

# Volume 2

## Section 2

### Chapter 9

Sitting on the hard wooden bed of the punishment room, Candy looked out of the window. There was only that small window. The light was falling straight upon her.

Being locked up didn't matter much to her. Only one thing bothered her.

*Will Great Uncle William come to the festival?*

She let out a deep sigh.

*He would probably be angry to learn that his adoptive daughter was sent to the punishment room and was forbidden to attend the May Festival...It would be better if he didn't come...*

Lifting her eyes to the light that poured in through the window, the girl prayed fervently.

*Praying only when it suits me is probably not very good, but Miss Pony always said that God was merciful, so He won't be angry with me...*

"What a gloomy place!"

Candy looked around the small room. It had a smell of mold. Apart from the bed, there was only a miserable table.

The door was heavy, and locked with a key.

"If the punishment room is so grim, I dare not imagine what the dungeon looks like..."

She shuddered at the mere thought of it.

"Well, the important thing is that we haven't abandoned you, right, Hughley?"

The turtle seemed to be taking a nap at the bottom of an old worn out wooden bucket.

The night before, Sister Gray had ordered her to get it outside but Sister Margaret had spared it. She was the kindest nun in the whole school. She had agreed to entrust Hughley to Candy, on condition that the girl would take full responsibility.

Sister Margaret grimaced at the mere thought of touching that shelled reptile.

"I beg you, Candice, get rid of that!" she insisted several times.

In her bucket, Hughley opened her shining black eyes that looked like seeds. Candy took the turtle in her hand and smiled, as it shook

its short legs in the air for a few moments. The soul of that little being gave off such warmth...No wonder Patty adored it so much. When we are sad, a little partner with whom to share our sorrow, even if it can't speak, is sometimes enough to relieve our despair...

"If only you knew how beautiful it is outside, Hughley! Come on, let's escape from this gloomy room and look for a nicer place!" she said, sliding the animal in her pocket.

The small window in the roof was too high for her to reach, but she moved the bed in order to place it underneath, and then put the table on the bed.

Balancing on the table, Candy grabbed the window frame within her reach. It was stuck, but the structure was old, and after she pushed it a little, the window opened. The iron bars were also rusty and didn't last long.

"It was so easy! If you want to lock me up, you'll have to provide a little more solid windows, dear sisters! You've underestimated me! Being small is an advantage! Come on, Hughley, we're going to the Blue River Zoo."

Candy passed through the window and descended to the ground, with the turtle still in her pocket.

She hadn't understood where they had put her the night before because of the darkness, but in broad daylight she noticed that the punishment room was located on the ground floor of the north tower. Very few people passed by the backyard. There was not even a gate. Taking advantage of the situation, Candy quickly sneaked away from the college.

Candy's idea was to entrust Hughley to the Blue River Zoo. She had checked its exact location on a map after her miraculous encounter with Albert. And according to him, the zoo didn't seem to be very far from the boarding school. Well...on foot, it was still a long walk. On her way, while holding Hughley, Candy explained the situation to her: "Don't worry, Hughley. Albert is very kind. Of course, you are sad you were separated from Patty, but you'll see her again, I promise!" She only had to give Albert's name at the entrance of the zoo so that they would let her in.

She was informed that it was precisely the time for Albert's break, and that she would find him in the relaxation room of the guards of the mammals section. Candy ran to the building they had indicated to her.

*Finally, I'm going to see him again!*

She couldn't get out of the college whenever she liked, even on holidays, and she wanted so much to listen to more stories about

Lakewood. And then, she also wanted to apologize to him...She was the one who had invited him to the May Festival, and now she could not even participate herself.

Arriving near a barn which served as a relaxation room, she heard a burst of laughter from inside. It was Albert's...How much she had missed him!

"Albert! Albert! I escaped from the college!" Candy cried joyfully, opening the door.

The person who was talking to Albert turned around...

Candy was speechless.

*Terry?*

Seeing her, the boy was no less astonished and opened his eyes wide.

"Oh, do you know each other?" said Albert, looking at them both with an amused expression. "Oh, yes, certainly, you are a student of St. Paul's too, I believe."

A smile appeared on his lips.

"That's funny. Two troublesome students of St. Paul's sneak away to come and see me..."

"Eh...I'm sorry, Albert, but when you said 'troublesome students' did you also refer to me?" demanded Candy in surprise, pointing at herself.

"Do you by any chance think you are a model student, Candy?"

Albert replied, before bursting into laughter.

That joke seemed a little harsh to the girl who puffed up her cheeks to show she was sulking.

Albert gave Terry an ironic smile.

"That's what I'm saying: two troublesome students. Candy, who will definitely never change, and you, who started a fight after drinking alcohol, which is strictly forbidden."

"Alcohol? Fight? Do you mean that night..." cried Candy, staring at Terry.

He avoided her gaze.

"Well...Indeed, if Albert hadn't intervened that night, no doubt I would have been more seriously wounded. On top of that, he brought me back to the school. Under the influence of alcohol and pain, I had completely lost my sense of orientation. So, unfortunately, I ended up in the girls' dormitory!"

Albert burst again into a cheerful laughter.

"Well, that's great! If I understand correctly, when Candy told me in panic that a friend of hers had been wounded, was it you she was talking about? I didn't know. And to think that I ran with her to buy some medicine for you!"

Terry turned towards Candy. He was now completely relaxed, and a smile had appeared on his face. The girl's heart was filled with a

warm sensation, as if that was the first time she saw joy in the boy's eyes.

*I'm so happy! He's not angry!*

She was so relieved...Quite naturally, she smiled.

That night...Whenever she recalled the expression of despair on Terry's face when she had found out his secret, she felt unbearable pain inside her. She felt terribly guilty for hurting him, even if it was done accidentally...

"By the way, where does this turtle come from, Candy?" asked Albert, seeing the animal in Candy's pocket.

"Oh, yes, that's right! This is Hughley, the friend of a friend. But animals are forbidden in the college, and I was asked to get rid of her...I hope you'll accept to make a little room for her at the zoo..."

"Really? The friend of a friend, you say? Well, then, I understand. Nice to meet you, Hughley."

Albert nodded eagerly and took in his hands the turtle Candy gave him. He rubbed his nose against the animal's snout to welcome it. He was still the same Albert.

"Thank you, Albert. By the way, about the May Festival..."

"The break is over, Albert!" interrupted someone who had just poked his head through the door of the relaxation room.

"I got it. I'm coming right away."

Albert hastened to pick up his working uniform.

"I'm sorry, but I have to go. I'll finish in two hours. Will you two wait for me here and have fun seeing the animals? I'd like you to see Poupe later, Candy."

