

VI. THE GARDENS

Helena cared for a Bessborough Gardens of the mind. Unlike its real counterpart it was always empty, always winter time. A train of ghosts guarded the grounds. They were the great lovers of the past. They had sacrificed for the poetry of the heart. Helena was willing to do what she needed to enter this Pantheon.

“I’m sorry to be like this!”

Helena was trying to pretend that her meeting with Tony was insignificant. She had a computer project to get done for Monday afternoon. So she spent the morning working away. She was having trouble aligning some of the designs, and she didn’t want that to prevent her from finishing. She kept hitting the same button over and over again in the hope that it might do something different. She took a break and just stared at the screen.

After some coffee, the hope was things would start to make sense. As the confusion began to unravel, she wondered what had been the problem. It seemed so simple. She felt helpless.

She had her schedule coordinated, but the project had thrown a wrench in things. She was more or less paralyzed after the ordeal. She wandered the hallway after she handed it in. Another student passed her.

“Are you sick, Helena?”

She tried to reassure herself, “No. I’ll be OK. I just need a nap.”

She was going to hang out at school before her meeting, but instead she decided that she’d have enough time to go home and take that rest. She had three hours. There was enough time for her.

She hadn’t realized her exhaustion when she made it back to her place. She crashed when she hit the pillow. Her vacation had created such expectations for her. Now she needed to live up to them. It was better to put all this at the back of her mind. Pretend that all the stuff with Tony hadn’t happened. She did that as she slept.

When she woke from the sleep, she was bit groggy. She wondered where she was and what time it was. She panicked as she thought she had slept through the meeting. This hollow filled her.

She made herself some tea. She had time but she was starting to cut it close. In the shower, she let the day melt away. Time stopped as the water rushed over her body. She gave in to the relaxing waters. This was how it was meant to be.

She chose a plain green skirt, a black top and hose, and her black leather jacket. She dried her hair, and touched up her make up. She looked very smart.

She caught her train. The tube was still crowded from the tail end of rush hour. She still had ample time as she made her connection to Victoria line. As she headed south, she heard the strangest announcement.

“Due to a problem on the Victoria line, all trains will stop at Victoria.”

She was bit shaken. What about her stop at Pimlico. She left her train and noticed the exit. But when she got a upstairs she got a bit twisted around in the main train station. She took a quick peek at the map. She was still a little disoriented.

On the street, she asked someone where was Vauxhall Bridge Road. A fellow pedestrian

gave her the strangest look. It was as if he didn't understand her accent.

"There's no such street around here!"

It made no sense.

She turned to someone else.

"How do I get to Pimlico?"

"It's a ways from here. What about the tube."

"The lines are out."

He pointed her in the right direction.

She started to run down Vauxhall Bridge Road. All her extra time was being squandered by this walk. She wouldn't have time to prepare. He might get impatient when she didn't make it on time.

Her watch stared back at her. She had to be quick. But there was still enough time. That was if she calculated right.

She still didn't recognize anything from this direction. She wanted to make sure that it was right. Finally, she passed a bar called the Pimlico. She figured that this was the right way. It was still taking forever.

"Where is this place?"

The daylight hours were diminishing. It was cloudy and dark. There was a chill in the air. She was glad that she wore her jacket.

Finally, she reached the stop light that led from Pimlico station. She took a breath and tried to collect herself.

When she arrived at the park, it was empty. She doubted her calculations. Maybe he had already been here. Already dismissed her. She rechecked her watch. Hadn't it been giving her problems.

It seemed too damp to sit down. There hadn't been any rain, but it felt strange in the park. She wasn't cold. A warmth from inside made her comfortable. The walk had helped. She stood with her back to the street.

She looked at the time again. It wasn't yet 6:30, but she had already been waiting for a few minutes. He seemed late. Her doubts were real.

She walked back and forth on the short path. Assuming that he was late, how would she be able to while away the time. Too bad she didn't smoke. This was one of those moments. She could hardly stay still. She longed for his touch. His kiss.

She saw herself as silly, just helpless. She should leave right now. That would be the perfect show of confidence. Abandon him before he ignored her. But she was tied to this place. This was her fate. If she left now, she would curse the rest of her days. She had lost that one great love.

She looked in her purse for a candy, some gum. Something to fill the space. She took out her cosmetic mirror and took a look at her make up. That would be enough.

