

A ROOM WITH A VIEW

E.M. FORSTER



FOREWORD AND ANNOTATIONS BY
ERICA ABBETT



VOCABETT CLASSICS

A ROOM WITH A VIEW: ANNOTATED EDITION

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READ THIS. YES, YOU!

I KNOW PEOPLE RARELY READ the forward to classic novels because I almost never do it myself. But while I have your attention, here are a few things you should know about *A Room With a View: Annotated Edition*.

1. **I, Erica Abbott, wrote the annotations** — I'm a full-time author and former English/history teacher. Despite my informal tone, you can rest easy knowing an experienced captain is sailing the ship.
2. **You don't need to read all the annotations** — Obviously I think they're brilliant because I wrote them, but this is Forster's book, and I want you to focus on it as much as possible. The annotations exist to clear up confusion, so if you're not confused, keep reading!
3. **Footnote placement** — If a footnote comes after a word, it usually defines the word. If it comes after a punctuation mark, it usually explains the preceding phrase or sentence.
4. **There's a glossary at the back** — I've used my infallible¹ judgment to determine which words deserve footnote status. However, if you come across a word and it isn't in the footnotes, check the glossary at the back of the book.
5. **I left Forster's British spelling intact** — But I'm American, so unless I'm defining one of his words, the footnotes have American spelling. The differences aren't typos!

¹ Infallible - Incapable of being wrong

FOREWORD BY ERICA ABBETT

WHEN I WAS 17, I hugged my family goodbye and boarded a plane to Italy. I didn't know anyone in the country and my Italian was nonexistent, but I moved in with a host family, began taking classes in a Renaissance villa, and eventually found myself thinking in a mixture of languages. Honestly, it was bliss.

Near the beginning of the year, our English teacher assigned E.M. Forster's classic novel *A Room With a View*. It was revelatory in more ways than one.

The most obvious shock was how much I *enjoyed* it. I've always been an avid reader, but my relationship with "school books" was tenuous¹ at best. In my mind, there were good books and there were school books. The categories were mutually exclusive.

Yet I remember curling up on the couch in that unfamiliar living room, grinning like an idiot at how perfectly Forster satirized "society" and its snobbery. I'd never read anything so delicately cutting, yet beautiful at the same time...How did he even do that?

The second shock was that I'd never heard of it.

Perhaps I was simply ignorant, but *A Room With a View* hardly seemed like an A-list classic novel, rubbing shoulders with *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance.

That's a shame, because *A Room With a View* has everything you could want in a book: murder, romance, travel, humor...AND it has everything an English teacher could want: symbolism, irony, a complex analysis of the social classes in Edwardian England...

All of which begs the question: Why is this not the most frequently-assigned book in all the land? Or at the very least, why isn't it an A-list classic novel?

Perhaps *A Room With a View* was overshadowed by Forster's later success with *A Passage to India*, which shares the "Britishers abroad" theme but is far more serious in its subject matter.

¹ Tenuous - Shaky; weak

But I believe it's simpler than that. To distill my hypothesis into a single sentence: I'm not alone in believing that "good books" and "school books" fall into different categories.

Traditional academic texts are undoubtedly impactful and part of a well-rounded education, but they rarely put a smile on your face. Since *A Room With a View* left so many people with a silly grin, just like it did for me in that unfamiliar living room, the literary intelligentsia assumed it couldn't possibly be a "serious" text.

We still need to read classics that teach us about the Russian Revolution and World War II and make us weep for humanity. But it's also okay to read about young love in Italy, *especially* if we're checking all "literary terms" boxes while we're at it.

Award-winning author Julian Barnes admits that he dismissed Forster in his younger years, but now praises how "masterfully" Forster's books are written, "how wry and sly he can be, and yet how powerfully reflective."¹

Internationally bestselling author Zadie Smith agrees. *A Room With a View* was the first book to show her the power of fiction, "how wholly one might feel for it and through it, how much it could do to you."²

She believed "the reading of it had done me some good," though she was careful not to admit as much to any "serious people" who "don't speak of novels that way."

It's time to end the strict divide between "good books" and "school books." *English teachers of the world, tear down this wall!*³

I hope you enjoy *A Room With a View* as much as I did. As always, give it a few pages before making up your mind.

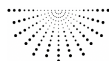
-Erica Abbett
Texas, 2023

¹ Julian Barnes, "Julian Barnes: I Was Wrong About EM Forster," The Guardian.

² Zadie Smith, "Love, Actually," The Guardian.

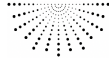
³ A reference to Ronald Reagan's famous "Berlin Wall" speech near the end of the Cold War, in which he declares, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

PART ONE



CHAPTER I

The Bertolini



"THE SIGNORA¹ HAD NO BUSINESS to do it," said Miss Bartlett², "no business at all. She promised us south rooms with a view close together, instead of which here are north rooms, looking into a courtyard, and a long way apart. Oh, Lucy!"

"And a Cockney³, besides!" said Lucy⁴, who had been further saddened by the Signora's unexpected accent. "It might be London." She looked at the two rows of English people who were sitting at the table; at the row of white bottles of water and red bottles of wine that ran between the English people; at the portraits of the late Queen and the late Poet Laureate that hung behind the English people, heavily framed; at the notice of the English church (Rev. Cuthbert Eager, M. A. Oxon), that was the only other decoration of the wall. "Charlotte, don't you feel, too, that we might be in London?⁵ I can hardly believe that all kinds of other things are just outside. I suppose it is one's being so tired."

"This meat has surely been used for soup," said Miss Bartlett, laying down her fork.

"I want so to see the Arno⁶. The rooms the Signora promised us in her

¹ Signora - Italian for "lady," pronounced like *siñora* in Spanish

² Miss Bartlett is the snobby chaperone (who is also Lucy's cousin). She's ridiculous, but you can't look away.

³ Cockney - An accent from the London area, typically associated with the working-class

⁴ Lucy is our young & naive heroine, still following Miss Bartlett's lead.

⁵ They're whining because, after traveling all the way to Italy, they're surrounded by Brits and don't have a view.

⁶ Arno - A river that runs through Florence, Italy

letter would have looked over the Arno. The Signora had no business to do it at all. Oh, it is a shame!"

"Any nook does for me," Miss Bartlett continued; "but it does seem hard that you shouldn't have a view."

Lucy felt that she had been selfish. "Charlotte, you mustn't spoil me: of course, you must look over the Arno, too. I meant that. The first vacant room in the front—"

"You must have it," said Miss Bartlett, part of whose travelling expenses were paid by Lucy's mother—a piece of generosity to which she made many a tactful allusion^{1,2}

"No, no. You must have it."

"I insist on it. Your mother would never forgive me, Lucy."

"She would never forgive *me*."

The ladies' voices grew animated, and—if the sad truth be owned—a little peevish. They were tired, and under the guise of unselfishness they wrangled. Some of their neighbours interchanged glances, and one of them—one of the ill-bred people whom one does meet abroad—leant forward over the table and actually intruded into their argument. He said:

"I have a view, I have a view."

Miss Bartlett was startled. Generally at a pension³ people looked them over for a day or two before speaking, and often did not find out that they would "do"⁴ till they had gone. She knew that the intruder was ill-bred, even before she glanced at him. He was an old man, of heavy build, with a fair, shaven face and large eyes. There was something childish in those eyes, though it was not the childishness of senility. What exactly it was Miss Bartlett did not stop to consider, for her glance passed on to his clothes. These did not attract her. He was probably trying to become acquainted with them before they got into the swim. So she assumed a dazed expression when he spoke to her, and then said: "A view? Oh, a view! How delightful a view is!"

"This is my son," said the old man; "his name's George. He has a view too."

"Ah," said Miss Bartlett, repressing⁵ Lucy, who was about to speak.

"What I mean," he continued, "is that you can have our rooms, and

¹ Allusion - Reference

² We're learning that Miss Bartlett likes to play the martyr, putting herself in less comfortable positions and making sure everyone knows it.

³ Pension - Like a hotel or B&B (modified from the Italian "pensione")

⁴ That is, if they were socially acceptable enough to talk to.

⁵ Repressing - Holding back, probably with a gesture

we'll have yours. We'll change."¹

The better class of tourist was shocked at this, and sympathized with the new-comers. Miss Bartlett, in reply, opened her mouth as little as possible, and said "Thank you very much indeed; that is out of the question."

"Why?" said the old man, with both fists on the table.

"Because it is quite out of the question, thank you."

"You see, we don't like to take—" began Lucy. Her cousin again repressed her.

"But why?" he persisted. "Women like looking at a view; men don't." And he thumped with his fists like a naughty child,² and turned to his son, saying, "George, persuade them!"

"It's so obvious they should have the rooms," said the son. "There's nothing else to say."

He did not look at the ladies as he spoke, but his voice was perplexed and sorrowful. Lucy, too, was perplexed; but she saw that they were in for what is known as "quite a scene," and she had an odd feeling that whenever these ill-bred tourists spoke the contest widened and deepened till it dealt, not with rooms and views, but with—well, with something quite different, whose existence she had not realized before. Now the old man attacked Miss Bartlett almost violently: Why should she not change?³ What possible objection had she? They would clear out in half an hour.

Miss Bartlett, though skilled in the delicacies of conversation, was powerless in the presence of brutality. It was impossible to snub⁴ any one so gross. Her face reddened with displeasure. She looked around as much as to say, "Are you all like this?" And two little old ladies, who were sitting further up the table, with shawls hanging over the backs of the chairs, looked back, clearly indicating "We are not; we are genteel."⁵

"Eat your dinner, dear," she said to Lucy, and began to toy again with the meat that she had once censured⁶.

Lucy mumbled that those seemed very odd people opposite.

"Eat your dinner, dear. This pension is a failure. To-morrow we will make a change."

Hardly had she announced this fell⁷ decision when she reversed it.

¹ Remember how much Miss Bartlett was judging him? But he has the better room, and is clearly far kinder if he's willing to give it up!

² To be fair, his manners leave something to be desired.

³ We're talking about more than rooms here...

⁴ Snub - To publicly ignore or insult (often by being so polite, it's clear to everyone that this person is beneath you)

⁵ I find all this snobbery hilarious.