With those words, Albert left the relaxation room, holding Hughley as if he had always been her owner.

Candy and Terry avoided looking at each other for a while, remaining silent.

The light of that beautiful afternoon flooded the untidy room. Alone with Terry, Candy had a little trouble breathing normally. She kept looking down. The boy finally found an excuse to break the ice.

"Oh, I know an animal that looks a lot like you. I'm sure you could become friends. Do you want to come and see it?" he suggested as cheerfully as possible.

Candy, who was afraid that Terry would refuse to talk to her, was relieved and followed him.

"The first time I came here was to thank Albert for helping me. And I liked this place so much that since then, every time I sneak away from school, I come here to see him. However, I didn't like zoos before..."

The girl continued walking beside him and nodded to his words. She was so tense that she couldn't find anything to say in order to start a

conversation.

Giraffes, lions, tapirs...There were few visitors on weekdays, and the animals seemed to be more at ease.

Suddenly, Terry stopped in front of a cage and pointed to an animal.

“Look, there he is, your friend!”

It was the cage of a little monkey, clinging from the branch of a tree.

“What? That monkey looks like me? How mean! Why do you say that?” she snapped, annoyed.

Candy’s shyness vanished in a flash.

“Oh, I’m sorry. It’s true, you are much more feminine...”

Actually, Terry had apologized to the monkey, and not to Candy.

“You are so rude!”

“There, even the way you’re stomping on the ground...You have exactly the same reactions!”

“Terry!”

“Not to mention your expression when you’re angry...”

“That’s enough!”

Candy raised her hand towards him, jokingly. The boy ran away, laughing. Candy ran after him. As she did that, she felt the fog that had filled her heart clearing up.

She could read his soul like a book. That feeling was very clear.

*He trusts me...*

Terry’s secret about his mother...She would keep it. She would never tell anyone.

“Terry?”

For a moment she lost sight of him.

He appeared again, smiling as he had never done at school. He was holding a bag of popcorn in his hand.

They devoured it under the sun, sitting on a bench.

Candy showed her skill by throwing a popcorn flake into the air and catching it with her mouth. She had practiced that game for years at Pony’s Home, and she was absolutely unbeatable in it.

“So, you left school to save that turtle?”

At that question, Candy stopped looking for more popcorn in the bag.

“Actually...I escaped from the punishment room.”

“You escaped?”

Terry, who had slumped on the bench, sat up in surprise.

Then Candy told him what had happened the night before: how the nuns had come unexpectedly and had discovered Hughley whom Patty had been keeping in secret, about the riotous scene that had resulted from that, and about herself who had called Sister Gray “stubborn old hag”.

Terry began to squirm with laughter.

“You called Sister Gray that? That’s unbelievable! I’ve never said anything of the sort, Miss Freckles!”

Candy pouted.

“However, that’s exactly what she is. And because of that, I was sent to the punishment room and deprived of the May Festival...”

“They have forbidden you to participate in the festival?”

For a moment, Terry turned his eyes to the sky.

*The May Festival without Candy would no longer be fun...I had intended to go, just once, but if she’s not there, I give up...*

Terry was surprised himself at his own strong reaction to that news. He preferred to change the subject.

“By the way, how did you meet Albert?”

“I met him in America, in Lakewood.”

A cloud passed over her face at that name. She saw again the forest where she had been lost.

“I lived in an orphanage, and the Leagan family hired me as a servant...Then I had to take care of the horses, and it became a little hard for me, so I ran away. But I was carried away by the current, and I fell into a waterfall. And it was Albert who saved me.”

“It’s extraordinary how easily you’re telling the terrible things that happened to you...” said Terry, looking down.

“Lakewood was so beautiful...”

The petals of the Sweet Candy roses floated before her eyes with that memory. Sweet Candy...It was the name of the flower Anthony had given to her in the stable.

“This is the season...The roses in Anthony’s rose garden must be in full bloom,” she murmured.

“Anthony?” asked Terry with a grimace.

Of course...The other day, when she had fainted, that was the name she had pronounced.

He demanded:

“Who is...this Anthony?”

Terry noticed himself that his voice had suddenly become very sharp.

Candy looked at him with moist eyes.

“A boy that looked like you...Or rather, I thought you looked like him at the beginning...But actually, you are not like him at all...”

The boy couldn’t hide his irritation any longer.

*Whom does she see right now? What memory is she thinking of?*

“Anthony was very good at cultivating flowers, particularly roses...The day we met at the gate of the roses...”

“Well, I’m happy I’m ‘not like him at all,’” cried Terry, cutting her off ironically. “I don’t wish to look like a weakling who takes care of roses, thank you very much!”

Candy lost her temper. She couldn’t bear it if someone spoke badly of

Anthony.

“What you say is mean. Anthony was not a weakling at all. He was strong and brave!”

“Oh, yes? So, what happened to that Anthony of yours? He chose the roses over you and dumped you, didn’t he? Have I guessed right?”

Terry, who was beside himself, got up from the bench. Candy was not ready to let that go and stood up too. But the next moment, all her strength left her.

“Anthony is dead...He fell from a horse.”

Candy had to bite her lip to keep from crying. She didn’t want to remember that scene...Her head was spinning.

Terry looked away. He didn’t want to see her eyes.

*Dead? Fell from a horse? That’s why she...*

“I’m sorry...My condolences. God rest the soul...of that weakling.”

Terry walked a few steps away, turning his back on Candy.

“Te...Terry! You mustn’t talk like that!” she screamed, stammering with anger.

The boy didn’t turn around. He didn’t know himself why he was in such a state.

*The dead don’t ever come back!*

The words didn’t come out of his lips, but they resounded in his heart.

“Why is he so mean? Isn’t he ashamed to say such things?”

Candy had returned safely to the school and to the punishment room. But the resentment she felt inside her hadn’t gone away.

First of all, Anthony was not a weakling!

Terry had not come back.

“He doesn’t even know Anthony! He was a very gentle boy...”

The face of the boy she admired so much, his smile, his voice...

Everything she had been trying not to think about was coming vividly before her eyes.

Sitting on the bed, she turned her head as if she wanted to avoid those sad memories.

“Albert looked strange when he learned that I was forbidden to attend the May Festival...But I have entrusted Hughley to him, and that is something...We can say that the day went well...”

After another sigh, Candy saw a package lying on the floor. She picked it up, wondering what it could be. A note was attached to it.

*“Candy,*

*A parcel has arrived for you. I came to bring it to you while the nuns were not looking, but you were not here...I’m worried. I’m sorry for what happened to you because of me!*

*Patty”*

Patty must have climbed the wall, and thrown the package into the punishment room through the small window that had remained open. That must have taken her a lot of courage.

