To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Sarah Kim Snyder entitled "These Dreams Among Us." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Dr. Jon White, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Provost
and Dean of The Graduate School

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's degree at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rules of the Library. Brief quotations from this thesis are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgment of the source is made.

Permission for extensive quotation from or reproduction of this thesis may be granted by my major professor, or in his absence, by the Head of Interlibrary Services when, in the opinion of either, the proposed use of the material is for scholarly purposes. Any copying or use of the material in this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature Sarah Kay Snyder

Date July 12, 1990

THESE DREAMS AMONG US

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sarah Kim Snyder

August 1990

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who gave me support during my writing of this thesis. First let me thank my committee members, Dr. Jon White, Dr. Marilyn Kallet, and Dr. Robert Stillman. The three of them made the process of finishing this thesis as painless as it could be.

Many thanks I also extend to my friends, all of whom put up with a great deal from me in the last few months. Calvin Pennala always knew the right thing to say, as did Renee Curry. Renee, you called at my lowest moment. Thanks! Thanks also to Michael Hill who knew when to be suitably impressed. To Melissa Sprenkle and Margy Ortigara I owe my sanity and a great deal of practical help, not to mention several fine meals. Thank you, Margy, for running down the steps.

Although it may be unusual, I need to also acknowledge three men I have never met, Agnolo di Cosimo di Mariano (better known as Bronzino), William Holman Hunt, and John Keats. Thank you for your vision. And I must not forget Mr. Matthew Ashford. He gave me his image and the inspiration of one of his personalities.

There's no possible way to acknowledge the support given me by my parents, Ralph and Dortha Tittsworth. They comforted, they cleaned up after me, they made certain my life ran smoothly. And most of all, they typed. Thank you. No one could wish for better parents.

Finally, to F., S. and H.G., who sent me the dream, I owe everything. To you I humbly offer this novella, the first fruit of my labor, in gratitude and dedication.

ABSTRACT

The story of Will Thornton and Christina O'Shaunessy is set in London and Dublin, places full of history, mythology, and magic. Here Christina and Will follow their individual quests for salvation.

Christina meets Will on a business trip to London. Though she's made it big in the Atlanta publishing business, Christina often feels incompetent and insecure because she knows that her mien is no more than the elaborately-worked mask of modernism.

Will, on the other hand, seems the perfect, self-possessed Englishman. Christina soon suspects that Will, however, has a secret. He is not what he seems to be. Christina begins to realize that the odd dreams she is having, the ring inherited from her mother and Will's interest in her are all intertwined. Torn between her need to make real her images of the perfect lover and the reality of danger that Will threatens her with, Christina makes a set of decisions that will change her life forever.

INTRODUCTION

The artist's conflict between worship of his "Creator" and worship of his "created" is a motif found frequently in Western literature. Examples of this theme range from W. B. Yeats' "Byzantium" through Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" to the anonymous lyric "The Daemon Lover." Although this theme recurs frequently in literature, little attention has been paid to it as a motif that spans the literary ages. This thesis explores the Pygmalion theme and its relationship to past literature through the characters of Christina O'Shaunessy and William Thornton, who each embody characteristics of three of the major literary epochs--medieval, romantic, and modern.

The thesis takes the form of the short novel, a form popularized by such great American writers as Katherine Anne Porter, Henry James, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. This form is infrequently used because of publication difficulties, but it offers many new stylistic possibilities for the writer, nevertheless.

The Daemon Lover

"O where have you been, my long, long love,
  This long seven years and more?"--
"O I'm come to seek my former vows
  Ye granted me before."--

.....

He turn'd him right and round about,
  And the tear blinded his ee;
"I wad never hae trodden on Irish ground,
  If it had not been for thee.

.....

She set her foot upon his ship,
  No mariners could she behold;
But the sails were o' the taffetie,
  And the masts o' the beaten gold.

.....

They had not sailed a league, a league,
  A league but barely three
Until she espied his cloven foot,
  And she wept right bitterlie.

"O hold your tongue of your weeping," says he,
  "Of your weeping now let me be;
I will show you how the lilies grow
  On the banks of Italy."--

.....

And aye when she turn'd her round about,
  Aye taller he seem'd for to be;
Until that the tops o' that gallant ship
  Nae taller were than he.

The clouds grew dark, and the wind grew lound,
  And the levin fill'd her ee;
And waesome wail'd the snaw-white sprites
  Upon the gurlie sea.

He strack the tap-mast wi' his hand,
  The for-mast wi' his knee;
And he brake that gallant ship in twain,
  And sank her in the sea.

--Anonymous

"So you didn't know about the will?" the inspector asked.

"No," I replied.

"And you didn't see Mr. Thornton in the woods that afternoon, Miss O'Shaunessy?"

"I don't know, Inspector," I replied. "I don't think so."

The chief inspector did not look pleased at my answer. His mouth pressed itself together until his carrot-colored beard met his moustache. I noticed the expression, but couldn't force myself to care. The sun shone clean and bright after the rain. It lit up the patches of golden honeysuckle just beginning to bloom along the fence around Eileen's garden.

The library had become very quiet. I knew everyone must be watching me.

Eileen spoke first, "Inspector Conaghan, do you have to do this now? She's grieving, can't you see?"

John spoke in support of his wife. "Yes. We just told her about the will and life insurance before you arrived. I think it's been something of a shock."

Dr. O'Connor added, "She doesn't seem to have completely recovered from her delirium . She had quite a fever. She probably doesn't remember much. And what she does remember would be highly suspect. Please, let her rest."

"All right doctor. But I don't want her to leave here until I finish my investigation," he added.

"We'll be more than pleased to keep her here with us," John replied.

Ordinarily, it would anger me to be talked over while I sat, perfectly able to answer for myself. But today, I am more interested in waiting and watching. In fact, the most difficult part of this experience has been the waiting. I've started this story in order to help pass the time. Thinking about how to write it has made me understand Will's elaborate plan more clearly. I suppose the most sensible place to begin is with the dream.

I had the first part of the dream for days before I left for England. I work for Look magazine in Atlanta. We're a travel magazine specializing in England and the Continent. I was to oversee the installation of a new permanent marketing division in our London office. Actually, all I had to do was spend a couple of days making sure that everything was running smoothly and offering a few

helpful suggestions. After that I expected to spend the rest of my time traveling about Ireland. I had never been here, but felt close ties to this place. My last name is as Irish as they come, O'Shaunessy.

Back to my dream. As I said, I had had the first part of it for several days before I left. I'd had recurring dreams before, but never one this persistent or vivid.

The dream begins with a bird's-eye view of a narrow beach bordered by a forest of mostly evergreens. I see as if from a great height a naked creature--I hesitate to call it a man since it seems sexless. In fact, it seems in some strange way to have no identity at all. The creature seems to be in great distress, emotional not physical, pain as it stumbles its way into the forest that can hide its vulnerability.

Then the focus of the dream shifts, I become a man riding on a horse through what must be the same evergreen woods. It's raining a fine mist that suspends itself in the grey morning. The steam from my horse's nostrils becomes just another part of that mist. The horse is running as best as it can through underbrush. We're chasing something, the horse and I, hunting something that is just out of sight. The wet spruce trees slap me in the face, their branches looking more black than green. Once in a while I

catch a glimpse of my bright red cloak whipping into the corners of my vision. It's the only color in the forest.

The scene suddenly changes again. I'm in the great hall of a castle filled with people. I see everything as through a fish-eye lens. Everyone is distorted, and I can't focus clearly on anyone because the people seem to be moving faster than I am. Everyone is dancing and drinking. Bright-colored clothes assault my eyes and the heat in the room is suffocating. It's hard to breathe in that heat; though as I walk through the crowd I realize that no one else seems uncomfortable.

So ends the first part of the dream. When I first began having the dream I didn't know enough to be afraid. I simply thought that I had been reading too many books on Irish folklore in preparation for my trip. Not to mention the Gothic novels I read on my lunch hour. It all seemed perfectly natural to assume that my subconscious was overstimulated by the excitement of a trip to my ancestral home.

My flight to Gatwick was as uneventful as the act of soaring at thirty thousand feet can be. I spent most of the time reading the Victoria Holt novel I have to hide at work. I also read from a bon voyage present that a strange girl named Desmin in my office had loaned me. Desmin knew of my

interest in folklore. So she brought me the odd little book that she had received as a gift from someone in Ireland. It's bound in dark green leather with gold-embossed letters on it that read Fairy Folklore of Ireland. The edges of the little book are gilded. It has no copyright date or author listed on its title page. It's beautiful. It looks quite old, and yet the pages are not yellowing at all. At the time I did not realize how significant that little book would become for me.

When I finally reached my hotel room in London about noon the next day, I wanted to collapse. I had flown most of the night and had not slept at all. I felt oily and frumpy and I needed a bath. The hotel room disappointed me also. The room was a standard Holiday Inn clone. I had so wanted something English--something in Morris chintz and oak. Certainly I did not want black Naugahyde and veneer. Like all tourists I wanted romance and adventure, something larger than life.

Added to this irritation was the card I found waiting for me on the dresser.

Dear Miss O'Shaunessy,

I hope your journey was pleasant. Everyone in the advertising department looks forward to meeting you tomorrow. I shall come around for you about 6:00 to take you to dinner as we previously agreed by fax.

Respectfully,
William Degores Thornton

I couldn't understand how I had been foolish enough to forget this engagement. I wondered why I had not had enough foresight to realize that meeting some old English businessman with a stodgy name like William Degores Thornton would not be the way I wanted to spend my first night in England.

After unpacking, I spent the rest of the afternoon shopping near my hotel on Oxford Street. I had decided that I might have to spend my first night in London at a business dinner, but I wanted to be dressed like a tourist out for some fun. I bought a lovely, light blue crepe dress at Laura Ashley. It had short, fluted sleeves in layers of soft crepe so thin they floated about my arms even with the air stirred up from walking across the dress shop floor. The dress bodice fit tight about my chest and waist. And the skirt was layered and full again. It looked so

beautiful and romantic. I wanted to set Mr. William Thornton on his ear.

Will Thornton was prompt that evening. And he was certainly nothing like what I had expected. Nothing. Rather than being the comic rendition of his name that I had imagined, he was the noble incarnation of it, instead. He was very tall, 6'3" perhaps with broad shoulders and a small waist. His brown hair had a hint of red in it and was very well cut, short on the bottom, longer on top. His eyes were a bit too small for his face, but his long eyelashes compensated by making them look longer.

In fact, that's how all his features were, almost awkwardly small and childlike in his long face and for his square jaw and strong neck. Even his nose which was long and British and flat on top turned up just the slightest bit at the end so that one felt as if Will couldn't be taken too seriously. This sensation was accentuated by the mobility of his expressive face. Even his throat was mobile in an uncanny way. His small square chin cast a triangular shadow on his neck when the light from my room fell directly across him. In fact, that was the first thing I noticed as his neck was at eye-level for me.

When he spoke his voice was rich, and of medium timbre. "Miss O'Shaunessy? I'm Will Thornton. Are you ready for

our date?" He extended his arm with a mock chivalric air, and I couldn't help but smile as I took it.

"Our 'date,' Mr. Thornton?" This is to be a business dinner, isn't it?"

Will looked at me sharply. My tone had hardly been the teasing one I had planned.

"Of course. I simply want you to enjoy your stay in London."

"I'm sorry, Will. May I call you that? I'm just tired and edgy. I didn't mean that the way it came out. I've just gotten too unaccustomed to any social affairs,...I mean engagements."

"You mean 'dates.'"

"Yes, I suppose so," I laughed.

"Come on then, Christina. May I call you that?"

And so we left. Looking back at that conversation, I see that that's how we always interacted. Will would always say the wrong thing--the thing that was the truth--and he would always mock me a little when I tried to get out of the situation gracefully, i.e. use stupid, social, canned phrases.

Dinner was lovely, though I hardly remember any of it. I was so tired. Who am I kidding? We ate at one of those tiny Italian restaurants one can find in any corner of

London. I don't even remember the name of it. During dinner, I almost knocked over my wine glass twice. I dropped my purse and when I tried to get up from the table I got the tablecloth caught on the ring I was wearing. The ring fell under the table, and Will and one of the waiters fumbled around underneath the tablecloth until the waiter, looking victorious, emerged with it held high above his head. Meanwhile I was forced to stand beside the table, smiling as gracefully as I could while the elderly English couple at the table beside us had an "oh, those Yanks" look on their faces. I felt so foolish!