⁶ Censured - Vocally disapproved of

⁷ Fell - Deadly; of terrible ferocity

The curtains at the end of the room parted, and revealed a clergyman, stout but attractive, who hurried forward to take his place at the table, cheerfully apologizing for his lateness. Lucy, who had not yet acquired decency,¹ at once rose to her feet, exclaiming: "Oh, oh! Why, it's Mr. Beebe! Oh, how perfectly lovely! Oh, Charlotte, we must stop now, however bad the rooms are. Oh!"

Miss Bartlett said, with more restraint:

"How do you do, Mr. Beebe? I expect that you have forgotten us: Miss Bartlett and Miss Honeychurch, who were at Tunbridge Wells when you helped the Vicar of St. Peter's that very cold Easter."²

The clergyman, who had the air of one on a holiday, did not remember the ladies quite as clearly as they remembered him. But he came forward pleasantly enough and accepted the chair into which he was beckoned by Lucy.

"I *am* so glad to see you," said the girl, who was in a state of spiritual starvat Snub - To publicly ignore or insult (often by being so polite, it's clear to everyone that this person is beneath you) ion, and would have been glad to see the waiter if her cousin had permitted it. "Just fancy how small the world is. Summer Street, too, makes it so specially funny."

"Miss Honeychurch lives in the parish of Summer Street," said Miss Bartlett, filling up the gap, "and she happened to tell me in the course of conversation that you have just accepted the living—"

"Yes, I heard from mother so last week. She didn't know that I knew you at Tunbridge Wells; but I wrote back at once, and I said: 'Mr. Beebe is —'"

"Quite right," said the clergyman. "I move into the Rectory at Summer Street next June. I am lucky to be appointed to such a charming neighbourhood."³

"Oh, how glad I am! The name of our house is Windy Corner." Mr. Beebe bowed.

"There is mother and me generally, and my brother, though it's not often we get him to ch— The church is rather far off, I mean."

"Lucy, dearest, let Mr. Beebe eat his dinner."

"I am eating it, thank you, and enjoying it."

He preferred to talk to Lucy, whose playing he remembered, rather than to Miss Bartlett, who probably remembered his sermons. He asked the girl whether she knew Florence well, and was informed at some length that she had never been there before. It is delightful to advise a newcomer, and he was first in the field. "Don't neglect the country round," his advice con-

¹ She was still young & not yet possessing perfect manners.

² She's basically saying, "We've met before, in England."

³ Mr. Beebe will be living in Lucy's neighborhood when they get back from Italy.

cluded. "The first fine afternoon drive up to Fiesole, and round by Settignano, or something of that sort."

"No!" cried a voice from the top of the table. "Mr. Beebe, you are wrong. The first fine afternoon your ladies must go to Prato."¹

"That lady looks so clever," whispered Miss Bartlett to her cousin. "We are in luck."

And, indeed, a perfect torrent² of information burst on them. People told them what to see, when to see it, how to stop the electric trams, how to get rid of the beggars, how much to give for a vellum blotter³, how much the place would grow upon them. The Pension Bertolini had decided, almost enthusiastically, that they would do. Whichever way they looked, kind ladies smiled and shouted at them. And above all rose the voice of the clever lady, crying: "Prato! They must go to Prato. That place is too sweetly squalid⁴ for words. I love it; I revel in⁵ shaking off the trammels⁶ of respectability, as you know."⁷

The young man named George glanced at the clever lady, and then returned moodily to his plate. Obviously he and his father did not do. Lucy, in the midst of her success, found time to wish they did. It gave her no extra pleasure that any one should be left in the cold; and when she rose to go, she turned back and gave the two outsiders a nervous little bow.

The father did not see it; the son acknowledged it, not by another bow, but by raising his eyebrows and smiling; he seemed to be smiling across something.⁸

She hastened after her cousin, who had already disappeared through the curtains—curtains which smote⁹ one in the face, and seemed heavy with more than cloth. Beyond them stood the unreliable Signora, bowing good-evening to her guests, and supported by 'Enery, her little boy, and Victorier,¹⁰ her daughter. It made a curious little scene, this attempt of the Cockney to convey the grace and geniality of the South. And even more curious was the drawing-room, which attempted to rival the solid comfort of a Bloomsbury boarding-house. Was this really Italy?

¹ Fiesole; Settignano; Prato - Towns near Florence, Italy

² Torrent - Flood

³ Vellum blotter - A thick covering over a table or desk

⁴ Squalid - Extremely dirty; poverty-stricken

⁵ Revel in - Greatly enjoy

⁶ Trammels - Restrictions

⁷ She's treating poor Italians like animals in a safari, and she's in a Jeep watching them.

⁸ A social divide, perhaps?

⁹ Smote - Past tense of "smite;" struck with an almost biblically firm blow

¹⁰ How "Henry" and "Victoria" sound in a Cockney accent

Miss Bartlett was already seated on a tightly stuffed arm-chair, which had the colour and the contours of a tomato. She was talking to Mr. Beebe, and as she spoke, her long narrow head drove backwards and forwards, slowly, regularly, as though she were demolishing some invisible obstacle. "We are most grateful to you," she was saying. "The first evening means so much. When you arrived we were in for a peculiarly *mauvais quart d'heure*."¹

He expressed his regret.

"Do you, by any chance, know the name of an old man who sat opposite us at dinner?"

"Emerson."

"Is he a friend of yours?"

"We are friendly—as one is in pensions."²

"Then I will say no more."

He pressed her very slightly, and she said more.³

"I am, as it were," she concluded, "the chaperon of my young cousin, Lucy, and it would be a serious thing if I put her under an obligation to people of whom we know nothing. His manner was somewhat unfortunate. I hope I acted for the best."

"You acted very naturally," said he. He seemed thoughtful, and after a few moments added: "All the same, I don't think much harm would have come of accepting."

"No *harm*, of course. But we could not be under an obligation."

"He is rather a peculiar man." Again he hesitated, and then said gently: "I think he would not take advantage of your acceptance, nor expect you to show gratitude. He has the merit—if it is one—of saying exactly what he means. He has rooms he does not value, and he thinks you would value them. He no more thought of putting you under an obligation than he thought of being polite. It is so difficult—at least, I find it difficult—to understand people who speak the truth."

Lucy was pleased, and said: "I was hoping that he was nice; I do so always hope that people will be nice."

"I think he is; nice and tiresome. I differ from him on almost every point of any importance, and so, I expect—I may say I hope—you will differ.⁴ But his is a type one disagrees with rather than deplors. When he first came here he not unnaturally put people's backs up. He has no tact and no manners—I don't mean by that that he has bad manners—and he will not

¹ *Mauvais quart d'heure* - An uncomfortable but brief experience (note how she's speaking French...interesting choice in Italy)

² Mr. Beebe, the clergyman, is distancing himself from Mr. Emerson.

³ They're testing each other's boundaries, seeing if it's OK to gossip.

⁴ What does Mr. Emerson believe that is so unpopular?

keep his opinions to himself. We nearly complained about him to our depressing Signora, but I am glad to say we thought better of it."

"Am I to conclude," said Miss Bartlett, "that he is a Socialist¹?"

Mr. Beebe accepted the convenient word, not without a slight twitching of the lips.

"And presumably he has brought up his son to be a Socialist, too?"

"I hardly know George, for he hasn't learnt to talk yet. He seems a nice creature, and I think he has brains. Of course, he has all his father's mannerisms, and it is quite possible that he, too, may be a Socialist."

"Oh, you relieve me," said Miss Bartlett. "So you think I ought to have accepted their offer? You feel I have been narrow-minded and suspicious?"

"Not at all," he answered; "I never suggested that."

"But ought I not to apologize, at all events, for my apparent rudeness?"

He replied, with some irritation, that it would be quite unnecessary, and got up from his seat to go to the smoking-room.

"Was I a bore?" said Miss Bartlett, as soon as he had disappeared. "Why didn't you talk, Lucy? He prefers young people, I'm sure. I do hope I haven't monopolized him. I hoped you would have him all the evening, as well as all dinner-time."

"He is nice," exclaimed Lucy. "Just what I remember. He seems to see good in everyone. No one would take him for a clergyman."

"My dear Lucia—"

"Well, you know what I mean. And you know how clergymen generally laugh; Mr. Beebe laughs just like an ordinary man."

"Funny girl! How you do remind me of your mother. I wonder if she will approve of Mr. Beebe."

"I'm sure she will; and so will Freddy."

"I think everyone at Windy Corner will approve; it is the fashionable world. I am used to Tunbridge Wells, where we are all hopelessly behind the times."

"Yes," said Lucy despondently².

There was a haze of disapproval in the air, but whether the disapproval was of herself, or of Mr. Beebe, or of the fashionable world at Windy Corner, or of the narrow world at Tunbridge Wells, she could not determine. She tried to locate it, but as usual she blundered. Miss Bartlett sedulously³ denied disapproving of any one, and added "I am afraid you are

¹ Socialist - Someone who advocates for the means of production to be owned by society as a whole (though "society" always ends up being the government)

² Despondently - In low spirits (note how her response mirrors that of Mr. Emerson's son, George)

³ Sedulously - Diligently

finding me a very depressing companion.”¹

And the girl again thought: “I must have been selfish or unkind; I must be more careful. It is so dreadful for Charlotte², being poor.”

Fortunately one of the little old ladies, who for some time had been smiling very benignly, now approached and asked if she might be allowed to sit where Mr. Beebe had sat. Permission granted, she began to chatter gently about Italy, the plunge it had been to come there, the gratifying success of the plunge, the improvement in her sister’s health, the necessity of closing the bed-room windows at night, and of thoroughly emptying the water-bottles in the morning. She handled her subjects agreeably, and they were, perhaps, more worthy of attention than the high discourse upon Guelphs and Ghibellines³ which was proceeding tempestuously⁴ at the other end of the room. It was a real catastrophe, not a mere episode, that evening of hers at Venice, when she had found in her bedroom something that is one worse than a flea, though one better than something else.

“But here you are as safe as in England. Signora Bertolini is so English.”

“Yet our rooms smell,” said poor Lucy. “We dread going to bed.”

“Ah, then you look into the court.” She sighed. “If only Mr. Emerson was more tactful! We were so sorry for you at dinner.”

“I think he was meaning to be kind.”

“Undoubtedly he was,” said Miss Bartlett.⁵

“Mr. Beebe has just been scolding me for my suspicious nature. Of course, I was holding back on my cousin’s account.”

“Of course,” said the little old lady; and they murmured that one could not be too careful with a young girl.

Lucy tried to look demure⁶, but could not help feeling a great fool. No one was careful with her at home; or, at all events, she had not noticed it.

