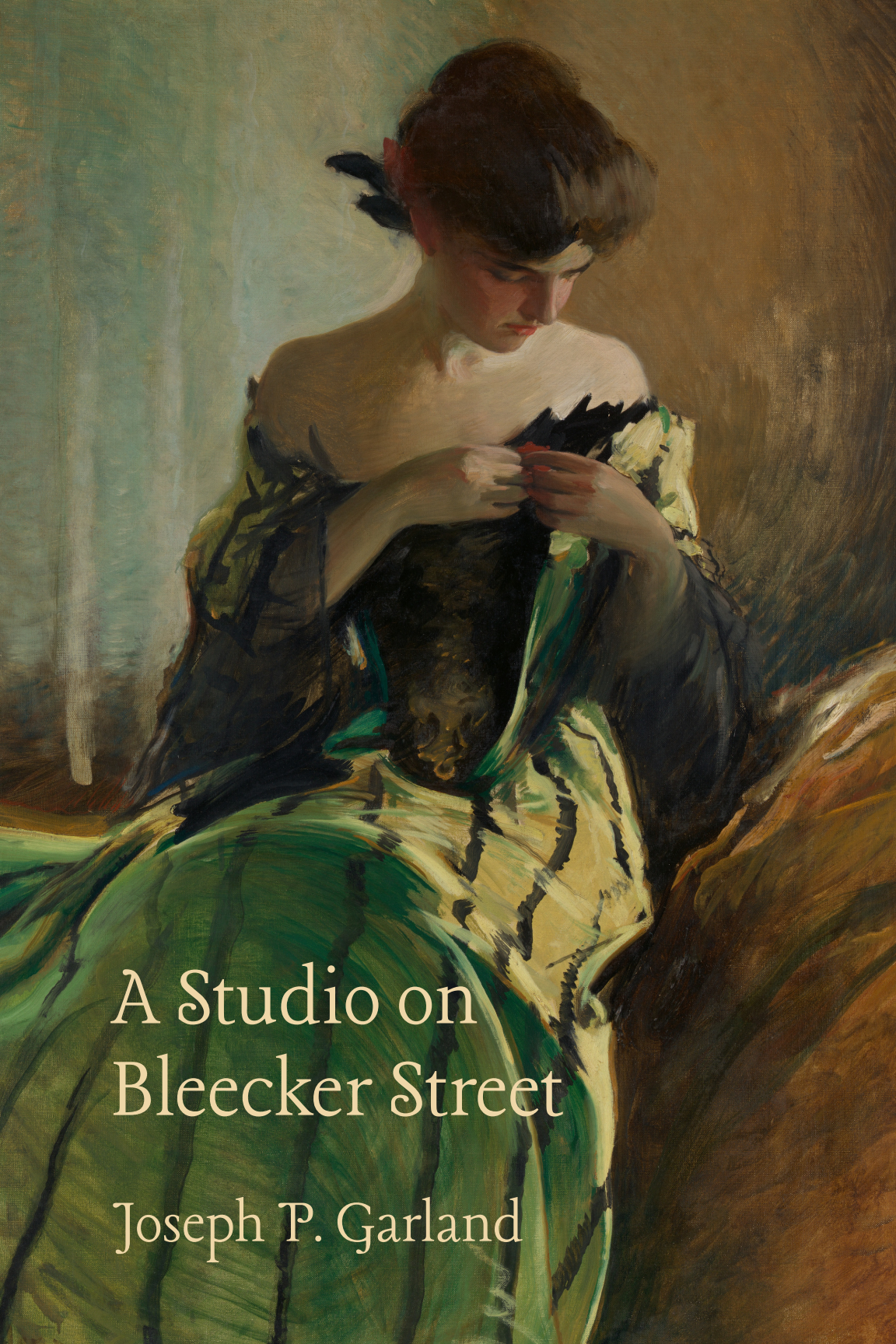
A Studio on
Bleecker Street
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Introduction

Although this book tells the story of Clara Bowman and events that occur in her life, many of its characters appear in *Róisín Campbell: An Irishwoman in New York*. Indeed, in that novel, it is noted that in early 1874, Emily Connor, who you will meet, "decamped to Greenwich Village, moving in with an unmarried friend who had artistic aspirations." That unmarried friend was Clara Bowman. This story begins nearly two y ears earlier, and the denouement of Róisín Campbell is spoken of here.

This novel continues past the final scene of that book and provides updates on some of the characters in that earlier one. While I do not think it necessary to have read the earlier book to enjoy this one, it will provide some insight into the story of some of the characters here.

> *"Harry," said Basil Hallward, looking him straight in the face, "every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul."*
>
> *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

1.

May 12, 1872 was a typical, if rainy, spring Sunday in New York City. Clara Bowman spent it as she always spent her Sundays in town. She was the largely spoiled second daughter (and second and last child) of a respected and wealthy family. She'd celebrated her eighteenth birthday six months earlier, and her long anticipated coming out in society was in March. She lived with her parents in their large house on East Thirty-Second Street in Manhattan. It was between Fifth and Madison Avenues.

As a rule, Clara's Sunday began with church services at Madison and Thirty-Fifth in which the readings were familiar and the sermon was forgettable. That done, she and her mother and sister, born Grace Bowman but now Mrs. Richard Lawford, strolled with similarly spoiled and rich women until they reached their respective houses. They could have taken their carriage on this particularly unpleasant Sunday but that would mean waiting until who knew how many other carriages would have to be loaded and would depart before theirs was ready, so as it was only a few blocks they walked beneath their umbrellas and dodged puddles and manure that others would have to clean up. They were home well before they would have been had they opted to take their brougham.

Ashley Davis, Clara's closest friend, was normally among the women with whom she walked, and Ashley's only brother, Thomas, sometimes accompanied them. It was universally understood that Thomas would marry Clara and the engagement was expected to follow Thomas mounting the courage to ask her father's permission—which would surely be given—and to ask Clara for her hand—which would even more surely be given.

The Davises lived two doors to the west, and the girls grew up together, sharing governesses and nurses. For several years they attended an all-girls academy on Twenty-Third Street.

Clara was a little taller and lankier than her contemporaries, and she was somewhat awkward. Ashley was a little shorter than average with flowing blonde hair in contrast to Clara's, which was flat and nearly jet black.

Thomas looked much like his sister, and he shared her sparkling blue eyes. His features were quite pleasant. Especially to a girl looking to fall in love. He was two years older than Clara and knew Clara for nearly as long as his sister did. He studied at Columbia College and was heir to his father's estate, though Clara did not need to marry for money.

On this May 12, Ashley and Thomas were visiting an ailing aunt on Long Island, and the best that could be hoped for was that they would appear at the Bowmans' shortly before dinner was over.