*Thank you, Patty... What can it be?*

Candy opened the package, and couldn't contain a cry of joy. Inside there were two costumes in medieval style.

"How beautiful! They look like the costumes of Romeo and Juliet. That's wonderful..."

At the bottom of the package, there was a letter.

*"Sir William regrets not being able to respond favorably to your charming invitation because of his many commitments, and he begs you to forgive him.*

*Sir William is delighted to know that Miss Candice is becoming a real lady.*

*George"*

"Oh, so this is a gift from Great Uncle William!" cried Candy, picking up Juliet's costume. "There is even a wig and a mask! Has Great Uncle William confused the May Festival of an English boarding school with a Venetian masquerade ball?"

The girl lifted the wig and smiled.

An idea had just come to her mind.

*Yes! With that, I can...*

"Great Uncle William, please forgive me. I'm not sure I'm the young lady of your dreams..."

And as if Great Uncle William were in person in that small room, she bowed her head apologetically.



## Chapter 10

The May Festival had finally come...

That day – and unfortunately it lasted only for a day – the college, which was overwhelmed with a gloomy atmosphere for the rest of the year, was adorned with the colors of roses.

There were flowers everywhere. The students had put on their best clothes and happily attended the organized events along with their guests who had come especially for the occasion. As a rule, they were strictly forbidden to meet anyone inside the school, even their own families.

It was the impatience of the students to see their families again that gave so much fervor to that event. That, and the hope of having a romance during that unique moment. Hearts were filled with hope because the day of the festival was the only one in the whole year when the girls were allowed to talk with the boys, and even dance with them, since the day ended with a ball.

It was the only time when even the nuns left regulation aside and displayed a pleasant expression. Except Sister Gray and Sister Kreis, of course...

When the magnificent “Parade of the fairies of May” was over, the orchestra, which stood ready in the hall of ceremonies that had been converted into a ballroom, started playing light music. There were so many splendidly dressed people that everyone was suffocating in the crowded room that was filled with laughter and whispering. The eyes of the girls sparkled with impatience and anxiety at the idea that a boy might perhaps invite them to dance.

“Look, it’s Terry! We don’t see him often in this kind of festivities... How elegant!”

Sighs were heard. All the girls in the hall stared at the boy who was formally dressed. Eliza’s eyes sparkled.

“He is here for me...Go away!” she said, nudging Louise. “Terry! You know, I might agree to dance with you...”

Terry was startled and froze in place when he noticed that Miss Leagan was talking to him.

“Thank you, my lady,” he replied with a polite smile, “but I’m not good at dancing. I would hate to step on your delicate feet. Please excuse me.”

He greeted her with a slight bow of his head and walked away. Eliza couldn’t take her eyes off his silhouette. No doubt everyone had seen that he had spoken to her as if they were acquainted, and they would deduce he was intimate with her.

*He called me “my lady” and said he wouldn’t like to take the risk of*

*stepping on my feet... That can only mean one thing: he loves me.*

A smile of satisfaction appeared on Eliza's face.

Actually, Terry had already forgotten the few words he had exchanged with the girl. He was walking among the crowd, in the hope of finding Candy.

*Where is she hiding?*

He had secretly entered the north tower in order to help Candy escape, but the punishment room was empty.

*I suspected she was not the kind of girl to remain quietly locked up and mope...*

While continuing his search, he smiled bitterly.

*Anyway, if I had taken her out of there, what good would have come of it?*

He couldn't understand his own behavior. If it had occurred to him to help her escape, it was probably to see all kinds of emotions displayed on her face.

*Since she's not allowed to participate in the festival, could she possibly have gone back to the zoo?*

Terry recalled that bright afternoon at the zoo, where Candy had showed up without warning. The competition of who would catch the most popcorn flakes with their mouth...She had easily won...And then her voice when she laughed...He smiled at that memory. Another thought that followed erased his smile immediately.

*Anthony...*

At the mention of that name, Candy's eyes had been instantly blurred with tears. That image was enough to annoy him.

*I don't want to hear her talk to me about that fellow ever again!*

That was almost a cry, inside of him. He restrained himself as best as he could.

*But what's wrong with me? Why can't I get out of my mind that girl who is full of freckles and has a snub nose? That doesn't look like me...*

Terry smiled bitterly again, and then he left the room.

The orchestra started playing again.

Some couples with flushed cheeks were spinning on the dancing floor. From one of the corners of the room, "Romeo" sneaked in cheerfully among the people, as if swimming in the middle of the crowd.

*How many people! Where are my friends?*

The Romeo in question, of course, was Candy in disguise, with a mask over her eyes.

Not even Sister Kreis, who was watching the entrance door, had noticed anything.

Neither had Neal, who had just been rejected by a girl he had invited to dance.

Candy, in her heart, beamed with pleasure.

*What a wonderful gift Great Uncle William has sent me! Wearing that costume, I can participate in the May Festival, even if I was forbidden to. Except for the parade, of course, but still, I'm having a good time. Well, that's Stear, in full dress!*

Candy stifled a mischievous little laughter and approached Stear who was watching the spinning couples with an indifferent expression.

"Would you like to dance with me?" Candy asked him, trying to make her voice sound like a boy's.

Stear turned around and was startled when he saw that stranger in Romeo's costume.

"Eh...Well, you see, I prefer to dance with girls..."

"Come on, Stear, don't panic! It's me!" replied Candy, discreetly lifting her mask.

"What? Can...Hmm..."

She put a hand on his mouth before he gave her away. The boy blinked for a moment, and then both took refuge in a corner of the room to talk more quietly.

"If even you haven't recognized me, it's because my costume is perfect!"

"Well, that was a surprise!"

Stear took a handkerchief out of his tuxedo pocket and wiped his face. It didn't take him long to regain his cheerfulness.

"I heard you were locked up in the punishment room. Archie and I were worried about you. How lucky you could escape! Well...I suspected you were not going to stay quietly imprisoned."

"It was thanks to the gift Great Uncle William sent me. He wrote to me he couldn't come to the May Festival and sent me two costumes, one for Romeo and the other for Juliet. No doubt he thought the ball of the May Festival was a masquerade ball."

"Do you mean you have Juliet's costume too?" cried the boy, opening his eyes wide. "Well, then, that's what you have to put on, Candy! I can't dance with you if you are a boy!"

Stear pointed at the dance floor with a wink. Among the dancers there were Archie and Annie. Annie was so beautiful with her cheeks flushed and her eyes towards her partner!