“About old Mr. Emerson—I hardly know. No, he is not tactful; yet, have you ever noticed that there are people who do things which are most indelicate, and yet at the same time—beautiful?”

“Beautiful?” said Miss Bartlett, puzzled at the word. “Are not beauty and delicacy the same?”

“So one would have thought,” said the other helplessly. “But things

¹ Martyr + funny that now she’s like, “I’ve NEVER been a snob!”

² Charlotte - The first name of Miss Bartlett, the snobby chaperone

³ Guelphs and Ghibellines - Feuding medieval families, like the Capulets and the Montagues from *Romeo and Juliet*

⁴ Tempestuously - Characterized by strong, turbulent emotion

⁵ Having received direction from Mr. Beebe, Miss Bartlett is now publicly agreeing that Mr. Emerson only meant to be kind.

⁶ Demure - Reserved; modest

are so difficult, I sometimes think."

She proceeded no further into things, for Mr. Beebe reappeared, looking extremely pleasant.

"Miss Bartlett," he cried, "it's all right about the rooms. I'm so glad. Mr. Emerson was talking about it in the smoking-room, and knowing what I did, I encouraged him to make the offer again. He has let me come and ask you. He would be so pleased."

"Oh, Charlotte," cried Lucy to her cousin, "we must have the rooms now. The old man is just as nice and kind as he can be."

Miss Bartlett was silent.

"I fear," said Mr. Beebe, after a pause, "that I have been officious¹. I must apologize for my interference."

Gravely displeased, he turned to go. Not till then did Miss Bartlett reply: "My own wishes, dearest Lucy, are unimportant in comparison with yours. It would be hard indeed if I stopped you doing as you liked at Florence, when I am only here through your kindness. If you wish me to turn these gentlemen out of their rooms, I will do it. Would you then, Mr. Beebe, kindly tell Mr. Emerson that I accept his kind offer, and then conduct him to me, in order that I may thank him personally?"

She raised her voice as she spoke; it was heard all over the drawing-room, and silenced the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. The clergyman, inwardly cursing the female sex, bowed, and departed with her message.

"Remember, Lucy, I alone am implicated in this. I do not wish the acceptance to come from you. Grant me that, at all events."²

Mr. Beebe was back, saying rather nervously:

"Mr. Emerson is engaged, but here is his son instead."

The young man gazed down on the three ladies, who felt seated on the floor, so low were their chairs.

"My father," he said, "is in his bath, so you cannot thank him personally. But any message given by you to me will be given by me to him as soon as he comes out."

Miss Bartlett was unequal to the bath. All her barbed civilities came forth wrong end first. Young Mr. Emerson scored a notable triumph to the delight of Mr. Beebe and to the secret delight of Lucy.

"Poor young man!" said Miss Bartlett, as soon as he had gone.

"How angry he is with his father about the rooms! It is all he can do to keep polite."

¹ Officious - Throwing around one's authority in an annoying way

² Note how masterfully Charlotte manipulates this. My favorite part is when she tells Lucy, "If you want me to turn these gentlemen out of their rooms, I will do it," and Mr. Beebe inwardly curses the female sex. Depending on how the swap is seen later, Charlotte now has plausible deniability from every angle.

"In half an hour or so your rooms will be ready," said Mr. Beebe. Then looking rather thoughtfully at the two cousins, he retired to his own rooms, to write up his philosophic diary.

"Oh, dear!" breathed the little old lady, and shuddered as if all the winds of heaven had entered the apartment. "Gentlemen sometimes do not realize—" Her voice faded away, but Miss Bartlett seemed to understand and a conversation developed, in which gentlemen who did not thoroughly realize played a principal part. Lucy, not realizing either, was reduced to literature. Taking up Baedeker's Handbook to Northern Italy,¹ she committed to memory the most important dates of Florentine History. For she was determined to enjoy herself on the morrow.² Thus the half-hour crept profitably away, and at last Miss Bartlett rose with a sigh, and said:

"I think one might venture now. No, Lucy, do not stir. I will superintend the move."

"How you do do everything," said Lucy.

"Naturally, dear. It is my affair."

"But I would like to help you."

"No, dear."

Charlotte's energy! And her unselfishness! She had been thus all her life, but really, on this Italian tour, she was surpassing herself. So Lucy felt, or strove to feel. And yet—there was a rebellious spirit in her which wondered whether the acceptance might not have been less delicate and more beautiful. At all events, she entered her own room without any feeling of joy.

"I want to explain," said Miss Bartlett, "why it is that I have taken the largest room. Naturally, of course, I should have given it to you; but I happen to know that it belongs to the young man, and I was sure your mother would not like it."

Lucy was bewildered.

"If you are to accept a favour it is more suitable you should be under an obligation to his father than to him. I am a woman of the world, in my small way, and I know where things lead to. However, Mr. Beebe is a guarantee of a sort that they will not presume on³ this."

"Mother wouldn't mind I'm sure," said Lucy, but again had the sense of larger and unsuspected issues.

Miss Bartlett only sighed, and enveloped her in a protecting embrace as she wished her good-night. It gave Lucy the sensation of a fog, and when she reached her own room she opened the window and breathed the clean night air, thinking of the kind old man who had enabled her to see the

¹ Baedeker's Handbook - The foremost travel guide of the era

² The next day

³ Presume - Take advantage of

lights dancing in the Arno and the cypresses of San Miniato, and the foothills of the Apennines, black against the rising moon.

Miss Bartlett, in her room, fastened the window-shutters and locked the door,¹ and then made a tour of the apartment to see where the cupboards² led, and whether there were any oubliettes³ or secret entrances. It was then that she saw, pinned up over the washstand, a sheet of paper on which was scrawled an enormous note of interrogation.⁴ Nothing more.

"What does it mean?" she thought, and she examined it carefully by the light of a candle. Meaningless at first, it gradually became menacing, obnoxious, portentous with evil. She was seized with an impulse to destroy it, but fortunately remembered that she had no right to do so, since it must be the property of young Mr. Emerson. So she unpinned it carefully, and put it between two pieces of blotting-paper to keep it clean for him. Then she completed her inspection of the room, sighed heavily according to her habit, and went to bed.

¹ Note how differently Miss Bartlett and Lucy, in the paragraph above, react to a view.

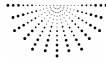
² Cupboards - What we Americans call closets

³ Oubliettes - Secret dungeons only accessible via trapdoor

⁴ Note of interrogation - A question mark

CHAPTER II

In Santa Croce With No Baedeker



IT WAS PLEASANT to wake up in Florence, to open the eyes upon a bright bare room, with a floor of red tiles which look clean though they are not; with a painted ceiling whereon pink griffins and blue *amorini*¹ sport in a forest of yellow violins and bassoons. It was pleasant, too, to fling wide the windows, pinching the fingers in unfamiliar fastenings, to lean out into sunshine with beautiful hills and trees and marble churches opposite, and close below, the Arno, gurgling against the embankment of the road.

Over the river men were at work with spades and sieves on the sandy foreshore, and on the river was a boat, also diligently employed for some mysterious end. An electric tram came rushing underneath the window. No one was inside it, except one tourist; but its platforms were overflowing with Italians, who preferred to stand. Children tried to hang on behind, and the conductor, with no malice², spat in their faces to make them let go. Then soldiers appeared—good-looking, undersized men—wearing each a knapsack covered with mangy fur, and a great-coat which had been cut for some larger soldier. Beside them walked officers, looking foolish and fierce, and before them went little boys, turning somersaults in time with the band. The tramcar became entangled in their ranks, and moved on painfully, like a caterpillar in a swarm of ants. One of the little boys fell down, and some white bullocks came out of an archway. Indeed, if it had not been for the good advice of an old man who was selling button-hooks, the road might never have got clear.

Over such trivialities as these many a valuable hour may slip away, and the traveller who has gone to Italy to study the tactile values of Giotto³,

¹ *Amorini* - Young lovers (Italian)

² Malice - Ill will

³ Giotto - Famous medieval Italian artist

or the corruption of the Papacy¹, may return remembering nothing but the blue sky and the men and women who live under it. So it was as well that Miss Bartlett should tap and come in, and having commented on Lucy's leaving the door unlocked, and on her leaning out of the window before she was fully dressed, should urge her to hasten herself, or the best of the day would be gone. By the time Lucy was ready her cousin had done her breakfast, and was listening to the clever lady among the crumbs.

A conversation then ensued, on not unfamiliar lines. Miss Bartlett was, after all, a wee bit tired, and thought they had better spend the morning settling in; unless Lucy would at all like to go out? Lucy would rather like to go out, as it was her first day in Florence, but, of course, she could go alone. Miss Bartlett could not allow this. Of course she would accompany Lucy everywhere. Oh, certainly not; Lucy would stop with her cousin. Oh, no! that would never do. Oh, yes!

At this point the clever lady broke in.

"If it is Mrs. Grundy who is troubling you, I do assure you that you can neglect the good person. Being English, Miss Honeychurch will be perfectly safe. Italians understand. A dear friend of mine, Contessa Baroncelli, has two daughters, and when she cannot send a maid to school with them, she lets them go in sailor-hats instead. Every one takes them for English, you see, especially if their hair is strained tightly behind."

Miss Bartlett was unconvinced by the safety of Contessa Baroncelli's daughters. She was determined to take Lucy herself, her head not being so very bad. The clever lady then said that she was going to spend a long morning in Santa Croce², and if Lucy would come too, she would be delighted.

"I will take you by a dear dirty back way, Miss Honeychurch, and if you bring me luck, we shall have an adventure."

Lucy said that this was most kind, and at once opened the Baedeker, to see where Santa Croce was.

"Tut, tut! Miss Lucy! I hope we shall soon emancipate you from Baedeker. He does but touch the surface of things. As to the true Italy—he does not even dream of it. The true Italy is only to be found by patient observation."

This sounded very interesting, and Lucy hurried over her breakfast, and started with her new friend in high spirits. Italy was coming at last. The Cockney Signora and her works had vanished like a bad dream.

Miss Lavish—for that was the clever lady's name—turned to the right along the sunny Lung' Arno. How delightfully warm! But a wind down the

¹ Papacy - Office of the Pope

² Santa Croce - A famous church in Florence (second word pronounced "CRO-chay")

side streets cut like a knife, didn't it? Ponte alle Grazie—particularly interesting, mentioned by Dante. San Miniato—beautiful as well as interesting; the crucifix that kissed a murderer—Miss Honeychurch would remember the story.¹ The men on the river were fishing. (Untrue; but then, so is most information.)² Then Miss Lavish darted under the archway of the white bullocks, and she stopped, and she cried:

"A smell! a true Florentine smell! Every city, let me teach you, has its own smell."

