.

MR. STILLFORD
 Sir Ambrose Athelstan Caverly,
 Baronet, Baron Lynborough of
 Lynborough in the County of Dorset
 and of Scarsmoor in the County of
 Yorkshire, unto her Excellency
 Helena Vittoria Maria Antonia,
 Marchesa Di San Servolo -
 greetings.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. STILLFORD (cont'd)
Whereas Lord Lynborough and his predecessors have been ever entitled to pass and repass along the path called Beach Path, and to use the path at their pleasure, without let or interference from any person or persons whatsoever...

Helena's face has gone pale. The document hasn't started in a very conciliatory manner.

HELENA

Go on.

MR. STILLFORD

... and whereas Lord Lynborough is desirous that his rights shall receive the recognition of the Marchesa, which has hitherto been refused; and whereas great and manifold troubles have arisen from such refusal; and whereas Lord Lynborough is desirous of dwelling in peace and amity with the Marchesa...

LADY NORAH

(jumping up triumphantly)
You see! Peace and amity!

CROMLECH

Silence!

MR. STILLFORD

I really must not be interrupted.

Norah retreats to her chair.

MR. STILLFORD (CONT'D)

Now therefore Lord Lynborough, moved by diverse considerations, doth engage and undertake that, in consideration of his receiving a full, gracious, and amicable recognition of his right, he shall, once a year, on Midsummer Day...

VIOLET

Why that's tomorrow!

MR. STILLFORD

(clearing his throat)

...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MR. STILLFORD (cont'd)
 repair in his own proper person to
 Nab Grange, and present himself to
 the said Marchesa at noon...

Norah, Violet, Miss Gilletson, Cromlech, and Roger all cross
 their fingers...

MR. STILLFORD (CONT'D)
 ... and that he then shall and will
 do homage...

... They lean forward and inhale...

MR. STILLFORD (CONT'D)
 ... by falling to his knee and
 kissing her hand.

Everyone GASPS!

MR. STILLFORD (CONT'D)
 That peace may reign between Nab
 Grange and Scarsmoor Castle so long
 as they both do stand.

Stillford hands over the scroll with a bow. Written at the
 bottom of the page in bold script, it says simply:

LYNBOROUGH

Helena's cheeks are flushed and her lips struggle not to
 smile. She returns the document to Stillford, rises to her
 feet and goes to Stabb with outstretched hands.

HELENA
 (dropping her voice)
 A very knightly way of saving a
 foolish woman's pride.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCARSMOOR TERRACE - SUNSET

Ambrose and Cromlech walk to the edge of the terrace and gaze
 down at Nab Grange.

CROMLECH
 'Knightly' she called you. By
 heaven, it's in your blood.

AMBROSE
 Cromlech, I am so supremely lucky
 never to have seen her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His attention shifts to the marble Venus that adorns the terrace fountain.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)

She is crafted of my heart and my soul; molded from the clay of a hundred lands; the dream-image of a thousand wanderings.

CROMLECH

But it's flesh and blood you see tomorrow. Are you so sure she is that image?

Lynborough need not answer.

Below, the lamps of Nab Grange have all gone out. All save one.

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

INT. AMBROSE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

A closet door swings open, exposing row upon row of men's shoes. Oxfords, alberts, and balmorals. Ankle boots and clogs. Hobnails, sandals, moccasins, mules and rubbers. Most are brand new, but a few old friends are in evidence - the Wellingtons, for instance, and the fancy button-downs, and even the worn brogues.

From this fabulous array, a pair of fine BLACK LACE LEATHER BOOTS is selected.

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE - MORNING

Two intricately carved rosewood doors glide apart, revealing an elegant long corridor - the GRAND GALLERY.