*I'm glad. It's been a long time since I saw Annie so happy...Oh, look!* Candy had just noticed Patty in a dark corner, against the wall, alone and with downcast eyes.

"Listen, Stear, I'll go and change my costume. In the meantime, can you ask that girl you see all alone over there to dance? She is my friend. Her name is Patricia, but we call her Patty. She is very nice, as

you'll see."

Stear straightened up and observed the student Candy had just pointed out to him.

"The pretty girl with the glasses? All right, I'll ask her."

At first glance, he seemed to like Patty. Without waiting, he walked towards her.

Candy took the opportunity to leave the ballroom discreetly.

Juliet's costume was well hidden in the hollow of a large tree, in a clearing which the bluebells of the forest had transformed into a magnificent blue carpet. She had left both costumes there to prevent anyone from finding them in the punishment room. And here she could change away from prying eyes, she thought.

Hidden behind a tree, Candy took off Romeo's costume and put on Juliet's dress. But she had to walk and behave in a more elegant manner now.

She lifted her leg to check if her movements were too hampered. In case of emergency, the long dress shouldn't prevent her from running away.

"Great! Even with that, I can run! Come on, it's time to go back to the ball and attack the buffet table! I have to make up for the menu in the punishment room..."

Candy hurried off to the ballroom, with one hand in the air, as if she supported herself.

Then someone grabbed her wrist and pulled her behind a bush.

"Who...who is it?"

"Hello, Miss Juliet! How are you? Well...Even monkeys can dress properly, I see. Freckled Tarzan!"

"Te...Te...Ter..."

Terry burst out laughing in front of Candy, who was so surprised that she was stammering.

Actually, her heart had almost stopped.

"Terry? You...you were looking at me while I was changing?"

"Is that what you think? I'm only interested in pretty girls! I may have seen you, but I didn't look at you."

He squinted his eyes mockingly.

"You are...you are..."

"A brute? Is that perhaps the word you can't say, Miss Juliet?"

"Exactly!" she cried, red with anger.

And she pushed away his hand which was still holding her wrist.

"Actually, I would have preferred not seeing you..."

He was still laughing. Angry, the girl shrugged her shoulders.

*I want to go away...*

Suddenly, the wind brought the sound of a waltz.

She knew that music. How could she ever forget it...Candy listened attentively.

*Yes, it's that song...It's the waltz I danced with Anthony in Lakewood. I remember...*

That day, Anthony was smiling, dressed in the traditional Scottish costume. His smile was perfectly clear...

Terry took Candy's hand.

"Will you give me this dance, princess?"

His voice was as soft as Anthony's, like a whisper. Candy let him guide her, and the two of them began to twirl in the middle of the clearing, among the rays of light passing through the trees. Time turned backwards...

She went back to the time she was dancing with Anthony...

"What's wrong?" Terry asked gently, seeing a tear at the corner of his partner's eyes.

She was again conscious of the present, and looked into the eyes of the boy who had just spoken to her. His gaze was strong, very different from that of Anthony. Candy's lips were slightly trembling.

"I...Eh...I remembered...That music...It was what the orchestra had played the first time I danced with Anthony."

Terry stood still.

"What's the matter? Why do you look at me so sternly? You seem..."

Terry didn't give her time to finish her sentence. He pulled her firmly towards him and pressed his lips on hers.

Terry's lips. Candy couldn't see anything else.

"S...stop it!"

She protested and violently freed herself from the arms that were encircling her. Tears of anger came to her eyes.

She slapped Terry with all her strength.

"What are you doing, you cad? That's what you are, a cad! A vile seducer!"

Terry threw a fiery look at Candy.

"What do you know about me?" he groaned.

The next moment it was Candy's cheek that was hit, startling her. She put a hand on it, as she suddenly felt it burning.

"You are mean and violent! You dare to hit a woman!"

Candy could no longer control herself. She slapped him again.

"My first kiss, and that's how you...I...If it had been Anthony...If it had been Anthony..."

Terry grabbed Candy by the shoulders and cried in the midst of tears:

"Well, go ahead, say it! 'If it had been Anthony...' If it had been Anthony, what? He would have been more gentle, right? Is that what you mean? But he's dead, I think. How can you know what someone who is dead would have done?"

“Stop it, Terry...You’re hurting me!”

But he didn’t let her go.

“Oh, is that hurting you? I’ve slapped you, and that hurt you? Well, then, call for help! ‘Anthony! Help!’ Go on, call him! He’s not coming? Of course, he’s dead. He died falling off a horse, didn’t he?”

“Stop, that’s enough...Stop it, Terry!”

Candy shook her head, crying. His fiery eyes were fixed upon her.

“I’ll make you forget that Anthony of yours...I’ll make you forget him!”

Terry lifted Candy up and put her on his shoulder like a rug, and then he began to walk with big strides.

“Stop, Terry, I beg you!”

Even though anger increased her strength tenfold, Candy couldn’t fight him.

When the neighing of a horse came from the depths of the forest, she thought she would go crazy.

*No...Terry is not going to force me to ride his horse!*

He was going back to the stable.

“Terry, no...”

She couldn’t open her eyes. Or rather, the fear for horses made her keep them shut.

“Don’t move...” he said in a suddenly calm voice.

He made Candy ride his mare and got in the saddle himself.

“Come on, let’s go, Theodora!”

At the rider’s order, the animal darted outside the stable.

Candy clung to Terry, trembling.

The horse was galloping through the forest.

The sound of the hooves...The scent of the forest...Everything was like that time...

*I don’t want to live through this again. Anthony who turned his head and looked back...The galloping horse...No! Not there!*

“Stop! Anthony! Help!”

“That’s it! Scream louder! Call Anthony! He won’t come! He won’t!”

Terry shouted and urged his horse to go faster.

“Forget him! You have to forget him! Dead are not coming back! He doesn’t suffer anymore, he doesn’t feel anything! Open your eyes! Open your eyes wide, Candy, and take a good look around you!”

Terry’s voice was full of pain. At the sound of that voice, Candy suddenly felt the door that had kept her locked for so long open all at once.

“Look! It’s May! The forest and all nature are coming back to life...”

Candy took a deep breath.

The fragrance of the trees, and of the moss...The horse slowed down a little.

The sunlight was passing through the trees like a long golden veil. The foxgloves were trembling, as if surprised by the passing of the hooves. Birds were flying, and butterflies were dancing.

Candy watched the landscape that was passing before her eyes. Her heart gradually calmed down.

The bluebells...The scent of the wild roses...

*Anthony...*

Candy fixed her eyes on a point beyond the veil of light, between the trees.

*Oh, Anthony...Come...*

In vain she called him over and over again, in a low voice. Anthony did not approach.