Not long after the parade of umbrellas of the Bowmans and the Lawfords reached the former's house, and after the three women spent some time with Grace's two girls, the five were seated in the dining room for dinner. As they were finishing, their coffees and desserts before them, the bell rang. Clara was glad her friends were finally stopping by, and two empty chairs awaited them. She heard Haskins, their butler, open the front door and expected the pair to be with them in a moment. But they did not rush in and they were not there. Instead, Haskins entered with an envelope on a silver plate, which he brought to Mr. Bowman, who ripped it open.

"Oh, my God." He stared at the paper. "It is your friends, the Davises. They are…dead."

Her father looked at her, the note from Mr. Davis shaking. "A train accident in Queens is what it says."

Ashley and Thomas were killed in Hollis, Queens, as they returned from their visit when a freight train derailed and the engineer on their passenger train waited too long to hit the brakes on the wet rails and the engine and several cars on that train derailed. Four people were killed, including both Davises.

The Bowmans would learn this later, but when her father was finished, Clara had to be helped upstairs by her sister and

her mother. As they sat with her in her room, the continuing rain clicking against its windows and a lone candle providing light, she told them that she realized finally what love was and that now it was too late. She would never know it again. Mother and sister sat with her until she fell asleep, and Grace remained throughout the night, though she, too, fell into a troubled sleep on an uncomfortable chair near the bed.

Clara Bowman remained like this through the week and into the next. By then, Mrs. Bowman was tired of her daughter's grief. Clara was not getting younger, and Thomas Davis was gone.

"Give her time," Grace said whenever her mother brought this up though she agreed that her sister's conduct, however sincere, was bordering on the self-indulgent. Mr. Bowman was resigned to allow the ladies to handle his youngest daughter and preferred not to be troubled by it in the interim.

Clara's loss was an agony. She had seen Ashley just on the Saturday and Thomas two days before that. Now they were gone forever. She kept to her room, her meals brought to her, passionless in her hopeless despair, as Browning observed. She often stared out her window, and her mother decreed that she not be disturbed.

She left the house once in that first week, to attend the funeral. It was a large, elaborate event. Clara was asked if she wished to sit among the Davises, in which case space would be saved for her, but she could not bring herself to do that, and found a spot near the rear and on a side aisle and mixed in with her mother, her sister, and other ladies in black. She remained towards the back at the quay later as the two coffins were placed on a boat to be buried in Queens, but their uncle saw her and insisted she travel with them to the cemetery.

She went and stood by the graves. Then she returned home to her room.

2.

Clara reacted badly to the collapse of her life and of her dreams and expectations. By week three, though, she ventured downstairs and ate with the family and joined them in the drawing room after dinner. But she suddenly resented her happily married sister and the slightest affection displayed between her parents. She hated herself for avoiding Mr. and Mrs. Davis when she saw them at services two Sundays later and was glad when they left for an extended stay in Saratoga in mid-June. Clara did not realize until he was dead how deeply in love she was with Thomas and was determined to suffer for it and to have others suffer with her.

Her ennui was noted by family and the few friends she was willing to see when they tried to visit, and "What are we to do about Clara?" was frequently asked when she was not in a room. Finally, her father said "enough." Clara did not hear him say it, and fortunately Mrs. Bowman convinced him not to broach it himself. She would do it. She sat Clara down in the corner of the drawing room on another of Clara's "bad days."

"This cannot go on."

"I know, mama. But I do not know what else I can do. Grace has Richard, and you have papa. I have nothing. Not even a friend in the world."

"You have me and Grace and the rest of us."

Mrs. Bowman hesitated, and the pause caused Clara to look at her mother.

"Most of all, my dear, you have you. You need to understand and accept that. Your sister, father, and I have spoken, and we agree that a change in scenery could not but help."

Clara's countenance narrowed at the conspiracy being unfolded before her.

"We will make arrangements for us, just you and I, to travel to London for a month. You will be free of the memories while—"

"I'll never be free of the mem—"

"I spoke too loosely. We realize that. You will, though, be free of the sights and sounds and smells that will, that have, triggered unpleasant thoughts about what you have been through and who you have lost."

"If you think it is what I must do."

"Clara. You must understand now or I fear you never will. You are old enough to know that you must make your own decisions. All we can do is facilitate them." Her voice rose slightly. "If you wish to remain here, cloistered, that is your prerogative. But I say I am tired of it. You are a woman, and it is time you acted like one."

Both were shocked by the explosion. Mrs. Bowman was to be the gentle touch but sounded like her husband. Clara turned to rush to her room to be done with this unpleasantness. As she reached the door, though, she turned.

"Have I been so awful, mama?" her question clouded by tears.

Her mother stood and walked slowly to her, with her arms outstretched. She pulled her daughter, and Clara bent slightly so her chin was on her mama's shoulder. It lasted but a moment, and Clara pushed away, using the back of her hand to wipe some tears away.

"You are all right, of course. All of you."

And with that, Clara found her attention wonderfully diverted to what she and her mother could do and see in England. Time was spent assembling and supervising the packing of the appropriate dresses and shoes and hats and the countless other things required for such a journey. Quite fine accommodations were arranged aboard one of the newer steamships.

So over two months after the young Davises were laid to rest, though surely not forgotten, and a few hours after their trunks were brought to a pier that jutted out into the Hudson, the Bowman women, accompanied by George Bowman, Richard Lawford and the Lawford girls, and various other

friends who watched the tugs position the ship in the river and accompany it south, were headed to the Old World.

It was a pleasant crossing, but the Bowmans kept to themselves. They finally disembarked in Southampton, where they and their luggage took a train to London and a carriage, their trunks on its roof, carried them to the Langham Hotel about midway between Hyde and Regent's Parks. It was a hotel popular with Americans and as it was new it was laden with all the modern conveniences.

They were treated like royalty as their cab arrived and both were amused and impressed that the doormen and others wore livery from the eighteenth century, long out of fashion in New York. The hotel had a narrow lobby with a cathedral ceiling from which several chandeliers dangled. There was a large restaurant to the right and a small, more intimate tearoom to the left. It was to the latter that the pair went after checking in, and they found a small table at which they had their first proper English tea and from which they could observe the comings and goings through the lobby as they waited for their suite to be made ready for them.

After several nervous moments as they ascended in the elevator, they were led to their rooms. There was a small sitting-room and their bedrooms were on either side of it with a bathroom on one side and a large closet to the other. Their dresses were hung and their other clothing and necessities had already been placed in dressers in their rooms with the trunks presumably taken to wherever it was that the Langham kept guests' trunks.

They were glad the room was more feminine than not, with neither the smell nor the feel of cigar and pipe smoke. Instead, the wallpaper was a light color, tan in the sitting room, a soft blue in Mrs. Bowman's bedroom, and a rosy pink in Clara's. In New York, they often found hostesses overwhelmed their houses, but here the roses and lilies and other freshly cut flowers were tastefully arranged about each of the rooms and added a barely detectable but extremely pleasant aroma. The

windows were open, but the suite faced the side and the traffic on Portland Place, where the hotel's imposing portico faced, barely intruded.

