

parsley

BY CAITLIN GEORGE



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CHARACTERS

C	A WOMAN
X	A MAN
FURIES	SOMETHING ELSE

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0

C and X enter
meet in the middle
dress in the clothes of their era and
begin.

1

- C Oh it's all withered./ When did that happen?
- X I'm not familiar. *I thought that was your thing. I didn't even notice -
- C My mother would be rolling over/ in her grave, she gave me this. You could have helped.
- X Not mother material. *I would if I could.
- C You could. I can't./ Therein lies the difference.
- X It's just a plant. *Next time we'll do better.

2

- X You know what she's like.
- C Just wish she wasn't like that.
- X But we scored this sick as apron/ and rain boots.
- C It's so pink and frilly!
- X Come on now who doesn't want a pair of hammy down rain boots?
- C Ever since dad died she's been unbearable.
- X I know.
- C She wasn't even at mum's funeral.
- X I know. That was as shitty move
- C It's just that I'm the one still here still looking after everything so where does she get off?

3

- C I want to talk to you about something that's hard to talk about.
- X I'm nervous.
- C I'm really hoping you can just listen.
- X Okay I'm all ears.
- C So we've been talking about it a lot -

- X You know it, baby. Ready and willing to defend your honour.
- C So you think you could take him? He's a general you know.
- X You think I'm scared of your uncle?
- C You should be. If I have to hear about that goddamn boat ride one more time.
- X But the winds! The ships had no winds in the sails and they had to get out of the bay or else –
- C Kill me now.

6

- X What were you thinking?
- C I heard this was good.
- X Eh
- C Okay what do you want to see?
- X Johnny was talking about the new one with that guy in it? You know from that show I like?
- C Oh yup yeah I know the one. Sure if you want.
- X Great, I'll buy the tickets.

7

- C My mother always used to tell me that parsley is a woman's herb. Not the plant, that the herb was for women. I've no idea what that means.
- As far as I can tell parsley is a bit of green people put on top of one-pot meals in restaurants, to dress them up, make them look more attractive, before being immediately kicked to the outskirts of the plate by whoever is wielding the fork. Only to later be abandoned to the compost with the leftover mess of scraps.
- I don't think that's the parallel she was trying to draw.
- I doubt she even knew what she meant. I'd ask her, my sisters and I would ask her, we never really got an answer. I couldn't tell if she didn't want to elaborate because my dad was there or because we were invariably eating dinner. Men aren't great with talk of blood and other things that might ooze out of bodies. Women's health is not appropriate dinner conversation.

8

- X It isn't 'needy' or unreasonable to want you to and you know -
- C Let me quickly offer a word of advice. That a childfree lifestyle is possible at all stuns a lot of people. So when you tell me –
- X Good luck on the battlefield!

X Should I take a look?

C God no!

X I'll call your sister?

C That's even worse.

X The doctor?

C Don't bother the doctor.

X I feel very strongly about -

C I don't want him here.

X It doesn't work that way!

C I want my mum.

X I don't know what to do.

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C is about to have the baby.

*She goes somewhere out of sight
for discretion.*

X It was incredible. Magical experience, really. I'm so glad I got to be there.

I almost didn't make it because when she woke up this morning with contractions the doctor told us it definitely wouldn't happen today. She was sure it would but they said no way, just first-baby-new-mum nerves, and we had to wait to go in. So I went to work and the second I got there I had to turn right back around and head to the hospital.

Should have seen it, not that I would want you to, but at one point the doctor had his arm halfway up the down there area. She'd been sick already and I was pretty queasy myself after that.

We asked for pain relief but he said it was too late. Which in hindsight is probably for the best. You've got to trust the doctor knows what's right. I am bruised all over though, not that I can complain, you should have seen the scratch marks.

He asked if we wanted to see it happening but we both said no. I don't think I'll be going down there for a while. I've been warned not to.

But this baby. Makes it all worth it.

God she's gorgeous.

A marvel.

Have a work knowledge of
mixology and latte art?
Directing
journalism and
late night show hosting?
You want me to believe you understand medicine
astrology
history and
all religious works?

C I am educated.

X That isn't all there is to know of men.

C I had an excellent teacher.

X Your governess?

C No.

X Your brother?

C Someone else.

X A man.

C So you see it's a firsthand account.

X I do.

Pause

C Does that shock you?

X No, ma'am.

C What did I say?

X It takes a little more than a smart mouth to shock me.

C How wonderful. I get to put my wit to good use for your enjoyment. Thank goodness you stopped by unannounced.

X I'm glad to learn the sacrifice of good men, your kin and countrymen, is in service of your education.

C Do not speak to me of sacrifice.

X Your sister was adored, exalted even. She made her choices./ Your mother on the other hand -

C Corporal. *Don't you start in on my mother!