No, foolish doesn't cover it. I felt that overwhelming sense of inadequacy and ugliness that I used to feel when at twelve years old I looked in the mirror that hung on the back of the bathroom door and saw fat, orange hair, and my equivalent of a summer tan--freckles, all over my face and shoulders. I wanted to look like Racquel Welch. Instead I looked like a fat, red-headed hick from Manchester, Tennessee.

That's how I felt that night. I wasn't fat anymore and makeup covered up my freckles, and my hair is colored strawberry instead of orange, but I was still that hick only barely hidden underneath a blue chiffon dress.

The ride home in the taxi was little better. I felt the need to apologize for my clumsiness at dinner. "I'm sorry I was such a clutz tonight. I'm usually not that bad."

"It's no problem. I did feel a bit awkward crawling cheek to cheek with our Italian waiter under the tablecloth with my hind parts exposed to all the other patrons. It reminded me of one of those horse costumes it takes two people to wear. Only I was missing my front man."

"Well, it reminded me of something, too."

"Oh?" He lifted one eyebrow and one side of his mouth simultaneously. (It was an expression I would come to see a lot in the next seven days.)

"No, I didn't mean that your..... No, I meant the whole incident reminded me of something that happened to me on my first overseas trip. I was sixteen and my aunts took me to Scotland with them. The first night we were there they went to a pub and left me in the hotel room. I decided to go shopping. I found one of those "outlet" stores full of sweaters and kilts. There was only one dressing room and it stood in the center of the store. I went in to try on a skirt and locked myself inside. The salesman kept trying to tell me how to unlock the door, but I couldn't understand him through his brogue. And he couldn't understand me,

either. It was horrible. When I finally got out the whole store was staring at me. I ran all the way back to the hotel and prayed that I would never see any of the people in the store again. I'll probably do the same thing tonight.

"What a sad story! I'd rather you didn't equate our first meeting with such a disaster."

"No, not most of it. Though the hotel where I'm staying is about as dreary as the one I ran back to that night."

"What were you hoping for?"

"Something that looked remotely English," I laughed.

"Why don't you come back to my townhouse with me? Before you jump to conclusions, let me assure you that I'm offering because I happen to be something of an antique collector. Therefore my home is very English. And there are no hostile locks in the entire place. Added to that I can understand you completely, accent and all."

"It's changed quite a bit since I was sixteen."

"What a shame," he answered.

I don't remember ever saying that I would stay with Will. It's not like something I would do. I just kept laughing and smiling and being led along until I found myself back in my hotel room packing my bags while Will

looked on from that plastic chair with the black Naugahyde cushions.

On the way from the hotel to Will's townhouse, I began to realize what I was doing. I was in a cab at 10:00 p.m. at night, destined for a townhouse with a man I had just met. Added to all that, it began to storm on the way there.

I turned to look at Will. The side of his face toward me was in shadow. The other side outlined a lurid aura every time we passed under a street light. Will had become very quiet. He leaned back into the seat and crossed his arms across his chest.

"You look quite self-satisfied," I noted. He looked at me without answering. "Something like the cat who swallowed the canary," I added. I was trying to make light of all this, but Will didn't laugh.

Instead he replied, "Well, why shouldn't I be self-satisfied. I'm riding in a taxi with a lovely storm outside and a lovely .... canary inside." He added a Bella Lugosi laugh for my benefit.

"That's not funny," I protested.

"Yes, it was." He said. I punched him in the arm.

"What a hook you have, my dear! I didn't mean anything by what I said. I am truly sorry if I frightened you. Will rubbed his arm where I had hit him. "That ring of

yours packs a punch. It's caused me nothing but trouble all night. May I see it?"

"Of course." I took it off and handed it to Will, relieved that the conversation had changed to something neutral.

Will turned the ring over in his hand, examining it closely. He fingered the intertwined serpentine pattern on the band, and asked, "Where did you get this?" without ever taking his eyes from its gold.

"It belonged to my great-grandmother. It's passed down in my family from daughter to daughter. It may be older than that, even. None of us really know. My great-grandmother gave it to my grandma in her will without saying anything about its history. She died suddenly, from a heart attack when gramdma was in her teens. Grandma said that she never saw her mother wear it, so she assumed that her mother had not had it long. Am I rambling?"

All through this conversation, Will had turned toward the window to hold the ring in the light. He rubbed the ring between his fingers almost reverently, then sighed and handed it back.

"No, you don't ramble. That's very interesting. I can't be sure with this light, but I think the ring is much older than it would be if it had been made for your

great-grandmother. I'd like to spend some time with it the next few days--studying it. It's the antique collector in me."

"Of course. I'd love to know more about it, myself."

With that we pulled into a long circular drive set back from the road. Three townhouses were in the middle of the drive surrounded by great oaks. "We're not in London, anymore, are we?"

"No, we're technically in Chelsea." There is more privacy and quiet here." I later learned that the townhouses had been built in the eighteenth century by some stockholders in the East India Company. One of these men had committed suicide here when the company failed to return enough profit to pay off the man's debts. Will led the way to the house on the far right--the one the stockholder had lived in.

Whenever I stand by a man at night by his door while he fumbles with keys to let me inside I feel awkward and guilty. To fill the silence, or rather to hear something besides the jangle of Will's keys, I asked, "Have you lived here long?"

"Yes, for a very long while."

Will looked at me as the door finally swung open. "You're nervous." He stated it as a fact. "Christina, you

don't need to be afraid of me." I looked down at my shoes because I didn't know where else to look. I hated that Will knew how I was feeling. I hated feeling so damn much like an ingenue on her way to her first intimacy with a man. It wasn't like I was going to bed with anyone, I kept reminding myself.

Will laughed as he pushed me lightly into the entry. "Besides you're technically my boss, right? I've got to make certain I behave well enough to get my next check."

I laughed and answered, "Yes, you're right. Everything rides on how good you are."

"Oh, a tease! Let me show you to your room before I lose all my self-control."

Will left me, surrounded by my bags, in the most incredible room I had ever stayed in. I was dead on my feet, but even so I had to take a good look around before I could relax enough to sleep. Against the wall opposite the doorway, stood a Jacobean canopied and curtained bed with a tree of life motif on the headboard. On the wall that housed the door hung what Will said was an early seventeenth century Flemish tapestry. Woven into it was a sporting scene of a warrior clothed in classical dress, hunting a boar. Oriental rugs lay on the floor, and a huge old wardrobe stood in a corner beside a bay window with a window

seat. There was even a nightstand beside the bed with a little shelf holding six or seven rare books.

Even though I had already lost track of the hours I had been awake, I couldn't sleep when I climbed into that wonderful old bed. The wind was blowing up another thunderstorm outside and the twigs on the oak tree kept scratching at the window. It sounded like claws scratching at the glass.

When I finally did manage to fall asleep it wasn't gradually. One minute I felt completely awake and irritated by that scratching and the next I was back in my dream again. Only this time it was a continuation of the dream I had been having before my trip.

The dream starts with me on the horse again. I still don't know who I am supposed to be. I am plunging through a grey, rain-soaked forest. Edges of the red cloak flap into my vision. I round a thicket and see the boar just ahead of me that I have been chasing. In my dream I am not surprised to see the boar, but a part of my subconscious that is me, the dreamer, is surprised.

The boar is huge and his grey-brown hair has ugly flecks of red and white in it. The steam from his breath rises up between his tusks. It reminds me, the rider, of the smoke in pagan sacrifices that I have seen. It's wicked

and even obscene. I draw out a spear from beside by saddle. The boar runs up against the thicket but he can't force his way through. He turns, and I see that his eyes look red and angry. Since he can't flee, he turns to fight.

Suddenly, I am walking again through the great hall of the castle, in the room that had seemed so uncomfortable before. Neither my eyes nor any of my other senses have been able to focus on any individual person. People are splashes of color and noise who part in waves before me without seeming to notice my presence. It seems that I am only an observer in this part of the dream, not a participant.

Then before me I see a beautiful young woman dressed in white gown with gems of all colors woven into it. She has on heavy red-gold jewelry that reflects the same colors in her hair. The candle and firelight catch in the hair and gems, throwing an aura around her. She is laughing and dancing with everyone. Yet no one else is in focus but her. She is the center of my attention. Her laugh spills around her, almost substantial enough to be touched. In her right hand she holds a gold goblet that I can see a servant is filling with a deep red wine.

Again I am in the forest. I see the boar turn and charge my horse. The horse screams and rears up to kick the

boar, throwing me off. I hit the ground hard, but in slow motion. My breath explodes from me in a slow rush of air and moans. I see the grey sky over me and feel some of the wet brown leaves crush beneath me while others, propelled from the wet soil float up into my vision releasing their dark, musty smell of decay. I hear the boar's grunts as with each pounding of its cloven feet it closes in on me. I see the filthy tips of his tusks,... and I am in the castle again. The beautiful woman laughs when she sees that a young retainer has saluted her with his cup of wine. When she raises her goblet to meet his, red wine spills from her cup. I know the rider has been gored.

When I woke from my dream I saw that spots of sunlight moved across the dark red comforter on the bed turning the bottom of the white canopy pink. I sat up in the bed and stared at the tapestry across from me. Usually if I want to remember a dream I have to play the whole of it over in my mind starting at the end and reconstructing it back to the beginning. But this dream, like the first segment of it, had seemingly become part of me as I slept. I realized as I stared at the tapestry that I remembered all of it instantly, as one recalls a life-changing event.

Looking back on this feeling I had about the dream, it occurs to me now that I should have been uneasy or at least

have felt that the dreams were portentious in some way. At the time, though, it seemed simply an interesting part of a new and exciting place. I suppose I had too much of that sense of invulnerability that many people have when they travel. I felt that everything I saw and did would conspire to give me joy. All of Great Britain seemed my Olympus, and my American passport assured me of immortality.

Having decided to make the most of the golden sunlight streaming in through the bay window, I hunted through my suitcase for the book that Desmin had given me, Fairy Folklore of Ireland, and climbed onto the window seat. My attention was half on the book and half on the sensation of total contentment that filled me.

The book, itself, made awfully dry reading. It purported to tell the traveller to Ireland about the history, appearance, living conditions, etc. of the "fair folk." I skimmed through it reading snatches of paragraphs from here and there until I heard sounds downstairs.

I was so hungry that I didn't bother to dress before I left my room. I put on a robe and houseshoes and moved as quietly down the stairs as I could pushing by weight onto the handrail to keep the stairs from creaking.

My mother says I'm a sneak. Maybe she's right. In any case I always like to see what someone is doing before they

see me. I've ruined a lot of Christmases for myself that way.

I had assumed (and hoped) that Will would be in the kitchen cooking breakfast. But not finding him there I crossed the entry and walked down the hall beside the stairs. I passed the open door to the drawing room and a bathroom, eventually coming to a room with its door pulled almost shut. Inside the room, someone breathed heavily as one does after great exertion or after great pain.

I pushed the door open as little as I could to still be able to see what was going on. Through the crack I saw Will sitting in a chair pushed back from a desk. The desk faced the door, but Will had turned the chair sidewise as if he had been reading the titles of the books that ran from floor to ceiling along that wall. The room was almost dark. The right wall held three large windows, but heavy green velvet curtains were drawn across them. A small lamp that looked to be an old oil lamp burned on the desk. That was the only light. Nevertheless I could see how drawn Will's face looked, and he held his hands clasped tightly together at his chest. He still wore the clothes he had had on the night before. At Will's feet lay a massive tome of a book with a green leather binding and gilded edges. It lay open

as if Will had dropped it. I realized that that must have been the noise I had heard earlier.

I slipped back up the stairs as quietly as possible and then made a racket getting dressed. I sang. I pushed my heaviest suitcase over on the floor. I ran the faucets at their highest pressure then turned them off abruptly making the pipes thud and ring. If I had known Will better I would have just walked into that study and asked if I could help. But I had this idea about how the English psyche is constructed, that the English would be the sort of people who would suffer quietly instead of announcing their discomfort to anyone who would listen. I decided to keep an eye on Will, but for the time being to concentrate on work. I remembered his tired silence in the car, a silence that I had almost attributed to some sort of evil machination in the works.

