

SUSANNA CLARKE

author of the bestselling JONATHAN STRANGE & Mr NORRELL



THE LADIES
of
GRACE ADIEU

and other stories



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Praise for *The Ladies of Grace Adieu*

"Tantalizing . . . those who were left thirsting for more, as well as the uninitiated, can get a fresh taste of Clarke's magical world in these stories . . . All the intellectual elements that won Clarke so much critical acclaim for her novel are here . . . The stories in *The Ladies of Grace Adieu* have a magic and a sleight of hand that keeps readers turning pages because they care about what happens to the characters . . . *The Ladies of Grace Adieu* proves enchanting."

—*Miami Herald*

"A sly, frequently comical, feminist revision of the richly detailed fictional history that Clarke wrote in her 2004 novel."

—*Chicago Tribune*

"A lovely companion piece to the novel. . . with illustrations by Charles Vess, an artist whose style is reminiscent of the great Arthur Rackham, harking back to the early 20th-century golden age of children's book illustrations . . . While *Ladies of Grace Adieu* might inspire new readers to buckle down, do those pushups, and pick up the 782-page *Jonathan Strange*, its more likely audience is those who have already finished that novel and are experiencing such withdrawal that they are perusing scientific texts about sea cucumbers, searching for footnotes."

—*Christian Science Monitor*

"If you read Clarke's first book, you will take to *Ladies* like jam to warm scones . . . The author's wry, knowing narrative voice owes debts to Jane Austen, Bram Stoker and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and the delightful illustrations by Charles Vess borrow from 19th-century fairy-tale collections, art deco and Edward Gorey."

—*Seattle Times*

"Whimsical and magical . . . Beautifully illustrated by Eisner and World Fantasy Award-winning artist Charles Vess, *The Ladies of Grace Adieu* offers a double dose of magic: entertainment for the eyes and the imagination."

—*Denver Post*

"Fans of her single novel will enjoy all of the stories in *The Ladies of Grace Adieu*. They are uniformly clever and meticulously composed, knowledgeable of folk traditions while giving them a modern spin."

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"*The Ladies of Grace Adieu* is like a tapas plate, delicately spiced and carefully presented . . . In essence, it's a collection of fairy tales, but Clarke's version of fairies is as refined and idiosyncratic as her writing . . . For those who haven't read *Jonathan Strange* yet, *Grace Adieu* could just as well serve as a tempting appetizer, a way to ease into Clarke's magical and thoroughly winning world."

—*Onion*

"Fans of Susanna Clarke who loved her long, dense, carefully embroidered meander through Napoleonic England—the best-selling 800-page *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*—will be delighted . . . Clarke presents eight short stories that are new and captivating, and that occupy—psychologically, and sometimes physically—the same antique landscape explored so thoroughly

her first novel . . . Clarke is having fun here, clearly. We should, too."

—**Buffalo News**

"Revisiting characters and landscapes she created in her best-selling *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*, Clarke has crafted eight quirky and devious stories to delight her fans . . . Ms. Clarke uses the language, diction, and historical settings beautifully, just hinting at Jane Austen. Each character is elegantly drawn and comes to life on the page. These stories are charming, engaging, and deceptively simple."

—**Booklist**

"Beguiling narrative energy and mischievous wit . . . Irresistible storytelling, from a splendidly gifted enchantress."

—**Kirkus Reviews** (starred review)

THE LADIES OF GRACE ADIEU
AND OTHER STORIES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell

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THE LADIES
of
GRACE ADIEU

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ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES VESS

BLOOMSBURY

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For my parents, Janet and Stuart Clarke

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[Introduction](#)

[by Professor James Sutherland, Director of Sidhe Studies, University of Aberdeen](#)

I HAVE APPROACHED THIS collection with two very modest aims in mind. The first is to throw some sort of light on the development of magic in the British Isles at different periods; the second is to introduce the reader to some of the ways in which Faerie can impinge upon our own quotidian world, in other words to create a sort of primer to Faerie and fairies.

The title story, "The Ladies of Grace Adieu", falls into the first category, with a poignant depiction of the difficulties faced by female magicians during the early nineteenth century - a time when their work was simply dismissed by their male counterparts (here amply represented by Gilbert Norrell and Jonathan Strange). The events of the story were referred to in a somewhat obscure novel published a few years ago. Should any readers happen to be acquainted with *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell* (Bloomsbury, London, 2004), then I direct their attention to a footnote in chapter 43 which describes how Jonathan Strange went to some trouble to extract his clergyman brother-in-law from a living in Gloucestershire and get him a different living in Northamptonshire. "The Ladies of Grace Adieu" provides a fuller explanation of Strange's rather enigmatic actions.

"On Lickerish Hill" and "Antickes and Frets" both describe the somewhat easier, less fraught relationship with fairies and magic which our English and Scottish ancestors once enjoyed.