She looked at the people walk back and forth on the street. This was hardly the most appropriate time for a romantic encounter. What had she been thinking?

The lilies were overgrown. Trying to push forth amidst the other plants. It was still too early. The freshness of spring incubated at this moment. It would take a few weeks for any blooms. The anticipation was weakened by sluggish air. It certainly nurtured these plants. But it

didn't make it seem that the clarity of May could assert itself. Winter would not let go of its captives.

This seemed to be their sentence. Corfu had been so liberating because of the heat. Her the air enclosed and hung on. They could not cast off its ill effects. Combined with the London soot, it only made things worse. You needed to keep moving. It wasn't a good place to sit still. It was an even more terrible place to wait. In her dreams, she could return to the paradise of the island. But here she was useless.

She looked down at her watch. He was twenty minutes late. Perhaps, he had miscalculated about the tube. He was probably running from Victoria. He could have taken a cab if he really cared. That was asking too much. He knew that she would wait.

How long would she wait? She didn't even get his number. It seemed more old-fashioned to do it this way. Not depend on technology for matters of the heart. This sentimentality made her smile. Just as she questioned him, he worked his way back into her heart. She could feel his warm breath on her neck. Even as the night chill was visiting, she could take comfort.

She turned back to the street to spy a man run towards the park. She was sure it was him. She moved in his direction. As he got closer, she saw it was someone else. A man running for a cab.

She thought that she felt a sprinkle. She didn't want to wait in the rain. It wasn't rain. Just the day trailing off.

If he was late, what could she do to fill the time. How long would she wait. Even if she stayed there for an hour, it might not be enough. If he was delayed for an hour, then he'd probably figure that she wouldn't wait. She had to stay for just that reason.

If it wasn't so cloudy, she'd probably be watching a sunset now. But it was fairly light out. Maybe her calculation was premature. Everything this day had been like this. When had she had time to eat? Her hunger weighed on her. It would be better to eat than just wait. She thought that she could bet something quick. That would have been all right earlier. When there was time. Now he was late. If he didn't see her, he'd know that she was gone.

This was worse than the computer problems. It made her feel powerless. In Corfu, the gods were on her side. Back in England, she faced the consequences of her agnosticism. There was only a cold silence.

She lost herself in the dream of his torrid kisses. She felt the earthquake of their romance. This was enough to hold her in place. She needed food. In a while, even that feeling would be forgotten.

There were so many witnesses to her fate. Seven o'clock and the bustle continued. What could she ask them? How could they help? Maybe bring her a drink to warm her up. Just longing for his warm body exposed her insecurities. The twilight enveloped her. She was drowning.

He would be there. She was like toddler waiting for a parent to rescue her from pre-school. Where were her guardians to snatch her from the jaws of death?

Her dramatics only made her smile. This made her seem silly. She had fun in Corfu. Now she was back at school. This was real. Her accomplishments, her dreams. She couldn't trade this for a school-girl crush.

She had indulged herself too much with Romantic paintings. She needed to curtail her diet if she was going to rescue her heart. He wouldn't be there for the service. She was on her own. She could have learned her lesson from the previous incident. Instead she let nostalgia set in.

Helena needed to turn her back on Corfu. Tony had been a bad dream. The promises were all a delusion. What had he really said. She had listened to his body. When she dug her hands into his flesh, she let her actions write its traces on the soul. She needed to erase these impressions. This was why she wanted to meet him at Bessborough Gardens. It was her locale. She could chase away his ghost for good.

Either way, it became clear that he was not going to come. It had been a great try. She had opened herself in a way contrary to her character. And it was better to have loved. She was not the cold fish that she feared. Love had brought her out of her shell. She knew what was out there. Now, she could find it.

As she sat down, she knew that she was slightly demoralized. She couldn't admit to herself how much had been taken away. But she wouldn't give in. This was her new strength. She was surviving.

If he would just show up at this moment, it wouldn't have been a waste. But he wasn't here. And the dusk air hung on with its fear. The night could only bring more trouble.

She had never reacted so violently to the changes of nature. Now she felt these tides pull her heart. She had become an artist to avoid this determinism. The fault was now in her stars. But she would never seem them with these clouds. Accursed sky!

Even at the darkest hour, she knew the light would eventually shine. She let that hope sustain her. There had to be a reason. She knew that it was her dream that burned at Bessborough Gardens. She would continue to wait.

