

Episode

Barbara Croker

The room was large, yet it was oppressive. Though Margaret knew every corner, every piece of solid heavy furniture, she felt uneasy. The Swiss clock on the oak mantel chimed the hour. She listened to each stroke, concentrating on it, trying to prolong it for some reason she did not understand. The chimes were the only friendly sound in this unfriendly room.

Terry would be here soon. Perhaps today he would take her away. When she was little, he used to say that they would run away together. He would take her to China or Paris, and they would not ever come home. Terry had always been a wonderful brother; she had depended on him for everything. She was never even afraid of Father when Terry was around.

The clock on the mantel had stopped chiming now, the echo still trembled in the room. She walked to the window overlooking the quiet street. It was raining out, and streams of water ran in thin crooked lines down the panes. The glass felt cool against her cheek. Terry had said he would be here at seven o'clock. It was almost five after now.

She walked across the room and looked in the gold-framed mirror. Her image smiled back at her. She really did look pretty, she thought. She had bought the dress because Terry loved blue. He used to tell her she looked like the picture of a princess in their Grimm's Fairy Tales.

The clock struck seven-fifteen, and she started. The whole house was still. Suddenly she heard the front door knocker. As she smothered a cry and ran toward the hall, she heard the maid's footsteps on the marble floor. She leaned against the half-open door and listened.

"Why Mr. Terry! Welcome home!"

"Thanks, Ellen. I would like you to meet my fiancee, Miss Pembroke."

A soft eastern voice said sweetly, "Hello, Ellen. I'm happy to meet you."

Margaret didn't want to hear anymore. She tried to shut her mind to the laughter and voices until she heard Terry's voice.

"Tell Marg we're on our way to a party, would you, Ellen?" it said. "I haven't had time to see her. She'll understand, because we have to leave for Boston at eleven. I just wanted to stop by home to leave these things."

"Yes, sir, but she's been looking forward to—"

"Marion, you'll love Marg," Terry broke in. "She's really a good kid. Well, goodnight, Ellen. Just leave these boxes in my room."

Gay laughter floated into the room until the front door slammed. Margaret stood with her hand on the heavy knob. Her knuckles stood out white and hard. She kept hearing the deep voice saying, "She's really a good kid."

The chimes rang seven-thirty, and she began to sob wildly and uncontrollably. Outside it still rained as the streetlights flickered on.

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Echoes

And on the pool faint ripples then appear.
 With pensive heart I go
 Where velvet-petaled pansies grow
 And humbly turn their faces from the sun.
 The blazing sun

Imprisoned lies within a pool
 Of emerald: deep, silent, cool.
 The water like a jewel
 Reflects both sun and patterned bough
 That drips a frieze of greenness now.

A joyful bird
 Strings jeweled notes into a song
 And drops the notes down one by one.
 The heavy notes
 Dispel the quiet stillness of the air

—Joan Myers