"I think I could die a happy woman in this room," Clara said as she lowered herself to one of two small sofas that faced one another.

Mrs. Bowman found this a peculiar moment, seeing Clara more girl-like and more alive than she had been since receiving the news in that horrible note months earlier.

"Do not get too comfortable, my dear," her mother warned, "for you must bathe and get out of those clothes so we might see the city."

Clara, her eyes tracing the dental molding that went around the ceiling, happily replied, "Soon enough, mama, soon enough," and continued her lounging until she mustered the strength and the will to lift herself so that she could begin her stay in London.

It was late July, and the timing was not advantageous since society would be fleeing to its various country estates in two weeks' time, and the Bowmans would be left in the doldrum period of the capital. Hot and with few to see and little to do. But it was a change.

They knew three or four members of English society, and they quickly ran through the roster in a series of afternoon visits and dinners. Some hinted that an invitation to a country estate would be forthcoming, but none actually arrived. It was just as well. Clara's despondency was reduced but too often made an appearance, and it was enough that she was able to walk with her mother and plan what they would do when they returned home come September.

Some days after they settled in, they were on Oxford Street among stores that sold ready-made women's clothing. One window caught Mrs. Bowman's eye. She tugged her daughter to it. There were three day-dresses displayed, and the older woman noticed their colors.

"What do you think of the red one?" she asked Clara, meaning the one on the left. It had an open collar and its sleeves did not float as much as was normal and the bustle did not seem to protrude dramatically. It was sleeker than customary, but that was not what caught Mrs. Bowman's eye. The red did. She was hoping for the opportunity to get something less mournful for her daughter and this might do it.

"The red one?" said daughter responded. "It would suit someone going to an afternoon party, I suppose, but would be entirely inappropriate for me."

"Why?"

Clara looked from the dress to her mother. "Because I am in mourning."

"Clara," Mrs. Bowman said, "we are in London and we are in London because you need to break free. It will not be disrespectful of Ashley or Thomas if you enjoy yourself in some small way while we are here. We will go in, we will see if it suits you, and if it does, we shall buy it. I think it would suit you quite well, and I do not believe I have seen one like it in New York."

Clara reluctantly followed her mother in. She would never buy such a pre-made dress for anything important but for a stylish yet comfortable one, she would humor her mother. The owner of the store was a large woman who rushed to them from the rear with a tape measure draped about her neck. It was a quiet time for the bespoke dressmakers as society women were out of town for the season, but her clientele were the wives and daughters of wealthy tradesman, bankers, and lawyers and so her shop enjoyed a steady flow even in August.

But it was empty when the two women came through the door and the owner, Mrs. Trolley, immediately recognized what they wore as high-quality and American. They likely wanted some dresses they could get quickly for their stay, and Mrs. Trolley was sure she could accommodate them. She also appreciated the black armbands they wore, which would require some delicacy if they were to buy one of the brighter dresses of which she was particularly proud.

"Good morning, ladies," she said in her practiced but not cynical way. "What may I help you with?"

"The red dress. Might there be one my daughter could try?"

Mrs. Trolley turned to Clara and assessed her. She was taller than the cut of the dress accommodated and the shopkeeper thought on it. As she did, Clara told her mother, "This is a bad idea, mama. Let us just go."

"Hush, Clara. We are here now. Let us see what Mrs.—"

"Trolley. Mrs. Trolley. A widow, ma'am."

"Oh, I am sorry." She turned to Clara. "We are here, and we will see what Mrs. Trolley can do."

Clara huffed in her well-practiced way, but Mrs. Trolley did not let her go far. "You are a tall girl. That red dress will not do. And you are in mourning, yes? I am sorry."

"Yes. Two people she was very close to."

"I am sorry, my dear. But you are in London now, and I hope that helps you with your loss."

Where they stood wasn't large but large enough for the dressmaker to circle Clara and with a touch here and a touch there to get the measure of the girl, with several "yes"s and "very nice"s as she did.

"I believe I have just the thing," she said as she disappeared to the rear. She presently returned with something maroon draped across her left arm. She lifted it and held it against Clara's front and looked to Mrs. Bowman for confirmation. It had a square collar trimmed by a rectangle in a cream lace. The sleeves hung easily down, and a belt made of the same maroon material as the dress itself allowed the dress to fit comfortably about Clara's midsection and below it the material was allowed to flow. The latter would have to be trimmed lest the wearer trip on it, but Mrs. Trolley saw that that was one of the few things she needed to do to make it fit the American.

"Perfect," Mrs. Bowman smiled, and Mrs. Trolley echoed, "'Tis, t'isn't it? The color suits her so well. It is an artistic dress, far more practical than the day dress."

There was a tall mirror to the side, and Clara held the dress against her front and looked.

"It is somber enough, Clara, to be respectful, and its color is perfect for you," Mrs. Bowman said and then turned to the dressmaker. "What will it take, how long, for her to have it?"

Clara, who was silent and allowed herself to be poked and prodded through all this, spoke. "It is a beautiful dress and I believe it would look very well on me," she said. She turned to her mother and Mrs. Trolley, still clinging the dress to herself. "But, mama. I feel it is too early."

Mrs. Trolley moved away, and Mrs. Bowman stepped closer, only the dress separating them. She ran her right hand across her daughter's left cheek.

"Clara. We will only do what you wish to do. You mustn't think otherwise." She paused, unsure of the tack to take, never having experienced the loss her daughter had.

"It must be you who decides. I can only support you. We are here to begin anew. We both know you need not wear mourning clothes to confirm your respect for the Davises. But…but when you look at that dress," and she moved to the side to allow them both to admire it in the mirror, "does it not convince you how beautiful and full of life you are?"

Clara remained conflicted by the norms of society but she was in London. She was beginning to feel she was herself and the mirror suggested who she could be. It truly was a wonderful dress. It was not nearly so large as the tailored things she had in New York and it would be more comfortable than what she brought with her. At the least she knew she must see how it looked on her body and not just being placed against it.

"Mama. Mrs. Trolley has gone to so much bother. It's the least I can do to try it on, don't you think?"

Mrs. Trolley was near enough to catch her name and was quickly leading Clara to a room beside her worktable in the back.

"Miss, I believe you may put it on so we can see, and I will then attempt to perform my magic to make it worthy of you."

Clara smiled at how this was said, so different from the gruffness of the men who were the dressmakers at home. The fitting room was large enough for her mother to join her and assist in removing the suddenly drab thing that she had on, the product of one of those gruff men, as well as the crinoline on which it draped itself, and replacing it with Mrs. Trolley's somewhat ill-fitting dress.

Mrs. Bowman brushed aside the curtain to the room and led her daughter out.

"Yes," Mrs. Trolley said as she approached Clara. She put her hands against Clara's waist, strong but not brutal hands. "This will fit nicely on you." She rotated Clara so the three could look at the dress in the mirror. The dressmaker pulled its waist from the rear and this revealed Clara's slight curves. She turned to Mrs. Bowman, on Clara's other side. "I do hate when pretty girls on becoming beautiful women do so much to hide the fact from the world, do you not agree Mrs.—"

"Bowman. Muriel Bowman and my daughter Clara. We are visiting from New York."