"Mr Simonelli or the Fairy Widower" is an extract from the diaries of Alessandro Simonelli. Simonelli is, of course, a monstrously irritating writer; at every turn he displays the conceit and arrogance of his race. (And I am talking here of the *English* and not of anyone else). An editor is advised to approach his diaries with caution. Simonelli published them first in the mid-1820s. Twenty years later he revised them and published them again. He did the same thing in the late

1860s. Indeed throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century his diaries and memoirs were being continually rewritten and brought out in new editions; and at each stage Simonelli reworked his past in order to promote his latest obsession whether that be ancient Sumerian history, the education of women, the improvement of *Sidhe* (fairy) morals, the provision of bibles for the heathen or the efficacy of a new sort of soap. In an attempt to circumvent this problem I have chosen an extract from the first edition which describes the beginning of Simo-nelli's extraordinary career. We can but hope that it bears some sort of relation to what actually happened.

In the years that followed Waterloo dealings between the *Sidhe* (fairies) and the British increased. British politicians debated the "Fairy Question" this way and that, but all agreed it was vital to the national interest. Yet if these stories demonstrate nothing else it is the appalling unpreparedness of the average nineteenth-century gentleman when he accidentally stumbled into Faerie. The Duke of Wellington is a case in point. Women do seem to have fared somewhat better in these perplexing circumstances; the heroine of "Mrs Mabb", Venetia Moore, consistently demonstrates an ability to intuit the rules of Faerie, which the older and more experienced Duke is quite without.

"Tom Brightwind or How the Fairy Bridge Was Built at Thoresby" remains a tale replete with interest for the student of Faerie. However I see no reason to revise my earlier assessment of the story given in 1999 (and deserving, I think, to be more widely known). The reader will find it prefacing the tale itself.

I have chosen to finish with a story from that wonderful writer, John Waterbury, Lord Portishead. Apart from the period 1808-1816 when he was under the thumb of Gilbert Norrell, Waterbury's writings and in particular his retelling of old tales of the Raven King are a continual delight. "John Uskglass and the Cumbrian Charcoal Burner" is an example of that genre of stories (much loved by the medievals) in which the rich and powerful are confounded by their social inferiors. (I am thinking here of the tales of Robin Hood or the ballad, "King John and the Abbot of Canterbury"). In medieval Northern England no one was richer or more powerful than John Uskglass and consequently Northern English folklore abounds with tales in which Uskglass tumbles down holes in the ground, falls in love with unsuitable ladies or for various complicated and unlikely reasons finds himself obliged to cook porridge for harassed innkeepers' wives.

The sad truth is that nowadays - as at all periods of our history - misinformation about Faerie assails us from every side. It is through stories such as these that the serious student of *Sidhe* culture may make a window for herself into Faerie and snatch a glimpse of its complexity, its contradictions and its perilous fascinations.

James Sutherland Aberdeen, April 2006



ABOVE ALL REMEMBER this: that magic belongs as much to the heart as to the head and everything which is done, should be done from love or joy or righteous anger.

And if we honour this principle we shall discover that our magic is much greater than all the sum of all the spells that were ever taught. Then magic is to us as flight is to the birds, because then our magic comes from the dark and dreaming heart, just as the flight of a bird comes from the heart. And we will feel the same joy in performing that magic that the bird feels as it casts itself into the void and we will know that magic is part of what a man is, just as flight is part of what a bird is.

This understanding is a gift to us from the Raven King, the dear king of all magicians, who stands between England and the Other Lands, between all wild creatures and the world of men.

From *The Book of the Lady Catherine of Winchester* (1209-67), translated from the Latin by Jane Tobias (1775-1819)

When Mrs Field died, her grieving widower looked around him and discovered that the world seemed quite as full of pretty, young women as it had been in his youth. It further occurred to him that he was just as rich as ever and that, though his home already contained one pretty, young woman (his niece and ward, Cassandra Parbringer), he did not believe that another would go amiss. He did not think that he was at all changed from what he had been and Cassandra was entirely of his opinion, for (she thought to herself) I am sure, sir, that you were every bit as tedious at twenty-one as you are at forty-nine. So Mr Field married again. The lady was pretty and clever and only a year older than Cassandra, but, in her defence, we may say that she had no money and must either marry Mr Field or go and be a teacher in a school. The second Mrs Field and Cassandra were very pleased with each other and soon became very fond of each other. Indeed the sad truth was that they were a great deal fonder of each other than either was of Mr Field. There was another lady who was their friend (her name was Miss Tobias) and the three were often seen walking together near the village where lived - Grace Adieu in Gloucestershire.

Cassandra Parbringer at twenty was considered an ideal of a certain type of beauty to which

some gentlemen are particularly partial. A white skin was agreeably tinged with pink. Light blue eyes harmonized very prettily with silvery-gold curls and the whole was a picture in which womanliness and childishness were sweetly combined. Mr Field, a gentleman not remarkable for his powers of observation, confidently supposed her to have a character childishly naive and full of pleasant, feminine submission in keeping with her face.

Her prospects seemed at this time rather better than Mrs Field's had been. The people of Grace Adieu had long since settled it amongst themselves that Cassandra should marry the Rector, Mr Henry Woodhope and Mr Woodhope himself did not seem at all averse to the idea.

"Mr Woodhope likes you, Cassandra, I think," said Mrs Field.

"Does he?"

Miss Tobias (who was also in the room) said, "Miss Parbringer is wise and keeps her opinion of Mr Woodhope to herself."