"Is it a very nice smell?" said Lucy, who had inherited from her mother a distaste to dirt.

"One doesn't come to Italy for niceness," was the retort; "one comes for life. *Buon giorno! Buon giorno!*"³ bowing right and left. "Look at that adorable wine-cart! How the driver stares at us, dear, simple soul!"

So Miss Lavish proceeded through the streets of the city of Florence, short, fidgety, and playful as a kitten, though without a kitten's grace. It was a treat for the girl to be with any one so clever and so cheerful; and a blue military cloak, such as an Italian officer wears, only increased the sense of festivity.

"*Buon giorno!* Take the word of an old woman, Miss Lucy: you will never repent of a little civility to your inferiors. *That* is the true democracy. Though I am a real Radical as well. There, now you're shocked."⁴

"Indeed, I'm not!" exclaimed Lucy. "We are Radicals, too, out and out. My father always voted for Mr. Gladstone,⁵ until he was so dreadful about Ireland."

"I see, I see. And now you have gone over to the enemy."

"Oh, please—! If my father was alive, I am sure he would vote Radical again now that Ireland is all right. And as it is, the glass over our front door was broken last election, and Freddy is sure it was the Tories⁶; but mother says nonsense, a tramp."

"Shameful! A manufacturing district, I suppose?"

"No—in the Surrey hills. About five miles from Dorking, looking over the Weald."

Miss Lavish seemed interested, and slackened her trot.

"What a delightful part; I know it so well. It is full of the very nicest

¹ This paragraph is just Miss Lavish talking without quotation marks.

² Great line, and another thematic statement.

³ *Buon giorno!* - Good day / good morning! (Italian)

⁴ Wow. The class system is so ingrained that it's not, "Be nice to everyone because we're all human," but, "We're obviously better than everybody, but it's good to be nice to poor people."

⁵ William Gladstone - Liberal Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

⁶ Tories - Members of the Conservative Party

people. Do you know Sir Harry Otway—a Radical if ever there was?"

"Very well indeed."

"And old Mrs. Butterworth the philanthropist?"

"Why, she rents a field of us! How funny!"

Miss Lavish looked at the narrow ribbon of sky, and murmured: "Oh, you have property in Surrey?"

"Hardly any," said Lucy, fearful of being thought a snob. "Only thirty acres—just the garden, all downhill, and some fields."

Miss Lavish was not disgusted, and said it was just the size of her aunt's Suffolk estate. Italy receded. They tried to remember the last name of Lady Louisa someone, who had taken a house near Summer Street the other year, but she had not liked it, which was odd of her. And just as Miss Lavish had got the name, she broke off and exclaimed:

"Bless us! Bless us and save us! We've lost the way."

Certainly they had seemed a long time in reaching Santa Croce, the tower of which had been plainly visible from the landing window. But Miss Lavish had said so much about knowing her Florence by heart, that Lucy had followed her with no misgivings.

"Lost! lost! My dear Miss Lucy, during our political diatribes¹ we have taken a wrong turning. How those horrid Conservatives would jeer at us! What are we to do? Two lone females in an unknown town. Now, this is what *I* call an adventure."

Lucy, who wanted to see Santa Croce, suggested, as a possible solution, that they should ask the way there.

"Oh, but that is the word of a craven²! And no, you are not, not, *not* to look at your Baedeker. Give it to me; I shan't let you carry it. We will simply drift."

Accordingly they drifted through a series of those grey-brown streets, neither commodious nor picturesque, in which the eastern quarter of the city abounds. Lucy soon lost interest in the discontent of Lady Louisa, and became discontented herself. For one ravishing moment Italy appeared. She stood in the Square of the *Annunziata* and saw in the living terra-cotta those divine babies whom no cheap reproduction can ever stale. There they stood, with their shining limbs bursting from the garments of charity, and their strong white arms extended against circlets of heaven. Lucy thought she had never seen anything more beautiful; but Miss Lavish, with a shriek of dismay, dragged her forward, declaring that they were out of their path now by at least a mile.

The hour was approaching at which the continental breakfast begins, or rather ceases, to tell, and the ladies bought some hot chestnut paste out

¹ Datribes - Forceful verbal attacks

² Craven - Coward

of a little shop, because it looked so typical. It tasted partly of the paper in which it was wrapped, partly of hair oil, partly of the great unknown. But it gave them strength to drift into another Piazza, large and dusty, on the farther side of which rose a black-and-white façade¹ of surpassing ugliness. Miss Lavish spoke to it dramatically. It was Santa Croce. The adventure was over.

"Stop a minute; let those two people go on, or I shall have to speak to them. I do detest conventional intercourse. Nasty! they are going into the church, too. Oh, the Britisher abroad!"²

"We sat opposite them at dinner last night. They have given us their rooms. They were so very kind."

"Look at their figures!" laughed Miss Lavish. "They walk through my Italy like a pair of cows. It's very naughty of me, but I would like to set an examination paper at Dover, and turn back every tourist who couldn't pass it."

"What would you ask us?"

Miss Lavish laid her hand pleasantly on Lucy's arm, as if to suggest that she, at all events, would get full marks. In this exalted mood they reached the steps of the great church, and were about to enter it when Miss Lavish stopped, squeaked, flung up her arms, and cried:

"There goes my local-colour box! I must have a word with him!"³

And in a moment she was away over the Piazza, her military cloak flapping in the wind; nor did she slacken speed till she caught up an old man with white whiskers, and nipped him playfully upon the arm.

Lucy waited for nearly ten minutes. Then she began to get tired. The beggars worried her, the dust blew in her eyes, and she remembered that a young girl ought not to loiter in public places. She descended slowly into the Piazza with the intention of rejoining Miss Lavish, who was really almost too original. But at that moment Miss Lavish and her local-colour box moved also, and disappeared down a side street, both gesticulating⁴ largely. Tears of indignation⁵ came to Lucy's eyes partly because Miss Lavish had jilted her, partly because she had taken her Baedeker. How could she find her way home? How could she find her way about in Santa Croce? Her first morning was ruined, and she might never be in Florence again. A few minutes ago she had been all high spirits, talking as a woman of culture, and half persuading herself that she was full of originality. Now she entered the

¹ Façade - The front of a building

² Oh, the irony!

³ This is a bit unclear, but presumably she's referring to someone who sells items related to Italy.

⁴ Gesticulating - Using dramatic hand gestures

⁵ Indignation - Righteous anger; annoyance

church depressed and humiliated, not even able to remember whether it was built by the Franciscans or the Dominicans.

Of course, it must be a wonderful building. But how like a barn! And how very cold! Of course, it contained frescoes by Giotto, in the presence of whose tactile values she was capable of feeling what was proper. But who was to tell her which they were? She walked about disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic over monuments of uncertain authorship or date. There was no one even to tell her which, of all the sepulchral slabs that paved the nave and transepts, was the one that was really beautiful, the one that had been most praised by Mr. Ruskin¹.²

Then the pernicious³ charm of Italy worked on her, and, instead of acquiring information, she began to be happy. She puzzled out the Italian notices—the notices that forbade people to introduce dogs into the church—the notice that prayed people, in the interest of health and out of respect to the sacred edifice in which they found themselves, not to spit. She watched the tourists; their noses were as red as their Baedekers, so cold was Santa Croce. She beheld the horrible fate that overtook three Papists⁴—two he-babies and a she-baby—who began their career by sousing⁵ each other with the Holy Water, and then proceeded to the Machiavelli⁶ memorial, dripping but hallowed. Advancing towards it very slowly and from immense distances, they touched the stone with their fingers, with their handkerchiefs, with their heads, and then retreated. What could this mean? They did it again and again.

Then Lucy realized that they had mistaken Machiavelli for some saint, hoping to acquire virtue. Punishment followed quickly. The smallest he-baby stumbled over one of the sepulchral slabs so much admired by Mr. Ruskin, and entangled his feet in the features of a recumbent⁷ bishop. Protestant as she was, Lucy darted forward. She was too late. He fell heavily upon the prelate's⁸ upturned toes.

"Hateful bishop!" exclaimed the voice of old Mr. Emerson, who had darted forward also. "Hard in life, hard in death. Go out into the sunshine, little boy, and kiss your hand to the sun, for that is where you ought to be.

¹ Mr. Ruskin - English art critic

² I adore this phrase. It perfectly shows how passive Lucy is at this point...Do you need someone to tell you what is really beautiful?

³ Pernicious - Harmful in a slow, subtle way

⁴ Papists - Roman Catholics

⁵ Sousing - Drenching

⁶ Machiavelli - A Renaissance statesman and philosopher who advocated unethical methods to attain and retain power

⁷ Recumbent - Lying down

⁸ Prelate - Bishop or high-ranking religious dignitary

Intolerable bishop!"¹

The child screamed frantically at these words, and at these dreadful people who picked him up, dusted him, rubbed his bruises, and told him not to be superstitious.

"Look at him!" said Mr. Emerson to Lucy. "Here's a mess: a baby hurt, cold, and frightened! But what else can you expect from a church?"

The child's legs had become as melting wax. Each time that old Mr. Emerson and Lucy set it erect it collapsed with a roar. Fortunately an Italian lady, who ought to have been saying her prayers, came to the rescue. By some mysterious virtue, which mothers alone possess, she stiffened the little boy's back-bone and imparted strength to his knees. He stood. Still gibbering with agitation, he walked away.

"You are a clever woman," said Mr. Emerson. "You have done more than all the relics in the world. I am not of your creed², but I do believe in those who make their fellow-creatures happy. There is no scheme of the universe—"

He paused for a phrase.

"*Niente*,"³ said the Italian lady, and returned to her prayers.

"I'm not sure she understands English," suggested Lucy.

In her chastened⁴ mood she no longer despised the Emersons. She was determined to be gracious to them, beautiful rather than delicate, and, if possible, to erase Miss Bartlett's civility by some gracious reference to the pleasant rooms.

"That woman understands everything," was Mr. Emerson's reply. "But what are you doing here? Are you doing the church? Are you through with the church?"