I put on my frumpiest business suit with its matching "sensible" shoes. The idea of going to supervise the work of Look's marketing department made my stomach tighten into knots. I didn't feel up to the task, and I hoped my ugly suit would make me look severe enough that no one would give me much trouble.

When I finally rearrived in the kitchen, Will, wearing an apron, turned and handed me a plate of breakfast. There

were eggs, fried tomatoes, bacon (Canadian style) and toast. Only an hour before I had seen Will gritting his teeth in pain. Yet, there he stood handing me a huge breakfast and smiling as if he had never felt better in his life. He had showered and was dressed in a hound's tooth sport coat and grey slacks. He had enough color in his face to make one think that he had only recently been out for a brisk morningjog. I didn't think that his high color and bright eyes could have been from fever.

"How did you sleep?" he asked.

"Fine, thanks. I had some amazing dreams. How about you?"

"No dreams for me. What were they about?"

"Hunting. You looked tired last night. I'm glad you got a good night's sleep."

"It must have been all the excitement of meeting you. How are those eggs? What were you hunting?" And so we had a Joseph Conrad conversation in which no one really answers the other's questions. At the time, I thought that Will must suspect that I had seen him in the study and was trying to avoid the conversation by asking me about my silly dreams. After all, who really wants to hear about someone else's dreams. They may intrigue the dreamer, but they usually bore anyone else. Nevertheless, to keep from pressing Will about his health, I gave in. I told him about the dream, cutting out huge portions and details of it that

I assumed only I could find interesting. Will listened intently while he finished his breakfast. He seemed a little edgy when he rose to clear the table.

"I'll be ready to leave in ten minutes," was all he had to say.

We drove to Sloane Square station and then rode the tube in to work. Will had nothing to say, but it didn't disturb me because I noticed that no one but tourists talk on the tube. On the steps outside the tunnel in a place that he couldn't be ignored sat a young man holding a sign made from a piece of a cardboard. The sign read, "Please help me. I'm hungry." The man was handsome and bright-looking. For some reason that made the sight especially sad for me. The man's knees were drawn up close to his body with his eyes focused resolutely on his kneecaps. He held the sign resting on his knees with one hand, and in his other hand he held a styrofoam cup. Panhandlers in London rarely accost anyone. They always sit in that same position, staring at their knees.

Will stopped and stared at the young man, but the other never met Will's eyes. Will knelt beside him and whispered something close to his ear. The young man nodded, still not looking at either of us. Will rose, tossed a pound note in

his cup and walked away so quickly that I had trouble keeping up.

Once outside on the street, I asked Will what that incident had been about. He told me that he would tell me about it some other time.

My visit to Look's London office was much as I had imagined. I was introduced to everyone in the marketing department. I was dragged from office to office hearing names and figures that I knew I couldn't possibly remember. I collected a stack of files, and everytime I was just about ready to ask some probing question such as "what is the gross in dollars spend by European advertisers," someone would step into the office who said they just had to meet me. Clearly, the entire division had worked out among themselves how long they would leave me to interrogate each prisoner in his office. This might have bothered me if I had thought that the office staff was hiding something from me. But since they gave me their files and copies of computer programs, I decided that their dread of the home office was simply a ubiquitous fear of prying eyes more than anything else.

Beween one of these episodes of musical offices, I managed to escape to the bathroom. I hid inside one of the stalls for at least five minutes. When I came out I decided

to try to find Will. I wanted to see a familiar face and take a break from the role of supervisor I had been playing all morning.

As I approached Will's office I heard him talking to someone. True to form, I stood outside the doorway to hear what was said.

I heard Will answer, "...all right, all right. A typical disassociated Yank, but I like her. You know, John, today she wore what I hope is the ugliest suit in her wardrobe. And she put her hair up the way a sixth form school mistress does. She's trying to appear in control."

"Appear?"

"Yes. She's not, you know. It's all a carefully rehearsed veneer really."

"She's a prude," said the voice I concluded to be John's.

"No, that's not it. I took her out to dinner last night, and she tripped, knocked things over, and generally bungled her way through the evening. She was nervous, John. Afraid of me, I think."

"The kind of woman who is afraid of men?"

"Yes, she is. She doesn't know how to behave around them."

"A prude."

"John, you're a cynic. She's not a prude. She's naive. Under that veneer I mentioned she's full of wonder and fear, no it's awe, of the world. She's disassociated from herself, from her heritage and society, but at least, she's aware of it. She feels her inconsistencies. That puts her in the better half of humanity, doesn't it?"

"You like her?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to sleep with her?"

I didn't get a chance to hear Will's answer because a secretary who had been sent to find me, led me into yet another round of office wrestling. Office wrestling is moving round and round an office sizing up your "colleague" and being sized up by him until someone makes the first maneuver with a well-planned smile or inuendo about the other's office decor. I hated all of it. Over and over, I kept hearing Will say, "She's disassociated from herself, her heritage, her society...." He was right. I was and I knew it. I wanted to hear his answer to John's question, too. And I hated myself for that. John was obviously a pig who thought women were only good for one thing. As soon as that thought occured to me though, I heard him saying matter-of-factly, "She's a prude."

I didn't see Will except in passing for the rest of that long day. I was so thankful that I didn't have to go home to a hotel room where the day's conversations would play continuously in my mind until I cried myself to sleep. Instead, I would be able to sit in a room that seemed made for me, a room full of beautiful things, a room in which I would be able to hear the sounds made by the only human being I knew in England. And he was a human being who had said that he liked me.

As we left work, Will asked what I wanted to do that evening. I answered that I would like to spend a quiet evening at home avoiding people with the name "John."

The night was exceptionally cool for June. While Will built a small fire in the drawing room, I changed into black sweat pants and a white sweat shirt. I curled up with the stack of files and the green book in a corner of a wing-backed, Queen Anne sofa. Will sat in an armchair close to the fire, reading. For a long while we didn't speak. I let the warmth of the fire sink into my tense muscles while I looked over some of the data I had accumulated that day.

"What are your plans for tomorrow?" Will asked. "Are you going back to the office?"

"No. If it's all right with you I'd like to stay here and go over these files for a couple of days. Any other questions I have, I can call about."

"That's fine."

"After that I plan on leaving for Ireland. You know I told you how much I was looking forward to visiting there."

"I remember." Will paused. "Today was a hard day for you."

"Ain't that the truth!" I answered, rubbing my feet.

"Well stretch them dogs out and let 'em bark then," Will answered in a perfect retort to my southernizing.

I laughed. "That was really good. It was perfect. Not overdone or anything."

"Thank you. I can do other dialects, as well. Do you want me to run through a few of them for you?"

"Yes, please."

Will laughed and started reading from the book on his lap. "'Oh that this too too sullied flesh would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!'" he recited in an Irish then Scottish brogue. He repeated it several times using a midwest American accent, the dialect of Cornwall, and the drawl of Louisiana.

"That's amazing! How did you learn them all? Why did you learn them?" I asked laughing still.

"It seemed like something that might be useful someday. It enables me to blend in with any populace I'm with. People more readily trust someone who seems to be one of their own."

"Does that ever upset your own sense of identity?"

"Yes. Always. But don't you feel the same way? I'm sure that standard midwest is not your original dialect. You learned the accent you practice now to fit into corporate America, didn't you?"

"But I sometimes hate myself for that. As you said earlier, 'I'm disassociated from myself, my heritage, and my society.'"

"Ah, I wondered when you would bring up my conversation with John again. You were eavesdropping."

"Yes. I was. And I know that people who listen to others' conversations deserve to get their ears burned, but it did hurt my feelings, especially when John called me a 'prude.' Who is John anyway?"

"He's my barrister. He's taking care of some personal legal matters of mine. It's nothing to do with work so don't worry."

"That didn't even occur to me, although I suppose it should have."

"How much of the conversation did you hear?"

"Up through 'are you going to sleep with her.' I didn't hear your answer."

"That's because I didn't answer. John can be ...."

"A pig?" I volunteered.

Will laughed. "Yes, that's not quite the word I was searching for, but it will do."

"You know, I guess I am a prude. And you were right when you said that I am afraid of men." I stopped to see what Will's response would be. He only sat there waiting for me to continue, but I could see the muscles in his throat working where the fire lit his face. I felt that sick feeling in my stomach---that sensation of anticipation and anxiety mixed. I had already said too much to a man who was nearly a stranger. It occurred to me then, however, that one could be an emotional as well as a physical prude. So I plunged ahead in defiance of John the barrister's accusation.

"I just haven't ever felt lovable." My God, I thought, that sounded so adolescent. I tried to work my way out of the grave I was digging for myself. "This is silly. I'm too defensive," I said in an effort to brush away the quiet tension that filled the space between Will and me.

"No, it isn't silly. Go on." Will's voice was low and gentle. He was very persuasive. I felt weak and emotional

from the corporate gauntlet that I had run that day. I found myself talking to Will the way one can talk to a stranger who will be no long-term part of one's life. I watched a log settle in the fireplace sending sparks bursting around the grate and up the chimney.

"I was in love once. I mean really in love."

"Oh."

"Yes, with a beautiful young man. I was so completely, so utterly happy. I was so happy that I hurt. It was as if the happiness stretched me in all directions. My ideals, my motives, my prayers all became lofty. I even stood straighter. I've never felt that way since."

"What happened?"

"The usual, I guess. He was not as good as he was beautiful. Since then whenever I am very happy--- not as happy as that time, I don't think that's possible. But whenever I approach that level of happiness, I remember how I felt then. So that in the midst of rejoicing I feel a bittersweet memory of that former happiness. And of course, such a memory only serves to make me conscious of my current feelings---the end result being loss of the lesser current happiness in the stonger memory of the greater previous happiness. Could you follow all that?"

"I think so," Will replied.

In other words, I've never felt strongly enough about anyone or anything since then for the feeling to stand on its own and allow no intrusion from the past.

"After the man I loved left me, all the joy left too. I would wake up in the morning and be so afraid of facing a day in which I knew I would find nothing beautiful that I could barely get out of bed. I became fat and apathetic. I didn't even try to approach beauty in myself. I had already learned to feel unworthy. A lot of women do that, I think. They get fat not out of gluttony for pleasure but out of a surfeit of misery. They bloat."

Will laughed and the tension eased a bit.

"It's true," I protested. There are women who are fat from pleasure, but they're few and far between. Big women, who like to cook for others, for instance. Or the statues of Venus or Botticelli's women, or women who are pregnant. They're beautiful because they're fat from pleasure.

"Bloating's different. Bloating comes from suppressing one's feelings. It comes from seeking to find pleasure in food when it doesn't feel safe to look for it anywhere else."

"I suppose you have a point. However, you're not fat now."

"I lost weight to interview for the job. Weight had become another part of the facade behind which I hide myself. Now I hide behind my job. Either way it's prudishness, isn't it?"

"I was hoping that maybe you had become happy again."

"No, that's not true. I'm not unhappy. I just don't feel anything. It's like living in a dream world. I always escape from the world in some way when the emotions get too strong, like waking from a dream just as one falls from a cliff."

"Well, then.....you need to wake from the dream of love and find the real emotion in this world."

"No, that won't happen. I used to want so badly to love someone again. I used to pray to God to let me feel that way once more. That someone beautiful and good would love me back. And then I would think that God would never give me someone like that because like Dante to Beatrix, I would love that person to the heights of heaven or to the depths of hell. And I wouldn't much care which".

"Then I would be afraid of that truth and deny to myself and God that I would do that, worship the loved one, I mean. I would pray, 'No God, rather I would so value the gift and its beauty that I would always remember the Maker of that beauty.' Then out of fear of losing that which I

didn't even have I would imagine myself as a priestess painted on the wall of an Egyptian temple. Wearing white and with my head bowed, I would have my extended palms raised high above me with the treasured gift of beauty and love resting on them in a glowing ball. I imagined that if I were only willing to give back that which I worshipped, then God would not require it of me. The whole idea was crazy," I said with a final sigh.

Will turned his head toward the fire and said quietly, "It would be much easier if you didn't have to answer to God."

"I suppose that's the price of having a soul," I replied. Later on, as the days passed, I would think of this odd conversation more and more often.

That night I woke up two or three times as the wind picked up and began to howl around the house. Each time I was surprised that my dreams had been the normal montage of scraps of daily experience that most dreams are. Toward morning, after the birds began to sing, I dozed off again after a couple of sleepless hours. This time, another part of the dream came to me.

