

In Meadows Where We Play By Jan McGeachie

Outside 23 Kirkgate, darkness has fallen. Thirsk is quiet.

But inside Alf Wight's house and surgery, there is movement.

Earlier Eva had stumbled through the unlocked door at the back of 23 Kirkgate, to settle into the rocking chair, looking for solace.

Now stirred by the noise, she was suddenly awake, senses blurred by the effects of the drink she had shared earlier with friends at the local Tavern.

She sensed she wasn't alone.

With heavy heart, Eva realised she shouldn't be there. Her head was pounding and her mouth felt dry, yet it would be impossible to make a bolt for the door as her legs were like lead.

This place made her so happy.

Through the glass partition wall, she could see the glimmer of the gas light. Not really wanting to share her idyll, she thought she had better investigate and find out who it was.

Quietly and reluctantly she moved away from the once warm Aga in the kitchen, into the cold of the corridor, who could she be sharing the house with? Surely the place stood empty at night?

Being close to her time, she knew Joan was now living at her parents' house, which is why having earlier cycled into town, Eva had abandoned the bike at the pub and sneaked inside here, intending to rest before going back to work in the fields at dawn.

It was still dark and unable to hear any clock, she had no idea what time it was, yet she was unable to ignore the lure of the light's glow.

As she opened the sturdy wooden door, she felt afraid, trying to steady her voice as she asked

“Whose there?”

To her surprise she found a stranger in the Consulting room, ruffling his dark hair with his hand, now studying her absently. The look made Eva feel slightly odd, it had been a while since any man had looked at her like that.

“Gosh you didn't 'alf give me a stir. From the way you are dressed, I'd say you are one of those Land Girls?”

Eva had arrived in town dressed in her uniform of brown felt slouch hat, green dungarees, shirt, tie, jumper and boots. Before she had left for the pub, she had proudly sewn on her badge to show she had given a full year's service. Her reward to

herself had been to sneak into town for a swift drink as a break from harvesting and her usual backbreaking forty-eight hour week.

“How did I come back here? One minute I was going over the top, leading the offensive, deafened by the sound of guns then suddenly I’m here again where I find its all so strangely quiet?”

The man seemed slightly confused. Gripping hard to the back of one of the chairs to steady herself, Eva was asking herself who was this man and why were they both as frightened as each other?

In a way she resented his intrusion. Trying hard to keep her voice steady, Eva said harshly:

‘I am afraid you must leave sir’

“Me leave? What are you on about? I’m one of the partners, Brian Sinclair”

She was acutely aware he now had an air of authority over her as she continued to say,

“Its you that should leave, seeing as you have no right being here?”

Eva told herself she mustn’t let him see she was shaking inside. She didn’t know whether it was from the drink or the strange situation they now both found themselves in?

Chin up, be strong she told herself as she found herself staring, compelled to watch his every move, listen to his every word.

“Talk woman, answer my question?”

Unable to move from the place where she stood, Eva began to realise her suspicions were correct; she was talking to someone who lived and worked here but who somehow had returned from the Front. She had lived in the area for a year so how come she didn’t recognise him?

His voice was now calmer,

“Don’t worry, you are safe with me. I’m no threat - I’ve led a fairly monogamous life till now”

Eva was sensing the man’s magnetism now he was winking. As he stood up, towering over her five-foot frame, Eva had the desire to touch him, to make sure that he really was standing there. Contrary to what she had felt earlier, now she didn’t want him to leave.

“Can’t you see things are changing? You Land Girls keep the country in food by driving those new fangled tractors, marking the end for the days of the horse. It’ll change things for this practice too, mark my words girl!”

It was then that Eva questioned why did they have to leave, when this place made her so happy?

Again Thirsk fell quiet, the pair destined to forever stay somewhere in the shadows there at 23 Kirkgate.

*The sunset and the morning
Brightens up the sky.....*

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