"No," cried Lucy, remembering her grievance. "I came here with Miss Lavish, who was to explain everything; and just by the door—it is too bad!—she simply ran away, and after waiting quite a time, I had to come in by myself."

"Why shouldn't you?" said Mr. Emerson.

"Yes, why shouldn't you come by yourself?" said the son, addressing the young lady for the first time.

"But Miss Lavish has even taken away Baedeker."

"Baedeker?" said Mr. Emerson. "I'm glad it's *that* you minded. It's worth minding, the loss of a Baedeker. *That's* worth minding."

Lucy was puzzled. She was again conscious of some new idea, and was not sure whither it would lead her.

¹ We're starting to see why Mr. Beebe and Emerson disagree...

² Creed - Beliefs

³ *Niente* - No problem; it's nothing (Italian)

⁴ Chastened - Subdued or moderated after a misfortune

"If you've no Baedeker," said the son, "you'd better join us." Was this where the idea would lead? She took refuge in her dignity.

"Thank you very much, but I could not think of that. I hope you do not suppose that I came to join on to you. I really came to help with the child, and to thank you for so kindly giving us your rooms last night. I hope that you have not been put to any great inconvenience."

"My dear," said the old man gently, "I think that you are repeating what you have heard older people say. You are pretending to be touchy; but you are not really. Stop being so tiresome, and tell me instead what part of the church you want to see. To take you to it will be a real pleasure."

Now, this was abominably impertinent,¹ and she ought to have been furious. But it is sometimes as difficult to lose one's temper as it is difficult at other times to keep it. Lucy could not get cross². Mr. Emerson was an old man, and surely a girl might humour him. On the other hand, his son was a young man, and she felt that a girl ought to be offended with him, or at all events be offended before him. It was at him that she gazed before replying.

"I am not touchy, I hope. It is the Giotto's that I want to see, if you will kindly tell me which they are."

The son nodded. With a look of sombre satisfaction, he led the way to the Peruzzi Chapel. There was a hint of the teacher about him. She felt like a child in school who had answered a question rightly.

The chapel was already filled with an earnest congregation, and out of them rose the voice of a lecturer, directing them how to worship Giotto, not by tactful valuations, but by the standards of the spirit.

"Remember," he was saying, "the facts about this church of Santa Croce; how it was built by faith in the full fervour of medievalism, before any taint of the Renaissance had appeared. Observe how Giotto in these frescoes—now, unhappily, ruined by restoration—is untroubled by the snares of anatomy and perspective. Could anything be more majestic, more pathetic, beautiful, true? How little, we feel, avails knowledge and technical cleverness against a man who truly feels!"

"No!" exclaimed Mr. Emerson, in much too loud a voice for church. "Remember nothing of the sort! Built by faith indeed! That simply means the workmen weren't paid properly. And as for the frescoes, I see no truth in them. Look at that fat man in blue! He must weigh as much as I do, and he is shooting into the sky like an air balloon."

He was referring to the fresco of the "Ascension of St. John." Inside, the lecturer's voice faltered, as well it might. The audience shifted uneasily, and so did Lucy. She was sure that she ought not to be with these men; but they had cast a spell over her. They were so serious and so strange that she

¹ Abominably impertinent - Horrifically rude; disrespectful

² Cross - Angry (British)

could not remember how to behave.

"Now, did this happen, or didn't it? Yes or no?"

George replied:

"It happened like this, if it happened at all. I would rather go up to heaven by myself than be pushed by cherubs; and if I got there I should like my friends to lean out of it, just as they do here."

"You will never go up," said his father. "You and I, dear boy, will lie at peace in the earth that bore us, and our names will disappear as surely as our work survives."

"Some of the people can only see the empty grave, not the saint, whoever he is, going up. It did happen like that, if it happened at all."

"Pardon me," said a frigid¹ voice. "The chapel is somewhat small for two parties. We will incommode² you no longer."

The lecturer was a clergyman, and his audience must be also his flock, for they held prayer-books as well as guide-books in their hands. They filed out of the chapel in silence. Amongst them were the two little old ladies of the Pension Bertolini—Miss Teresa and Miss Catherine Alan.

"Stop!" cried Mr. Emerson. "There's plenty of room for us all. Stop!"

The procession disappeared without a word.

Soon the lecturer could be heard in the next chapel, describing the life of St. Francis.

"George, I do believe that clergyman is the Brixton curate³."

George went into the next chapel and returned, saying "Perhaps he is. I don't remember."

"Then I had better speak to him and remind him who I am. It's that Mr. Eager. Why did he go? Did we talk too loud? How vexatious⁴. I shall go and say we are sorry. Hadn't I better? Then perhaps he will come back."

"He will not come back," said George.

But Mr. Emerson, contrite⁵ and unhappy, hurried away to apologize to the Rev. Cuthbert Eager. Lucy, apparently absorbed in a lunette⁶, could hear the lecture again interrupted, the anxious, aggressive voice of the old man, the curt⁷, injured replies of his opponent. The son, who took every little contretemps⁸ as if it were a tragedy, was listening also.

"My father has that effect on nearly everyone," he informed her. "He

¹ Frigid - Cold; unfriendly

² Incommode - Inconvenience

³ Brixton curate - Member of the clergy from Brixton, England

⁴ Vexatious - Annoying

⁵ Contrite - Feeling guilty

⁶ Lunette - An arched opening of window

⁷ Curt - Rudely brief

⁸ Contretemps - Minor disagreement

will try to be kind."

"I hope we all try," said she, smiling nervously.

"Because we think it improves our characters. But he is kind to people because he loves them; and they find him out, and are offended, or frightened."

"How silly of them!" said Lucy, though in her heart she sympathized; "I think that a kind action done tactfully—"

"Tact!"

He threw up his head in disdain. Apparently she had given the wrong answer. She watched the singular creature pace up and down the chapel. For a young man his face was rugged, and—until the shadows fell upon it—hard. Enshadowed, it sprang into tenderness. She saw him once again at Rome, on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, carrying a burden of acorns. Healthy and muscular, he yet gave her the feeling of greyness, of tragedy that might only find solution in the night. The feeling soon passed; it was unlike her to have entertained anything so subtle¹. Born of silence and of unknown emotion, it passed when Mr. Emerson returned, and she could re-enter the world of rapid talk, which was alone familiar to her.

"Were you snubbed?" asked his son tranquilly².

"But we have spoilt the pleasure of I don't know how many people. They won't come back."

"...full of innate sympathy...quickness to perceive good in others...vision of the brotherhood of man..."³ Scraps of the lecture on St. Francis came floating round the partition wall.

"Don't let us spoil yours," he continued to Lucy. "Have you looked at those saints?"

"Yes," said Lucy. "They are lovely. Do you know which is the tombstone that is praised in Ruskin?"

He did not know, and suggested that they should try to guess it. George, rather to her relief, refused to move, and she and the old man wandered not unpleasantly about Santa Croce, which, though it is like a barn, has harvested many beautiful things inside its walls. There were also beggars to avoid and guides to dodge round the pillars, and an old lady with her dog, and here and there a priest modestly edging to his Mass through the groups of tourists. But Mr. Emerson was only half interested. He watched the lecturer, whose success he believed he had impaired, and then he anxiously watched his son.

"Why will he look at that fresco?" he said uneasily. "I saw nothing in

¹ Subtle - Delicately complex

² Tranquilly - Calmly

³ Interesting contrast between the clergyman's lecture and how he treated Mr. Emerson...

it."

"I like Giotto," she replied. "It is so wonderful what they say about his tactile values. Though I like things like the Della Robbia babies better."

"So you ought. A baby is worth a dozen saints. And my baby's worth the whole of Paradise, and as far as I can see he lives in Hell."

Lucy again felt that this did not do.

"In Hell," he repeated. "He's unhappy."

"Oh, dear!" said Lucy.

"How can he be unhappy when he is strong and alive? What more is one to give him? And think how he has been brought up—free from all the superstition and ignorance that lead men to hate one another in the name of God. With such an education as that, I thought he was bound to grow up happy."

She was no theologian¹, but she felt that here was a very foolish old man, as well as a very irreligious one. She also felt that her mother might not like her talking to that kind of person, and that Charlotte would object most strongly.

"What are we to do with him?" he asked. "He comes out for his holiday to Italy, and behaves—like that; like the little child who ought to have been playing, and who hurt himself upon the tombstone. Eh? What did you say?"

Lucy had made no suggestion. Suddenly he said:

"Now don't be stupid over this. I don't require you to fall in love with my boy, but I do think you might try and understand him. You are nearer his age, and if you let yourself go I am sure you are sensible. You might help me. He has known so few women, and you have the time. You stop here several weeks, I suppose? But let yourself go. You are inclined² to get muddled, if I may judge from last night. Let yourself go. Pull out from the depths those thoughts that you do not understand, and spread them out in the sunlight and know the meaning of them. By understanding George you may learn to understand yourself. It will be good for both of you."³

To this extraordinary speech Lucy found no answer.

"I only know what it is that's wrong with him; not why it is."

"And what is it?" asked Lucy fearfully, expecting some harrowing tale.

"The old trouble; things won't fit."

"What things?"

"The things of the universe. It is quite true. They don't."

¹ Theologian - Religious scholar

² Inclined - Willing, tending to

³ In terms of the hero's journey, Mr. Emerson's speech would quite literally be the "call to adventure."

"Oh, Mr. Emerson, whatever do you mean?"

In his ordinary voice, so that she scarcely realized he was quoting poetry, he said:

"From far, from eve and morning,
And yon twelve-winded sky,
The stuff of life to knit me
Blew hither: here am I!"¹

George and I both know this, but why does it distress him? We know that we come from the winds, and that we shall return to them; that all life is perhaps a knot, a tangle, a blemish in the eternal smoothness. But why should this make us unhappy? Let us rather love one another, and work and rejoice. I don't believe in this world sorrow."

Miss Honeychurch assented².

"Then make my boy think like us. Make him realize that by the side of the everlasting Why there is a Yes—a transitory³ Yes if you like, but a Yes."

Suddenly she laughed; surely one ought to laugh. A young man melancholy⁴ because the universe wouldn't fit, because life was a tangle or a wind, or a Yes, or something!

"I'm very sorry," she cried. "You'll think me unfeeling, but—but—" Then she became matronly⁵. "Oh, but your son wants employment. Has he no particular hobby? Why, I myself have worries, but I can generally forget them at the piano; and collecting stamps did no end of good for my brother. Perhaps Italy bores him; you ought to try the Alps or the Lakes."