I was back in the forest again. The sexless creature I had seen in the first part of the dream reappeared. He walked around a small stand of oak trees not far from the

body of the dying rider. Hurrying to the rider's side, he knelt down and put his ear to the man's chest. The rider was still alive, although obviously in much pain. He opened his eyes and saw the creature leaning over him. His eyes blinked rapidly, and I noticed the sweat heading on his brow. The creature placed his hand over the rider's eyes. The rider smiled a little, sighing with his last breath. Then the creature pulled the man into his arms. While rocking violently he began to keen a wail such as I could never imagine possible. Birds in the trees took up the scream.

I watched as the creature built a pyre on the narrow beach. He stripped the rider's body and layed it on the pyre. After that, I saw the rest of the dream from the creature's perspective. I lit the pyre. As it burned I dressed in the rider's clothes, including the bloody shirt. I scooped handfuls of sand out of the beach near the incoming tide. Soon the tide made a small pool where I had dug the hole. With the reflection of the fire blazing red behind me I looked into the pool to see if my plan had worked. It had. The rider's image stared back at me. I watched the image in the pool smile.

I awoke quite late in the morning. The birds I had heard earlier had already quieted into their midday hush.

Pulling on my robe, I ran down into the kitchen to see if Will was still in the house. He'd left a note for me on the kitchen table asking that I meet him at the Tate Gallery about 2:00.

I spent the rest of the morning reading marketing surveys while waiting for the clock to tell me I could leave. My stomach felt a little sick, my fingers trembled a little as I turned the pages of the reports. I am not a person who is very much in touch with my feelings. As a rule, I only know what I'm feeling by the physical reactions I have to an experience. I wasn't sure that I liked how I was responding now.

It took me longer to get to the Tate than I had expected. The closest tube station was Westminster and the crowds were very bad. I also had some trouble reading the map I was using so that I walked the last few blocks to the Tate wondering if I had gotten turned around. Everything I saw confirmed that I must have lost my way. Trees lined a sidewalk alongside a road with little traffic. The crowds had thinned to one or two passersby. I had that sensation that one has in a dream when some goal toward which one is desperately running becomes suddenly unattainable. I felt sick and weak. I was sure I would never be able to find

Will again. It was all I could do not to turn around and run back to the tube station.

When I finally walked up the flight of steps and saw Will waiting under the portico of the gallery, I ran to him and put my arms around his waist. I felt silly and childish, but I didn't care.

"Well, how nice," Will said matter-of-factly. "I was beginning to wonder if you were coming. It's almost 2:30."

"I'm sorry. It took longer than I thought from the tube station, and I got turned around. I'm just so glad you're still here. You can't imagine how glad."

Will and I spent the rest of the afternoon moving through the rooms filled with paintings by Constable, Turner, and the Pre-Raphaelites. I always feel as if I've been transported into a cleaner, holier world when I visit an art museum. This feeling is magnified in the Tate. The rooms are well-aired and bright. The wooden floors creak when one walks across them, making one feel as if a certain effort at silence is required, an effort similar to being in a church.

I didn't hear Will walk up behind me until he leaned over my shoulder and whispered, "Hunt's 'Lady of Shalott,' one of your favorites?"

"Yes, I can't believe I'm finally seeing it. I first saw a picture of it when I was a freshman in college. I feel a kind of affinity for her."

"Why?"

"I don't know, exactly. I suppose because she became a slave to a curse the limits of which were never clearly defined. I mean, why wasn't she supposed to look into the real world? She was just stuck in that tower, and nobody could help her. She must have been so lonely. And then in Tennyson's poem Lancelot has the nerve to say, 'She has a lovely face' when she comes floating dead down the river like that's all that was important or something. He doesn't even give her another thought even though she died for love of him."

"Yes, I think I understand. She wanted to face reality, but when she actually did, it cost her everything."

"That's it exactly."

Will motioned to a painting by Strudwick on the opposite wall. "That's one of my favorites."

"Will, I'm surprised at you. That's awful," I laughed.

Will's eyebrows shot up and he put a look of mock hurt on his face, "What's wrong with it?"

"It's dead," I replied. "It's the absolute worst of Pre-Raphaelite work. All the women look the same. They're

all frozen in static gestures. They're beautiful, but there's no soul in them at all."

"They are very beautiful," he answered.

"'She has a lovely face,'" I replied.

Will only laughed and took my hand to lead me into another room.

That night I walked in the castle again. Only this time I saw everything from the creature's perspective who had assumed the image of the rider. I greeted all my guests in the castle in a language that wasn't English, but that I understood in the dream. Although I turned to speak to all the people in my path, my eyes never lost sight of the beautiful woman standing near the fire. I moved to her side. She took my hand and led me from the room to the cheers of the people remaining in the great hall.

I finally understood the situation completely. This was the woman the rider had married earlier that day. Then to escape the crush of people in the hall, he left his bride to be the diplomat, while he had ridden into the forest. He had not expected to see the boar. Even though the rider knew how foolhardy it was to hunt alone, he had thought of the fine gift the boar would be to his wedding feast.

This is the story the creature who had assumed the rider's image told his bride. For he had assumed the

rider's memories as well as his appearance. He did not tell her, however, that the blood on his shirt was that of her husband. He told her instead that he had wounded the boar, but had not been able to kill it. Neither did he tell her that the man she would sleep with that night was not the one she had married.

I awoke with that nagging sensation of knowing that there was something very important that I should have been aware of. I lay in bed staring up at the canopy going over every appointment, every assignment, every goal I had had for this trip. I thought perhaps I had forgotten something that I was supposed to do. Nothing would come to mind that I could have forgotten. Still that nagging sensation wouldn't go away. I turned over to look out the window hoping the change of scenery would jog my memory.

"It's raining a fine mist," Will said from the window seat. "But that's not what you were wondering, is it? I came in to bring you some breakfast before I left for work." Will gestured to the tray on the night stand beside the bed. He continued, "You looked so lovely, that I thought I would watch you for a moment before I woke you up. Are you angry?"

"I had the sensation that I'd forgotten something important. Something was making me nervous anyway. I

suppose it was you. No, I'm not angry. I just can't figure you out sometimes."

"Don't quit trying," Will answered. "Perhaps you aren't aware of how pretty you can be. You are really very naive, in spite of your 'big city airs.'"

"That makes me angry," I answered.

"You should be more aware of yourself as a woman. Here's your breakfast. Enjoy yourself. I'll be home late. Please try to finish all your work so that we can have a bit of a holiday tomorrow."

After Will left I sat in bed eating toast and butter. I felt as if I had missed part two of a three-part miniseries. Granted, I thought, Will and I had become closer, but not to the point of his staring at me while I slept or offering intimate summations of my character flaws. I noticed that the half-light of the drizzly day made the white sheets on the bed glow almost iridescent. I wondered if I were still dreaming.

I spent part of the morning centering myself in business. I sat in bed, enjoying the luxury of having the house to myself, while simultaneously swearing that I wouldn't get out of bed until all the work was done. I called the office and asked them to send over a messenger to pick up the reports I'd written and the extra files. I

dressed in an old flannel shirt and a pair of jeans with the knees ripped out. I planned on doing some exploring.

My mother has always told me that people who go through other peoples' closets should expect to find their own skeletons. I know she's right, but the thrill of going through someone's house, especially someone who is as much of an enigma as Will, is too much of a temptation. I had not yet had a chance to really look at Will's study, and I hadn't seen his bedroom at all. I decided to go through the study first, saving the best for last.

Will's study was very dark. The clouds outside eliminated most of the light that could enter through the windows, and there were few lights in the room itself, as well. I turned on the small desk light and left the door to the hallway open. Still the corners of the room were hidden in shadows. The walls of the office were lined with books, but I was especially fascinated with a small bookcase beside the desk. There were no more than twenty volumes or so in it. But all of them were extraordinary for one reason or another. For instance, there were several volumes of Sir Walter Scott's Waverly novels, including Kenilworth, that were all first editions. There was also an illuminated book of hours from the fifteenth century and the eighteenth century printing of Hamlet that I had heard Will read from a

couple of nights before. On the bottom shelf of the bookcase sat the green tome of a book that had lain at Will's feet the morning I had found him sick.

I laid the book on the desk and sat down in the green leather chair to read a bit. There was no title or author anywhere on the book. Inside were hand-written pages, some of them beautifully illuminated , others almost scrawled, all written in a foreign language. I flipped through several of the pages looking at the words and trying to decide what purpose the book served.

Before long, I felt that prickling feeling one has when being watched. I looked behind me but, of course, no one was there. I tried to reason with myself that since I was facing the doorway, no one could have come in the room without my notice. Outside the rain was coming down in earnest. The room seemed darker than before. The hairs on the back of my neck rose like a tomcat faced with a pack of angry dogs. I closed the book, but left it on the desk. I planned to come back for it, later. Once in the hallway, I laughed at myself for being so foolish. Still, I thought I would look around in Will's bedroom before I went back to the study.

There were two or three doors in the hallway the function of which I didn't know. One, underneath the

stairs, was most certainly a closet of some sort. Another door, between the study and the drawing room looked more promising. Sure enough, it was a bedroom, a very elegantly appointed bedroom.

The room was small and had no windows. Beside the door, stood an armoire made of cherry. And beside the armoire was small closet. On the opposite wall, stood a small fireplace that must have connected to the main flue in the drawing room. The outside of the fireplace and its hearth were covered with white tiles with a blue fleur-de-lis design in them. A small mantle, painted white, bordered the fireplace. On the mantle sat a small gold clock in which it was possible to see the workings. On the right side of the fireplace a maple sleigh-bed stood against the wall covered in a white, tatted coverlid over a blue comforter. A wing-backed chair was pulled up close to the left side of the fireplace. It was covered in a large blue and white pattern representing sheaves of wheat.

On the left wall, over the chair, hung a portrait. On closer inspection I realized that it was an original Bronzino entitled, "Portrait of a Young Man." The portrait was a very fine one, in which the young man was dressed in black with gold ties on his hat and codpiece. He also wore an onyx ring on his left hand. The gold in the portrait was

further emphasized by the antique gilded frame surrounding it. It hung on a carved peg by a piece of heavy blue velvet.

It was a lovely room, but one that did not seem much lived in. The only sign that it was, in fact, Will's room were the clothes inside the closet and armoire.
In fact, the bed looked as if it had not been slept in recently. I remembered seeing Will sitting in that study in the clothes he had worn the night before.

Having regained my courage, I decided to take another look at that book from the study. However, I also decided to look at it in Will's bedroom. It was a decidedly more welcoming place.

I settled down on the bed with by back against the headboard and the book across by lap. I had hardly opened the book before that prickly feeling started again. I looked up quickly around the room. The portrait caught by eye. I watched it sure that at any second the eyes would move or that the man would step out of his frame. In my general psychology class in college, we learned about the phenomena of staring at a motionless object on a wall until it appeared to move. Of course, it was all a trick of the eye, a trompe l'oeil.

"Miss O'Shaunessy?," a voice said from the door. For half a second, I thought the voice had come from the painting. I jumped off the bed, and the book fell shut on the floor.

"Miss O'Shaunessy, I'm sorry to have startled you. I'm the messenger that you phoned for," said an aged man standing in the bedroom door. His voice was warm and he spoke in thick Cockney.

"How did you get in here?" I asked.

"The front door came open when I knocked. I suppose it wasn't shut entirely. I thought you'd left it open in case you couldn't hear me. There's no ringer on the door, you know."

"Yes. You're right. I didn't hear."

"You were lost in that painting, I see," he said conversationally as he walked farther into the room.

"Yes, I was."

"The eyes are odd. It seems as if the right one is looking at something different from the left."

"Have you seen the painting before?"

"Yes, I've delivered messages here several times to Mr. Thornton. He showed it to me once when he was sick and had to stay in bed for several days."

"When was that?"

"Oh, right before you got here, Miss O'Shaunessy." I suppose it's lucky that he's feeling so much better during your visit."

"Yes, it's lucky for me."

"He must have felt quite under the weather because he looked at that painting and said as how it was remarkable that people hung pictures of the dead on their walls. I asked him what he meant. He answered that that young man there, with his face and posture full of life and arrogance, was long dead. Only that painting kept him alive. I thought it was an odd saying--the words of a very sick man. Well now, I'd better get back to work. Have you got the files you wanted me to collect?"