"Oh," cried Cassandra, "you may know it if you wish. Mr Woodhope is Mr Field stretched out a little to become more thin and tall. He is younger and therefore more disposed to be agreeable and his wits are rather sharper. But when all is said and done he is only Mr Field come again."

"Why then do you give him encouragement?" asked Mrs Field. "

"Because I suppose that I must marry someone and Mr Woodhope has this to recommend him - that he lives in Grace Adieu and that in marrying him I need never be parted from my dear Mrs Field."

"It is a very poor ambition to wish to marry a Mr Field of any sort," sighed Mrs Field. "Have you nothing better to wish for?"

Cassandra considered. "I have always had a great desire to visit Yorkshire," she said. "I imagine it to be just like the novels of Mrs Radcliffe."

"It is exactly like everywhere else," said Miss Tobias.

"Oh, Miss Tobias," said Cassandra, "how can you say so? If magic does not linger in Yorkshire where may we find it still? 'Upon the moors, beneath the stars, With the Kings wild Company/ *That is my idea of Yorkshire.*'"

"But," said Miss Tobias, "a great deal of time has passed since the Kings wild Company was last there and in the meantime Yorkshiremen have acquired tollgates and newspapers and stagecoaches and circulating libraries and everything most modern and commonplace."

Cassandra sniffed. "You disappoint me," she said.

Miss Tobias was governess to two little girls at a great house in the village, called Winter's Realm. The parents of these children were dead and the people of Grace Adieu were fond of telling each other that it was no house for children, being too vast and gloomy and full of odd-shaped rooms and strange carvings. The younger child was indeed often fearful and often plagued with nightmares. She seemed, poor little thing, to believe herself haunted by owls. There was nothing in the world she feared so much as owls. No one else had ever seen the owls, but the house was old and full of cracks and holes to let them in and full of fat mice to tempt them so perhaps it were true. The governess was not much liked in the village: she was too tall, too fond of books, too grave, and - a curious thing never smiled unless there was some thing to smile at. Yet Miss Ursula and Miss Flora were very prettily behaved children and seemed greatly attached to Miss Tobias.

Despite their future greatness as heiresses, in the article of relations the children were as poor as churchmice. Their only guardian was a cousin of their dead mother. In all the long years of their orphanhood this gentleman had only visited them twice and once had written them a very short letter at Christmas. But, because Captain Winbright wore a redcoat and was an officer in the _____ shires, all his absences and silences were forgiven and Miss Ursula and Miss Flora

(though only eight and four years old) had begun to shew all the weakness of their sex by preferring him to all the rest of their acquaintance.

It was said that the great-grandfather of these children had studied magic and had left behind him a library. Miss Tobias was often in the library and what she did there no one knew. Of late her two friends, Mrs Field and Miss Parbringer, had also been at the house a great deal. But it was generally supposed that they were visiting the children. For ladies (as every one knows) do not study magic. Magicians themselves are another matter - ladies (as every one knows) are willing to see magicians. (How else to explain the great popularity of Mr Norrell in all the fashionable drawing rooms of London? Mr Norrell is almost as famous for his insignificant face and long silences as he is for his incomparable magic and Mr Norrell's pupil, Mr Strange, with his almost handsome face and lively conversation is welcome where ever he goes.) This then, we will suppose, must explain a question which Cassandra Parbringer put to Miss Tobias on a day September, a very fine day on the cusp of summer and autumn.

"And have you read Mr Strange's piece in *The Review*? What is your opinion of it?"

"I thought Mr Strange expressed himself with his customary clarity. Any one, whether or not they understand any thing of the theory and practice of magic, might understand him. He was witty and sly, as he generally is. It was altogether an admirable piece of writing. He is a clever man, I think."

"You speak exactly like a governess."

"Is that so surprizing?"

"But I did not wish to hear your opinion as a governess, I wished to hear your opinion as a . . . never mind. What did you think of the ideas?"

"I did not agree with any of them."

"Ah, *that* was what I wished to hear."

"Modern magicians," said Mrs Field, "seem to devote more of their energies to belittling magic than to doing any. We are constantly hearing how certain sorts of magic are too perilous for men to attempt (although they appear in all the old stories). Or they cannot be attempted any more because the prescription is lost. Or it never existed. And, as for the Otherlanders, Mr Norrell and Mr Strange do not seem to know if there are such persons in the world. Nor do they appear to care very much, for, even if they do exist, then it seems we have no business talking to them. And the Raven King, we learn, was only a dream of fevered medieval brains, addled with too much magic."

"Mr Strange and Mr Norrell mean to make magic as commonplace as their own dull persons," said Cassandra. "They deny the King for fear that comparison with his great magic would reveal the poverty of their own."

Mrs Field laughed. "Cassandra," she said, "does not know how to leave off abusing Mr Strange."

Then, from the particular sins of the great Mr Strange and the even greater Mr Norrell, they were led to talk of the viciousness of men in general and from there, by a natural progression, a discussion of whether Cassandra should marry Mr Woodhope.