New tears came to her eyes.

“Forget him, Candy...”

Terry’s quiet voice reached her from behind. She looked up with eyes full of tears.

Terry was holding firmly the reins in his hands and was looking straight ahead, defiantly. His chest to which Candy was clinging was warm. She felt his heartbeat. His body gave off an aroma similar to that of fresh grass.

*We are alive...Terry is alive, and so am I.*

Something pierced through her.

*Dead are not coming back...*

What Terry had shouted at her a few moments ago came back to her mind.

*Yes, Anthony...Actually, you knew it...You knew it...*

Beyond the veil of light, she saw Anthony nodding silently.

*Yes, Candy...I won’t come back...I’ll never come back...You can forget me...*

Candy watched Anthony as he vanished in the light with a smile. She almost called him...But she restrained herself.

## Chapter 11

*May*

*But what's happening to me?*

*Since the May Festival I have the impression that a fountain has appeared in my heart. Cold water overflows from it without stopping and gushes out in a torrent of tears. There's not a moment that I don't feel the urge to cry.*

*Unconsciously, I keep looking for Terrence, and I reproach myself for that. I feel guilty, and I can't accept the fact that I think about him all the time, and yet...that's how it is.*

*Before, it was Anthony who occupied the most important place in my thoughts. As much as I locked them up and repressed them inside me, Anthony's memories overflowed everywhere, and I couldn't do anything about it. But today...*

*Forgive me, Anthony...*

*I can't forget you.*

*Whenever I think of you, even today, tears come to my eyes...I loved you so much...*

*But now I understand reality. I understand it from the bottom of my heart.*

*You are dead. I'll never see you again. You've gone to a world where I can't see you anymore, where I can't hear your voice anymore.*

*Of course, I already knew that, but I didn't want to accept it. I was hoping things could start again. Oh, if only time could turn back...If only the fox hunting had never taken place...If only I had refused to be adopted...*

*But these are just dreams, and they won't go away like this.*

*We have to go on living, don't we?*

*Terrence G. Granchester. Terry...*

*It was him who made me understand. He forced me to face what I didn't want to see.*

*Should I thank him for that? Or should I blame him? I don't know.*

*But one thing is certain. I'm no longer afraid of horses. I'm no longer afraid of my memories.*

*Terrence forced me to change.*

*Is that a good thing? Can anyone tell me?*

*Could anyone calm my restless heart?*

Candy closed her diary and sighed.

Then, from the drawer of her desk, she took out a white silk tie.

That afternoon, after getting Candy off the horse, Terry had noticed



that her arm was scratched.

He had taken his tie off and made a bandage of it, without saying a word.

Neither of them had spoken.

“I was violent...But don’t expect any apology from me,” he had declared in a very calm voice, before walking away.

Candy had remained watching his back absently. The light of the approaching sunset gave Terry’s silk shirt a golden color.

*I still haven’t returned it to him...Not even today...*

Candy approached the window, holding Terry’s white tie in her hands.

The forest was wrapped in darkness. Terry was somewhere beyond that darkness.

*What is he doing right now?*

Suddenly, in a reflex, she moved away from the window. She had come so close that she had seen her own reflection.

She put her finger on her lips.

Terry had touched those lips. They looked like an imaginary flower blooming on the glass pane. Candy quickly looked away. That image hurt her, as if something oppressed her heart.

More than a week had passed since the May Festival, but the students still had their minds full of the events of that memorable day.

That day, during the lunch break, Eliza made sure to start a conversation by positioning herself at the precise place where the sunlight filtered through the window, apparently close enough for Candy to hear everything:

“It was a wonderful day, right, Louise? The buffet was delicious!”

“You are quite right, Eliza! The parade, the ball...Everything was so beautiful!”

“There were so many boys rushing to ask me to dance that I didn’t know where to turn to!” insisted Eliza with an affected air, watching Candy’s reaction out of the corner of her eye.

Candy made a point of answering her expectations, since that seemed to give her so much pleasure.

“What a pity I couldn’t participate. Oh, dear, I’m so sorry...”

Then, shrugging her shoulders, as if she were really downcast, she narrowed her eyes and discreetly stuck her tongue out in the direction of Patty, who began to giggle.

That May Festival would be an unforgettable day for Patty too.

“You know, Candy, I think Stear is very nice.”

She had got along well with the boy. For a week, she had only been talking about him.

“You know, Stear’s dream is to fly!”

“He wants to become a bird?”

“No, Candy, not a bird! He told me he wanted to build an airplane one day. Not only to fly with it; his dream is to build it. Isn’t that wonderful?”

Patty was excited.

“An airplane? Well, let’s hope he’ll make it fly, at least...”

“Of course it will fly! If it’s Stear who will design it, it will be a magnificent machine!”

It was so touching to see Patty bringing her hands to her chest while talking about Stear, as if in ecstasy.

*That’s nice...I think Stear has finally found someone who believes in his dreams.*

Patty kept talking, when suddenly Candy saw a figure in the courtyard that startled her.

Terry was crossing unhurriedly the courtyard, with his hands in his pockets, towards “False Pony’s Hill”.

The girl’s heart started beating wildly.

*Does he want to skip lessons again?*

Candy hadn’t been able to give him back his tie yet. It was the second time she saw him since the May Festival. She really wanted to follow him...

“Candy...Candy? Are you listening to me?”

“Eh? Pardon? What?”

Candy turned to Patty, startled.

“Oh, you were not listening, right? I was saying...I’d like to know if you could arrange some meeting...with Stear, so I could speak to him...”

As she said that, the girl blushed slightly.

“All right! You can count on me!” replied Candy, giving a punch to her chest, so hard that she began to cough.

Patty, bursting into laughter, hurried to pat her friend’s back.

The bell rang, announcing the end of the recess.

*Does he still go to “False Pony’s Hill” to smoke in secret...?*

Deep in thought, Candy went back to her seat, when she saw a note stuck among the pages of her textbook.

She opened the note, and couldn’t hide her surprise.

*It’s Annie!*

*“Today, after lessons, I absolutely need to talk to you.*

*Come and meet me behind the school library. And above all, don’t let anyone see you!*

*Annie”*

Candy read again and again that message from the one who had been her dear friend. Her heart was already full of impatience.

*Maybe Annie will finally confide in me...*

Candy looked tenderly at the profile of the girl who had written to her, and who was sitting a few seats away, with her nose in a book..Of course, they saw each other every day in class and in the dormitory, but she couldn't call her by her name. She was even careful not to meet her eyes.