She could feel the seconds fission in their interminableness. She would be exiled to this eternity. A plant in the gardens. This was her myth. And she would always wait—a perennial. No season could destroy her.

She felt this enormous fatigue, The weight of all her years was pressing on her. What could she do? She felt like she needed to rest. She closed her eyes and buried her face in her hands. She let herself completely relax.

When she opened her eyes, she saw her mother come up the path. She was in a shawl and a dark evening gown. She balanced on her heels. It seemed to chilly for what she was wearing.

Helena questioned her, "What are you doing here?"

"I knew that you needed help. I came over for you. Auntie Martha told me that you were waiting here."

"I don't remember telling her anything."

"Yes, you did."

Helena believed her.

"You can see the mess that I've got myself in."

Motherly advice was in full supply, "You're making yourself look silly. You should have waited fifteen minutes and just left. It adds to your mystery."

Helena thought the advice was silly, "He could have been delayed. Then he'd have no way of contacting me."

“If he really wants you, he’d find you. It’s your inexperience dear. You should never run after a man. And always get a pledge from him. Not a promise, a pledge. He needs to back it up with something real. A gift. Something that he puts in your hand.”

Helena found her mother so cold mercenary.

“This is love. It’s not something that you can buy.”

“If it was love, he would have been here early. He would have brought you flowers. He’d rescue you with a limousine. You have to accustom yourself to luxury.”

This wasn’t Helena’s life that they were discussing. This was her mother’s projection. Helena continued to wonder why her mother was here.”

“Are you going to a cocktail party.”

“Forget me, my love. What are you going to do?”

“I ‘m going to wait ten more minutes.”

“Did you learn anything in Corfu? You have a power. You have to make a man want you.”

Her mother had lived with this illusion. After all these years she still believed that she was all powerful. It intimidated Helena that she thought this way.

“I don’t want to become cold and ruthless. I don’t want to live for physical pleasure. I want something more.”

“Romance is not something holy. If there’s nothing to hold on to, it will all vanish in thin air. Even sex is the same way. I wish that I had told you all this sooner.

Helena contradicted her mother, “I think this was all that you taught me. That’s why I turned out the way I did. I became just the opposite.”

“You shouldn’t be so cruel to your poor mother.”

“Cruel. You’re the one who’s enjoying herself. I’m waiting helpless for the man of my life.”

“It’s your own fault for trying to live a fairy tale. This is not the prince, Cinderella. You never even got a phone number. Where’s my modern girl.?”

“I gave him a day, a time, a place.”

“This is the real world. Things change second to second. You have to know that. Hearts are fickle. Make yours the same.”

Even at this point, Helena didn’t want to abandon her love. This was what made her what she was. She cherished her own tender heart. Her mother was asking her to become hard and ugly. Helena wouldn’t let go.

“Don’t you have to be somewhere?” Helena was a little impatient.

“I’m here to help you”

“You should have done that long ago.”

“I don’t want to accept your blame. It’s your life. You’ve had all the privileges.”

“I’m not complaining. You’re the one who’s interfering.”

There were tears in her mother’s eyes, “I didn’t come her for this.”

“I’m the one who should be crying.”

Why had her mother made the trip? It still seemed so unfair. Helena had live all these years without her. Now she was here to gloat. It was too ridiculous.

“Do you just want me to go?”

“I’m going to leave in a few minutes. I’m tired, I’m cold, and I need to eat something. I can feel my stomach growling. I wish that you had brought some food from your cocktail party.”

“I haven’t been at the party. I’m going to the party.”

Helena looked around. She didn’t see a limousine. Or even a waiting cab. This didn’t seem like her mother. She couldn’t imagine Mother on the train.”

“Don’t you have to be somewhere?”

Nothing made sense. How could her mother really be here. And for what. Just for a cocktail party. That was enough to snap Helena out of this dream. Her mother’s apparition had been enough to bring doubt to Helena. She should have been this way sooner.

Her true love had only made her more of a victim. This was why her friends became enslaved to men. She needed to say good by to the fantasy. She opened her eyes to survey the park. What she saw would seal her fate.

The mists of Millbank were already starting to collect. It was the tail end of twilight. Helena looked at the far end of the Gardens and noted an apparition. A form seemed to move through the mist. Nighttime had a real form. It was Tony. She watched him come closer.