While the ladies of Grace Adieu were talking, Mr Jonathan Strange (the magician and second phenomenon of the Age) was seated in the library of Mr Gilbert Norrell (the magician and first phenomenon of the Age). Mr Strange was informing Mr Norrell that he intended to be absent from London for some weeks. "I hope, sir, that it will cause you no inconvenience. The next article for the *Edinburgh Magazine* is done — unless, sir, you wish to make changes (which I think you may very well do without my assistance)."

Mr Norrell inquired with a frown where Mr Strange was going, for, as was well known in

London, the elder magician - a quiet, dry little man - did not like to be without the younger for even so much as a day, or half a day. He did not even like to spare Mr Strange to speak to other people.

"I am going to Gloucestershire, sir. I have promised Mrs Strange that I will take her to visit her brother, who is Rector of a village there. You have heard me speak of Mr Henry Wood-hope I think?"

The next day was rainy in Grace Adieu and Miss Tobias was unable to leave Winter's Realm. She passed the day with the children, teaching them Latin ("which I see no occasion to omit simply on account of your sex. One day you may have a use for it,") and in telling them stories of Thomas of Dundale's captivity in the Other Lands and how he became the first human servant of the Raven King.

When the second day was fine and dry, Miss Tobias took the opportunity to slip away for half an hour to visit Mrs Field, leaving the children in the care of the nursery maid. It so happened that Mr Field had gone to Cheltenham (a rare occurrence, for, as Mrs Field remarked, there never was a man so addicted to home. "I fear we make it far too comfortable for him," she said) and so Miss Tobias took advantage of his absence to make a visit of a rather longer duration than usual. (At the time there seemed no harm in it.)

On her way back to Winter's Realm she passed the top of Grace and Angels Lane, where the church stood and, next to it, the Rectory. A very smart barouche was just turning from the high road into the lane. This in itself was interesting enough for Miss Tobias did not recognize the carriage or its occupants, but what made it more extraordinary still was that it was driven with great confidence and spirit by a lady. At her side, upon the barouche box, a gentleman sat, hands in pockets, legs crossed, greatly at his ease. His air was rather striking. "He is not exactly handsome," thought Miss Tobias, "his nose is too long. Yet he has that arrogant air that handsome men have."

It seemed to be a day for visitors. In the yard of Winter's Realm was a gig and two high-spirited horses. Davey, the coachman and a stable boy were attending to them, watched by a thin dark man - a very slovenly fellow (somebody's servant) - who was leaning against the wall of the kitchen garden to catch the sun and smoking a pipe. His shirt was undone at the front and as Miss Tobias passed, he slowly scratched his bare chest with a long, dark finger and smiled at her.

As long as Miss Tobias had known the house, the great hall had always been the same: full of nothing but silence and shadows and dustmotes turning in great slanting beams of daylight, but today there were echoes of loud voices and music and high, excited laughter. She opened the door to the dining parlour. The table was laid with the best glasses, the best silver and the best dinner service. A meal had been prepared and put upon the table, but then, apparently, forgotten. Travelling trunks and boxes had been brought in and clothes pulled out and then abandoned; men's and women's clothing were tumbled together quite promiscuously over the floor. A man in an officer's redcoat was seated on a chair with Miss Ursula on his knee. He was holding a glass of wine, which he put to her lips and then, as she tried to drink, he took the glass away. He was laughing and the child was laughing. Indeed, from her flushed face and excited air Miss Tobias could not be entirely sure that she had not already drunk of the contents. In the middle of the room another man (a very handsome man), also in uniform, was standing among all the clothes and trinkets and laughing with them. The younger child, Miss Flora, stood on one side, watching them all with great, wondering eyes. Miss Tobias went immediately to her and took her hand. In the gloom at the back of the dining parlour a young woman was seated at the pianoforte, playing an Italian song very badly. Perhaps she knew that it was bad, for she seemed very reluctant to

play at all. The song was full of long pauses; she sighed often and she did not look happy. The quite suddenly, she stopt.

The handsome man in the middle of the room turned to her instantly. "Go on, go on," he cried. "We are all attending, I promise you. It is," and here he turned back to the other man and winked at him, "delightful. We are going to teach country dances to my little cousins. Fred is the best dancing master in the world. So you must play, you know."

Wearily the young lady began again.

The seated man, whose name it seemed was Fred, happened at this moment to notice Miss Tobias. He smiled pleasantly at her and begged her pardon.

"Oh," cried the handsome man, "Miss Tobias will forgive us, Fred. Miss Tobias and I are old friends."

"Good afternoon, Captain Winbright," said Miss Tobias.

By now Mr and Mrs Strange were comfortably seated in Mr Woodhope's pleasant drawing room. Mrs Strange had been shewn all over Mr Woodhope's Rectory and had spoken to the housekeeper and the cook and the dairymaid and the other maid and the stableman and the gardener and the gardener's boy. Mr Woodhope had seemed most anxious to have a woman's opinion on everything and would scarcely allow Mrs Strange leave to sit down or take food or drink until she had approved the house, the servants and all the housekeeping arrangements. So, like a good, kind sister, she had looked at it all and smiled upon all the servants and racked her brains for easy questions to ask them and then declared herself delighted.

"And I promise you, Henry," she said with a smile, "that Miss Parbringer will be equally pleased."