After the messenger left, I didn't have the heart to keep on going through Will's things. I straightened up the bed, and put the book in its place in the study. I closed the doors to both rooms.

When Will came home late in the afternoon he found me curled up in the chair in the living room. He stuck his head in the door and said, "I've brought salmon for dinner. Come help me cook."

By the time I walked to the kitchen, Will had already turned on the stereo and put The Police in to play on the CD.

"I didn't know you had a stereo in here."

"Yes, just a CD player. I keep it in the cabinet to keep out the dust. What have you been doing?," Will asked as he unpacked the groceries and pulled off his tie.

"Not much. I've been reading a book I got as a going away loan."

"Loan?" he asked.

"Yes, the girl wants it back, but it's about Ireland, so she loaned it to me."

"Really? What's it called? What do you want to go with the salmon? Wash your hands."

"You're worse than my mother. Why don't I make some spicy potato salad? Do you have mustard?"

"Potato sald with salmon! My God, girl, what a combination. The mustard's in the icebox. I suppose if you make it it will be wonderful." Will lifted my hair from the back of my neck and kissed me there. "You didn't tell me the name of the book you'd been reading."

"Oh, well you didn't give me a chance." I paused a moment, confused by the kiss. Will was still acting the same way he had that morning. "Will, you seem to be treating me quite differently today from the way you did yesterday." Will laughed and gave me one of those

one-eyebrow looks while he handed me the potatoes and cutting board.

"Are you asking me why?" he said.

"I guess I am."

"I hadn't really thought about it. But I suppose it's because I slept with you last night."

"What?" I asked laughing now as well.

"In my dreams. At least, I think it was you," he answered. I hit at him with the wet towel, but he dodged away. In the laughter, I forgot to wonder if he was joking or not.

"Let's try again," he said wiping the smile from his face with the back of one hand. "What did you do today?"

"I read a book called Fairy Folklore of Ireland," I answered trying for the same dead pan, drawing room voice Will had managed.

"How very interesting. What's it about?" he asked. We both starting laughing again. "Wait, let me guess. The fairy folklore of Ireland? Look out for that knife," he said as I brandished it toward him like a sword.

"Do you remember John?" he asked.

"How could I forget?" I replied.

"His wife, Eileen, has a niece who works for Look in Atlanta. The girl is very interested in Irish folklore.

John and Eileen have an impressive library. One day I found a book by that title, remembered the interest of the niece and had Eileen send it to her."

"Your kidding."

"No, I can't remember the girl's name at the moment."

"Not Desmin."

"Yes. That's it. Is she the one who lent you the book?"

"Yes. What a coincidence!" I laughed.

"Oh, I don't believe in coincidence," Will said, looking at me sideways. I believe in knowing... 'every move you make.'" Will had sung the words along with the CD. He caught me in his arms, and we danced around the room as The Police finished singing "Every Breath You Take" without Will's help.

"I have had a marvelous day," he said above the music. "I've planned a trip that is going to solve all my problems." We stopped dancing and Will kissed my forehead. "Let's cook dinner. Tomorrow I'll tell you about my plans. I want to wait until they are definite."

At dinner, Will asked again about my book saying that he hadn't had a chance to read it before John's wife had posted it.

"Oh, it's about the fairies in Ireland. It uses the oldest known folklore about fairies to trace their living arrangements, habits, history and such," I explained.

"Give me an example," said Will past a mouthful of potato salad.

"Well, the book says that we ill-informed folk believe many things about fairies that aren't true. For instance, they're not "wee" at all. They're human size or taller. Along the line the stories about fairies and leprechauns became intertwined. They're the little ones."

"Fairies or the fair folk as the writer calls them, are supposed to be very beautiful. In fact, they worship beauty instead of a god because they don't have souls. That's why their behavior seems so unpredictable to humans. Sometimes they do good things and sometimes they're cruel. It all depends on how they feel about you. There's no morality involved. They are capable of magic, too. But they learn it more than they inherit it. That's as far as I've got. Oh yeah, they live a very long time, about two thousand years, what the writer called a 'natural epoch.'"

"Really?" Will asked.

"Well, according to the crazy man who wrote the book."

"Christina, don't tell me you don't believe the book is true." Will put on a look of exasperation. "Why, you are

disassociated! How can you be a romantic, no... a Christian and not believe, at least in the possibility of fairies?"

"Wait a minute. You don't believe this stuff is for real? What does being a romantic or a Christian have to do with anything?"

"Well, I'd wager a bet that your friend the Lady of Shalott would have believed."

"Why?"

"She lived in a time when people were not disassociated. They had not yet divorced the symbol from the act. For instance, the Holy Grail was real to them. It had power as well as being a symbol of power. But now it's been relegated to the rubbish pile of noble, but worthless ideals. That's what the painters we saw yesterday, your Pre-Raphaelites, were trying to do. They were trying to reunite the symbol and the power. All the Romantics tried. Of course, they failed because they thought the world inside their minds, inside the museum, was more real than the industrialism that eventually produced the "golden arches" across the street from the museum today."

"You've thought about this a lot," I answered. "But you can't tell me that that McDonald's is more real than art," I retorted. I was hurt a little because the ideas I clung to in private where being exposed to neon light.

"No, of course not. Neither is more real than the other. In fact, that's the problem. There's really no discontinuity between them at all. Forcing such phrases as 'inner' and 'outer' on one's existence is what causes disassociation."

"All this from a man who chooses Strudwick over Hunt?" I teased.

"My taste isn't all bad. You saw the portrait in my bedroom. I hear you liked it." Will smiled.

"How did you know about that?" I'm sure I must have blushed at being caught in my indiscretion. "The messenger must have told you."

"Yes, he did. Are you finished with dinner? Let's clean up and sit in the drawing room."

I managed to get my plate to the counter, but dropped the knife and fork on the floor. "Are you mad?" I asked.

"No, I'm not angry. But if you break my dishes I may be. You really are clumsy when you're nervous," Will laughed.

"Why didn't you ever show me your portrait?"

"My portrait?" Will asked nervously. "Oh, the painting. Well, you know the come-on, 'why don't you come to my room and see my new print'? I didn't want to sound like that."

"You're very good at evading my questions," I answered. "The messenger said that he'd seen it when you were very sick and that you talked about how odd it was to hang a dead person's picture on the wall for decoration."

"Did I sound as morbid as that? I suppose I did say it, though," Will answered. "You must agree that it is a bit strange."

"Yes, I suppose so," I answered. I was thinking to myself that this might be a good time to bring up my having seen Will in pain in the study that morning. I was trying to think of a smooth transition when Will said, "Can you imagine how that young man would have felt years later if he had seen the portrait?"

"What do you mean?"

"If he had been sick or old and seen himself looking forever virile on the canvas? That would have been quite a blow. A constant reminder of his fleeting life," Will said sadly.

"You talk as if that didn't happen to him, though," I said.

"I like to think that he died while he still looked as he did in the portrait," Will answered.

Yes, I thought, I must bring up the question of Will's health. I decided to use the green tome as a lead in.

"Did the messenger tell you what else I was doing when he found me?" I asked. "I was looking at that big green book of yours, the one with all the different handwritings in it." I was about to say "that I saw in your study the morning you were sick." I didn't have a chance, however. Will had gone very pale. He jumped up from the chair so quickly that it fell over backwards in a lound crash onto the tiled floor. He pushed me against the counter, his hands clenched tightly on my shoulders.

"Will, I'm sorry... What's wrong? I ...".

"The green book? You opened it? For how long? Did you say anything?"

"Did I say anything?" I asked.

Will shook me. "Did you say anything while the book was open?"

"No, no. What does that have to do ... Will, stop it!"

"Don't ever, ever, open that book again. Promise me you'll never touch it. Promise."

"I promise. Let me go." I said.

"I'm sorry, Christina. I didn't mean to hurt you. That book is very dangerous, though."

"Why? I couldn't even read it," I asked.

"No, it's in languages that have no relationship to English. It's a book of magic." Will answered. He looked closely at my eyes to see how I would respond to that.

"Magic? Are you serious? You really believe in that stuff? You were serious at dinner about the fairies, leprechauns, and all?" I was incredulous.

"Yes. Please Christina. Call me superstitious if you will. But leave that book alone. There are some things better not tested. I'm very tired. I think I'll go to bed.I'll clean the dishes tomorrow. Good night." Will walked out of the kitchen. I heard the door to his room open and close.

I stood surrounded by the dirty dishes and wondered for the rest of the evening about the questions Will had posed. The salmon dinner and the night's conversation didn't seem to me as if they belonged in the same evening somehow. While I scraped the plates, I realized they belonged together at least as much as McDonald's and art.

The following morning Will woke me very early.

"Wake up, Christina. Christina, come on now. Put your clothes on and brush your hair. Come on, get up."

"What time is it?" I asked. "Just let me sleep a little longer."

"Christina, get up. It's 5:30. We're going on a trip. You can sleep in the back seat. I meant to tell you last night, but we fought. Remember?"

"Why do we have to go now? Where are we going?" I was whining now.

"We're going to Kenilworth. I want us to be the first ones there."

After more coaxing, and mostly because I wanted to be left in peace, I agreed to get out of bed. Ten minutes later, I was as dressed as a person can get who has put on yesterday's clothes that had been wadded up and thrown on the floor.

Will led me to the car with one arm around me and a pillow and blanket in the other. I climbed into the back seat and Will handed me the pillow. He lay the blanket over me. I was dimly aware of hearing Will pack some things into the trunk. But I was so relieved to be lying down again that I didn't pay much attention to what he was doing.

Now nothing puts me to sleep faster than being in the back seat of a moving car. The sound of the engine beneath my head and the blur of the tops of trees speeding past create the most wonderful haze. There's a sort of haze of timelessness and comfortable solitude that induce sleep. I was drifting back into those Elysian Fields in minutes. At

one point, I was vaguely aware of Will murmuring softly. I remember that I said, "What did you say?"

Will replied, "Nothing, love. Just talking to myself. Go back to sleep."

The dream was less vivid this time. There were passing images of the young lord and his lady. Images of a picnic in a meadow, of making love and accidentally knocking over the skin of wine propped precariously against a rock. An image of shared intimate looks across a table full of dinner guests. An image of the woman telling her lord that she was pregnant. "A child?" he asked as he placed his hand across her belly.

"Christina, we're here, love. What was that you were saying, something about a child?" Will's voice made the last image fade.

"Yes, a dream I was having." I sat up to see where we were. The rain of the day before had stopped, but low dark clouds remained over a landscape, the centerpiece of which was Kenilworth castle.

"What do you think? Isn't it wonderful?" Will asked.

Truly, it was. The remains of Kenilworth rose dark against the darker sky. Most ruins that I have seen seem dwarfed by the landscape they are in. Not so Kenilworth.

It retains a haunted majesty of its glory days. I said as much to Will.

"Yes, I agree," he said. "I believe one feels more closely what it meant to live in ages past here than when visiting those renovated castles clogged with tourists and wax figures."

We climbed around on the ruins for almost an hour. A cool, exhilarating wind touched everything with a feeling of power. No one else was there. It was a tourist's dream. Will asked me to close my eyes, and he led me as I laughed through the twelfth century keep. "Open your eyes," he said.

"My God! I can't believe it! Where did it come from?" I exclaimed. Laid out before me was a beautiful Tudor garden. Certainly, standing in the shadow of the ruined keep with the wall of the drained moat beyond it, the living, budding, garden seemed out of place as if it had been dropped there by magic. For the past hour, I had seen nothing but grey sky, dark red walls, and the deep green of the grass on the meadows that had once been the mere surrounding Kenilworth. Now below me, pristine and brilliant, were shades of green, yellow, red and purple. I felt like no one had ever seen it before. As if no one had

walked there in over three hundred years. "Will, I'm so glad you brought me here. This place is wonderful."

"I knew you would appreciate it. We should leave soon, though. Before the tourists arrive and ruin it for us."

As we left the ruins, I turned to look back at it one last time. Bells began ringing in the town below. Some high and fast and some low, more vibration than sound. "What are those bells?" I asked.

"Church bells. Have you forgotten that it's Sunday?"

"I guess I did. But this place is as holy as any church I've ever been in."

"Then you were worshipping the building and not your God. I'm sorry. I hope I didn't hurt your feelings. But this place is a monument to earthly beauty, not to the eternal for which there can be no monuments at all."