Clara was embarrassed by the nonsense being spoken as she looked in the mirror. She was just as plain a woman as she had been a girl. Yet the image offered a glimpse, not of beauty—of that she was sure—but of something…pleasant.

With one hand gripping the dress's waist, Mrs. Trolley used the other to pull back on its top, allowing it to frame Clara's bosom. She had seen this before. The wave that washes over a young woman when she sees who she is. There was an element of cynicism in it since it helped her sell dresses, but that did not alter the affection she had for those who came through. She took particular satisfaction attending to the well-off but not wealthy who were her usual clients.

Clara hoped the others did not notice her smile, though they both did, and decided she liked what looked back at her. "How long would it take, Mrs. Trolley?"

The older women exchanged smiles in the mirror, though Clara did not notice them, and Mrs. Trolley said, “If I measure you out now, I will prepare it immediately and you can return in two days for it. Would that be satisfactory?”

It was and when they returned it was ready for Clara. Mrs. Bowman was happy to pay for it and for two others—the cost was less than for just one bought in New York. Without a bustle, there was no need for crinoline and the awkwardness and discomfort that came along with one. On those days when she and her mother went for long walks, Clara wore one of Mrs. Trolley’s dresses instead of the more formal things for shopping and the occasional visiting. She always dressed formally for dinner.

Their days passed well enough. As they strolled with their parasols and intertwined arms, they spoke of the sights they saw and the people they passed. Shopping and sitting on a bench with a bit of refreshment in a park. The one thing they did not talk about during the day was the reason for their trip, though it was uppermost in both their minds. With each evening, sometimes while they ate in the Langham’s or a nearby restaurant recommended by the concierge, but more often when they retired to their sitting room, Clara spoke more and more of her loss. Mrs. Bowman took to measuring her daughter’s revival by the tone as well as what she said. While she still spoke of her times with Thomas, it was far more often about Ashley.

More and more Clara smiled as she began a sentence with “Do you remember…?” Memories of happy days, the simpler the happier it seemed with the caveat that nothing compared to the night they came out into society together and the giggles and swooning they shared between the dances they so laboriously practiced for with the boys who were even more uncomfortably dressed and more awkward than they were.

“Mama, have I ever told you about…?” Clara would say, and she had of course told her mother about this or that boy dozens of times and how much she was in love with him and he with

her until the next partner and the next waltz. “Oh how Ash and I were cruel about some of them but, mama, you could not blame us, they were so ridiculous.”

Some of these sessions would end in tears, as they reminded Clara of how much she missed Ashley. Mrs. Bowman would then sit on the side of Clara’s bed holding her daughter’s hand until she fell asleep. But about two weeks after their arrival, Clara said, “I know she is gone. And I miss her so much. I am glad that we had time to share such nonsense,” and she insisted that she was perfectly capable of putting herself to sleep and managed to do that.

So their days were spent having breakfast in the hotel’s dining room adjoining the lobby and taking in the sights of the comings and goings there. They changed after they ate and walked north or south, east or west, as the mood dictated and weather permitted, enjoying the winding paths in the two large parks nearby. Often, they shopped and were able to supplement what they brought with some of the newer fashions, including some with hints of Paris, such as they saw in Mrs. Trolley’s shop.

A return to the hotel for lunch and then generally they sat together in their suite or on the hotel’s terrace writing letters home or reading or doing needlepoint. Dinner in the dining room, sometimes with people of their acquaintance from New York, and if the weather was kind a short walk nearby. It was a pleasant routine and it and simply being away helped Clara begin to forget.

About a week after nearly everyone fled town in mid-August, she and her mother entered what had become a familiar section of Regent’s Park. It was to the southern end, and they sat in one of a series of benches arrayed among a number of rose bushes. Not far from them a young woman stood before an easel, painting a watercolor of one of those bushes.

“I must see,” Clara told her mother, and she jumped up. Upon arriving, the artist ignored Clara looking over her shoulder, the

American's glance alternating between the painting and its subject. The artist, a fair-skinned woman named (Clara would learn) Felicity Adams, lifted her brush from the paper and without looking away she said in an uppercrust accent, "You must tell me what you think."

Clara had little idea what to "think" about a painting. The art of her world was the portraits in the Bowmans' and other similar houses and the occasional broad landscape of the country. She attended her share of exhibitions of newly rich men eager to show off their artistic tastes and, more, their financial acumen, and she and Ashley had visited the new Metropolitan Museum on Fourteenth Street several times.

What she saw as she looked over Felicity's left shoulder was, for want of a better term, alive. Somehow the still-damp watercolors brought out a depth Clara had not noticed in looking at the petals and the stems and the leaves and the thorns themselves.

She was silent, and Felicity said, "It's not very good, is it?" which shook Clara from her stupor.

"It is the most beautiful, most magical thing I have ever seen."

Felicity looked over, hearing and seeing her admirer for the first time.

Clara continued staring at the paper. Felicity had never known someone to respond so viscerally to her simple bit of water coloring. She was, like Clara, a woman with much time on her hands. Thanks to the persistence of several governesses, she was adept at any number of things at which a wealthy city woman of society must be adept. She found art, though, something beyond a mere lure for a husband. She often received compliments on the things she painted or drew but had never seen the expression on this American's face.

"You must have it."

"No, surely not," Clara said.

Felicity laughed. "It is but a quick study. I wish you to have it."

By this point, Mrs. Bowman was beside Clara. She chastised her daughter for interrupting the artist, but Felicity insisted it was far from a bother.

She turned back to the watercolor of the rose bushes.

"Please give me a moment, and I shall be done."

As the others watched, she dabbed her brush in the paint and lightly drew it across, creating more texture in one of the roses, and then she pronounced that it was finished and that it would be dry presently and that she would present it to, "I am sorry, I don't know your names," and when told she continued that she would present it to Miss Bowman as a souvenir of her visit to Regent's Park and would then take the two women to tea "or whatever it is you Americans currently enjoy."

For most of their tea at a small teahouse across from the park, Clara was quiet, allowing her mother to carry their end of the conversation. Mrs. Bowman made the nature of Clara's situation generally known straight off, especially the horrible deaths of the Davises and the need to flee America so she could breathe again. And then the lonely weeks in London.

Clara paid little attention. She had heard it often on the crossing and on visits and had no interest in becoming engaged in it. During a lull, she asked, "May we see your studio?"

The others turned to her.

"Do not be presumptuous, Clara."

Felicity ignored this.