"He is blushing," said Jonathan Strange, raising his eyes from his newspaper. "We have come, Henry, with the sole purpose of seeing Miss Parbringer (of whom you write so much) and when we have seen her, we will go away again."

"Indeed? Well, I hope to invite Mrs Field and her niece to meet you at the earliest opportunity."

"Oh, there is no need to trouble yourself," said Strange, "for we have brought telescopes. We will stand at bedroom windows and spy her out, as she goes about the village."

Strange did indeed get up and go to the window as he spoke. "Henry," he said, "I like your church exceedingly. I like that little wall that goes around the building and the trees, and holds them all in tight. It makes the place look like a ship. If you ever get a good strong wind then church and trees will all sail off together to another place entirely."

"Strange," said Henry Woodhope, "you are quite as ridiculous as ever."

"Do not mind him, Henry," said Arabella Strange. "He has the mind of a magician. They are all a little mad."

"Except Norrell," said Strange.

"Strange, I would ask you, as a friend, to do no magic while you are here. We are a very quiet village."

"My dear Henry," said Strange, "I am not a street conjuror with a booth and a yellow curtain. I do not intend to set up in a corner of the churchyard to catch trade. These days Admirals and Rear Admirals and Vice Admirals and all His Majesty's Ministers send me respectful letters requesting my services and (what is much more) pay me well for them. I very much doubt if there is any one in Grace Adieu who could afford me."

"What room is this?" asked Captain Winbright.

"This was old Mr Enderwhild's bedroom, sir," said Miss Tobias.

"The magician?"

"The magician."

~~"And where did he keep all his hoard, Miss Tobias? You have been here long enough to wink it out. There are sovereigns, I dare say, hidden away in all sorts of odd holes and corners."~~

"I never heard so, sir."

"Come, Miss Tobias, what do old men learn magic for, except to find each other's piles of gold? What else is magic good for?" A thought seemed to trouble him. "They shew no sign of inheriting the family genius, do they? The children, I mean. No, of course. Who ever heard of women doing magic?"

"There have been two female magicians, sir. Both highly regarded. The Lady Catherine of Winchester, who taught Martin Pale, and Gregory Absalom's daughter, Maria, who was mistress of the Shadow House for more than a century."

He did not seem greatly interested. "Shew me some other rooms," he said. They walked down another echoing corridor, which, like much of the great, dark house, had fallen into the possession of mice and spiders.

"Are my cousins healthy children?"

"Yes, sir."

He was silent and then he said, "Well, of course, it may not last. There are so many childish illnesses, Miss Tobias. I myself, when only six or seven, almost died of the red spot. Have these children had the red spot?"

"No, sir."

"Indeed? Our grandparents understood these things better, I think. They would not permit themselves to get overfond of children until they had got past all childhood's trials and maladies. It is a good rule. Do not get overfond of children."

He caught her eye and reddened. Then laughed. "Why, it is only a joke. How solemn you look. Ah, Miss Tobias, I see how it is. You have borne all the responsibility for this house and for my cousins, my rich little cousins, for far too long. Women should not have to bear such burdens alone. Their pretty white shoulders were not made for it. But, see, I am come to help you now. And Fred. Fred has a great mind to be a cousin too. Fred is very fond of children."

"And the lady, Captain Winbright? Will she stay and be another cousin with you and the other gentleman?"

He smiled confidingly at her. His eyes seemed such a bright, laughing blue and his smile so open and unaffected, that it took a woman of Miss Tobias's great composure not to smile with him.

"Between ourselves she has been a little ill-used by a brother officer in the _____ shires. But I am such a soft-hearted fellow - the sight of a woman's tears can move me to almost any thing."

So said Captain Winbright in the corridor, but when they entered the dining parlour again, the sight of a woman's tears (for the young lady was crying at that moment) moved him only to be rude to her. Upon her saying his name, gently and somewhat apprehensively, he turned upon her and cried, "Oh, why do you not go back to Brighton? You could you know, very easily. That would be the best thing for you."

"Reigate," she said gently.

He looked at her much irritated. "Aye, Reigate," he said.

She had a sweet, timorous face, great dark eyes and a little rosebud mouth, for ever trembling on the brink of tears. But it was the kind of beauty that soon evaporates when any thing at all of the nature of suffering comes near it and she had, poor thing, been very unhappy of late. She reminded Miss Tobias of a child's rag doll, pretty enough at the beginning, but very sad and pitiful once its rag stuffing were gone. She looked up at Miss Tobias. "I never thought . . ." she

said and lapsed into tears.

Miss Tobias was silent a moment. "Well," she said at last, "perhaps you were not brought up it."

That evening Mr Field fell asleep in the parlour again. This had happened to him rather often recently.

It happened like this. The servant came into the room with a note for Mrs Field and she began to read it. Then, as his wife read, Mr Field began to feel (as he expressed it to himself) "all cobwebby" with sleep. After a moment or two it seemed to him that he woke up and the evening continued in its normal course, with Cassandra and Mrs Field sitting one on either side of the fire. Indeed Mr Field spent a very pleasant evening - the kind of evening he loved to spend, attended to by the two ladies. That it was only the dream of such an evening (for the poor, silly man was indeed asleep) did not in any way detract from his enjoyment of it.