As the person got closer, she realized that it was not a man at all. It was a woman. She kept walking towards her.

“You’re Helena Fair.”

The woman had a resemblance to Tony.

“Yes, I am.”

“I’m Bertie. I’m Tony’s sister. I’m sorry that you had to wait like this. Tony asked me to come by. An emergency came up. And he couldn’t make it.”

“Did he leave a phone number?”

“I need to talk to you.”

“You could just give me a number. He could talk to me.”

“Tony never told you that he’s engaged. He’s going to be married at the end of the summer to Vanessa. Vanessa is a beautiful girl. A family friend. Tony’s known her for years.”

“He never said anything to me.”

“I think that he got confused. He was away from home. The sea air, the sun. It was a case of temporary insanity. The Mediterranean does that.”

“Does what? This makes no sense.”

“I know that you’ve been waiting here all this time. And it’s only exaggerated the feelings that you have. But Tony can’t see you. Tony can’t love you. He’s with another girl. He’s going to marry her. They’re perfect together.”

Helena didn’t need Bertie to act as Vanessa’s cheerleader. The news itself was devastating. The illusion of Corfu quickly dissolved. Helena didn’t want to listen to any more. She just wanted to leave.

“I guess that I made a mistake.”

“Tony does want to explain. He wanted me to give you his address. You could write him.”

“Write him. That’s letting him off easy.”

“I know how terrible this seems.”

“You don’t know the half of it.” Here, Helena shone on the stage of her theater. Her long

limbs only made her gestures more effective.

“I’m trying to be understanding. Don’t hate me. I’m the messenger.”

For the moment, Bertie seemed like the perfect candidate for Helena’s derision. She couldn’t give up on her love for Tony. There were tears in her eyes.

“You’re telling me that this was a fling for him.”

“I’m not saying anything of the sort. I think that he cared for you. That’s why I’m here.”

“If he had any courage, he would have come himself.”

“He wanted to come. He had an appointment that he couldn’t miss. Something work related.”

“This is perverse.”

“I wish that I could do more for you. You’re such a poor soul. My bother has a side that we all fear.”

“Bertie, you sound like you’re talking about some criminal who’s been picked up for stealing diamonds. It’s more than that.”

Helena felt that her youth had been stolen from her. She had saved herself for her time in Greece. Her fate was being decided by a severe judge. She hardly knew Bertie. But she could feel a hate for her. If she had felt a love for Tony, she could only feel such hate for his sister.

Helena wanted to call her a monster. Bertie had wanted to let Helena down easy. But she was only driving the nails in.

“You said that you had an address. I’ll take it. I’ll do the civilized thing and write.”

“He really is sorry. I know that he wanted to be here early.”

His intentions only made him more pathetic.

“That’s not really consolation now.”

“I know that an apology can’t get your heart back. Life is cruel.”

“Life isn’t cruel. It’s people in it.”

She wanted to sting the brother and sister. They seemed two halves of the same viper. Bertie handed her the address and disappeared the same way that she had come. Her appearance had seemed as ghostly as her mother. But Helena held the address card in her hand. She knew it was real.

It was as if Helena had received the wedding notice. That was the paper that she clutched in her hand.

“Where’s the envelope for my RSVP?”

She imagine a reply dripping in blood. She wanted revenge.

The night air was setting in. Helena’s desolate situation made itself known Tony had stuck a knife in her.

Helena realized that this was her great dramatic scene. She needed to act her it with its full dramatic impact. Otherwise, here tragedy would have none of its import. Her mother had appeared a phantom. Bertie had gone back to her castle. There was no one that could rescue her. She needed the death knell to strike with its full fury.

Her time with Tony had only been a few days. But these were the days of paradise that you lived a lifetime for. If you gave up on your paradise, your life was just a sleepwalk. She had come to life in the warm waters. The impression of his body was still fresh in her mind. They floated together in the calm waters. The waves spoke of their love.

With her recollection, she felt that the experience was so concrete for her. As she recalled his caresses, a fire passed over her. The heat engulfed her body. Her passions overcame her. She was again moving with Tony. The two of them expressed that communion.

Her memories clouded what she now felt around her. The garden seemed to come alive. It was nightfall, but the glow filled the darkness. She saw its striking light. But she could feel it within in her. She merged with this sensation. It was her heaven.