"There is nothing I would rather do," she said, and so after the bill was paid (by Felicity after a battle with Mrs. Bowman) and Felicity collected her easel and supplies from the teahouse's corner where she left them, the three went to the street. Three or four blocks later, they came upon Felicity's small building. It was like its neighbors, built in the Georgian period, with their three steps leading to a black door. Felicity said they were in the Primrose Hill neighborhood, just to the east of the hill whence its name derived and just north of Regent's Park itself. The flat was on the third floor (to the

Americans) and faced the rear, overlooking the neatly tended gardens in the backs of the houses beside and across from it.

It was bright, as its back looked south, and the gardens were abloom with a panoply of colors not unlike those recently seen in the park. The flat itself was square and felt larger than it was with a calming pattern to its wallpaper. It had a small and tidy kitchen. A bed was lengthwise against the left wall and several very fine but well-worn pieces of furniture dotted the place. More than anything, the room was an artist's studio and smelled like one. There was an easel on which an incomplete landscape lay, and drawings and paintings leaned in columns along the wall to the right.

Mrs. Bowman was fatigued, though, and so the Americans left soon after the tour ended, but not until she insisted that she and Clara take Felicity to dinner. Felicity suggested a restaurant not far from the Langham, and the three were seated shortly after seven-thirty. Within minutes, a lady and a gentleman stopped by their table. When the former had Felicity's attention, she asked, "Are these your latest protégés, my dear Felicity?" She was a bit stout and wore a fine emerald dress that did well to complement her chestnut hair.

Felicity smiled. "No. They are from America. I have just met them. Allow me to introduce Mrs. and Miss Bowman of New York. Miss Bowman admired one of the watercolors I was doing in the park, and I thought that warranted my payment with dinner. Though Mrs. Bowman insists that she actually pay for it. So here we are."

Turning to Mrs. Bowman and Clara, she said, "Ladies, this is my dear friend Alice Jones and her husband Michael Jones."

At this, the latter, a fine-looking Englishman in a well-tailored suit, stepped around his wife and reached for the hand of Mrs. Bowman. He kissed it lightly, and with a practiced bow said, "It is a true delight to meet you, Mrs. Bowman." He looked at Clara and said with the hint of a second bow, "And you, of course, Miss Bowman."

With that, the couple began to move away. Alice turned back to Felicity and said, "We must get together sometime but for now my husband is beckoning me," and with that, she followed her husband to their table.

When they were out of earshot, Felicity turned to her guests and lowered her voice. "We were once great friends. But when she married and I moved to London, she did not seem to know me anymore. We see each other sometimes when she is in town."

Mrs. Bowman asked Felicity about her plans for marriage.

"Perhaps someday, but I'm too much enjoying my freedom. My father lives for his horses and hunts and he allowed me to take this time in London when I convinced him that doing so would be like exhausting a horse and breaking her to become a compliant mare. I told him at that point, when I was well and truly 'broken,' I would gladly enter his and my mother's world and, for that matter, Alice Jones's. It's been just over one year now, and I'm afraid I shall never become the compliant mare he hopes I will."

At this, Clara asked, "What would you do then? Of course you must have a husband."

Felicity laughed. "Of course I *must* unless I *do not*. I am too young." She whispered conspiratorially, "I am twenty-one, you know," and then looked at Clara. "Much too young to worry about how much I am enjoying my life here. I do have a few friends in my world, and each day is far from the days and the friends of the world of my parents and Mr. and Mrs. Jones."

Looking back and forth between the other two, she added, "And it allows me to meet people like you, sitting in Regent's Park."

Felicity said that while the family had a house in the city, she convinced her father to allow her to rent her own flat using the significant savings he enjoyed as a result of him not having to buy her dresses to go to event on event.

"Fortunately, we are well enough off that my father need not worry about auctioning me off to some rich American

industrialist or his son, so I have the small flat and enough to live on and enough to take people I like to dinner."

Clara interrupted, "So you like us."

"Indeed, I do and I will be sad when you leave us forever to go home."

At this point dinner was nearly over and the summer sun over London had not yet faded. They decided to forgo dessert or coffee or tea and walked two blocks to Regent's Park where they strolled around the lake, a pond really, in the southern end. Felicity was between the two Bowmans, her arms through theirs. She was happy to agree to meet Clara again, at her rose bushes the next morning.

When Clara arrived around ten, the early mist was burnt off though the grass was wet. Felicity was already set up, and she had brought a folding stool for her new friend in the small wagon she sometimes used to transport her supplies. After a quick "hello," she returned to her work, and Clara sat beside her, shortly saying, "I would like to be able to do something like that."

"There is no reason you cannot." She turned from her easel and smiled. "And I shall teach you."

When the watercolor was finished and drying, Clara helped Felicity put her things in her little wagon except for the painting itself, which was carefully placed in a folio that Felicity carried. Then, Felicity rifled through some things and produced a sketchbook, which she handed to Clara with a pencil.

"Sketch me," she said. Clara protested that she could do no such thing and Felicity insisted that she at least try. The Englishwoman turned her head slightly and held the pose. Clara hesitated until she put the pencil to the paper. Finally, she let the former touch the latter and hoped what she drew would bear some resemblance to her new friend's forehead.

When it was done, Felicity took it and studied it. She then folded it and placed it carefully among the things in the wagon.

"Will you not tell me what you think?"

The pair had started walking to Felicity's flat, and as they left the park, Felicity ended her silence.

"It is not good. But I do not think it bad, either." As they waited to cross the road that ran along the park's eastern border, she turned to her new friend. "It is not bad, Miss Bowman, and I believe we might just be able to make something of you. I truly do."

There was an opening in the traffic, and they raced across, with Clara pulling the little wagon like the girl she sometimes still was, and Felicity's last words made her feel like one, too.

As they resumed a walking pace, Felicity commented, "Wherever I go, I carry a sketch pad. I often dine alone so I am not deterred by conversation in sketching the others at the restaurant. They all know me, and people let me sketch them because I give them the product of my efforts."

She said she often went to the park with her easel and watercolors to paint the trees and bushes. After Clara helped carry the supplies to the flat, they arranged to meet again at the Langham.

3.

Felicity Adams took to her self-appointed role of tour guide with great spirit, and her two new friends discovered more in three days than they had in the prior weeks. After several days, Felicity took them to Piccadilly and along a street lined with mansions. At the third one on the left, she turned.

"The family left for the country a few weeks ago but there will be a few members of staff."

Felicity simply opened the door and called out "Jones" as she entered the foyer. A moment later the butler appeared.

"Good morning, miss. I had no idea you would be stopping by. Your brother is expected tomorrow so we have prepared the house. Do you intend to stay?"

"No, Jones, I merely wish to show my new friends the house."

Felicity told him to resume whatever he was doing to prepare things for her brother, and he bowed and went on his way. The Americans had seen many a fine house in New York but nothing as elegant as this.

"Why would you leave all this?" Clara asked as she twirled around in Felicity's bedroom, which had a large four poster bed, and walls covered in a blue paper sprinkled with yellow flowers on green stems.