While he slept, Mrs Field and Cassandra were hurrying along the lane to Winter's Realm.

In the Rectory Henry Woodhope and Mrs Strange had said their goodnights but Mr Strange proposed to continue reading a while. His book was a Life of Martin Pale by Thaddeus Hickman. He had reached Chapter 26 where Hickman discussed some theories, which he attributed to Martin Pale, that sometimes magicians, in times of great need, might find themselves capable of much greater acts of magic than they had ever learnt or even heard of before.

"Oh," said Strange with much irritation, "this is the most complete stuff and nonsense."

"Goodnight, Jonathan," said Arabella and kissed him, just above his frown.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, not raising his eyes from the book.

"And the young woman," whispered Mrs Field, "who is she?"

Miss Tobias raised an eye-brow and said, "She says that she is Mrs Winbright. But Captain Winbright says that she is not. I had not supposed it to be a point capable of so wide an interpretation."

"And if any thing were to happen . . . to the children, I mean," whispered Mrs Field, "then Captain Winbright might benefit in some way?"

"Oh, he would certainly be a very rich man and whatever he has come here to escape - whether it be debts or scandal - would presumably hold no more fears for him."

The three ladies were in the children's bedroom. Miss Tobias sat somewhere in the dark, wrapped in a shawl. Two candles bloomed in the vast dark room, one near to the children's bed and the other upon a little rickety table by the door, so that any one entering the room would instantly be seen. Somewhere in the house, at the end of a great many long, dark corridors, could be heard the sound of a man singing and another laughing.

From the bed Miss Flora anxiously inquired if there were any owls in the room.

Miss Tobias assured her there were none.

"Yet I think they may still come," said Miss Flora in a fright, "if you do not stay."

Miss Tobias said that they would stay for a while. "Be quiet now," she said, "and Miss Parbringer will tell you a story⁷, if you ask her."

"What story shall I tell you?" asked Cassandra.

"A story of the Raven King," said Miss Ursula.

"Very well," said Cassandra.

This then is the story which Cassandra told the children.

"Before the Raven King was a Icing at all, but only a Raven Child, he lived in a very wonderful house with his uncle and his aunt. (These were not really his relations at all, but only a kind gentleman and lady who had taken him to live with them.) One day his uncle, who was reading books of magic in his great library, sent for the Raven Child and inquired politely how

he did. The Raven Child replied that he did very well.

" 'Hmmp, well,' said Uncle Auberon, 'as I am your guardian and protector, little human child I had better make sure of it. Shew me the dreams you had last night.' So the Raven Child took out his dreams and Uncle Auberon made a space for them on the library table. There were a hundred odd things on that table; books on unnatural history; a map shewing the relative positions of Masculine Duplicity and Feminine Integrity (and how to get from one to the other) and a set of beautiful brass instruments in a mahogany box, all very cunningly contrived to measure Ambition and Jealousy, Love and Self-sacrifice, Loyalty to the State and Dreams of Regicide and many other Vices and Virtues which it might be useful to know about. All these things Uncle Auberon put on the floor, for he was not a very tidy person and people were forever scolding him about it. Then Uncle Auberon spread the Raven Child's dreams out on the table and peered at them through little wire spectacles.

" 'Why,' cried Uncle Auberon, 'here is a dream of a tall black tower in a dark wood in the snow. The tower is all in ruins, like broken teeth. Black, ragged birds fly round and round and you are inside that tower and cannot get out. Little human child, when you had this terrible dream, was you not afraid?'

" 'No, Uncle,' said the Raven Child, 'last night I dreamt of the tower where I was born and of the ravens who brought me water to drink when I was too young even to crawl. Why should I be afraid?'

"So Uncle Auberon looked at the next dream and when he saw it he cried out loud. 'But here is a dream of cruel eyes a-glittering and wicked jaws a-slavering. Little human child, when you had this terrible dream, was you not afraid?'

" 'No, Uncle,' said the Raven Child, 'last night I dreamt of the wolves who suckled me and who lay down beside me and kept me warm when I was too young even to crawl. Why should I be afraid?'

"So Uncle Auberon looked at the next dream and when he saw it he shivered and said, 'But this is a dream of a dark lake in a sad and rainy twilight. The woods are monstrous silent and ghostly boat sails upon the water. The boatman is as thin and twisted as a hedge root and his face is all in shadow. Little human child, when you had this terrible dream, was you not afraid?'

"Then the Raven Child banged his fist upon the table in his exasperation and stamped his foot upon the floor. 'Uncle Auberon!' he exclaimed, 'that is the fairy boat and the fairy boatman which you and Aunt Titania yourselves sent to fetch me and bring me to your house. Why should I be afraid?'

" 'Well!' said a third person, who had not spoken before, 'how the child boasts of his courage! The person who spoke was Uncle Auberon's servant, who had been sitting high upon a shelf, disguised (until this moment) as a bust of Mr William Shakespeare. Uncle Auberon was quite startled by his sudden appearance, but the Raven Child had always known he was there.