The old man's face saddened, and he touched her gently with his hand. This did not alarm her; she thought that her advice had impressed him and that he was thanking her for it. Indeed, he no longer alarmed her at all; she regarded him as a kind thing, but quite silly. Her feelings were as inflated spiritually as they had been an hour ago esthetically⁶, before she lost Baedeker. The dear George, now striding towards them over the tombstones, seemed both pitiable and absurd. He approached, his face in the shadow. He said:

"Miss Bartlett."

"Oh, good gracious me!" said Lucy, suddenly collapsing and again seeing the whole of life in a new perspective. "Where? Where?"

"In the nave."⁷

¹ Allusion to a poem by A. E. Housman

² Assented - Agreed

³ Transitory - Temporary

⁴ Melancholy - Sad for no apparent reason

⁵ Matronly - Acting like an old, married woman

⁶ Esthetically - Relating to beauty

⁷ Nave - The central part of a church

"I see. Those gossiping little Miss Alans must have—" She checked herself.

"Poor girl!" exploded Mr. Emerson. "Poor girl!"

She could not let this pass, for it was just what she was feeling herself.

"Poor girl? I fail to understand the point of that remark. I think myself a very fortunate girl, I assure you. I'm thoroughly happy, and having a splendid time. Pray don't waste time mourning over *me*.¹ There's enough sorrow in the world, isn't there, without trying to invent it.² Good-bye. Thank you both so much for all your kindness. Ah, yes! there does come my cousin. A delightful morning! Santa Croce is a wonderful church."

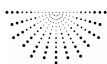
She joined her cousin.

¹ Lucy is differentiating herself from George.

² And I must say, I love her attitude.

CHAPTER III

Music, Violets, and the Letter “S”



IT SO HAPPENED that Lucy, who found daily life rather chaotic, entered a more solid world when she opened the piano. She was then no longer either deferential¹ or patronizing²; no longer either a rebel or a slave. The kingdom of music is not the kingdom of this world; it will accept those whom breeding and intellect and culture have alike rejected. The commonplace person begins to play, and shoots into the empyrean³ without effort, whilst we look up, marvelling how he has escaped us, and thinking how we could worship him and love him, would he but translate his visions into human words, and his experiences into human actions. Perhaps he cannot; certainly he does not, or does so very seldom. Lucy had done so never.

She was no dazzling *exécutante*⁴; her runs were not at all like strings of pearls, and she struck no more right notes than was suitable for one of her age and situation. Nor was she the passionate young lady, who performs so tragically on a summer's evening with the window open. Passion was there, but it could not be easily labelled; it slipped between love and hatred and jealousy, and all the furniture of the pictorial style. And she was tragical only in the sense that she was great, for she loved to play on the side of Victory. Victory of what and over what—that is more than the words of daily life can tell us. But that some sonatas of Beethoven are written tragic no one can gainsay⁵; yet they can triumph or despair as the player decides, and Lucy had decided that they should triumph.

A very wet afternoon at the Bertolini permitted her to do the thing she

¹ Deferential - Showing respect, taking a back seat

² Patronizing - Condescending

³ Empyrean - Relating to heaven or the sky

⁴ *Exécutante* - Performer (French)

⁵ Gainsay - Deny

really liked, and after lunch she opened the little draped piano. A few people lingered round and praised her playing, but finding that she made no reply, dispersed to their rooms to write up their diaries or to sleep. She took no notice of Mr. Emerson looking for his son, nor of Miss Bartlett looking for Miss Lavish, nor of Miss Lavish looking for her cigarette-case. Like every true performer, she was intoxicated by the mere feel of the notes: they were fingers caressing her own; and by touch, not by sound alone, did she come to her desire.

Mr. Beebe, sitting unnoticed in the window, pondered this illogical element in Miss Honeychurch, and recalled the occasion at Tunbridge Wells when he had discovered it. It was at one of those entertainments where the upper classes entertain the lower. The seats were filled with a respectful audience, and the ladies and gentlemen of the parish, under the auspices¹ of their vicar, sang, or recited, or imitated the drawing of a champagne cork. Among the promised items was "Miss Honeychurch. Piano. Beethoven," and Mr. Beebe was wondering whether it would be Adelaida, or the march of The Ruins of Athens, when his composure was disturbed by the opening bars of Opus III. He was in suspense all through the introduction, for not until the pace quickens does one know what the performer intends. With the roar of the opening theme he knew that things were going extraordinarily; in the chords that herald the conclusion he heard the hammer strokes of victory. He was glad that she only played the first movement, for he could have paid no attention to the winding intricacies of the measures of nine-sixteen. The audience clapped, no less respectful. It was Mr. Beebe who started the stamping; it was all that one could do.

"Who is she?" he asked the vicar afterwards.

"Cousin of one of my parishioners. I do not consider her choice of a piece happy. Beethoven is so usually simple and direct in his appeal that it is sheer perversity to choose a thing like that, which, if anything, disturbs."

"Introduce me."

"She will be delighted. She and Miss Bartlett are full of the praises of your sermon."

"My sermon?" cried Mr. Beebe. "Why ever did she listen to it?"

When he was introduced he understood why, for Miss Honeychurch, disjoined from her music stool, was only a young lady with a quantity of dark hair and a very pretty, pale, undeveloped face. She loved going to concerts, she loved stopping with her cousin, she loved iced coffee and meringues. He did not doubt that she loved his sermon also. But before he left Tunbridge Wells he made a remark to the vicar, which he now made to Lucy herself when she closed the little piano and moved dreamily towards him:

¹ Under the auspices of - With the help or support of

"If Miss Honeychurch ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting both for us and for her."¹

Lucy at once re-entered daily life.

"Oh, what a funny thing! Some one said just the same to mother, and she said she trusted I should never live a duet."

"Doesn't Mrs. Honeychurch like music?"

"She doesn't mind it. But she doesn't like one to get excited over anything; she thinks I am silly about it. She thinks—I can't make out. Once, you know, I said that I liked my own playing better than any one's. She has never got over it. Of course, I didn't mean that I played well; I only meant—"

"Of course," said he, wondering why she bothered to explain.

"Music—" said Lucy, as if attempting some generality. She could not complete it, and looked out absently upon Italy in the wet. The whole life of the South was disorganized, and the most graceful nation in Europe had turned into formless lumps of clothes.

The street and the river were dirty yellow, the bridge was dirty grey, and the hills were dirty purple. Somewhere in their folds were concealed Miss Lavish and Miss Bartlett, who had chosen this afternoon to visit the Torre del Gallo.

"What about music?" said Mr. Beebe.

"Poor Charlotte will be sopped," was Lucy's reply.

The expedition was typical of Miss Bartlett, who would return cold, tired, hungry, and angelic, with a ruined skirt, a pulpy Baedeker, and a tickling cough in her throat. On another day, when the whole world was singing and the air ran into the mouth, like wine, she would refuse to stir from the drawing-room, saying that she was an old thing, and no fit companion for a hearty girl.

"Miss Lavish has led your cousin astray. She hopes to find the true Italy in the wet I believe."

"Miss Lavish is so original," murmured Lucy. This was a stock remark, the supreme achievement of the Pension Bertolini in the way of definition. Miss Lavish was so original. Mr. Beebe had his doubts, but they would have been put down to clerical narrowness. For that, and for other reasons, he held his peace.

"Is it true," continued Lucy in awe-struck tone, "that Miss Lavish is writing a book?"

"They do say so."

"What is it about?"

"It will be a novel," replied Mr. Beebe, "dealing with modern Italy. Let me refer you for an account to Miss Catharine Alan, who uses words herself more admirably than any one I know."

¹ Foreshadowing

"I wish Miss Lavish would tell me herself. We started such friends. But I don't think she ought to have run away with Baedeker that morning in Santa Croce. Charlotte was most annoyed at finding me practically alone, and so I couldn't help being a little annoyed with Miss Lavish."

"The two ladies, at all events, have made it up."

He was interested in the sudden friendship between women so apparently dissimilar as Miss Bartlett and Miss Lavish. They were always in each other's company, with Lucy a slighted¹ third. Miss Lavish he believed he understood, but Miss Bartlett might reveal unknown depths of strangeness, though not perhaps, of meaning. Was Italy deflecting² her from the path of prim³ chaperon, which he had assigned to her at Tunbridge Wells? All his life he had loved to study maiden ladies; they were his specialty, and his profession had provided him with ample opportunities for the work. Girls like Lucy were charming to look at, but Mr. Beebe was, from rather profound reasons, somewhat chilly in his attitude towards the other sex, and preferred to be interested rather than enthralled⁴.

Lucy, for the third time, said that poor Charlotte would be sopped. The Arno was rising in flood, washing away the traces of the little carts upon the foreshore. But in the south-west there had appeared a dull haze of yellow, which might mean better weather if it did not mean worse. She opened the window to inspect, and a cold blast entered the room, drawing a plaintive⁵ cry from Miss Catharine Alan, who entered at the same moment by the door.

"Oh, dear Miss Honeychurch, you will catch a chill! And Mr. Beebe here besides. Who would suppose this is Italy? There is my sister actually nursing the hot-water can; no comforts or proper provisions."

She sidled⁶ towards them and sat down, self-conscious as she always was on entering a room which contained one man, or a man and one woman.

"I could hear your beautiful playing, Miss Honeychurch, though I was in my room with the door shut. Doors shut; indeed, most necessary. No one has the least idea of privacy in this country. And one person catches it from another."

Lucy answered suitably. Mr. Beebe was not able to tell the ladies of his adventure at Modena, where the chambermaid burst in upon him in his

¹ Slighted - Slightly disrespected

² Deflecting - Turn from a straight course

³ Prim - Stiffly formal and respectable

⁴ Enthralled - Fascinated by; captured

⁵ Plaintive - Mournful; sad

⁶ Sidled - Walked in a furtive manner, often sideways or obliquely

bath, exclaiming cheerfully, "*Fa niente, sono vecchia.*"¹

He contented himself with saying: "I quite agree with you, Miss Alan. The Italians are a most unpleasant people. They pry everywhere, they see everything, and they know what we want before we know it ourselves. We are at their mercy. They read our thoughts, they foretell our desires. From the cab-driver down to—to Giotto, they turn us inside out, and I resent it. Yet in their heart of hearts they are—how superficial! They have no conception of the intellectual life. How right is Signora Bertolini, who exclaimed to me the other day: 'Ho, Mr. Beebe, if you knew what I suffer over the children's educaishion. *Hi* won't 'ave my little Victorier taught by a hignorant Italian what can't explain nothink!'"²

Miss Alan did not follow, but gathered that she was being mocked in an agreeable way. Her sister was a little disappointed in Mr. Beebe, having expected better things from a clergyman whose head was bald and who wore a pair of russet whiskers. Indeed, who would have supposed that tolerance, sympathy, and a sense of humour would inhabit that militant form?