X There are men on this estate who fought in that war.

C Not anymore.

X Oh?

C There were. But then most of them never came back. My uncle and his godforsaken war have emptied this village of every man able to take arms, and now those left look to me. I have been made father to their children, and husband to their wives. I collect rent, settle disputes and manage the harvest.

This is my house.

Pause

X Has anyone ever told you that you've beautiful eyes?

Beat

C Why are you here, Corporal?

X Beg your pardon?

C Why has he sent you here now?

X To inspect the property.

C The estate is my brothers. He left it to me, as Steward while/ he is away.

X Stewardess. Stewardress? That can't be right.

C You think I'm scared of my uncle?

X If you're not you should be.

C I'm not.

X Well you should be.

C Why?

Pause

X Have you ever seen a snail? Really seen one. Held it to the light and examined the highlighted intricacies of its shell. Like a mathematic equation the coil wraps around a central point growing smaller and smaller till it eventually disappears inside itself. A true example of perfection in nature.

And the colours! More than just a dull smudge there is on each a completely unique pattern of earthy browns to bright white and yellows. No snail is just a snail it is its own complete self: a uniquely individual creature. Incredible.

Perhaps that's why it feels so disappointing when one is crushed underfoot.

You'll be walking casually down the street on a dewy evening, pleasantly distracted by the glowing evening sky. Then there's this awful crunch followed closely by a sensation of

smearing, like treading in shit. Looking down the shell, the armour of the creature is shattered into too many pieces to question repair. Underneath, wet and exposed, is the slug that lives inside it. A slimy disgusting thing that was destined to crawl on the ground, its sticky shame trailing behind it.

Why is it beautiful things can so easily fool us into forgetting they are filthy?

The water boils.

A whistle

*which is actually an air horn
blows.*

Neither move for far too long of a while.

C Shall I be mother?

As C tends to the tea, X lifts the lid of the Hope Chest. It releases a wind, which briefly stirs the room.

C slams it shut.

X Is it your custom to drag out your luggage alone in the middle of the night, My Lady?

C Are you curious about what I do alone in the middle of the night, Corporal?

Pause

X I've overstepped.

C It's getting late.

X Yes.

C There are rooms made up in the back of the house. You'll have to light a fire as -

X You dismissed the servants.

C Yes.

X But you're not going anywhere.

C Are we arriving to the point?

X I think you know why I'm here.

C I do not owe you, nor my uncle an explanation for what I do within the confines of my own home. Here is your tea. I trust you'll find your own way around.

She goes to leave further into the house.

X Rain boots.

Stillness.

X pulls out a stack of letters from his coat pocket.

- X It's not an option.
- C Why not?
- X He is a man.
- C Clearly.
- X You are a woman.
- C So?
- X You cannot win.
- C I don't think that's true.
- X Shall we test your plan?
Chrysothemis, it is I
your uncle, Menelaus.
Come be my wife. Together we will
rule two kingdoms
occupy palaces
any children we may bear will be well fed.
All you have to do is
take it rough
every other night for
the first couple of years.
It is possible you might even
eventually
grow to like it.
Are you sure you won't go through with this?
- C Yes.
- X Why not?
- C It's rape.
- X You'll be so well cared for.
- C Still rape.
- X Hmm
Chrysothemis, it is I your uncle.
- C I will not marry you.

X Then I shall take you by force.

C Then I will kill you.

X Very well.

*She goes to stab him with a mimed knife.
He knocks the knife out of her hand
pins her arms behind her back and
holds her against his chest.
He runs a hand up her leg lifting her dress.*

C Stop.

X You asked for my help.

C Always going beyond the call.

X God you're gorgeous. A marvel!

C Xander, stop.

*She stomps on his foot.
He lets her go.*

X Ow
Whore.

C You deserved that.

X Bitch.

Pause

Now what?

C Marriage it is.

X Or death.

C They are synonymous.

X There is always a choice.

C What are my choices?

X A knife. Something

sharp
quick and clean.
But I forget myself because
of your manly way of speaking
dressing
behaving
but
you are a lady
not a creature accustomed to blood.

Something kinder, I think.
Some rope perhaps?
There are many a sturdy tree here
in this graveyard.
We could hang you high
in welcome of the new king
your uncle.

Too macabre?
Yes, it is.
I can tell by your face.

Very well then, poison.
It is the womanliest of the three options
as it involves no bloodshed or
knot tying. Which
is sure to be difficult for you.
Dainty fingers.

C Knife.

X You're certain?
I can't persuade you
to the poison.

C I choose knife.

X Think though
the blood will be everywhere.

C Good let it flow.
Let it run into the stream
that it might greet Menelaus on the shore.

X But I will be left to clean it up.

C You are a vulture.