"'Tis a cage. My papa tolerates my acts of independence." She threw herself on her bed and lay looking up. "He is sure I will tire of them and settle down with one of the appropriate men he has chosen for me." She raised herself to look at the others, who were studying each nook of the room. "Perhaps I will. Perhaps he will break me like one of his horses." She flopped back down. "We shall see."

She was surprised when she felt Clara fall beside her, the mattress vibrating for several seconds.

"I don't know if I shall ever marry since the man I love is gone."

Her mother was frozen, holding her breath as she looked down on the two girls. In all their talks, Clara had not told Felicity this part of why she was in London. Only that she had suffered some horrible loss with the death of friends.

"What do you mean 'gone'?"

Clara adjusted her body and rolled on her side so she could see her friend, who was still looking at the ceiling. She ran her left hand mindlessly across the other's stomach.

"I was in love with someone who died in a stupid train crash." She again flopped down and also stared up at the ceiling. "A train crash in Queens! Killed with my best friend."

Felicity mimicked Clara's actions, rising and turning so she could study the American's face.

"Tell me."

Which is how on the plush bed in a lavish bedroom decorated in an incredibly tasteful manner with the sound of passing carriages slipping through the window Clara Bowman released the hold the ghost of Thomas Davis had over her heart, by the simple act of telling a friend—a stranger, really—of how she loved him and how his death nearly destroyed her.

All three were quieter after leaving the house than they were entering, but Felicity lightened things by insisting that they have lunch at a small café some blocks away. It was a refuge she frequented when she was at the mansion before she got her flat. They sat at a small, round table near the front window and enjoyed the view of the few passersby while they ate. Clara's revelations were not forgotten but placed to the backs of their minds while they spoke of less important things.

From that day, as a rule, Felicity arrived at the Langham at ten and took the Bowmans out. Sometimes they took a cab to a row of West End stores on or near Oxford Street where Felicity was recognized and catered to. On other days she insisted that they wear shoes and dresses that were as comfortable as possible and even convinced Mrs. Bowman to forgo a corset to take a long stroll. They either ate at or near the stores when that is where they went or returned to the hotel to lunch in

their suite, after which Mrs. Bowman would bid the younger women continue their explorations.

After lunch nearly a week after they met and after Mrs. Bowman was deposited at the hotel, Felicity insisted that Clara accompany her to her flat. There, Felicity grabbed her folding easel and a couple of stools as well as a satchel of supplies and the two carried them to the ground floor. Felicity opened a door in the hall and extracted her wagon. The two loaded it with the materials and together carried it to the sidewalk. Clara volunteered to pull it as the pair walked to the northern reaches of Regent's Park.

They found a small garden beyond which the traffic flowed. It was defined by a series of ornamental shrubs divided by flower beds. The path around it was wide enough to set up their stools without obstructing others. After they were placed, Felicity positioned the easel in front of Clara's stool. She told Clara to "simply draw what you see." Clara would not, saying that insofar as drawing was drilled into her as a girl, she shed any interest in it as soon as she could. She had done that slight thing where Felicity posed and did not like the result.

Felicity insisted. With much hesitation, Clara made a primitive drawing of an innocent flower bed in Regent's Park. It was pronounced "not terrible for a debut effort." After several more attempts dissolved into fits of laughter, the girls reversed their procession, going back to Felicity's, with the host now pulling the wagon as they chatted.

It rained the next morning, which put Clara in a foul mood, but Felicity relieved her by taking her and her mother to a department store in Knightsbridge. The three had lunch in the store's restaurant. It was close enough to the Langham to walk there after the rain let up. The girls dropped Mrs. Bowman off and continued to Felicity's. Clara said she wanted to watch Felicity at work and sat on the side of the bed as the Englishwoman resumed the detailing on the landscape that was her current work-in-progress, tidying up a small oil of a bridge over the Thames.

Minutes later, Clara rose and after a nod from Felicity began to go through the drawings and paintings strewn against the walls. They were there for perhaps twenty or thirty minutes when there was a knock on the door. Felicity stopped her work and opened it. Standing there was her brother, John. He passed her and was inside.

"Jones has advised me, my dear sister, that you are entertaining visitors from America. Assuming this is one of them," looking at and bowing to Clara, "and seeing as this is one of them, I am now particularly perturbed at your failure to tell me."

Felicity looked from her brother to her friend, still wandering through some of Felicity's oils, and to the latter said, "This is my older brother, John, but do not take him seriously. He is spoken for."

"Ah," he said. "Spoken for, perhaps. But not as yet *taken*."

Felicity waited a moment. "This is Clara Bowman. She and her mother are visiting us from New York."

He nodded and with that dropped himself onto his sister's bed while Clara resumed her browsing. He became quickly bored by being ignored.

"Felicity. I have come all this way to see you and your friend, and it is the least you can do to keep me entertained."

Clara looked at her friend, who shook her head.

"I can assure you, dear brother, looking at one of my sketches is infinitely more entertaining than conversing with you."

Clara hid a smile, then said, "No. While I am certain speaking with you would be far more enjoyable, I'm endeavoring to learn from what your sister has done."

John raised himself. He looked at the American.

"What my sister has 'done'? She puts squiggles on paper and passes them off as something significant." John flopped back down. "Ah, but I see you have been ensnared in her web and I shall burden the two of you no more."

With this, and after being at the flat for less than ten minutes, he rose.

"But I do not surrender. I insist that I be allowed to take you and your mother to dinner this evening. It may well be the highlight of my stay in town. I shall pick you both up, and your dear mother, Miss Bowman, at the…Where is it that you are staying?"

"The Langham."

"The Langham. Of course. I will pick you and your mother up there at seven o'clock. Felicity, dear, you must be there too, of course. We shall adjourn to its fine dining room and I will learn about you and you will learn more than you ever care to know about me."

With that, he bowed to Clara and to his sister, restored his hat, and was gone.

"He's not so pompous as he likes people to believe, and on his good days he can be quite kind. He's to be married in the fall to the daughter of someone in my father's horsey set with no money and a heavily mortgaged estate. The alliance of the families is considered an act of *noblesse oblige* by my parents, and Diana does make John happy enough, I suppose.

"You'll learn further of him and my family at dinner this evening. But he's practiced at the art of flirting bordering on seduction, and do not allow it."

* * * *

FELICITY WAS RIGHT. Clara discovered John Adams's charm and she was taken aback when the maître d' referred to him as "Sir John."

When the four were seated, Clara asked about it, and Felicity said, "Oh that. Our father is a baron and so he is sometimes referred to as 'Sir.' Please pay it no mind, much as he likes others to."

Of course, Clara and Mrs. Bowman could not help but pay it mind. They did not know what a baron was and what this particular baron or an ancestor may have done to gather the

title, but it was more than enough to set aflutter their Yankee inferiority. As to Sir John's charm, he displayed it chiefly to Mrs. Bowman, as Michael Jones had done when they had their encounter days before.

It was a fine dinner, and Sir John held the floor for most of it. But by the time the coffees were drunk and the dessert cart sampled, it was late and the room was still warm, and the two Adamses bid the two Bowmans good night.