In the midst of her satisfaction she continued to sidle, and at last the cause was disclosed. From the chair beneath her she extracted a gun-metal cigarette-case, on which were powdered in turquoise the initials "E. L."

"That belongs to Lavish," said the clergyman. "A good fellow, Lavish, but I wish she'd start a pipe."

"Oh, Mr. Beebe," said Miss Alan, divided between awe and mirth³. "Indeed, though it is dreadful for her to smoke, it is not quite as dreadful as you suppose. She took to it, practically in despair, after her life's work was carried away in a landslip⁴. Surely that makes it more excusable."

"What was that?" asked Lucy.

Mr. Beebe sat back complacently⁵, and Miss Alan began as follows: "It was a novel—and I am afraid, from what I can gather, not a very nice novel. It is so sad when people who have abilities misuse them, and I must say they nearly always do. Anyhow, she left it almost finished in the Grotto of the Calvary at the Capuccini Hotel at Amalfi while she went for a little ink. She said: 'Can I have a little ink, please?' But you know what Italians are, and meanwhile the Grotto fell roaring on to the beach, and the saddest thing of all is that she cannot remember what she has written. The poor thing was very ill after it, and so got tempted into cigarettes. It is a great

¹ *Fa niente, sono vecchia.* - Don't worry [lit. 'do nothing'], I'm old. (Italian)

² This speech can be dissected on so many levels. At the beginning, you think he's as ignorant and prejudiced as the others, but by the end, you realize he's twisted their words inside out and is making fun of them.

³ Mirth - Amusement

⁴ Landslip - Landslide

⁵ Complacently - Showing smug or uncritical self-satisfaction

secret, but I am glad to say that she is writing another novel. She told Teresa and Miss Pole the other day that she had got up all the local colour—this novel is to be about modern Italy; the other was historical—but that she could not start till she had an idea. First she tried Perugia for an inspiration, then she came here—this must on no account get round. And so cheerful through it all! I cannot help thinking that there is something to admire in everyone, even if you do not approve of them.”

Miss Alan was always thus being charitable against her better judgement. A delicate pathos¹ perfumed her disconnected remarks, giving them unexpected beauty, just as in the decaying autumn woods there sometimes rise odours reminiscent of spring. She felt she had made almost too many allowances, and apologized hurriedly for her toleration.

“All the same, she is a little too—I hardly like to say unwomanly, but she behaved most strangely when the Emersons arrived.”

Mr. Beebe smiled as Miss Alan plunged into an anecdote² which he knew she would be unable to finish in the presence of a gentleman.³

“I don’t know, Miss Honeychurch, if you have noticed that Miss Pole, the lady who has so much yellow hair, takes lemonade. That old Mr. Emerson, who puts things very strangely—”

Her jaw dropped. She was silent. Mr. Beebe, whose social resources were endless, went out to order some tea, and she continued to Lucy in a hasty whisper:

“Stomach. He warned Miss Pole of her stomach-acidity, he called it—and he may have meant to be kind. I must say I forgot myself and laughed; it was so sudden. As Teresa truly said, it was no laughing matter. But the point is that Miss Lavish was positively *attracted* by his mentioning S., and said she liked plain speaking, and meeting different grades of thought. She thought they were commercial travellers—‘drummers’ was the word she used—and all through dinner she tried to prove that England, our great and beloved country, rests on nothing but commerce. Teresa was very much annoyed, and left the table before the cheese, saying as she did so: ‘There, Miss Lavish, is one who can confute you better than I,’ and pointed to that beautiful picture of Lord Tennyson. Then Miss Lavish said: ‘Tut! The early Victorians.’ Just imagine! ‘Tut! The early Victorians.’ My sister had gone, and I felt bound to speak. I said: ‘Miss Lavish, *I* am an early Victorian; at least, that is to say, I will hear no breath of censure against our dear Queen.’ It was horrible speaking. I reminded her how the Queen had been to Ireland when she did not want to go, and I must say she was dumbfounded,

¹ Pathos - A quality that evokes pity or sadness

² Anecdote - A story about a real incident or person

³ We’re getting the impression that Mr. Beebe is a bit smarter than some of these ladies.

and made no reply. But, unluckily, Mr. Emerson overheard this part, and called in his deep voice: 'Quite so, quite so! I honour the woman for her Irish visit.' The woman! I tell things so badly; but you see what a tangle we were in by this time, all on account of S. having been mentioned in the first place. But that was not all. After dinner Miss Lavish actually came up and said: 'Miss Alan, I am going into the smoking-room to talk to those two nice men. Come, too.' Needless to say, I refused such an unsuitable invitation, and she had the impertinence to tell me that it would broaden my ideas, and said that she had four brothers, all University men, except one who was in the army, who always made a point of talking to commercial travellers."¹

"Let me finish the story," said Mr. Beebe, who had returned.

"Miss Lavish tried Miss Pole, myself, everyone, and finally said: 'I shall go alone.' She went. At the end of five minutes she returned unobtrusively with a green baize board², and began playing patience³."

"Whatever happened?" cried Lucy.

"No one knows. No one will ever know.⁴ Miss Lavish will never dare to tell, and Mr. Emerson does not think it worth telling."

"Mr. Beebe—old Mr. Emerson, is he nice or not nice? I do so want to know."

Mr. Beebe laughed and suggested that she should settle the question for herself.

"No; but it is so difficult. Sometimes he is so silly, and then I do not mind him. Miss Alan, what do you think? Is he nice?"

The little old lady shook her head, and sighed disapprovingly. Mr. Beebe, whom the conversation amused, stirred her up by saying:

"I consider that you are bound to class him as nice, Miss Alan, after that business of the violets."

"Violets? Oh, dear! Who told you about the violets? How do things get round? A pension is a bad place for gossips. No, I cannot forget how they behaved at Mr. Eager's lecture at Santa Croce. Oh, poor Miss Honeychurch! It really was too bad. No, I have quite changed. I do *not* like the Emersons. They are *not* nice."

Mr. Beebe smiled nonchalantly⁵. He had made a gentle effort to intro-

¹ Honestly, my eyes glazed over here. All you need to know is Miss Lavish is a bit scandalous and Miss Alan (who's speaking) likes the sound of her own voice.

² Baize board - The green material that covers pool, snooker, and other gaming tables

³ Patience - Card game like solitaire

⁴ Quite the dramatic statement considering we're only talking about a woman in the smoking room! This helps highlight the differences between our time and theirs when it comes to women's rights.

⁵ Nonchalantly - In a calm and relaxed manner

duce the Emersons into Bertolini society, and the effort had failed. He was almost the only person who remained friendly to them. Miss Lavish, who represented intellect, was avowedly hostile, and now the Miss Alans, who stood for good breeding, were following her. Miss Bartlett, smarting under an obligation, would scarcely be civil. The case of Lucy was different. She had given him a hazy account of her adventures in Santa Croce, and he gathered that the two men had made a curious and possibly concerted attempt to annex¹ her, to show her the world from their own strange standpoint, to interest her in their private sorrows and joys. This was impertinent; he did not wish their cause to be championed by a young girl: he would rather it should fail. After all, he knew nothing about them, and pension joys, pension sorrows, are flimsy things; whereas Lucy would be his parishioner.

Lucy, with one eye upon the weather, finally said that she thought the Emersons were nice; not that she saw anything of them now. Even their seats at dinner had been moved.

"But aren't they always waylaying you to go out with them, dear?" said the little lady inquisitively.

"Only once. Charlotte didn't like it, and said something—quite politely, of course."

"Most right of her. They don't understand our ways. They must find their level."

Mr. Beebe rather felt that they had gone under. They had given up their attempt—if it was one—to conquer society, and now the father was almost as silent as the son. He wondered whether he would not plan a pleasant day for these folk before they left—some expedition, perhaps, with Lucy well chaperoned to be nice to them. It was one of Mr. Beebe's chief pleasures to provide people with happy memories.

Evening approached while they chatted; the air became brighter; the colours on the trees and hills were purified, and the Arno lost its muddy solidity and began to twinkle. There were a few streaks of bluish-green among the clouds, a few patches of watery light upon the earth, and then the dripping façade of San Miniato shone brilliantly in the declining sun.

"Too late to go out," said Miss Alan in a voice of relief. "All the galleries are shut."

"I think I shall go out," said Lucy. "I want to go round the town in the circular tram—on the platform by the driver."

Her two companions looked grave. Mr. Beebe, who felt responsible for her in the absence of Miss Bartlett, ventured to say:

"I wish we could. Unluckily I have letters. If you do want to go out alone, won't you be better on your feet?"

¹ Annex - Add to one's territory (metaphorically here, obviously)

"Italians, dear, you know," said Miss Alan.

"Perhaps I shall meet someone who reads me through and through!"

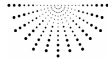
But they still looked disapproval, and she so far conceded¹ to Mr. Beebe as to say that she would only go for a little walk, and keep to the street frequented by tourists.

"She oughtn't really to go at all," said Mr. Beebe, as they watched her from the window, "and she knows it. I put it down to too much Beethoven."

¹ Conceded - Gave in; admitted something true after initially resisting

CHAPTER IV

Fourth Chapter



MR. BEEBE was right. Lucy never knew her desires so clearly as after music. She had not really appreciated the clergyman's wit, nor the suggestive twitterings¹ of Miss Alan. Conversation was tedious²; she wanted something big, and she believed that it would have come to her on the wind-swept platform of an electric tram. This she might not attempt. It was unladylike. Why? Why were most big things unladylike?³ Charlotte had once explained to her why. It was not that ladies were inferior to men; it was that they were different. Their mission was to inspire others to achievement rather than to achieve themselves. Indirectly, by means of tact and a spotless name, a lady could accomplish much. But if she rushed into the fray⁴ herself she would be first censured, then despised, and finally ignored. Poems had been written to illustrate this point.