Ordinarily, Will's words would have stung me. And I know my reply had a certain bite to it although I didn't feel particularly angry. "Then why did you bring me here? You seem to worship it as much as I do."

"It's different for me," was Will's only reply.

Looking back, I think that must have been the moment that I knew, deep in my heart, in that place that permits no light of reason, what the truth really was. But I pushed it

away as a madness and forced my eyes from Will's to the direction of the car.

"I guess we should leave then. Let's go get some breakfast. I'm starved," I said to break the tension.

"Christina, ..." he began.

"No, no. Come on. I'm not angry. I promise. Let's just have a wonderful day together. No arguments and little philosophy, ok?" I walked toward the car, leaving Will to stand along for a moment looking over Kenilworth. I turned back and watched him closely. I was afraid of the unmentionable. But standing before me was the back of a lonely young man dressed in a pair of Levi's and a white cable-knit sweater, all things from a world that I could understand. I laughed at myself and called, "Come on, handsome. I'm wasting away." Will turned toward me with a smile. And the church bells stopped ringing.

Will drove us southeast from Kenilworth toward Northhamptonshire. The roads there were almost deserted. He pulled off the road beside a meadow filled with purple clover and ox-eye daisies. The wind had blown off the clouds and the sun was warm and lazy.

"Will, I hate to mention this. But I don't see a restaurant anywhere nearby," I teased.

"That's because you don't know where to look," answered Will. He got out of the car and opened the trunk. "Get out of the car and look like you have a little faith in me," he called. Will pulled out a huge picnic basket and a blanket. "Will you carry the blanket? Find us a lovely spot for a picnic, please."

Will had thought of everything. He had packed strawberries, scones, tea, butter, and cold chicken. It was a wonderful picnic. Butterflies that Will called "orange-tips" were everywhere celebrating the sunshine. I lay down on the blanket to watch the clouds change shapes and chase each other across the sky. Will stretched out beside me, and we tried to guess what shape each of us thought the clouds formed.

"I'll give you a clue," Will said. "Pay attention. It's big and often pink."

"Will! No, leave me alone. I know what it is. A pink elephant."

"Very good!" Will laughed. He raised up on one elbow and pushed some stray hair from my face. I wanted so badly for him to kiss me. He just laughed again, rolling away. He stood up and offered me his hand. "We're going to eat in town tonight at San Lorenzo. Then I'll take you dancing at the Hippodrome," he said.

"We'll need to go home first and change," I answered, a little disappointed by the change of mood.

"I have another idea. Rather than drive all the way back to Chelsea, let's buy what we need. I'll take you shopping."

"Will, this is too much. It's beginning to feel like an American Express commercial," I told him.

"Your provincial attitude about money is showing," Will answered. "What's the use of having it if I can't enjoy it. Let it buy us a perfect day, at least as much of a perfect day as can be bought. Don't forget, you'll be leaving for Ireland tomorrow, and I'll not see you again."

"I'm trying not to remember," I said.

"That's good to hear. I was beginning to wonder," Will said.

"Maybe I should cancel my trip. I could stay with you."

"Absolutely not. You've been wanting to see Ireland for years. You should go. Let's not get in a stew over it now. We can talk about it later, all right?"

"OK," I answered. Will drew me to him, resting his chin on the top of my head.

We made the trip back to London in good time. We would still have a couple of hours to shop. I've noticed that the

times I have that are really good are processed into a haze of light and motion in my mind. Perhaps that's to prevent the too close examination of such times later. It preserves the seamless lie of perfection. In any case, such are the memories of the majority of that perfect day. Will took me to a store called Jigsaw on Bond Street. I tried on several dresses suitable for both dinner and dancing. Every time I would try on a dress, I'd model it for Will and the salesgirl, who had also gotten into the spirit of the thing. I finally walked out in a black mini with narrow straps.

"Perfect," Will said. "Now all you need is a pair of black pumps."

"And hose, and a hairnet," added the salesgirl who was gathering up the articles in question.

The salesgirl helped me put my hair up while Will, who had brought his clothes, changed in a spare dressing room. He came out wearing a turquoise cambric shirt and black jeans. The shirt was double-breasted and had a pan collar. He wore flat black boots made from heavy leather that came only a quarter of the way up his calves. They had silver studs and silver toe caps. I laughed until I had to sit down to catch my breath. The salesgirl declared us to be "hot," and said that I "didn't look a bit like a Yank."

As we left, I said to Will, "If I don't look like a Yank, and you most certainly don't look like a 'suit,' what does that leave us to be?"

"Happy?" he asked.

We ate at San Lorenzo's. I don't even remember what I had. I'm certain that I didn't drop anything under the table or make a fool of myself. I do remember that Will fed me spoonfuls of zabaglione while he held my hand.

We danced and drank at the Hippodrome until I lost all my self-consciousness, until I was quite drunk and had to take off my pumps because I couldn't stand up in them anymore. Will and I laughed and sang all the songs we could remember from our childhoods on the way home, such classics as "Found a Peanut" and "I Think I'll go Eat Worms."

Will helped me into the house, kissing my neck and ears. It occurred to me to wonder why Will had waited until I was drunk to sleep with me. For I knew that was what was coming next. I even tried to pose the question into some logical form. "Why are you doing all of this?" I asked.

"All of what?" he said stepping back to look at my face.

"The wine, the dancing. Why now? Why are you kissing me now?" I asked.

"Because I had to make certain that you would fall in love with me. If we'd done it sooner you wouldn't have connected the emotion to it. If you sleep with me tonight, won't you love me?"

"I already love you."

"When did you realize it?"

"Just now. Why do I have to fall in love with you?"

"So that you will take me to Ireland with you tomorrow, today rather," Will said looking at his watch.

"You never answer my questions," I laughed. Will led me into his bedroom.

I dimly remember that about 4:00 a.m. I tried to get out of bed. I was trying to climb over Will to get to the bathroom. Will caught my shoulders and asked, "Are you sick?"

"I need to throw up," I answered, curling myself into a ball.

"You'll be fine. Try to go back to sleep. I'll sing to you," Will said. I vaguely remember him stroking my forehead and singing a sort of chant in which I found it impossible to understand any of the words. Within minutes, all the pain had disappeared, and I was falling into a restful sleep, the kind of sleep that alcohol has no part in.

Our departure time for Ireland was 1:00 p.m. I used the excuse of needing to pack to avoid Will. Every time I looked at him I felt scared, awkward and confused. I told myself that my fear stemmed from not knowing what was going to happen when the trip was over. Would I have to leave Will? Did he take our relationship as seriously as I did? What would I do if he didn't? Surely he wouldn't toy with me, I thought, not after I told him about my vision of the "beautiful one" that night while he sat with the fire lighting up his face. And almost as if I had already lost him, I remembered such images as that night with its fire, the dinner table talks, the smooth whiteness of his skin the night before.

I sank to the bedroom floor, crying and beating my head into the side of the mattress. I clutched a pillow to my face to hide my wails and catch my tears. Even so Will heard me. He didn't even knock at the door. He just came in and fell to the floor with me. He put his arms around me, pillow and all. He rocked me back and forth murmuring, "don't be afraid. Please don't be afraid. I'll never leave you, Christina. Don't be afraid."

"I feel so awkward."

"Christina, I'm still the man you call Will. I know what you're afraid of. Your afraid I'll leave you. You're thinking about Eqyptian temple walls, right?"

I started to laugh at that. "Yes. How did you know?"

"I know everything about you," he said.

"When are you going to start giving me straight answers?"

"How do you know I'm not?" he answered.

"See what I mean?"

"At least you're smiling now. I will answer one question. You know I didn't tell you when you asked me a couple of days ago, about the plans that I was excited about?"

"You said you'd tell me yesterday," I said.

"Well, I'll tell you now. I had hoped that I could talk you into letting me go to Ireland with you..."

"I would hardly call last night, 'talking,'" I interrupted.

"Come to think of it neither would I. In any case, I had already bought my ticket even then. But here's the best part. Do you remember John McAfee, my barrister? He's invited us to stay with him and his wife at their manor house in County Waterford. It's really his wife's house.

She inherited it. It's an eighteenth or nineteenth century affair. It should be wonderful."

"That's what you were so excited about?" I asked.

"Well, yes. I thought you'd be thrilled. After all, it's old and romantic."

"Of course, John will have the answer to his question," I said.

"What question? Oh, is that what's bothering you? That's false pride, Christina. Do you see yourself as the lovely virgin who must be besieged to give into her lover?"

I thought about the question a moment. "Yes, a little," I answered.

"Then you see me as your enemy. And you see our love-making as defeat. Unfortunately, John has the same set of expectations, only from the man's point-of-view. But now you see how foolish such an idea is, don't you? And wouldn't you also agree that it's ridiculous for us to sit on your bedroom floor all morning? Finish packing while I make us some tea. Will got up and moved toward the door.

"Will, thank you," I said.

"I love you, Christina."

And so for the next couple of days I lived my life in a self-imposed blindness. I tried to suppress all my questions about Will. When that failed I remembered his

promise. I would say to myself, "If Will says not to be afraid, then there's nothing to fear. If he says he won't leave me, then we'll always be together." Of course, in both cases I was reading more into Will's promises than he probably intended. Likewise, it seems remarkable to me now that I failed to see the connection between Will and my dreams. I suppose that this is another example of that self-imposed blindness. I lived in a romantic dream in which I would not allow my waking life to intrude.

I was quiet on the drive to Gatwick, working hard at preserving the false serenity I possessed at the moment. Will respected my mood, as did the weather. The grey skies of the previous morning had returned. I noticed that Will's face looked ashen in the grey light. It occurred to me to wonder if Will's silence was less on my account than I had believed.

Will must have made some extraordinary arrangements some way or another because he and I had seats together on the plane. After take-off, I relaxed a bit, excited about my long-awaited trip to Ireland. I took Will's hand in my own. "Will, I am very excited about staying in that manor house. It was very thoughtful of you to arrange it. I'm sorry I didn't seem suitably impressed this morning." Will smiled, but still said nothing. I remembered the first time

I had seen Will act this way in the cab the night I had met him. "Do you feel ok?" I asked.

"I usually have a bit of motion sickness on planes. I'll be fine." Will squeezed my hand tighter and then began tracing my fingers with his own. "You're wearing your ring today. The one your mother gave you. You haven't worn it since the night we met. I wanted to take a closer look at it, remember?"

Will slipped the ring off my finger. He held it up to the window. "I was right about it. It's extremely old," he said. "Much older than your great-grandmother's time. See this scroll work? That's a sign of Celtic workmanship. Of course, it could be a reproduction, but do you see these small marks here on the underside of the ring? The spacing of the indentions is about right for the tools used by the Celts."

"That's impossible, Will. That would make this ring at least fifteen hundred years old," I said.

"Yes, it would indeed." Will showed little amazement at the thought. "Nevertheless, I believe it's so. The remarkable aspect of the ring is the condition it's in. As you pointed out, it shows no sign of age at all. Even if it were only one hundred years old or so, it would show signs of age."

"That's impossible, though," I reasserted.

Will said nothing, only placed the ring back on my hand. He said little else for the remainder of the trip. I noticed a fine sheen of sweat across his forehead. Once in a while he would place his hand on mine and finger the ring absent-mindedly.

John McAfee and his wife met us at Shannon airport. John McAfee was hardly the imposing figure I had imagined him to be. His voice was low and rich, but his body didn't suit it. He was a middle-aged, balding, short lawyer. His appearance went a long way to putting my apprehensions to rest. What were left of them were extinguished in the warmth of John's Irish wife, Eileen. She was the perfect slightly frumpy, overweight counterpart to her husband. Her light, lilting accent and the soft hand she placed on my arm endeared her to me immediately. While John pulled Will aside to begin what sounded like a business conversation, Eileen said in a conspiratorial manner. "Those men, they can't leave their work for a minute. How was you trip, pigeon?"

I told her that it had been fine. "Now lovey, let me ask you a question that I've been fretting over all morning. Now I'm asking you woman to woman, so don't take offense.

John, what does he know of matters of the heart? But he did sensibly advise me just to ask."

"Please, go ahead," I said smiling at her discomfort.

"Without more ado then. Will you and the gentleman there be wanting one room or two?"

So the moment I had dreaded had come and was being swallowed up in my laughter. "One," I answered.

"I'm glad to hear it. Will is a lovely young man," she replied with a knowing smile. "And you can rest assured, that as far as I know he's not had a serious lady friend in years."

