

Mariclon's Cove

MARY ALICE KESSLER

It was a bright, brisk day. The foaming sea crashed gaily against shining rocks. The wind blew high and strong. My hair was torn back from my face; my wet face, so clean and free. I was free. The wind and the sea and I were free . . . free . . . free. Life had thrown me into a tossing, black-green world. A windy spray-world of clouds and burning sun and screaming gulls. My wet dungarees clung to my legs and I tasted the salt of a day at sea.

Suddenly I spied Mariclon's Cove. Ah, yes, that was it. Musical. The name was music. Mariclon. And what peace and subdued, happy solitude awaited me there. Cool, dew-carressed beachhead. Cool and green bathed in soft sun magic. No jagged boulders or crashing surf. Just lovely sun-kissed peace. I pulled hard on the keel handle. Too often had I missed the cove and been carried farther into an angry, treacherous ocean. Pull harder, me laddie. Heave. There, now. Ease her. Let her sail majestically, white sails billowing, proud. Steer her straight to shore. Lower that back sail. Slower . . . slower . . . drifting . . . lazy . . . easy . . . slower. The sand grated neath her hulk. Now, jump into the icy-green, lapping wavelets. Pull her fast. Steady. The hot white sand. Soft and sugary.

My head was hot and blond from long hours in the glaring sun. Hot and wind-blown. I ran from the cove onto one of the big rocks. A mad crash of surf sprayed me . . . cooling, refreshing me. Another . . . another. Beyond the cove stretched endless rock-bound beach. Tearing coastline — stark and friendless — frosted with sudsy sea. Far out, the water became black. Closer in, it was green and blue,

almost robin-egg blue near the cove. Shallower.

That bold, beautiful sea! Proud killer of men and ships. Spasmodic, sinister. Calm, smiling. I've seen you wild and black — tearing at the cot like some savage beast. Yes, and I've seen you gentle, mauve. Early morning. Silent, questioning. Come out and try me. Sport with me. Laugh at me — with me. Come out and try. Few, who have ventured into a gray sea of nothingness have ever laughed at you. Few. And I've seen you bright and green and bounding as you are now. Playful, cold, salty. Forgotten are the rotting ships and tear-stained faces of those left behind. The last gurgle of the drowning. The last heave of a settling stem. Forgotten. My proud sea, arch your back and fling waves of spray in my face. Wet me, and laugh with me.

I dashed back to my stretch of beach, where the thunderous breakers were quieted and only the shriek of gulls stabbed the slow laziness. I stretched on the sand and lay very still. My happy heartbeat. I loved all this so intensely that it hurt me inside. It made my stomach feel hard and sore. My passion for the sea.

I glanced toward the woods. At least sixty gulls had stolen into the beachhead as I had been dreaming. Lovely white and gray things. Scavengers like the sea, screaming and stealing. I raised my hand, and a splendid gray male screeched into the air, followed by his fellow scavengers. They soared wonderfully toward the water, oblivious of their beauty and their sad part in life's pattern, and settled lazily on bouncing little emerald ripples. They were annoyed with me.

I glanced to the nor' west. A coin-shaped mass of burnished copper was being devoured by black, pine-tipped woods. I had to make it for home. Had to hurry. I had stayed too long. Nose'er out . . . loose those rear sails and steer her to sea. Sea. Now dull and gray.

Palely tinted with a dying sun's blood. The wind, not cool, but cold and frightening. I was cold. Better get my mackinaw out. Cold. Frightening. Black, miserable sea. Stopping me. Wind. Get me home. Blow . . . shove me home.

I knew I wasn't going home I had known it all afternoon. All the glorious sun crowded afternoon. My grandmother once told me that I had premonitions, and I had felt all afternoon that I wasn't going home.

I was heading for those rocks. Those ugly rocks. Black and mystic in the twilight's grayness. Like the wail of a violin,

not quite there, and yet so real . . . and mystic.

My rudder was jammed. I struggled with it. God knows I struggled and worked frantically. Perhaps my grandmother was wrong. Maybe I didn't have premonitions. I was only imagining this. I was really heading straight for home. The rudder would unjam just in time to turn from the rocks (if I were headed for the rocks).

And then I saw them. High, mountainous in front of me. I felt the sea heaving, lurching beneath me . . . the boat's bottom scraped the first rocks. Smiling, gentle, mauve. You proud, tossing thing. You've got me. You'll tear me to ribbons. Ha! Ha! Mad sea. You haven't got me. Ho! Ho! You haven't got me.

It was a bright, brisk day. The foaming sea crashed gaily against shining rocks. The wind blew high and strong. An old, torn pair of dungarees hung from a rock.

Fantasies of The Night

LENA WILLKIE

Night reached greedy fingers across a leaden sky. In the west, a sullen November sunset faded into a melancholy gray. Naked trees swayed and bent and moaned under the whiplash of a winter wind. Leaves whirled and fell in a lifeless dance. Dull, brown, untidy lawns darkened in the fading light.

Darkness crept silently over the whole sky snuffing out what little light remained. The limbs of the trees lost their integrity and became a shapeless mass that bent closer and closer. A strong harsh wind pushed against me like a rude stranger. Bushes along the street reached out to clutch me.

A timid moon tried to assert itself

among enveloping clouds. The whole sullen atmosphere pressed down toward earth as if too tired to support itself. Only the sighing of the wind through the trees and the sly rustling of dead leaves broke the quiet. The arch of the trees over the sidewalk was made cavernous by the darkness. Light from the corner lamppost increased the gloom of the cavern ahead.

Surroundings lost their familiarity, made vague and unreal by the omnipresent night. Even the sidewalk was lost in the blackness. I felt isolated in the listening stillness. My steps quickened. I fought down a desire to run the last block. Home, at last! I ran up the steps, slipped through the door, and quickly shut it behind me.