There is much that is immortal in this medieval lady. The dragons have gone, and so have the knights, but still she lingers in our midst. She reigned in many an early Victorian castle, and was Queen of much early Victorian song. It is sweet to protect her in the intervals of business, sweet to pay her honour when she has cooked our dinner well. But alas! the creature grows degenerate⁵. In her heart also there are springing up strange desires. She too is enamoured⁶ of heavy winds, and vast panoramas, and green expanses of the sea. She has marked the kingdom of this world, how full it is of wealth, and beauty, and war—a radiant crust, built around the

¹ Twitterings - Rapid, trivial talk

² Tedious - Dull; boring

³ "Why were most big things unladylike?" - Interesting thematic question

⁴ Fray - Battle

⁵ Degenerate - Immoral; corrupt

⁶ Enamoured - Full of love or adoration

central fires, spinning towards the receding¹ heavens. Men, declaring that she inspires them to it, move joyfully over the surface, having the most delightful meetings with other men, happy, not because they are masculine, but because they are alive. Before the show breaks up she would like to drop the august² title of the Eternal Woman, and go there as her transitory self.³

Lucy does not stand for the medieval lady, who was rather an ideal to which she was bidden to lift her eyes when feeling serious. Nor has she any system of revolt. Here and there a restriction annoyed her particularly, and she would transgress it, and perhaps be sorry that she had done so. This afternoon she was peculiarly restive⁴. She would really like to do something of which her well-wishers disapproved. As she might not go on the electric tram, she went to Alinari's shop.

There she bought a photograph of Botticelli's "Birth of Venus." Venus, being a pity, spoilt the picture, otherwise so charming, and Miss Bartlett had persuaded her to do without it. (A pity in art of course signified the nude.) Giorgione's "Tempesta," the "Idolino," some of the Sistine frescoes and the Apoxyomenos, were added to it. She felt a little calmer then, and bought Fra Angelico's "Coronation," Giotto's "Ascension of St. John," some Della Robbia babies, and some Guido Reni Madonnas. For her taste was catholic, and she extended uncritical approval to every well-known name.

But though she spent nearly seven lire⁵, the gates of liberty seemed still unopened. She was conscious of her discontent; it was new to her to be conscious of it. "The world," she thought, "is certainly full of beautiful things, if only I could come across them." It was not surprising that Mrs. Honeychurch disapproved of music, declaring that it always left her daughter peevish, unpractical, and touchy.

"Nothing ever happens to me," she reflected, as she entered the Piazza Signoria and looked nonchalantly at its marvels, now fairly familiar to her. The great square was in shadow; the sunshine had come too late to strike it. Neptune⁶ was already unsubstantial in the twilight, half god, half ghost, and his fountain plashed dreamily to the men and satyrs⁷ who idled togeth-

¹ Receding - Moving back

² August - Old; Respected

³ This whole paragraph pauses the story to discuss how women are held to medieval standards.

⁴ Restive - Increasingly difficult to control

⁵ Lire - The currency of Italy until it was replaced by the Euro in 2002

⁶ Neptune - The Roman version of Poseidon, god of the seas

⁷ Satyr - Half-man, half-goat; fond of spying on bathing women

er on its marge¹. The Loggia² showed as the triple entrance of a cave, wherein many a deity³, shadowy, but immortal, looking forth upon the arrivals and departures of mankind. It was the hour of unreality—the hour, that is, when unfamiliar things are real. An older person at such an hour and in such a place might think that sufficient was happening to him, and rest content. Lucy desired more.⁴

She fixed her eyes wistfully on the tower of the palace, which rose out of the lower darkness like a pillar of roughened gold. It seemed no longer a tower, no longer supported by earth, but some unattainable treasure throbbing in the tranquil sky. Its brightness mesmerized her, still dancing before her eyes when she bent them to the ground and started towards home.

Then something did happen.

Two Italians by the Loggia had been bickering about a debt. "*Cinque⁵ lire,*" they had cried, "*cinque lire!*" They sparred⁶ at each other, and one of them was hit lightly upon the chest. He frowned; he bent towards Lucy with a look of interest, as if he had an important message for her. He opened his lips to deliver it, and a stream of red came out between them and trickled down his unshaven chin.

That was all. A crowd rose out of the dusk. It hid this extraordinary man from her, and bore him away to the fountain. Mr. George Emerson happened to be a few paces away, looking at her across the spot where the man had been. How very odd! Across something. Even as she caught sight of him he grew dim; the palace itself grew dim, swayed above her, fell on to her softly, slowly, noiselessly, and the sky fell with it.

She thought: "Oh, what have I done?"

"Oh, what have I done?" she murmured, and opened her eyes.

George Emerson still looked at her, but not across anything. She had complained of dullness, and lo! one man was stabbed, and another held her in his arms.

They were sitting on some steps in the Uffizi⁷ Arcade. He must have carried her. He rose when she spoke, and began to dust his knees. She repeated:

"Oh, what have I done?"

"You fainted."

"I—I am very sorry."

¹ Marge - Edge

² Loggia - An open-air extension of a building

³ Deity - A god or goddess

⁴ She is moping around like George!

⁵ *Cinque* - Five in Italian, pronounced "ching-quay"

⁶ Sparred - Fought

⁷ Uffizi - The most well-known museum in Florence

"How are you now?"

"Perfectly well—absolutely well." And she began to nod and smile.

"Then let us come home. There's no point in our stopping."

He held out his hand to pull her up. She pretended not to see it. The cries from the fountain—they had never ceased—rang emptily. The whole world seemed pale and void¹ of its original meaning.

"How very kind you have been! I might have hurt myself falling. But now I am well. I can go alone, thank you."

His hand was still extended.

"Oh, my photographs!" she exclaimed suddenly.

"What photographs?"

"I bought some photographs at Alinari's. I must have dropped them out there in the square." She looked at him cautiously. "Would you add to your kindness by fetching them?"

He added to his kindness. As soon as he had turned his back, Lucy arose with the running of a maniac and stole down the arcade towards the Arno.

"Miss Honeychurch!"

She stopped with her hand on her heart.

"You sit still; you aren't fit to go home alone."

"Yes, I am, thank you so very much."

"No, you aren't. You'd go openly if you were."

"But I had rather—"

"Then I don't fetch your photographs."

"I had rather be alone."

He said imperiously²: "The man is dead—the man is probably dead; sit down till you are rested." She was bewildered³, and obeyed him. "And don't move till I come back."

In the distance she saw creatures with black hoods, such as appear in dreams. The palace tower had lost the reflection of the declining day, and joined itself to earth. How should she talk to Mr. Emerson when he returned from the shadowy square? Again the thought occurred to her, "Oh, what have I done?"—the thought that she, as well as the dying man, had crossed some spiritual boundary.

He returned, and she talked of the murder. Oddly enough, it was an easy topic. She spoke of the Italian character; she became almost garrulous⁴ over the incident that had made her faint five minutes before. Being strong physically, she soon overcame the horror of blood. She rose without his

¹ Void - Empty

² Imperiously - With the attitude of an emperor

³ Bewildered - Very confused

⁴ Garrulous - Chatty

assistance, and though wings seemed to flutter inside her, she walked firmly enough towards the Arno. There a cabman signalled to them; they refused him.

"And the murderer tried to kiss him, you say—how very odd Italians are!—and gave himself up to the police! Mr. Beebe was saying that Italians know everything, but I think they are rather childish. When my cousin and I were at the Pitti¹ yesterday—What was that?"

He had thrown something into the stream.

"What did you throw in?"

"Things I didn't want," he said crossly.

"Mr. Emerson!"

"Well?"

"Where are the photographs?"

He was silent.

"I believe it was my photographs that you threw away."

"I didn't know what to do with them," he cried, and his voice was that of an anxious boy. Her heart warmed towards him for the first time. "They were covered with blood. There! I'm glad I've told you; and all the time we were making conversation I was wondering what to do with them." He pointed down-stream. "They've gone." The river swirled under the bridge, "I did mind them so, and one is so foolish, it seemed better that they should go out to the sea—I don't know; I may just mean that they frightened me." Then the boy verged into a man. "For something tremendous has happened; I must face it without getting muddled. It isn't exactly that a man has died."

Something warned Lucy that she must stop him.

"It has happened," he repeated, "and I mean to find out what it is."

"Mr. Emerson—"

He turned towards her frowning, as if she had disturbed him in some abstract quest.

"I want to ask you something before we go in."

They were close to their pension. She stopped and leant her elbows against the parapet of the embankment.² He did likewise. There is at times a magic in identity of position; it is one of the things that have suggested to us eternal comradeship. She moved her elbows before saying:

"I have behaved ridiculously."

He was following his own thoughts.

"I was never so much ashamed of myself in my life; I cannot think what came over me."

"I nearly fainted myself," he said; but she felt that her attitude re-

¹ The Pitti Palace - Former home of the Medici family

² Parapet of the embankment - The railing between people and the river

pelled him.

"Well, I owe you a thousand apologies."

"Oh, all right."

"And—this is the real point—you know how silly people are gossiping—ladies especially, I am afraid—you understand what I mean?"

"I'm afraid I don't."

"I mean, would you not mention it to any one, my foolish behaviour?"

"Your behaviour? Oh, yes, all right—all right."

"Thank you so much. And would you—"

She could not carry her request any further. The river was rushing below them, almost black in the advancing night. He had thrown her photographs into it, and then he had told her the reason. It struck her that it was hopeless to look for chivalry¹ in such a man. He would do her no harm by idle gossip; he was trustworthy, intelligent, and even kind; he might even have a high opinion of her. But he lacked chivalry; his thoughts, like his behaviour, would not be modified by awe. It was useless to say to him, "And would you—" and hope that he would complete the sentence for himself, averting² his eyes from her nakedness like the knight in that beautiful picture. She had been in his arms, and he remembered it, just as he remembered the blood on the photographs that she had bought in Alinari's shop. It was not exactly that a man had died; something had happened to the living: they had come to a situation where character tells, and where childhood enters upon the branching paths of Youth.

"Well, thank you so much," she repeated, "How quickly these accidents do happen, and then one returns to the old life!"

"I don't."

Anxiety moved her to question him.

His answer was puzzling: "I shall probably want to live."

"But why, Mr. Emerson? What do you mean?"

"I shall want to live, I say."

Leaning her elbows on the parapet, she contemplated the River Arno, whose roar was suggesting some unexpected melody to her ears.

¹ Chivalry - A combination of qualities including courage, honor, courtesy, justice, etc.

² Averting - Turning away