Mrs. Bowman promptly ran a bath, and Clara sat with her.

"Mother. I should like to stay longer in London."

"I must say that Miss Adams is a pleasure. But please tell me you do not wish to stay longer because of that brother of hers."

"I'm not such a fool, mama. It is Felicity. I like her. I don't know why. She has opened me to a new world, and I would like to explore it. It'll not be too much trouble to stay here for another month, will it?"

"I expect not. I am sure they can accommodate us here."

Clara rose and kissed her mother on the forehead and sat down again, and her mother rose as she did. Her daughter handed her a towel and left to prepare for bed. Mrs. Bowman came to her room and asked about Felicity.

"I do not want you to attach yourself to that girl. Nothing can come of it, with you leaving."

"I only wish to be her friend, mama, much as I do like her. But I want her to teach me."

4.

It was a simple matter to extend the Bowmans' London stay, and Mrs. Bowman was pleased with how the prospect lifted Clara's spirits. The trip, after all, was intended to allow her daughter to move on. And the days continued, with a stroll in the mornings and the two girls spending afternoons together. They followed it with dinner, usually in the Langham's dining room. Felicity accepted Mrs. Bowman's kindness of paying for their dinners and repaid it slightly with a sketch she did of the older woman near her favorite rose bushes.

The weather was at times awful, but that did not matter. Clara enjoyed spending rainy days in Felicity's studio, either looking over her work or doing exercises under her tutelage. She advanced to watercolors, and Felicity refused to confirm Clara's opinion that she had no talent for it and that none of her things would be worthwhile.

At lunch on one such inclement afternoon, Felicity told Clara that they were going somewhere special and that she had to be on her best behavior. This time Mrs. Bowman agreed to accompany them. The three took a Hansom cab to Trafalgar Square and walked into the National Gallery.

To Clara, it was superior to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, perhaps because some of Felicity's excitement about art had virus-like found its way into Clara's blood. Again and again while Mrs. Bowman kept her distance to take in a painting as a whole, the girls approached it to study how that whole was created and accomplished.

At some point, Mrs. Bowman tired. The three went to a small café on the premises for tea to sustain them for the rest of their visit. But it was still too much for Mrs. Bowman, and she found a pleasant bench across from a more-than-pleasant painting of the English countryside and allowed the girls to wander off while she rested and chatted now and then with others who shared her admiration for the clouds above the Lake District.

As they wandered from gallery to gallery, though, Clara found herself increasingly disturbed. She saw the beauty in work after work, especially those of more recent vintage. Broad landscapes. Intimate portraits. Street scenes of London and Paris. Each one convinced her that she could never create anything that would represent what the artist saw or move the viewer as she was moved and so all the explanations from Felicity about technique and how it created the magic would be wasted on her.

Shortly before they returned to the gallery to rejoin a happy and rested Mrs. Bowman, Felicity noticed that Clara's step had slowed and her enthusiasm had waned. Seeing a bench across from a large Renaissance painting of some saint or another, Felicity told Clara to sit.

"I do not know why I should bother. Nothing I will do will amount to anything. It was a foolish thought all along."

"Clara, you fool. You'll probably never paint something that will hang in the National Gallery. Nor will I. But I think you can do a very fine job. That's all you can be expected to do. You paint in a way that you enjoy doing it. If that's not why you paint or draw, don't bother."

Felicity got up. Clara had a legitimate point, but they were in the National Gallery and of course everything—or most everything—was a masterpiece. Neither she nor Clara would know whether she would create a work that others found worthwhile unless she tried, and Felicity sensed that Clara was displaying a bit of the selfishness and lack of confidence too often found in society girls in London and, she dared say, in New York.

Watching Felicity storm away, Clara did feel the fool. Felicity was trying to fan an interest that Clara had, and she threw it back at her. She owed it to her friend to stick with it and do her best while she was in London. When they were on board their ship returning them to America, she could reassess things in the solitude of the crossing.

Clara rose and rushed to catch Felicity, which she did shortly before they came upon her mother chatting with a well-dressed society lady who vanished with a nod and a smile when they arrived.

Mrs. Bowman was largely recovered. It was only a mile back to the Langham, so the three elected to walk. As they did, Felicity reminded Clara that it took time to master painting, especially watercolors, a medium more difficult to excel at than oils. If Clara could feel for the touch necessary to bring life to the foliage or St. Paul's and the other parts of London the pair looked over while sitting on Primrose Hill, Felicity promised she could become accomplished, even if not enough to have them hung for the public's consumption. Clara promised she would not give up, and the three had a pleasant dinner that evening in the Bowmans' suite.

* * * *

SEVERAL DAYS AFTER her visit to the National Gallery, Clara heard, "Miss Bowman?" as she was leaving Felicity's in the late afternoon for her walk to the Langham. She turned. Sir John was rushing to catch her.

"I thought that might be you." He was slightly out of breath. "I sometimes take a walk in this area before getting ready for dinner and I was passing near Fel's on the off chance that I might run into you and here you are."

Clara smiled. "'On the off chance'?"

He stepped slightly back and bowed. "You have caught me out. I wanted to walk and thought it likely that you would be here and heading to the hotel about now, so I confess to having waited for you to come out. Can you ever forgive me?"

The two began to walk south and soon Clara found her arm through his. Having company, and of a handsome male member of the aristocracy, was quite a pleasing break.

"If you think I will be taken in by your English charm, you are in for a surprise."

"I only seek to take you to your hotel, Miss Bowman. It is a pleasant afternoon, and frankly I was hoping to enjoy this little stroll with you. I know too few Americans and those I do are loud and unsettling."

"I cannot object, Sir John, to you thinking me an exception, so let us walk and enjoy this little stroll together," and Clara was more charmed with each step until he bid her "good afternoon" upon reaching the Langham.

He took three or four steps when he heard, "Sir John," and it caused him to turn.

"I did enjoy that. Perhaps we can do it again."

"Miss Bowman. It would be my pleasure."

"I leave your sister's at about the same time each afternoon."

With that he doffed his hat and bowed, punctuating it with, "I look forward to it," and after he stepped closer, he suggested that they keep their rendezvous *entre nous*, lest her mother or his sister object to their innocent strolling. She entered the Langham strangely excited about another walk with Sir John Adams, the future baron.

For all her claims of being immune to his charms, as with the Adams house and how for some reason she could not articulate it was superior to the grand ones with which she was familiar in New York, there was something about Sir John that was a cut above the gentlemen with whom she had been in contact at home. His Saville Row suit was slightly better tailored. His laugh the slightest degree more amusing. And even his face and his moustache were the slightest degree handsomer than even the most well-regarded young man who attended the balls and operas that Clara enjoyed before that horrible day in May. For all his protests of being pleased to be in her company, she felt the pleasure was on balance more hers.