"Uncle Auberon's servant peered down from his high shelf at the Raven Child and the Raven Child looked up at him. 'There are all sorts of things in Heaven and Earth,' said Uncle Auberon's servant, 'that yearn to do you harm. There is fire that wants to burn you. There are swords that long to pierce you through and through and ropes that mean to bind you hard. There are a thousand, thousand things that you have never yet dreamt of: creatures that can steal your sleep from you, year after year, until you scarcely know yourself, and men yet unborn who will curse you and scheme against you. Little human child, the time has come to be afraid.'

"But the Raven Child said, 'Robin Goodfellow, I knew all along that it was you that sent me those dreams. But I am a human child and therefore cleverer than you and when those wicked creatures come to do me harm I shall be cleverer than them. I am a human child and all the

vast stony, rainy English earth belongs to me. I am an English child and all the wide grey English air, full of black wings beating and grey ghosts of rain sighing, belongs to me. This being so, Robin Goodfellow, tell me, why should I be afraid?' Then the Raven Child shook his head of raven hair and disappeared.

"Mr Goodfellow glanced a little nervously at Uncle Auberon to see if he were at all displeased that Mr Goodfellow had spoken out so boldly to the human foster child, but Uncle Auberon (who was quite an old gentleman) had stopt listening to them both a while ago and had wandered off to resume his search for a book. It contained a spell for turning Members of Parliament into useful members of society and now, just when Uncle Auberon thought he had a use for it, he could not find it (though he had had it in his hand not a hundred years before). So Mr Goodfellow said nothing but quietly turned himself back into William Shakespeare."

In the Rectory Mr Strange was still reading. He had reached Chapter 42 where Hickman related how Maria Absalom defeated her enemies by shewing them the true reflections of their souls in the mirrors of the Shadow House and how the ugly sights which they saw there (and knew in their hearts to be true) so dismayed them that they could oppose her no more.

There was, upon the back of Mr Strange's neck, a particularly tender spot and all his friends had heard him tell how, when ever there was any magic going on, it would begin to prickle and to itch. Without knowing that he did so, he now began to rub the place.

So many dark corridors, thought Cassandra, how lucky it is that I know my way about them, for many people I think would soon be lost. Poor souls, they would soon take fright because the way is so long, but I *know* that I am now very near to the great staircase and will soon be able to slip out of the house and into the garden.

It had been decided that Mrs Field should stay and watch the children for the remainder of the night and so Cassandra was making her way back to Mr Field's house quite alone.

Except (she thought) I do not believe that that tall, moon-shiny window should be *there*. It would suit me much better if it were behind me. Or perhaps on my left. For I am sure it was not there when I came in. Oh, I am lost! How very . . . And now the voices of those two wretches of men come echoing down this dark passageway and they are most manifestly drunk and do not know me. And I am here where I have no right to be.

(Cassandra pulled her shawl closer round her.) "And yet," she murmured, "why should I be afraid?"

"Damn this house!" cried Winbright. "It is nothing but horrid black corridors. What do you see, Fred?"

"Only an owl. A pretty white owl. What the devil is it doing inside the house?"

"Fred," cried Winbright, slumping against the wall and sliding down a little, "fetch me my pistol, like a good fellow."

"At once, Captain!" cried Fred. He saluted Captain Win-bright and then promptly forgot all about it.

Captain Winbright smiled. "And here," he said, "is Miss Tobias, running to meet us."

"Sir," said Miss Tobias appearing suddenly out of the darkness, "what are you doing?"

"There is a damned owl in the house. We are going to shoot it."

Miss Tobias looked round at the owl, shifting in the shadows, and then said hurriedly, "Well, you are very free from superstition, I must say. You might both set up as the publishers of an atheist encyclopedia tomorrow. I applaud your boldness, but I do not share it."

The two gentlemen looked at her.

"Did you never hear that owls are the possessions of the Raven King?" she asked.

"Do not frighten me, Miss Tobias," said Captain Winbright, "you will make me think I see tal

crowns of raven feathers in the dark. This is certainly the house for it. Damn her, Fred. She behaves as if she were my governess as well."

"Is she at all like your governess?" asked Fred.

"I do not know. I had so many. They all left me. You would not have left me, would you, Miss Tobias?"

"I cannot tell, sir."

"Fred," said Captain Winbright, "now there are two owls. Two pretty little owls. You are like Minerva, Miss Tobias, so tall and wise, and disapproving of a fellow. Minerva with two owls. Your name is Jane, is it not?"

"My name, sir, is Miss Tobias."

Winbright stared into the darkness and shivered. "What is the game they play in Yorkshire, Fred? When they send children alone into the dark to summon the Raven King. What are those words they say?"

Fred sighed and shook his head. "It has to do with hearts being eaten," he said. "That is all I recall."

"How they stare at us, Fred," said Winbright. "They are very impertinent owls. I had always thought they were such shy little creatures."

"They do not like us," said Fred sadly.

"They like you better, Jane. Why, one is upon your shoulder now. Are you not afraid?"

"No, sir."

"Those feathers," said Fred, "those soft feathers between the wing and the body dance like flames when they swoop. If I were a mouse I would think the flames of Hell had come to swallow me up."

