

Lemuel returned to the Roane farm the following evening on horseback, with their purchases in his saddle bags. One way or another he had encountered the Squire, and the two men rode up the drive together with Lundy leading the way. Lundy ran to the springhouse to bark at Lily, he ran through the kitchen to bark at Deborah and Anne, and he ran out beneath the giant maple in the back yard to bark at Catherine, who had spread a blanket in the shade of its branches and was trying to occupy the unhappy, teething baby with demonstrations of the flight of its whirlybird seeds. His household thus alerted, Lundy ran back to trot alongside the horses, waving his tail's white flag.

The ladies flocked in to the yard, and they met the men with exclamations of delight and good cheer. Even Anne, after looking distracted and anxious all day, seemed to relax, and she greeted both men with smiles.

After tying his horse, Andrew strode up to Catherine and the sniffing Baby Elizabeth. He said, "I hope you will not think me a lazy man for paying my respects to two ladies with a single bow."

He removed his hat and paid his respects in a most elegant manner.

Catherine said, "I cannot speak for Herself, but I would like one all for Myself."

"My dear, for you, I have better than that." He bowed again to kiss her hand.

Giggling, Catherine said, "Now Elizabeth wants one, too."

"And for you," he said to the baby, "I have still better than that." He leaned in and kissed the baby's cheek before replacing his hat on his head. "Now, I pray you," he said, shaking his finger at Catherine, "do not oblige me to raise the stakes, as it were. My wife's sister is watching."

In truth, Lily was paying more attention to Lemuel, for at just that moment they heard her say, "Why, Lem! You've cut your hair!"

Catherine looked around and saw he had. Gone were the straying locks that had always made Catherine think of a mother who could not bear to shear her baby's first curls; for the first time Catherine could

see the skin on the back of his neck.

Anne added to Lily's sentiment by blurting, "It's about time!"

Andrew wheezed with silent laughter, and Catherine clapped her hand to her mouth and turned away to laugh and wince at the same time. "Oh, poor Lem!" she said to Andrew.

"Now," Andrew said as he took the baby from her shoulder and offered her his arm, "I am certain the words are as dulcet music to his ears. She has noticed he has hair, after all!"

"Oh yes," Catherine agreed. "I am certain it is most gratifying to a man when ladies notice he has hair and elbows and suchlike."

"It is indeed a promotion from merely having one's existence noted. One of these days she's bound to notice he has such things as sighs and glances, and then...!"

Catherine would not dignify this pointed elision with more than a smile. Andrew led her back to the blanket beneath the maple and helped her to sit down.

She explained, "I was just showing Herself how the whirlybirds fly." She scooped up a handful from the blanket and tossed them in the air to watch them come twirling down.

"Whirlybirds?" Andrew asked. "What a cunning name. In my youth we called them kitty-keys."

He lowered himself onto the blanket and leaned back against the trunk of the tree, propping up the slumping baby on his lap.

"Kitty-keys?" Catherine smiled. "Keys for unlocking cats?"

"Well, let us just see about that." He sat up and reached out to tickle one of her dimples with a papery seed. "Any secrets coming out yet?"

Catherine giggled at first, but she turned her head away when she remembered the secrets she did have, the sad and the sweet.

"Ah!" he said, more gentle than teasing. "I see the sparkling of a veritable chest of jewels. But I am no rifler of hidden treasure, have no fear. You may keep your secrets to yourself." He gave the seed a conclusive final twist in her dimple's lock, and he tossed it away behind his back.

Another pained giggle escaped from her as Catherine watched it

flutter down, and she realized she was disappointed he had given up his treasure hunting so easily. He himself had secrets she hoped he would sell, if only she could bear parting with a few of her own. She had been wanting to speak to him alone for days.

“Andrew,” she said, “I have a... a question to ask you. Or a favor. Oh, I’m not sure what it is!”

“From your part, my dear, it can only be an opportunity to do myself the great pleasure and honor of serving you.”

Catherine looked up at him and smiled. Elizabeth had pulled his hat from his head and left a rakish swoop of formerly well-styled curls in its place, but his face was full of warmth and compassion, and his eyes were even a little sad. She knew his florid gallantry was only a game he played, his unflagging good humor only a mask. She knew, perhaps, because she played such games and wore such disguises, too.

She said, “I wish you would tell me his name. Only his Christian name, that’s all I care to know.”

He sighed and settled Elizabeth on his knee. Catherine knew he would not ask her whose name she meant, and he did not.

“Edward said you might know it,” she explained, “since you must have witnessed the deed when he bought the land. His name isn’t John, you know. Or is it?”

Andrew looked as if he was about to say something, but Elizabeth chose that moment to bite down on the brim of his hat, and he had to stop to rescue it.

“He didn’t exactly tell me it wasn’t,” she admitted. “But he told me his name was... Nobody.”

“Nobody?” Andrew asked. “Indeed? With a capital N?”

“I suppose so.”

“Hmm! Decidedly, the young man has more poetry in him than I had given him credit for. Perhaps he wishes you to call him Nobody, as you wish to be called Cat, and Elizabeth wishes to be called Herself, and I wish to be called Darling.”