Sheltered as she may have been in her mother's eyes, Clara picked up a fair amount about…men in her conversations with Ashley and others in her circle and in the pulp novels they shared with one another. Meeting and then walking with Sir John removed a veil over everything that she did not realize

she put in place with Thomas's death. She suddenly felt deep inside her the *physical* loss from Thomas's death. They had never had intimate contact, nothing beyond a brotherly kiss. But that was the point. They had never had physical contact. Now they never would.

An ocean from home and a charming, titled man. Clara dared to think about him as a man and herself as a woman. So, yes, she would keep it *entre nous*.

She began to anticipate his appearance on the street when she prepared to leave Felicity's flat over the next days, but he did not come.

Until he did. It was quite a nice afternoon, and Felicity offered to accompany her guest to the Langham, but Clara declined, and when she stepped onto the sidewalk, she was thrilled that she had.

The stroll was much as it was that first time a week earlier. Yet Clara felt it was worlds apart. She walked slightly closer to him and held his arm slightly tighter and they did not speak quite so much. By the time they reached the Langham, she felt a desire to lie with him. She knew he was opportunistic. She knew he was shallow. She knew he was engaged.

She also knew that she would soon be gone, and they would never cross paths again so when he suggested they share a walk the next afternoon, when he said Felicity had an obligation with the family barrister to review and sign some papers, she agreed. Felicity had mentioned this appointment to the Bowmans.

The next afternoon, Clara told her mother she wished to take a walk alone for a change, and her mother was pleased Clara seemed excited about doing so. After a morning the three spent together and lunch at the Langham, Mrs. Bowman went to the suite, and Clara accompanied Felicity to the street. When they parted, Clara said she was planning to take her own stroll to Regent's Park. Which she did. It was where she met Sir John.

She quickly was lost to him. His modesty and kindness so at odds with how he was with his sister. Felicity warned Clara

about him, yes, but she was perhaps jealous that Clara would spend time with him and not with her.

She lost track of the time, but it was warm and she was tired. John asked if she would like some refreshment, and when they left the park near its southern end, they were in Piccadilly, not far from the family house, and they soon were in its foyer.

Jones appeared, and John directed that refreshments be brought to the drawing-room to the left of the top of the grand stairway. Jones brought lemonade and small sandwiches and left the couple to it. Clara was on the sofa, and John was beside her.

"You look awfully warm." He reached for her neck, and she allowed his fingers to graze against her skin. Far from rejecting his touch, as she knew she should have, she embraced it with a moan. She inhaled his smell, a masculinity she never before knew, and it filled her like some strain of opium and fueled her excitement. He stood and reached out his hand and she followed him up each step of the flight that brought the pair to his bedroom. It was infinitely more masculine than his sister's. The shades were lowered but not so much that the room was dark. The window was open and let in the slight sounds of the street. Even the air had a musky, manly smell.

Clara let him lower her gently to his bed and lift her dress and petticoat. Her moans had grown to panting, and she felt the sweat on his neck as she pulled him down for their—her—first lover's kiss. She allowed him to make love to her. It was in some respects painful but in others glorious, until he was done. He stood and cleaned himself as well as he could before pulling up his trousers, leaving her unfulfilled and alone on his bed.

"I shall be waiting in the drawing-room when you are decent," and Sir John was gone.

Clara knew every moment what she was doing and she did it. Her mother had spoken to her shortly before she came out about relations with men, and her friends had spoken in general and sometimes very specific terms about it. They at times circulated particular passages from books purloined

from beneath a brother's bed and half-laughed at what they read. While there were times Clara was tempted to explore matters with Thomas, she never did, and he never insisted, much as she knew he wanted to. Now Thomas was gone and it was never done and it never would be done. She would not let that happen again. She knew what she was doing and insisted to herself that she did not regret it.

Until the moment she heard the door of Sir John's bedroom close behind him. It took her some minutes to make herself presentable, though she feared the bloodstains would be noticed before she could destroy her soiled undergarments. She could do nothing about the bedsheets. She slowly went through the door and down the stairs to the drawing-room. She was able, with some difficulty, to compose herself.

He was at a window, looking out. He had a glass of lemonade in his right hand and a half-eaten sandwich in his left. He turned when he heard her.

"That was very pleasant. But I must get you back now."

Without waiting, he put what he held on a nearby tray and passed her on his way to the door, his steps then bounding down the stairs. When he saw her at the top of the broad stairway, he called out, "Thank you, Jones. We shall be off now. I shall be back to dress for dinner in an hour or so."

He waited, and Jones appeared. When Clara's foot hit the floor of the foyer, the door was opened for them, and she followed Sir John to the street where he hailed a cab to return her, alone, to the Langham, kissing her hand before she left.

When she was deposited at the hotel, she told her mother that she felt under the weather—"Perhaps it is something I had at lunch." She took a bath, alone, and remained in her room when she was done. Mrs. Bowman sent a note to Felicity regretting that they could not meet for dinner and that she hoped Clara would be better disposed in the morning.

At breakfast, Clara told her mother that she was feeling better and that she would be happy to walk with Felicity. When their friend appeared, she said her brother, sadly, sent her a

note. “Whatever has delayed his departure has been resolved and so he is heading to the country. He said he regrets not being able to see you again or even wish you a proper farewell, but he is in quite a hurry to reunite with my parents.”

Clara’s stomach rattled, not helped by Felicity adding, “More likely he completed some conquest, but he is gone and so we need not worry about him further, though I do admit he can be entertaining at times.”

With that, the three left the hotel and found a cab to take them to Piccadilly.

Over the next days, Clara told no one what happened with Sir John Adams. She managed to sufficiently bury it in her mind so she could continue to enjoy London and especially Felicity, who, in fairness, had warned her. She knew enough to be relieved when two weeks after the event she had her normal monthly pain and blood.

So, things continued as they had been until four days before the Bowmans were to depart.

“Why did you not tell me?”

Felicity had bided her time in the morning until she was alone with Clara, walking north to the spot in Regent’s Park they considered their own, one with several benches that overlooked a small pond alive with birds.

“How did you find out?” Clara asked.

“Jones, of course. There are limits to what a servant will keep discreet. And me, saying those horrible things about him and his conquest before leaving town. I should have known it was you.”

“It was me, but he did not force me. I wanted to lie with him. I did not want to lose the opportunity as I had done once before.”

They agreed not to spend their remaining time dwelling on what had been done. Though it was but slightly below the surface, the two enjoyed the final days of the Bowmans’ adventure in London. Felicity was as sad at their leaving as they were to be going, it being unlikely they would see each

other again. Several of her sketches, including a brilliant color portrait of Clara Bowman with three roses—representing the little group that spent time so pleasantly together—in the background that Mrs. Bowman knew would look superb in the house on Thirty-Second Street, were carefully wrapped and safely stowed for the journey. Felicity made sure to keep several of Clara's early efforts. They were good for all their faults and as the visitors' train disappeared from view, she wondered whether Clara would keep at it and follow her, bolting from her particular paddock before she could be broken.