She had been cold. But now she let the surroundings fill her with its warmth. Tony had not abandoned her. The two could live anew in a love that burned everlasting. Her face was full of a smile of contentment. In the mind, their gestures were so fluid. She couldn't give up on this love. It meant something substantial to her.

A dormant summer extended its heat through the garden. To be here was to embrace the shelter that it offered against the ragged surrounding. She was drenched in sweat. His body slid against hers. She waited for her kiss. That kiss that would sustain her until dawn. Her heart beat faster. She was a bit taken aback by it all. She felt the ache of desire. But she was to be denied the saving kiss. It was not to be. And as reality started to set in, the cold of the night twisted around her. She felt faint. What was to be her consolation?

Tony had left her in Bessborough Gardens. The weak attempt to pawn off his emissary was a clear slap in the face. He had tried to damage her. But she could not accede to his aggression. She was filled with rancor for Anthony Richmond. She took some comfort in her anger. The choice to send his sister in his place was a clear humiliation. She felt that she had been challenged to a duel. Worse, she had been stabbed in the back. This was the worst set up. She saw red. She wished for revenge. He had taken her by false pretenses. Everything in Corfu was a lie. This miserable playboy knew all the stops. Her pretense at anger.

She wanted to race around all of London until she found the monster. She was ready to slay the dragon. This was her course of action. No pity for herself. No mercy for him. She was the angry bitch that she needed to be. Who the hell did he think he was? He acted so sweetly. He pretended to be the source of love. Flowers grew around him while he slept. What an angel! What a devil!

For his perfidy, he would taste the well-deserved poison apple. She needed to find a way to serve him his just desserts. She would call on the dark forces of the lower depths to do her bidding. Her mission was blessed by her black heart. The harpies would rip him to shreds. The vultures would carry away his remains. His memory would be forever besmirched. She reveled in her new power. Now she was moved by these forces of evil. This offered her even more pleasure than before. She stood at the heights and looked down at the world. She was no longer this helpless creature. Ready for blood, her nails were sharpened. This was only the beginning. In the future, all other men had to keep out of her way.

She chuckled when she contemplated how far she had come. Bessborough Gardens again burned. But it was the fires of the demon. She stirred the cauldron. She tempered the relics for their task. Her curse was to extend everywhere!

The Queen of Darkness welcomed her coronation in bitterness. She drank from the chalice and licked her lips. There would no longer be hunger and thirst. She fed on herself. Wonder of wonders!

She had realized what a deep sleep she had inhabited. This explained why her mother

had denied her love. She did not want to let her daughter be lulled by tenderness. She needed a lesson. Tony was that lessons. Finally her nature was awakened. It could germinate. The weeds could spread. The sprawling vegetation could take hold.

Hate was so much more refreshing than love. The lover was always helpless. She awaited her lover's call. She was at his beck and call. She was on bended knee. With hate, she did not give in to his whims. She embraced her independence. She waltzed around an imaginary dance floor. She needed nothing nor no one. Hooray! She was becoming intoxicated with her glee.

Once she started to feel this way, there was no way to stop. She was giving in to this incredible power. It was part of her. It drove her. It was something else, and she felt it taking over. She felt like she was being watched. She was expected to mess up. She couldn't let herself give in this way. But it was so exhilarating. She gritted her teeth. Too much to take.

She redirected her feelings towards Tony. But it seemed to be more than him. Something deeper took over. Rooted in how she saw the world. It transformed as she watched. The night time city traffic buzzed by her. She was in her island protecting whatever was left. She surveyed her tuft of land. Was this all that was left for her stand. Her romantic heroines again emerged from the shadows. She embraced them all. She accepted their vocation. They were phantoms, and she too would haunt this place.

It had been while since Bertie had been there. Helena was still keep watching. This was a feeling way beyond tears. There had been no mourning. She was only numb. The soul passed from the body. The body was an abandoned shell.

She roamed the grounds like any other specter. But her trail was more fresh. She could entice unwilling victims. Her story was to become theirs. She sung the song of her forlorn tale. Those who wandered into Bessborough Gardens would know her pain as it resonated in their lives too. She now recognized the curse of Ophelia. She felt the drowning waters pass over her. She was losing her youth. She would leave her stooped over from the effects.