Catherine refused to smile. She wished he would be a little more serious, for once. “Shall I pray every night for Nobody?” she asked.

“Shall I ask the Lord every night to see that Nobody be warm and dry, that Nobody have enough to eat?”

“Hmm! I see your difficulty. I daresay the Lord will understand which Nobody you mean, but if you have a habit of praying aloud, your bedmates will think you a most hard-hearted woman.”

Finally Catherine laughed in spite of herself. Foiled of her plan to gnaw on his hat, Elizabeth had slumped forward onto Andrew’s chest and was pawing over the complicated arrangement of neckcloth, coat buttons, waistcoat buttons, watch chain, and other masculine accoutrements. Andrew fended off her predations with gentle patience.

“Do you know his name, in fact?” Catherine asked.

“I could not have forgotten it,” he admitted. “But are you certain you want to know it? That is, are you certain you wish to learn it from me? You might wait for him to tell you himself.”

Catherine gave a sad shrug. “That seems unlikely to ever happen. Edward ‘came to an understanding’ with him about that.”

“Ah, my dear, that is perhaps but a question of time and trust. A man may befriend a wolf, but it will still be some time before he trusts it among his lambs.”

“I don’t believe Edward has gone so far as befriending him. I don’t believe he wants friends at all. He told Edward as much.”

“Hmm. He did come to the log-rolling.”

“I don’t know why.”

“No. Men are incomprehensible creatures, in point of fact. What’s that?” he asked in answer to one of Elizabeth’s squeals.

“‘Reprehensible’ you say? My dear demoiselle! Fie!”

“Oh, don’t listen to her,” Catherine said, scooting over beside him so she could pull Elizabeth onto her lap. “She is the worst beard-puller, belly-stomper, and general abuser of men I have ever seen. Worse than her Mama!”

She lifted the baby up to kiss her, and Elizabeth demonstrated the stomping power of her fat legs by bouncing on Catherine’s knee. Andrew combed his hair straight with his fingers and leaned back comfortably against the tree to watch them play. In the front yard,

behind the house, they heard Lily's high voice talking to Lemuel, but they couldn't make out Lemuel's grave replies.

"What do you know about him besides his name?" Catherine asked. "You needn't tell me. I only wonder how much is known of him."

"Not much, I am afraid. I only saw to the deed. No one has brought a suit against him yet, and as a reward for keeping the township's peace, I like to leave people in their own."

"You are truly a prince among squires."

Andrew smiled at her, but he said, "You could only wish I had a bit more of an ear for gossip."

Catherine smiled back, unable to deny it in the present circumstances. She knew she ought to let the matter drop, but it was impossible to resist talking to someone about the man—someone who would not tease and insinuate, as Anne, Lily, and Deborah did, but who simply seemed to understand.

"I do fear there is some tragedy in his past, however," she said. "Don't you? Otherwise, why shut oneself away forever from relations with one's family and friends, and even strangers?"

"Forever! My dear, with what nonchalance do you toss off such a weighty word, which taxes all my strength even to lift! He cannot remain hidden in his hollow forever. For one thing, he'll not last the winter."

"Then that would be forever," Catherine said quietly, smarting a bit over the accusation of nonchalance.

"Nonsense. He's young and strong and hungry. His limbs are full of fire. A man of that age cannot simply lay himself down and die—alas, perhaps, for him! He cannot help but move and strive to live."

Catherine was not so certain of that. At least, she did not know whether Andrew's rule was expected to hold for women. She was convinced that if not for Anne and Deborah, she would have lain in her blood-spotted nightgown on that mattress in Pittsburgh until she'd died.

Andrew said, "You may well worry that he's not as warm or as dry as he might be, or that he subsists on little more than locusts and wild

honey, as it were, but I, for one, do not expect this outbreak of his to do lasting harm. Nor do I expect it to last, once he sees how little it helps. There, my dear, if I am not mistaken, is a man who is trying to run, not from a crime, nor from a heartbreak, but from himself. And I could have told him that that won't do any good. But there is no use telling a young man anything. Some lessons can only be learnt in the school of experience."

He took the baby back from Catherine and set her up on the blanket before him. Elizabeth wobbled and flopped forward, but she held herself up with one hand and yanked on the fabric of Andrew's trouser leg with the other.

"Take our young pupil, here," he said. "A lot of good it would do me to explain to her the finer points of sitting up unaided. We shall just have to let her fall a few times."

Catherine gave the baby a sad, unsatisfied smile, then looked down to rifle through the scattered maple seeds. She had talked to Andrew, but she had not learned anything about the reclusive doctor after all. Andrew had only told her to wait, as if waiting would wear away the granite of Edward's made-up mind. He had even told her not to worry too much about the poor man. Catherine wanted to worry.

Then Andrew said gently, "Be patient with him, my dear. We men are slow to learn, and slower still to admit we were wrong."

"Patient with whom?" Catherine asked. "With Edward?"

"No, with Paul. His name is Paul."