"Indeed," murmured Winbright, and both men watched the owls glide in and out of the gloom. Then suddenly one of the owls cried out - a hideous screech to freeze the blood.

Miss Tobias looked down and crossed her hands - the very picture of a modest governess. "They do that, you know," she said, "to petrify their prey with fear; to turn it, as it were, to stone. That is the cruel, wild magic of owls."

But no one answered her, for there was no one in the corridor but herself and the owls (each with something in its beak). "How hungry you are, dearest," said Miss Tobias approvingly, "One two, three swallows and the dish goes down."

About midnight Mr Strange's book appeared to him so dull and the night so sweet that he left the house and went out into the apple orchard. There was no wall to this orchard but only a grassy bank. Mr Strange lay down beneath a pear tree and, though he had intended to think about magic, he very soon fell asleep.

A little later he heard (or dreamt that he heard) the sound of laughter and of feminine voices. Looking up, he saw three ladies in pale gowns walking (almost dancing) upon the bank above him. The stars surrounded them; the night-wind took their gowns and blew them about. They held out their arms to the wind (they seemed indeed to be dancing). Mr Strange stretched himself and sighed with pleasure. He assumed (not unreasonably) that he was still dreaming.

But the ladies stopt and stared down into the grass.

"What is it?" asked Miss Tobias.

Cassandra peered into the darkness. "It is a man," she said with great authority.

"Gracious Heaven," said Mrs Field. "What kind of man?"

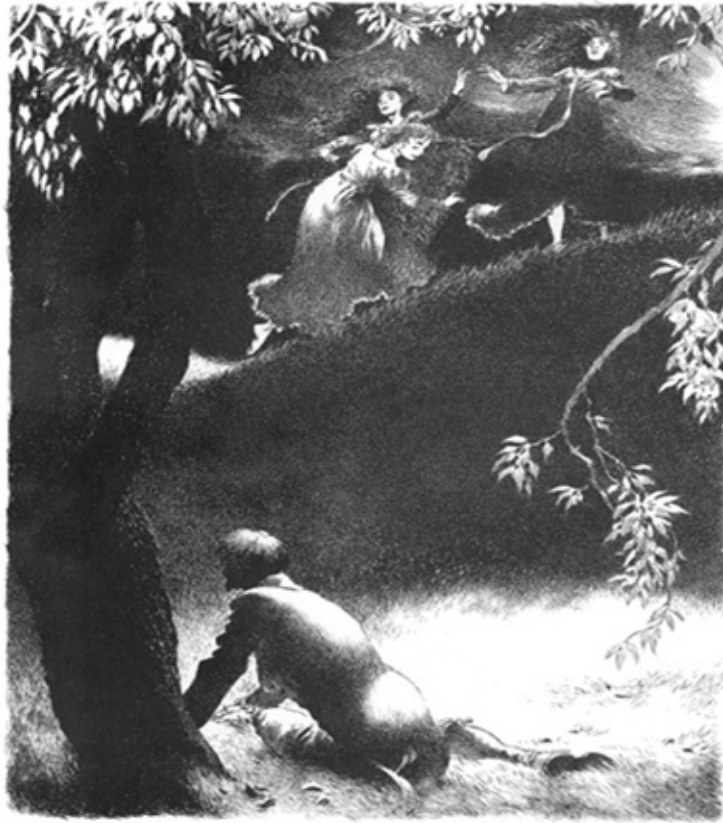
"The usual kind, I should say," said Cassandra.

"I meant, Cassandra," said the other, "what degree, what station of man?"

Jonathan Strange got to his feet, perplexed, brushing straw from his clothes. "Ladies," he said,

"forgive me. I thought that I had woken in the Raven King's Other Lands. I thought that you were Titania's ladies come to meet me."

The ladies were silent. And then: "Well!" said Mrs Field. "What a speech!"



"I beg your pardon, madam. I meant only that it is a beautiful night (as I am sure you will agree) and I have been thinking for some time that it is (in the most critical and technical sense) a magical night and I thought perhaps that you were the magic what was meant to happen."

"Oh," cried Cassandra, "they are all full of nonsense. Do not listen to him, my dear Mrs Field. Miss Tobias, let us walk on." But she looked at him curiously and said, "You? What do you know of magic?"

"A little, madam."

"Well, sir," she said, "I will give you a piece of good advice. You will never grow proficient in the art as long as you continue with your outmoded notions of Raven Kings and Otherlanders. Have you not heard? They have all been done away with by Mr Strange and Mr Norrell."

Mr Strange thanked her for the advice.

"There is much more that we could teach you . . ." she said.

"So it would seem," said Strange, crossing his arms.

". . . only that we have neither the time nor the inclination."

"That is a pity," said Strange. "Are you sure, madam, that you will not reconsider? My last master found me to be a most apt pupil, very quick to grasp the principles of any subject."

"What was the name of your last master?" asked Miss Tobias.

"Norrell," said Strange softly.

Another short silence ensued.

"You are the London magician," said Cassandra.

"No, indeed," cried Strange, stung. "I am the Shropshire magician and Mr Norrell is the Yorkshire magician. We neither of us own London as our home. We are countrymen both. We have that, at least, in common."

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