Annie was an abandoned child too, and both of them had come to Pony's Home on the same day. They had grown up together, so Candy understood very well Annie's feelings. It was also extremely fortunate that she had found her there and she could live under the same roof with her...

After class, Candy went discreetly behind the library.

That side of the library was always in the shadow. Dark green ivy covered the entire wall.

*I'm going to talk with Annie!*

Candy vibrated with impatience at the mere thought of it.

Time seemed to pass extremely slowly. Candy moved away from the wall against which she was leaning. She looked around, and...yes, this time it was her!

"Annie!" she called without thinking, which she immediately regretted.

Annie looked around her in distress, to make sure nobody had heard.

"I'm sorry, Annie. I couldn't help it, I'm so happy!" said Candy, running towards her friend.

But Annie kept her head lowered. Her shoulders were stiff with tension. Nervousness, perhaps...

"Thank you for your message. So, what do you want to tell me?" asked Candy, in a deliberately cheerful tone, because she knew how shy Annie had been since her childhood, and that she had a difficulty in expressing her true feelings. "Are you in trouble? For all your small troubles, just call Candy! Candy is the solution to all your worries!"

Candy had naturally regained the cheerful and light tone of their childhood conversations, but when Annie lifted her head...

Her eyes were shining, full of tears.

"Candy, please, don't take Archie away from me!"

Annie looked straight into Candy's eyes, imploringly, and her voice trembled. Her friend swallowed hard.

"But...why do you say that?"

"I...I've always been in love with Archie, since I first met him...Even before I went to Lakewood. I've known him longer than you do..."

"Yes, of course, I know your feelings about him! How can you think I would take him away from you?"

Candy never expected to hear such a thing...Annie continued:

“Because...Archie...It’s you he loves!”

She couldn’t hold back her tears as she said those words. Candy was shocked.

“But that’s impossible! Archie and I get along well, that’s all. Back in Lakewood, with Stear and Anthony, the other boys...We were all friends, but that’s all!”

Candy put a hand on Annie’s shoulder.

“No, that’s not true!” Annie retorted, freeing herself with a quick movement.

In front of that reaction which seemed so unlike Annie’s behavior, Candy opened her eyes wide.

“Archie is in love with you! I know it...Every time I see him, he only talks about you. And at the May Festival he kept worrying because you hadn’t been allowed to participate in the parade. And even when we were dancing...”

“Annie...”

“It has always been like this with you! At Pony’s Home, you were everybody’s favorite...We were abandoned on the same day, but I’m not like you!”

“Annie, be quiet!”

Candy’s cry sounded like a warning, because at the same time Eliza and several other girls suddenly came out of the shadows of the building.

Annie turned pale.

Eliza and her gang approached, with a sardonic smile on their lips.

“You see? I was right to say there was something suspicious about this Annie Brighton. This time we have caught her red-handed!”

Eliza, with her arms crossed, was looking at Annie victoriously. Candy rushed to support her friend who was about to collapse, trembling.

“So, Annie, you are an abandoned child too! And you grew up in the same orphanage...How interesting! I think Archie would be very surprised to hear that.”

Annie gave a little cry, before running away.

“This little nobody has fooled all of us until now...Ay!”

Candy pushed Eliza unceremoniously, and then ran after Annie.

“Annie! Wait!”

In the distance, she could hear the thunder of a storm.

The weather had been variable until then, the sun alternating with the clouds. But the sky had become much darker, almost black. While running, Candy bit her lip.

*How can you be so fragile, Annie? You haven’t changed since you were a little girl. You are still so weak...*

Annie was heading at full speed towards False Pony's Hill. So did she know that place too? Did she feel the same nostalgia up there?

A drop of rain fell. Before Annie reached the hill, Candy managed to grab her by the shoulder.

"Annie! Wait!"

"Let go of me! I can't stand it anymore...I can no longer stay in college. If Archie knew the truth...I would rather die!"

"You fool!" cried Candy, bursting into tears.

She gave Annie a push. Under the force of that push, Annie lost her balance and fell backwards, in the middle of the clovers.

"Enough with your nonsense! Stop these childish whims!"

Candy screamed, with her face full of tears. There was so much anger inside her. There was sadness too. And the rain had become so strong that she didn't even know she was crying.

Annie was crying just as much, and she was wet too.

"What's wrong with Pony's Home? Why are you so ashamed of it? Didn't we receive all the affection we needed? Didn't we grow up thanks to the love of Miss Pony and Sister Lane? Even today, so far from here, don't you know they are thinking about us? I've endured it until now...I've refrained from talking to you, for your sake...But it was so hard sometimes...That's because you're like a sister to me, Annie. We've always been together, haven't we? In joy and in sorrow..."

"Candy..."

Annie looked up. Candy's crying was louder than the rain.

"Annie! Brace yourself! Why are you so afraid that Archie might know the truth? He's not the kind of person who would despise someone just because they originate from an orphanage! Are you in love with him without knowing anything about his character?"

"Candy..."

"I didn't know you could fall in love with such a hateful boy!"

"No, Candy..."

Annie had suddenly got up. She clung to Candy. The rain made the scent of the white clover flowers stronger.

Candy was right...Archibald Cornwell was not someone who would discriminate people based on their origins. Of course, he liked making fun of girls, and whispering to them sweet words he didn't mean, but he was not a flirt. And it was because she was sure he was really kind and loyal that Annie had fallen in love with him.

"I was so afraid...I am so afraid he will despise me...If Archie despised me, I..."

Annie was now looking straight into her friend's eyes with such intensity that her gaze seemed to produce light.

"Forgive me, Candy...I'm so ashamed."

**“Well, here she is! The sincere Annie of the old days is back!”**

**The two girls hugged each other now under the rain, as they used to do when they were little.**

**“Be yourself, Annie! I’m sure Archie will accept you just the way you are.”**

**“Yes, you are right...I’m going to talk to Archie. I’m the adopted child of the Brighton family...Actually, I grew up at Pony’s Home, like you...”**

**“That’s right!”**

**“You haven’t changed, Candy!”**

**“Neither have you, Annie!”**

**Holding hands, they smiled at each other. Although they were completely drenched, their faces were radiant like the blue sky.**

## Chapter 12

It was a sunny summer day.

The boarding school was immersed in the verdure.

*If I had come to the college in this season, I wouldn't have had the same first impression at all,* thought Candy, looking up at the glowing stained-glass windows.

Even Sister Gray, with her unchanging stony expression, seemed to exude a little more gentleness. Green definitely suited her well...

During the recess the students spontaneously grouped together. Their laughter and whispers resounded in the shadows of the trees. Conversations revolved again and again around a single topic: how to contact the boys.