It is airy and well lit, thanks to the high-arched windows which line the north wall. At the far end of the room there sits a single high-backed ARMCHAIR. In the corner, a LONG CASE PENDULUM CLOCK ticks off the seconds. It is now 10:30.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - BLACK LACE BOOTS/GALLERY CLOCK

BLACK LEATHER is buffed to a high polish... The GALLERY CLOCK reads 11:00... Wool stockings disappear into the boots... It is 11:20... The boots skip along the Main Road... 11:45....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They cross the gravel drive.... 11:49.... Climb the front walkway... 11:55... Swagger down the hall... 11:59.... And dance out a two-step before the gallery door.

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE GALLERY - DAY

The sun from the windows shines on the Marchesa's hair; her face is half in shadow. She sits in the armchair, her head on her left hand; her right hand on her knee. Her cheeks are pale - the olive reigns unchallenged; her lips are set tight; her eyes downcast.

The first stroke of twelve RINGS silvery from the clock.

The ornate doors part. Ambrose enters and advances across the room. He stops before her and falls upon his knee.

Helena does not lift her eyes, but slowly raises her hand. He places his hand under it, pressing it a little upward and bowing his head to meet it half-way in its ascent.

The twelfth stroke echoes through the room. His lips lightly brush her skin.

Homage for Beach Path and his right there in is duly paid.

Slowly he rises to his feet; slowly her eyes turn upward to his face. It is ablaze with a great triumph; that same fire spreads to her cheeks.

AMBROSE

(tenderly)

It's better than I dreamed.

HELENA

To have peace between us? Yes, it's good.

AMBROSE

I have never seen your face before.
Nor you mine?

She shakes her head; a tear rolls down her cheek.

HELENA

And you might have been so cruel!

AMBROSE

To you? To you who carry the power
of a world in your face?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

There are other things, besides
gates and walls and Norah's head
that you jump over, Lord
Lynborough.

AMBROSE

I lived a lifetime waiting for the
clock to strike. I have tried for
life before - in that moment I
found it... Your pardon. I have
paid my dues. The bond gives me no
right to linger.

HELENA

Is it good-bye till next Midsummer
Day?

AMBROSE

You would see me walking on Beach
Path.

HELENA

(eagerly)

Or will you stay and lunch with me
today? And you might even pay
homage again - say tomorrow - or -
some day in the week.

AMBROSE

Lunch, most certainly. That commits
me to nothing. Homage, Marchesa, is
quite another matter.

HELENA

Your chivalry is turning to
bargaining.

AMBROSE

It was never anything else.

HELENA

That's not a very civil answer.

AMBROSE

Well, my friends tell me that I am
no gentleman.

HELENA

On so slight and so peculiar an
acquaintance, am I to differ?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AMBROSE

Not when you yourself have inspired
their opinion.

HELENA

Then you don't mind what people
think?

AMBROSE

(a hint of pride)
I'm ideally placed for defying the
world if I want to. For a man, it
really takes no courage at all.

HELENA

You mean it would be different if
you were a woman?

AMBROSE

Would it? You certainly played
mischief with Roger and Cromlech.

HELENA

I might be ashamed of my tactics if
I hadn't copied them from you.

AMBROSE

(with a laugh)
Defeated by their sheer
inexperience of the feminine!

HELENA

Perhaps, but your campaign was
hardly the success - at least my
campaign was hardly the failure you
expected. One misses a catch
sometimes, doesn't one?

AMBROSE

Sometimes, Marchesa, the sun is in
one's eyes!

CUT TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE - DAY

The sun shines midday bright.

Under the shade of a stately oak, the other residents of
Scarsmoor and the Grange have gathered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIOLET

What could be taking so long?

MR. STILLFORD

(clasping Violet's hand)

Helena is a proud woman.

LADY NORAH

Lynborough can take a century if he likes - Helena will never submit. She may not desire to win, but she'll never agree to lose!

ROGER

(turning to Norah)

Perhaps he'll surrender to her. I think the right woman could change any man.

CROMLECH

Ambrose is capable of anything - except being somebody else.

MISS GILLETSON

What manner of man is he then?

CUT TO:

INT. NAB GRANGE GALLERY - DAY

AMBROSE

Odd? Do you really find me odd?

HELENA

Frankly, yes. You've got no... common sense.

AMBROSE

That is a great compliment.

