

"A DOOR MARKED 'NEVERMORE'"

Marjorie Wilson

He turned the nose of the car in onto the gravel drive leading to the cottage colony.

"Sure you want to go in?" he asked her.

She sat silently, wondering to herself if she really did. Finally she said, in a very small voice, "Yes, let's go."

The towering pine trees on either side of the drive interlocked branches above them. Ahead, the lake gleamed silvery blue. The car came to the end of the road, next to the old white clubhouse that looked like a relic of Victorian days. Its big eyes of dormer windows stared out over the water, just as they had done for decades and decades.

Around the clubhouse were more tall pines, and beside it was a small enclosure containing a children's playground. But there were no children there. In fact, there was not a person in sight, although she could smell the combination of lingering lunchtime odors and dish-washing soap as she stepped out of the car.

She stood for a moment, looking at the lake. A faint breeze rippled the trees down along the shore, and blew a strand of hair across her face as she gazed at the water from the high bluff.

"Where do you want to go?" he said, gently.

"Let's go down to the woods," she answered. "Maybe we'll find somebody who knows something down there."

They started off down the narrow, cracked concrete strip that served as a walk in front of the row of cottages. She glanced at each cottage as she passed it. Who lived there now? And who had lived there? She couldn't tell, for there were no names displayed. The cottages were well kept, their old fashioned wooden frames artfully covered by new facades or bright paint. Scarlet geraniums and blazing petunias crowded windowboxes, or clustered in circles around the poles of trees.

Here, obviously, was a brand new cottage, built in the fashion of a Swiss chalet. It looked somewhat incongruous amid the stolid, square, multi-porched dwellings that grouped on either side of it.

They neared the woods at the end of the walk. Still not a living soul appeared. Everything was silent. Was everybody asleep? Or was she dreaming all this?

Suddenly a man's figure strolled out of the woods. She looked searchingly at him—no, she'd never seen him before. He came up to them, smiled hesitatingly, and asked, "Do you folks have a place here?"

"No," she said, "We're just looking around. Why?"

"Well, I used to come up here as a kid, and I'm back looking the place over. Sure has changed."

She introduced herself and her husband to him. "Where are you from?"

"I'm a writer on *The Washington Post*. I know this is a long way from there, but I was in the area, and just wanted to hit the nostalgia trail. Wonder if the bridge down the trail in there still holds people. It was kind of rickety when I was a boy."

"I haven't the wildest idea."

"Think I'll go see. Nice to have met you," and he swung off back into the woods.

"Let's go down to the other end," she said to her husband.

They went back down the walk, past the clubhouse and on, where more cottages were built along the bluff. Down at the end of the splintered walk was a deep ravine, beside the last cottage. Pines and poplars made a dense thicket at its edge, blocking the view from the walk.

"There used to be a bridge here, too," she said. "There's another cottage across the gully."

She stopped, in dismay and disbelief. There was no bridge there. Instead, there was a shining white picket fence.

"Oh, no," she wailed, and burst into tears. He understandingly took her in his arms, and patted her head.

"It's like in that song. . . . 'A door marked NEVERMORE that wasn't there before. . . .'" she choked out.

"Honey, you can't ever go back. Don't you know that yet?"

"I guess you're right," she sobbed. "But I thought I'd find something happy here, that would help. Or somebody that I'd know."

No, she couldn't go back. The Old Greek philosopher was speaking wisdom when he said "No one ever steps in the same river twice." But in her grief she had felt by revisiting a gay place of her youth, she might be able to recapture some of its spirit.

It had changed. So had she. Time, age and death had erected a "nevermore" fence in her life, which going back to old familiar places

could not hurdle. The beloved ideals and individuals that she's ensconced in the niches of her personal pantheon had toppled into fragments. Their ghosts, and the ghosts of former years that clung thickly around her all seemed to whisper tauntingly, "Nevermore." And, with one final flood of tears, she capitulated to them, and accepted their conclusion. Nevermore.

"I'm okay," she said. "Let's find the car and go. There's nothing to stay afoot here for. It's over."

It was over. And on the way to their automobile, she suddenly felt a surge of peace within her at the knowledge. Many things were over . . . her adolescence, tangled misunderstandings, shattered family ties, rebellion at inevitable occurrences. But now the end of her sorrow was over. Acceptance was beginning.

To M'Lady Kathryn

Marc Silberman

Once when the sun came
up blood red,
In the hair of the
Pageant of Dreams,
I smelled a garden
in your hair
And let myself wander
through the world
inside your eyes.

Now my life means
more to me.
Now my eyes can really
see,
That people and flowers
are one and the same
And there are no such
things as weeds.