Tradition had not lied: thanks to the May Festival, there had been several couples of "May lovers"...

"Look at those three...We always see them together these last few days."

Eliza looked irritated at some spot in the courtyard, under the tree that was closest to the forest. In the shadow of that green foliage, Candy, Patty and Annie were chatting cheerfully.

"Do you know what I think, Louise? If they are together all the time, maybe Patty is an abandoned child too. It can't be coincidental that she gets along so well with two girls from the orphanage, don't you agree?"

"You are right...Maybe they're going to found a union of abandoned girls!"

"This upsurge of students of low level undermines the good reputation of St. Paul's Royal College, that's what I say!" argued Eliza in a loud voice.

Under the tree, Candy shrugged her shoulders.

"She doesn't need to shout like that; we have heard her perfectly!"

"You are absolutely right!" responded Annie with a big smile.

Candy looked at her friend with admiration.

*Annie...You have become stronger; that's great! And that makes you even prettier. Oh, the miracle of love...*

As she had expected, Annie's fears had turned out to be unfounded and Archie had accepted her confession very kindly.

Ready for any punishment in case Sister Gray caught her, Annie had asked Archie to meet her.

"What does it matter where you come from? You are who you are and you'll always be, that's all!" he had declared when she had revealed to him the truth about her origins.

Archie's sincere expression when he gave her that answer upset Annie

so much that she burst into tears.

“My anguish had been completely unjustified! Candy, you were right. Archie is really kind. I don’t expect him to love me right away, but I hope that some day I’ll be the one he will love sincerely from the bottom of his heart.”

Annie was so radiant while saying that. Her absolute confidence in her ability to be connected with Archie was nice to see.

*Love...To hold on to someone with all your heart...*

Love...It was the first time Candy had ever used that word which seemed too serious to be pronounced lightly. Even about Anthony, for whom she had felt so many things...she had never used that word to evoke her feelings...

*Anyway...Will I ever be able to love someone?*

“I was violent...But don’t expect any apology from me.”

The memory of those words confused Candy. Her breathing became quick.

“There! You’re daydreaming again!” said Patty, waving her hand in front of her friend’s eyes in order to bring her back to reality.

“Eh? What?”

Candy blinked her eyes.

“We were talking about summer vacation. They have asked me to go back to America...”

Annie looked down, embarrassed.

“Your papa and mama must be looking forward to seeing you again. Archie and the others will return to America too, right?” asked Candy in a cheerful voice.

“And what about you, Candy? Do you have any plans?” asked Patty. She was worried about her and didn’t dare to look at her face.

“Well...I think they’ll send me to summer school.”

St. Paul’s Royal College organized summer courses every year in Scotland. The nuns went there too, of course, and the severe atmosphere didn’t really change from what it was all year round. Therefore, that event didn’t cause any particular enthusiasm to the young students.

“But they say summer school is terrible...Don’t you want to come to my house instead? Oxford is a beautiful place...”

“Thank you, Patty. But I happen to be interested in that ‘terrible summer school’...” replied Candy smiling.

She especially wanted to go to Scotland.

Scotland, the homeland of the Ardlay clan. The country that was linked to Anthony, and to Prince on the Hill...

“Apart from that, I think that when vacation begins we’ll have a little



more freedom, right? How about going to the Blue River Zoo together? We'll invite Stear and Archie!" proposed Candy, winking at Patty, then at Annie, then at Patty, and then at Annie again.

Her two friends, who had felt a little guilty since Candy had said she would be the only one to attend the summer courses of the college, felt liberated and burst out laughing.

"What a good idea! Then I could see Hughley again!" said Patty, bringing her hands to her face.

"Are you sure it's just about Hughley?"

"Oh, Candy, stop it..."

Patty turned all red.

Candy looked up to the sky, which was so clear that blue drops seemed to fall between the leaves of the trees.

*Stear and Patty...They look so nice together!*

Summer...Her favorite season was just beginning...

That same afternoon, Candy went out to take a walk in the forest, in the flaming light of the sunset.

Twilight was so beautiful...She had slipped out, taking advantage of the time that was left until the bell rang for dinner.

The sky was a mixture of pink, orange and purple, delicately melted together. The leaves of the trees reflected the golden rays of the sun like pillars of celestial light. From time to time, the leaves seemed to be dancing, as if they were sighs. Candy picked up a still green one that had fallen, and slipped it into her pocket.

The colors of the sunset were changing every moment, when suddenly, from the other side of the forest, a sweet piano melody was heard. The sunset light seemed to transform into musical notes. Candy stopped.

*What a beautiful melody...It must be coming from the music room.*

Candy went to the other side of the forest and walked towards that place, as if magnetized by the sound that reached her ears.

The melody was becoming clearer, like the scent of roses.

She looked up to the music room. The sound of the piano seemed to be coming from an open window on the second floor.

*Who's playing such a sweet melody?*

Soon Candy spotted a tree whose branches extended towards the study room on the second floor, and quickly climbed it. When she was in a position to see what was going on inside, she looked...and was out of breath.

*Terry...*

It was Terry who elegantly ran his slender fingers over the keys of the grand piano that was next to the window.

Under his fingers, the melody turned into a bouquet of light, then flew

away in a multitude of sparks. Holding her breath, the girl settled herself comfortably on a sturdy branch, with her back against the trunk of the tree.

From the moment she had heard that music, her heart had fluttered without any reason, and had told herself it must be Terry who was playing. It was just a hunch, but it turned out to be right.

Sitting on her branch, Candy let herself be charmed by the sound of the piano. That Terry, with his eyes looking down at the keyboard, was still a stranger to her. She had just met him. An aura of nobility surrounded him: Terrence G. Granchester.

The boy was of such a higher social class than her that at that moment he seemed very distant to her. And then suddenly, the piano stopped.

“Well, what a surprise! Do monkeys love music now?” said Terry ironically, looking up.

Candy was brought out of her reverie and was startled. Since when had he seen her? How long did he know she had been listening to him?

She hadn’t seen him closely since the May Festival. She curled up on her branch. She wanted to go down and run away...but on the other hand, she couldn’t take her eyes off the one whom she had come to spy on.

“If you want to listen to me playing the piano, then join me. Come on, it mustn’t be very difficult for a monkey.”

Terry waved at her, laughing, inviting her to come over, as if he had already forgotten the events of the last time they had spoken. But his little gesture seemed as if he were calling a puppy. Candy started to find that annoying.

“Are you calling me a monkey? Thank you very much, that’s very kind of you!”

Before even finishing her sentence, Candy had jumped from the window into the room.

“Ah, but this is a monkey with freckles! An extremely rare species, I think...”