HELENA

I must have said it wrong.

AMBROSE

Isn't it completely sensible to admire those things which one encounters least? To celebrate the uncommonly good or the uncommonly beautiful? Uncommon sense is the only kind of sense worth having.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA
(frustrated)
But... being odd just to be odd
isn't a good thing.

AMBROSE
You're in no danger of it.

HELENA
How should you describe me then?

AMBROSE
I should describe you, Marchesa, as
being a little lower than the
angels.

HELENA
(cautiously)
How much lower, please?

AMBROSE
Just by the depth of your dimples.

Try as she may, Helena cannot help but smile.

HELENA
Are you paying homage again, my
lord?

AMBROSE
Homage, Marchesa, is paid in
recognition of a right.

HELENA
And for what other rights might you
ask recognition?

AMBROSE
There might be the right of
welcoming you at Scarsmoor
tomorrow.

HELENA
(warily)
Very well, it is accorded.

AMBROSE
There might be the right of
escorting you home from Scarsmoor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HELENA

On the prescribed terms it is your
lordship's.

AMBROSE

(stepping closer)

What then of the right to see you
daily, and day by day?

HELENA

You take too many obligations - and
too lightly.

She extends her hand.

HELENA (CONT'D)

If you wish to grow richer in
rights, the harder you must work!

Ambrose sinks to his knee and again pays his homage. As he
rises, Helena bends ever so slightly toward him. Delicately,
he kisses her cheek

HELENA

(whispering)

Pray, use gently what you took with
that.

AMBROSE

This morning I came here not
knowing whether I should see my
dream. I don't speak of my dream-
image only, though I could speak
till next Midsummer Day upon that.
I speak to a soul. I think our
souls have known one another longer
and better than our faces.

HELENA

Yes, I think it is so. Yet who can
tell so soon?

AMBROSE

There's a great gladness upon me
because my dream came true.

HELENA

Who can tell so soon?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

AMBROSE

Here's a heart to my heart, and a
spirit to my spirit - and a glad
venture to us both.

Once more he leans forward to kiss her; softly, she presses
her fingers to his lips.

HELENA

Suffer me a little while, my lord.
Am I to be won before ever I am
wooded?

AMBROSE

Haven't I wooed you already - as
well in our quarrel as in my
homage, in our strife as in the end
of it?

HELENA

I think so, yes. Yet suffer me a
little still.

AMBROSE

If you doubt...

HELENA

It's strange but I cannot doubt.

Helena rises from her chair and escorts Ambrose to the door.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Come on to the lawn now, but tell
them nothing.

AMBROSE

Save that I have paid my homage and
received the recognition of my
right?

HELENA

Indeed, yes!

AMBROSE

That, if you will - and that
henceforward my path shall be
called - Helena's.

Her eyes meet his smile - warm, protective, reassuring - all
pretense abandoned. Together, they rejoin their friends.

CUT TO:

EXT. NAB GRANGE - DAY

Cupid has also visited the front lawn - and been very busy. There are signs, not to be misunderstood, that Roger, once distantly worshiping the Marchesa, has rested his eyes upon Lady Norah; and that Violet has not for handsome Stillford the scorn she had bestowed on other men. Even Brutus and Nellie have settled their differences.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

Nothing was asked, and nothing told, that day. In truth there appeared to be no need. For it seems as though love were not always invisible, nor the twang of his bow so faint as to elude the ear. With joyous blood his glad wounds are red, and who will may tell the sufferers. Sympathy too lends insight; your fellow-sufferer knows your plight first. There were fellow-sufferers on the lawn that day - to whom, as to all good lovers, here's Godspeed.

Helena accompanies Ambrose through the garden, across the meadow and onto the path. She places her hand into his, and the two lovers begin their journey.

CROMLECH (V.O.)

They walked together on Helena's Path, until it led them - still together - to the Boundless Sea.

They are far away now, just two tiny specks framed between the posts of the open gate.

A breath of wind caresses the meadow; slowly, the gate swings shut.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.