"I'm glad to hear that. Thanks. It's good to have a woman to talk to again. I was afraid you and your husband would be stuffy," I said candidly.

"God forbid," she said with laughter behind her eyes.

We drove directly east across Ireland from Shannon airport to County Waterford which lies close to the eastern shore. Although the drive took almost three hours, I wasn't bored for a second. I rode in the front with Mrs. McAfee, or Eileen as she told me to call her. Ireland was all I had dreamed it would be, mile after mile of green fields crisscrossed with old stone fences, interspersed with small white houses. Villages with such names as Rathdowney,

Kilmacthomas, and Stradbally streamed past too quickly to satisfy my curiosity.

Eileen McAffee was a wonderful guide. She pointed out the windows faster than I could follow her comments. I began to worry about whether she could drive and still get us safely home. Already we had run off the road several times, usually in the direction of Eileen's pointing finger. John and Will were in the back seat. Apparently John had brought some business papers that Will had asked for. Will was reading and signing as fast as he could. From what I could gather, the plan was to stop in Waterford proper to file the papers before we went on to the McAffee's house. John and Will didn't seem disturbed by Eileen's erratic driving, so I tried not to let it bother me, either.

"Eileen, what was your maiden name? Please tell me about your family and home," I asked.

"My maiden name was Coe. Not a common Irish name by any means. Disappointed are you? The manor house is called Dolmen Manor because the Ballynageeraph Dolmen is only a mile or so away, on old family lands, in fact. Though we don't own the land anymore. The house was built in 1796. It's lovely, really. It's special to me and John. We have two children who will fight over it one day, I'm sure. But for now it's ours in peace."

"I'd love to see that dolmen while we're here," I said.

"I'll be glad to take you," Will answered.

"Are you among the living again?" I asked turning around to see John putting away the last of the papers.

"All yours," he smiled back.

Just then we passed another field with some beautiful Hereford cattle grazing in it. "Eileen, the cows here look so much better than the ones back home," I commented.

John and Will started laughing. "What did I tell you, John? I knew that Christina would be in her element here," Will said.

"Why do you always make fun of me?" I asked, honestly put out.

"I'm not 'making fun,'" he said. "You simply project such a different image here than you did in the office. I prefer this one much more. It's more authentic."

"I can't exactly talk about cows in a board room," I answered.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Leave her alone, man," Eileen said hotly. And then to change the subject, "Will tells me you have a good Irish name, 'O'Shaunessy.'"

"Yes, there's Irish all over my mother's side of the family. And of course, my father's father's people, too," I said.

"I believe I'm the only one in the car who can't claim a good Celtic heritage," Will said.

"My God, you're barely even English, man. Two French names. What a sad state of affairs," John teased.

"Two French names?" I asked. "Thornton is English, isn't it?"

John didn't give Will a chance to answer, "Yes, but there's his middle name. His first's the name of the Conqueror. His other name is Degores, and I don't know what signficance that has."

"It was my mother's maiden name. It's a corruption of middle French. It means 'almost lost,'" Will added.

"I remember reading about a knight with such a name in an old chivalic romance," Eileen said. "He'd lost his identity from being separated from his parents when just a lad."

When we arrived in Waterford, John dropped the papers off at the court house. I made a mental note to ask Will about them later.

John and Eileen's home was lovely indeed. It was a red brick built off the road a bit in a grove of evergreens and

oaks. Through the trees one could catch an occasional shimmer of the river beyond. The entire setting was romantic in a gothic sort of way. I said as much to Will after dinner, when Eileen had showed us to our room.

"Does that mean you like it here?" he asked.

"Yes, very much. I only wish our room was furnished to match. I mean, it's nice and all ..."

"It is decidedly modern, however," Will finished for me. We both looked at the green sculptured carpet and the brass bed with its strawberry comforter.

"It's homey though. I like it. Am I being provincial again?" I asked.

"Yes and it's wonderful," Will answered.

"The view out the window is amazing," I said. " I can see clear to the river. It reminds me of a dream I've been having." I had been wanting to discuss the dream with Will for several days. In my heart, I knew that he was connected with them. But though I realized this, I wanted to get the blank look from Will that I was getting now.

"What dream is that?" he asked.

"Well, for several days I've had the most vivid dream. It's in a series. Each night I dream more of it. At first I thought it was just a result of the anticipation I felt

about coming to England. It's all set in a medieval world. It's like a movie unfolding," I said.

"You said that 'at first' you thought the dreams were from anticipation. What do you think now?" Will asked.

"I don't know what to think. I'm not afraid of the dreams. But they're uncanny somehow. They can't be normal. What do you think?"

"I think they're normal, but not in the sense that you mean. Like all dreams, though, I'm certain they're trying to tell you something. In that sense they are normal, as you mean it."

"Will, do you remember that first day in London when you stopped and talked to the mendicant in the tube stop? What did you say to him?"

"I asked him if he was dying. He was."

"Why did you want to know?" I asked.

"I thought maybe I might need his help with something. Now that's enough. It's been a long day. And who knows, you may have another dream to dream."

"I'm not tired." I watched Will very carefully.

"Then why don't you finish your book," he said tossing it to me from the top of the dresser where I had laid it earlier. "I'll go play chess with John for a while."

"Will, are you going to make love to me tonight?" I asked, afraid of both answers.

He searched my eyes before answering, "Yes."

"Are you going to sing over me, again?"

"Yes."

"I don't like this, Will. I don't understand what's happening."

"I don't like it, either. But you know I wouldn't hurt you. And I would hazard a guess that you understand far more than you are allowing yourself to admit. Please, read the book."

I did finish the book that night. The last section of it was on social codes in the fairy community. Without quoting the entire section, I'll try to summarize what it said.

The book said, "in the oldest known folklore about the fairies, there were stories of fairies who rebelled against their king, Oberon. This is the only more in fairy culture. The punishment for the crime was especially cruel. Fairies who were judged guilty by Oberon were stripped of their identity. Doomed to wander the earth devoid of their own fair physical form, these fairies frequently became associated with the gnomes of another set of folklore.

"There remained one other alternative, however. Fairies stripped of their identity could use their magic, if they had mastered enough of it, to take the forms of dying humans. The problems involved with this were numerous. The fairy could not kill the human to acquire his form because the form would not allow itself to be taken by the one who had killed it. Also when acquiring the form of a human, one acquired its memories as well. This was a double-edged sword because while the fairy could search the human's memories to find the most recent time that the human had been in good health and take that form, hence avoiding fatal injuries himself, the fairy also acquired the memories of the acute pain of being human."

The author went on to explain that "the compensation fairies have for not having a soul is that they experience little fear of their own mortality. They have no guilt since they have no conscience. Their long, pain-free lives allow them to experience the beauty that they worship."

"Now, when a fairy assumes the form of a human he gets the worst of both worlds. He suffers the mental pain and memories of loss that humans do, but he has no consolation of an eternal soul to compensate for it. Most fairies known to have acquired a human form quickly lose the will to live in such an ugly world and soon take their own lives.

"There is only one escape from the plight of those fairies without identity. It is one most familiar in stories of merpeople, the fairies of the sea. That solution is in finding one of the seven charmed talismans that the fairies enchanted for the kings of Ireland."

"In a time unknown, Ireland was ruled by seven kings who swore an oath of loyalty to Oberon. In return, he used his most formidable of fairy magic to charm any possession brought to him. The charm allowed the wearer to live a life protected from death by accident or disease. Only old age could take its human bearer."

"If a fairy who had lost his form could win one of these talismans from its human owner by a free gift of love without ever speaking to the human about his plight, or identifying himself as a fairy (since he is forbidden to identify with his people), then as long as he wears the talisman he is free of the curse of punishment."

"Unfortunately," the author continued, "no one knows where the talismans are. Likewise, no tales are told of any fairy who was willing to suffer long enough to be saved in this manner."

A knock at the door jarred me from the dull sense of shock I had after I finished reading this. Eileen came into the room.

"Hello, pigeon. I just came to see if there's anything you'll be needing. I see you're reading the book Will suggested I send to Desmin. It's a small world, isn't it?

Eileen, practical, sensible Eileen, who decorated an Irish manor house with strawberries, was an anchor for my ship adrift. And she had voiced a thought that offered safety as well, "it was a small world."

"Eileen, how did Desmin get the job at Look?" I asked.

"Now I don't suppose I should be telling you so, but Will pulled some strings when he heard that I had a niece looking for a job in Atlanta. He's a fine young man."

"Yes, a fine man. Eileen, have you read this book?"

"No, why do you ask, love."

"Listen to this and tell me what you think." I read Eileen the passage about the fate of fairies without identity. I was counting on her to poo-poo the whole idea of fairies in the first place. But her practical mind took another turn.

She said, "It seems to me it would get harder and harder to find a suitable form. Not many young people are dying these days. And I'd suppose a creature that worshipped beauty would want someone at least a little handsome and of the right gender, naturally. And can you imagine the paper-work involved. The body to dispose of,

and papers to fill out for this and that. How would a person manage it all?" she finished.

"Eileen, are you saying you believe fairies exist?"

"Naturally, lass. I'm Irish aren't I?" She kissed my cheek and left me alone with my realizations.

I'm sure that whoever reads this will wonder why I didn't go to Will at that very moment and confront him with the whole mess. But, put yourself in my shoes. I'm the kind of person who makes fun of those who watch A Current Affair and read The National Inquirer. Such stories as the one I was living happen in gothic novels, on TV, in movies, not in real life. These things don't happen to people who get up in the morning wearing a torn T-shirt for a nightgown, people who have indigestion, and wonder if they have enough cash on them to pick up the dry-cleaning and buy gasoline on the way home from work. For God's sake, I read the Wall Street Journal at night, and eat more meals at Burger King than I should. Most of all, people from Manchester, Tennessee who spent their weekends at their grandparents' dairy farm jumping into creeks and dodging cow shit don't meet giants, or trolls, or fairies.

Frankly, I began to doubt my sanity as well. After all, everything that had happened had a logical explanation. There were no miracles or supernatural acts here. In fact,

given my religious beliefs, I could have accepted the miraculous. Instead, I saw a reasonable series of events. Will helped a friend's relative get a job. That happens every day. She just happened to like folklore as I do. So it's no great miracle that she has loaned me her book. She couldn't know that I would meet her aunt on my trip.

And the dreams, well that could be explained as well. I had glanced through the book and seen the passage on fairy identity loss the first time I had picked it up and glanced through it. Only my subconscious, not my conscious, had registered it. That's the principle behind subliminal messages in music, right? The rest of the dreams were cued from the objects I'd seen on the trip--the tapestry with the boar hunt, the red coverlid on the bed. And Will and I just happened to have a picnic the day after I dreamed about that other picnic. Just coincidence. Maybe I really was going crazy. I knew if I were to tell the staff psychologist back home about all of this he would toss out passages of Freud and Jung that every college student in America can recite.

When I considered the possibility that I wasn't crazy and that Will might really be one of the fair folk, the conclusions were no more comforting. That meant I was in love with someone who wasn't even a human being. What is the proper behavior in such a situation? Are there any

rules at all? Wouldn't he want to be with his own kind? Would he even want to stay with me? He could stay if he wanted to, couldn't he? Maybe not. How would I introduce him to my parents? And when I got old and ugly, what then? When I died and left him would I ever see him again? No, because he has no soul. Such were the doubts that resulted in an explosion of ejaculations in which I cursed Will, the crazy world I live in, my god, my fate, and myself. I had never felt that kind of helpless fury before.

I looked up to see Will silhouetted inside the doorway. The glow of the light in the hall lit his red-brown hair into a fire while his face was still in shadow. I could barely see the movement of his mouth when he said, "You cursed me." His voice was quiet, almost gentle. He moved into the room. The light around him dimmed. By the time he sat on the edge of the bed beside me, I could again see his face. His eyes were cold and angry.

We did make love that night. Rather we had sex. If our other night had been holy, I would have to describe this one as demonic. Filled with hurt and betrayal we made our love full of pain as well. Behind it all there was a kind of despair for both of us that forced us to cling to what we were simultaneously fighting.

Will did not sing passages over me from his book of magic that night. Neither do I remember the transition between lovemaking and sleep. All I experienced or didn't experience was dulled by the surety of Will's manipulation of me and the memory of my cursing of the one who seemed to have the ability to save or damn my soul.