She could not leave her. She was motionless in her watch. This was how she would haunt the place. Petrified in stone. Or the stone would disintegrate leaving only the hollow spirit. The wail spiraled in the enclosed space. The garden was now a tomb. She accepted her vanishing.

Her passion had taken her to a place immaterial. Even as she touched his skin, she was transported in a place supernatural. Now her quest was not mediated by the flesh. She was transported immediately to this other world.

The transition had been easy. She had attained her nirvana. She accepted his disappearance because it gave her an excuse to also disappear. If no one missed her, she would not feel tied to the physical realm. Others would wander by and soon be prey to her spell. The garden would now echo her cries.

But she had not cried. She had remained steadfast. She left it for her successors to feel her hurt more intensely. Was this always her weakness—that she could not truly feel anything of import. Even her time with Tony had only been a masquerade. Now she was split between her desire to get angry, and the temptation to give up. She wasn't connected to him. She never was. He had Vanessa. Helena had the ghosts of her own imagination. Claire had warned her about the tricks of the imagination. This is what Claire had meant.

Helena wanted to leave. There was nothing to resolve here. She felt that the only way out of the Gardens was to crawl. She braced herself against the stone wall. Her weakness reminded her how she had given up her body. All control seemed futile. She tried to make a fist for strength. Her fingers could not hold together.

Tony was now locked in an embrace with Vanessa. He was warm. He felt her wet kisses. Helena needed to accept her new state. To become cold-blooded. But she was not even good at her own poetry. How could she haunt the lovers if everyone was so cynical about their own chances for love. Romance was held in such low regard. She was a sentimental fool!

Helena just wanted peace of mind. Screw Tony, screw love. She just wanted something that would allow her to walk away with some dignity. Her paralysis was not only physical. She had trouble overcoming its symptoms. Some boost might get her going. She looked deep into herself and saw nothing. What had happened to the girl so driven by her design project this morning. What a difference a day makes!

Across the street, she watched a man walk into a bar. He had his problems of the day. He was content. She felt the warmth of the place. She seemed drawn to his mission. She crossed the street in a daze and was almost hit. Even with her faculties, it might have been tricky. She couldn't go inside. None of it seemed real for her. All this talking, talking. She didn't need a drink. She needed a change from all of this. She wandered farther and farther. With each lighted window, she felt another invitation. She rejected each. She picked up her pace. She was running away from herself.

The Gardens were empty. Something had been forgotten here. A soul. Helena kept watch on her bench. It was almost nine in the evening. He still had not arrived. She was not going to leave.

As she pressed her face against the pillow, the fatigue of the night passed over her. She had walked London for hours. She couldn't figure out how she had arrived home. Perhaps someone had brought her here. As she headed off to sleep, the image of Bessborough Gardens burned deep on the inner eye. A queasiness washed over her entire body.

Her sleep was dreamless. She had lost her capacity to dream back at Millbank. And there was a strange glow that shone through Bessborough Gardens that night. A heart had been buried among the flowers. It came to bloom in the heart of darkness. Even romantic couples paused to look at each other as they passed this solemn place. What kept them together. The fear of betrayal.

Helena had first been attracted to a view to romance represented in Millais's painting. From that feeling, she had made a shelter for herself at Bessborough Gardens. It was that secret place that she had shared with Tony. The two had trampled together on these protected gardens. Now she was paying the price for her trespass. She was beyond help. No kiss could rescue her for her sin.

She accepted a severe exchange. Forever, her heart would keep watch. The Haunting was to be a meager reckoning for all the love that had poured out of her on those glorious sunny days. In Bessborough Gardens, even as the sun shone, there was a dark cloud that menaced the flowers. And spring rains were always most extreme in this place.

Helena threw herself in her work. Her former troubles were past. A new skill emerged. Nothing could stop her in this pursuit. But all this devotion to work sapped her. A question

remained. Bessborough Gardens had made her feel more of an outsider. She needed to get away for the summer. She wouldn't look back as she headed for the plane. Perhaps, this would all continue in the fall. For the present, she let go of the curse and walked away.

If Helena was to find passion again, it would have to touch her in a new way. She had relied on the body to help her transcend her circumstances. It had only condemned her to a worse exile. She was suspended before this precipice. She held on for dear life. Below her there was life that new nothing of her predicament. For her part, she could feel the pull of earth below. This was her Bessborough Gardens.