When I awoke, Will was gone, the sheets cold. I went through the motions of bathing and dressing. I had a vague notion that I should look for Will, but my doubts about the creature I had fallen in love with chased away my concern. I moved slowly out of the room and down to the kitchen.

I don't remember the things about that morning that I ordinarily would have. People's smiles and solicitations of my well-being. I answered, not even hearing the words. I don't remember what I wore or whether or not I ate breakfast. But there was a bird singing outside of a window. It was a bird song I couldn't recognize and that I continually mistook to be inside the house. And I remember the bronze hood of the stove as well. A patch of sunlight danced on it turning bronze to brass. My performance of normality must have been professional since no one seemed to question my odd behavior. Likewise, no one volunteered to tell me of Will's whereabouts, and I didn't ask. They probably thought I already knew.

I vaguely remember Eileen asking if I'd like to go see the dolmen that morning. Although Will had said that he

would take me, I decided that I needed the time away from him to clear my head and get some perspective.

Ballynageeragh Dolmen sits on a low mound of earth in the middle of a fallow field. Four narrow rocks of granite approximately six feet high precariously support the massive capstone. These dolmens are sometimes tombs and sometimesgrave-markers. Most of them are about five thousand years old.

My amazement at Ballynageeragh Dolmen pierced through the cloud of despair hovering over me. The clean grey angles of the stones offered me a new sense of the relativity of my problems. Meanwhile, Eileen offered me another sort of centering with her vivid retellings of several of the local myths surrounding the dolmen. I laughed at her stories of peasants who come seeking the divine magic in the dolmen to answer such questions as whether their true love would have blue or brown eyes, I laid my hand on the cool stone, thinking that here was a monument more stable than the very landscape that supported it. A monument, certainly, of great significance since it stood for the predictable transience of human life. How many people had asked futile questions of this dolmen? How many had battled and died around it? Buried in that greater question was another. How many of those deaths had been

orchestrated by creatures like Will? Had he planned from the time he lost his identity to send the boar to kill that rider? Was he a monster or a man deserving of pity? And what right had I to laugh at those people who came asking help from this monument to death? I was doing the same thing. The stone beneath my hand felt warmer and Eileen's chatter became a drone in the distance that changed to a low chant. I saw the lady and the rider who was Will walking on the battlements of their fortress. They were speaking of an upcoming separation.

The lady asked, "Do you have any idea how long the siege will last?"

"No, I'll be home as soon as I can. You can count on that."

The wind caught in the lady's red hair, blowing it about her face. Feelings of love and hope welled up inside me. I knew the emotions were Will's.

"Don't let me forget to give you the ring before you leave. It's in my mother-of-pearl box. Little Gwyneth will miss you."

"She's a beautiful child. I love her so much," Will answered, and I felt the truth of it. Will was her father, though her features would be those of the dead man.

"And do you love her mother?" the lady asked.

"More than ever. We are going to have this lovely life together always."

"More children?" she asked.

"Absolutely."

"You know, I never told you, but our love is more fertile than you think."

Will laughed. "What? Do we have more children stashed away somewhere?" He caressed her waistline.

"No, not yet. I just mean that our child was conceived the first time we made love, the night before our wedding," she said.

"Before?" I felt Will's disappointment and jealousy. He knew of the pre-marital meeting from the rider's memories, but he had not considered the possibility of the conception happening then.

"Yes. I'm just glad nothing happened to you before the wedding. That's the threat old women use to keep maidens chaste. It would have been horrible, though. Can't you imagine the position I'd be in now. Of course, I'm glad of your good health for other reasons as well." She put her arms around Will.

Will didn't want to believe what he had heard. Gwyneth was his child, his and the woman he loved, the woman he did

not mind losing his identity for. He had even planned not to wear the ring so that he could stay with her.

"Are you sure, absolutely sure about the child?"

"Yes. Why do you ask? I knew when we made love. I have the sight, you know."

Will walked away from his lady to stand on the other side of the battlement wall. He looked down at the loose mortar and stones the masons had yet to use in making some repairs. He felt confused and angry, yet he knew he had no reason to feel that way. He loved the little girl and there would be other children who would be his. He thought of Gwyneth's little fingers holding his own, and turned back to his lady. She saw his welcoming smile and walked toward him. Maybe it was because her eyes were locked on his that she failed to see the rocks in her path. She tripped and fell to the ground below. Her body lay motionless, her neck contorted into a sickening position.

I felt nausea rush over me with a wave of pain that began in my stomach and swept me off my feet. All around me I smelled carnage and waste. My head seemed to break into shards of ice. I realized that Will had lost not only his wife, but the ring as well.

I saw Will place the ring into the baby girl's fist. "Yours by right of inheritance," he said.

Then I saw a siege in which Will led the vanguard toward the walls of a half-ruined city. Men standing on the tops of the walls cast stones and spears onto Will's troops. A spear struck Will through his stomach. Blood from the wound splattered into his eyes. He crawled toward a dying enemy soldier whose legs had been crushed from one of the catapulted rocks launched by his own comrades. Will placed his hands over the man's face.

He had been forced to give up the form that offered any hope of receiving the ring from Gwyneth. The irony was in the fact that he would never see his daughter again because now he was her enemy in a war he had helped to start.

Fate continued to lead him further and further away from the ring. There were years of momentary happiness that sometimes made him forget the smell of mortality. Form after form passed, along with years of study and of writing in the green book of magic. There were years of scheming to get close to the ring in life after life. Yet he always trying to hold onto something of the original fairy whose name became harder and harder to remember.

There was one form whose image was brighter than the others. In Renaissance Florence, I saw three young men, wealthy and arrogant. One of them kept watch in the doorway of a confectionary shop. Another kissed the maid behind the

counter, while the third one who wore an onyx ring on his left hand, filled his pockets with sugared nuts.

And then there was the middle-aged man in the powdered wig, mixing a white powder into his wine. On the writing table beside him were two documents, a letter and a will. On the drawing room couch across the room lay a beggar dying of consumption.

Finally, I saw Will Thornton lying in a hospital room with bandages wrapped around his chest. White-coated men mentioned words like, "gunshot, lungs, no chance," among themselves. I saw a hand touch his face and it seemed as if it were my hand. A quiet smile, stillness, a surge of memories--of which none told of the germinating seeds of cancer planted in bones.

The images slowed down, the chanting stopped, and the droning became Eileen's frantic chatter. I tasted the acidity of bile in my mouth, and my head ached.

Much of what follows has been pieced together from what others told me after the events occurred. My own recollections come piecemeal, and some of them make little sense. I do remember that after the waking vision at the dolmen, I felt remarkably calm. I told Eileen that I needed to find Will immediately to give him the ring. I couldn't understand why she persisted in holding onto my arm, or why

she wouldn't speak clearly. After trying several times to reasonably explain my position, I pushed her from me. I walked back toward the manor house anxious to find Will as quickly as possible. This is the last of the story that I remember with clarity.

It seemed as if I wandered for a long time looking for Will in the groves of evergreen around Dolmen Manor, where I was sure I would find him. There was the constant slap of wet branches against my face, the damp smell of musty undergrowth, and an ever-darkening sky. There must have been rain as well because my clothes clung to me as if soaking wet.

I remember as well that it occurred to me as odd that though I was the one looking for him, Will found me, instead. I heard the beating hoofs of the horse before I saw him riding toward me. He slumped a bit over the horse's neck, and I could tell that he had been in the rain, too because his hair and forehead were wet.

He jumped off the horse a bit too quickly, stumbled, and bit his lip. He pulled me close, stroking my hair. I told him that I'd been looking for him. I told him how sorry I was for cursing him. I told him I loved him. I took the ring off my finger and placed it in his hand. He seemed uncertain as to whether or not to take it. He ran

his fingers across my chest where my shirt opened, looking at the water on his finger tips. After a moment of thought, he placed the ring on his finger.

After that everything is a blur. I felt very ill. I remember throwing up several times. A man I didn't know picked me up. He carried me a long way all the time singing softly to me. He told me he loved me and that he would come for me. He was a beautiful man. His hair and eyes shone the same tawny gold. His skin, though fair, had the same bronze beneath it as well. His fine hair hung past his shoulders in a heavy shower of different variations of gold and copper. He laughed a great deal, and he sang, sometimes hugging me close to him. Eventually I fell asleep to the motion of walking and the soft singing.

I apparently slept a great while.

Eileen was sitting beside the bed, rubbing a damp cloth across my forehead. John stood behind her.

"How you've worried us, dear!" she said. "You've been quite ill with a fever. The doctor says that you must have had food poisoning. But none of us can think what would have caused it. Then you seem to have caught a chill on top of it all. How do you feel?"

"Where's Will?" I asked.

"Now don't worry about Will. Just rest, dear."

"Where's Will? I repeated.

Eileen paused before answering. "Christina, love, Will didn't want you to know, but he'd been sick for a long time. He had cancer." She lowered her head.

"Where is he?" I asked.

John walked around the bed and sat down. "Christina, you mustn't get all in a lather. The doctor says you need rest."

"Tell me about him," I commanded.

John and Eileen exchanged looks before John began again, "Yesterday morning after you and Eileen had left to visit the dolmen, Will came and asked where you had gone. He didn't look well at all. I wondered if I shouldn't call a doctor. But Will wouldn't hear of it. He said he only needed a breath of fresh air, so he thought he would go riding. Then Eileen came back from the dolmen out of breath, asking if you were here. She told how you'd been taken ill and how you'd run back toward the house saying something about Will and rings of some sort. But you didn't come to the house. We didn't know where you'd wandered off to." John said.

"You were delirious, love," Eileen added.

John took up the story again. "Will came into the library as we were discussing what to do. He was obviously

not feeling any better than he had earlier. Nevertheless, he ran back outside shouting that he was going to look for you in the woods. We saw him ride past the window."

Eileen then told me that not long after they had phoned the police to come help look for me, they heard a strange sound near the house close to the tree-line. They went to investigate and found me propped against a tree, unconscious. Eileen paused, apparently uncertain how much more to say.

John made the decision, "Will didn't come back, Christina. The horse had returned about an hour before, riderless. The police are searching for him, but it doesn't look good. He was so ill. I can't imagine how he could have gotten far without the horse. It was getting dark, and given his poor health he was probably not as alert to his whereabouts as he should have been. There were signs of hoof prints near the river. The police are dragging it now."

I'm certain that John and Eileen expected some kind of emotional outburst at that. But everything seemed purged clean to me. I was left with the calm of someone who awaits the imminent approach of the unknown with resignation and joy. For how can they have known that when I closed my eyes to sleep I saw the yet nameless beloved shining in the

darkness of my mind. I'm not saying that I know what's going to happen to me. I can imagine that trying to live with Will in any state of normalcy would be a constant struggle between worlds that are disassociated from one another, at least in my mind. And I'll have to remember that Will is the one who is allowed to worship Beauty. I'll need to always be the priestess offering it to heaven. But when I see that shining in the darkness, that breathtaking beauty in which I can hide, I know that living without Will would be impossible for me. It would be a souless existence. It would be a dreamless void.

Later, after the physician had examined me, I heard him telling John and Eileen that I seemed to have physically recovered from my illness, but that I had yet to deal with Will's death. "Of course," he added, "this reaction could be just the normal stage of denial that often occurs after the sudden death of a loved one. Or it may be the effects of the delirium. In either case, I'm sure she will be fine."

When I listen closely now, I can hear a still distant chant in a language I cannot understand, and I'm sure I will be fine as well.

VITA

Kim was born in Cleveland, Tennessee on July 30, 1964. She attended elementary and junior high school in Cleveland, and she graduated from Cleveland High School with honors in 1982.

In the fall of 1982, Kim entered Carson-Newman College. She majored in German and Psychology. In the spring of 1986, Kim graduated with honors with her Bachelor of Arts.

In the fall of 1986, Kim began her graduate studies at The University of Tennessee in Rural Sociology. Quickly realizing that she was in the wrong field, she sought out requirements for acceptance into the graduate program in English. Not having had an English course in several years, Kim spent another year as an undergraduate amassing the required hours needed for admittance to the English program.

In the fall of 1988, Kim began her graduate studies in English. She was awarded the Master of Arts degree in English in August 1990. Kim has been accepted into the doctoral program in English at The University of Tennessee. She will begin this program in the fall of 1990.