Terry laughed and gave a high pitched chord on the piano to emphasize his sarcasm.

“Oh!”

Candy, who was beginning to get really upset, grabbed the curtain with the intention of going out the window again. What a fool she had been to recall the moments she had spent with him on the day of the festival!

“Wait! Don’t go...” cried the boy, suddenly getting serious. “I was playing especially for you.”

As if his own words would make him blush, Terry looked down at the

keyboard.

However, it was the truth.

It had been a long time since he had felt the desire to play the piano. But he had looked up at the trees and...someone was there.

*I thought I was dreaming, Candy...*

Of course, he didn't say that last sentence. He just looked at her as she still held the curtain, confused.

"I didn't know that a brute could play the piano..."

Candy had to force herself to find the strength to respond with a little irony. But her voice was so low it didn't have the slightest effect.

Terry smiled without replying and started playing again. The sweetness of the melody quickly calmed down the girl.

She leaned her back lightly against the wall to listen more comfortably.

"You are playing very well, Terry..." she murmured, when the part was finished.

"This is Mozart's *Lullaby*...The only piece I can play well," explained Terry, closing the piano.

"I didn't know it was a lullaby. I understand better why it made me sleepy a while ago."

"She used to play that to me often...I remember that she hummed it to me when I was in bed..." continued Terry in a whisper, his eyes half-closed.

*She...*No doubt he was talking about Eleanor Baker.

Candy held her breath and couldn't take her eyes off Terry. Fortunately, he was probably lost in his thoughts. He didn't seem to harbor any hostility, anger or violence. Reassured, she sighed inwardly.

"Well...You see, this is the only memory I have of her..."

"I envy you..." said Candy, without thinking.

Terry was startled and turned to her.

"At least you have one memory...I don't even have that. I have none..." she confessed.

*That's true...You don't even know what your parents looked like...*

Candy shook her head slightly, as if she had heard what Terry was thinking. Then she smiled.

"But I was abandoned at the best orphanage in the world. All my memories from Pony's Home are real treasures for me. I'm grateful to my parents every day for leaving me there. I'm sure they chose that place because they knew they were doing what was best for me."

Terry was looking at Candy with admiration. She seemed so happy...

"Tell me more about yourself, Candy..."

She didn't need to be begged for that. She talked about Miss Pony who was so forgiving, about Sister Lane who was so conscientious but

never forgot her sense of humor.

“At Pony’s Home I was the best at throwing the lasso and climbing trees!”

“And you also had the most freckles, right?”

“Exactly! You’re jealous, huh?” said Candy, trying not to laugh.

“Yes, I envy you...I love freckles,” replied Terry without malice, which made him cough immediately afterwards to hide his embarrassment. “Candy, are you going back to America for the summer vacation?”

He was obviously trying to change the subject.

“No...Nobody has asked me to go back, so I’ll probably attend the summer college.”

“You’re going to Scotland, then?”

Terry leaned on the piano and lowered his head, as if he were absorbed in deep thought.

“You know, we have a second residence in Scotland.”

At that moment, the bell for dinner rang.

The sun was almost down. A blue light tinged with orange illuminated the music room.

If Candy was late, she would get demerit points again.

“I have to go!”

The girl grabbed the window ledge.

*I love freckles...*

It was just a simple phrase, but it had troubled her so much...

She had something to confess to Terry too. She took a deep breath.

“Terry...You know...I’m no longer afraid of horses,” she said, as quickly as she could.

Then, without waiting for a possible answer, she turned and jumped from the window to the branch of the tree. She felt her whole body burning up.

“Come and see me to our second residence.”

A voice had said something behind her. Had she really heard it?

## Chapter 13

*“Dear Miss Candice White Ardlay,  
I am glad your days are studious and profitable.  
But summer vacation will soon come, and I’m writing to you today to  
inform you that Sir William would like to ask you to stay in the second  
residence of the Ardlay family in Scotland.  
Madam Elroy and the other members of the family, including the  
Cornwell brothers, will also stay in the Scottish villa.  
Thank you for sending your replies directly to me. I never fail to  
deliver them to Sir William. As I have already told you, Sir William is  
always very busy. Do not expect a direct response from him.  
I wish you a happy summer vacation.  
George”*

*July*

*Scotland!*

*Since yesterday, I am not far from Edinburgh, at the boarding school  
where the summer classes will take place. And since my arrival, new  
emotions have never stopped!*

*The white umbels of the wild carrots and the buttercups swaying as  
far as the eye can see in the meadows! All the small lakes scattered  
across the landscape, and the lovely streams flowing and reflecting  
the sunlight! I think I have returned to Lakewood! And the church  
located in the middle of this setting looks so much like that one in the  
village where Pony’s Home is that it makes me quite nostalgic!*

*Just as I arrived, I started screaming for joy and climbed on the first  
branch of the tree which is in front of the church! Of course, Sister  
Margaret was terrified...*

*But the best news is that Sister Kreis and Sister Gray, detained by  
some meetings, won’t be with us!*

*To think that I had prepared a whole strategy of resistance to the  
“horrible summer college”...It was really useless!*

*And then, how lucky! Great Aunt Elroy has refused to let me spend  
the holidays with them in the second residence of the Ardlays. It  
seems she doesn’t want to spend her vacation with a person of low  
social class like me. If she prefers to spend it with Eliza and Neal, let  
her do as she pleases!*

*There’s another thing that makes me very happy: Patty and Annie will  
attend the summer college too! Not out of compassion for me...but  
rather because they have learned that Stear and Archie will also be in  
the Ardlay residence in Scotland, which is...in Edinburgh, very close*

*to the boarding school!*

*And then...then...The second residence of T. G. is very close too. I know that because I heard Eliza talking to her friends...*

“Come and see me to our second residence...”

Candy had the impression she heard the voice of T. G. (that is, Terry). Holding her breath, she quickly closed her diary.

Was it just an impression?

Suddenly, the door of her room swung open.

“Candy! Come on! We’re going to the lake!”

Annie and Patty burst into the room. What vivacity! What energy! They had quite changed, both of them, compared to the time when they had first come to the college...

It turned out that they had already managed to contact Stear and Archie who had arrived at the second residence of the Ardlay clan a few days ago. They would all meet on the shores of the lake.

“All right! I’m going there ahead of you!”

Candy raised her arms smiling, grabbed the wooden window frame, and jumped without hesitation on the branch of the nearest tree. It seemed to be inviting her to jump in the middle of its foliage.

“Oh, Candy, you’ll never change...”

Annie burst out laughing in the same high-pitched voice she had always had.

Candy quickly descended from her tree and ran across the large grassy grounds of the boarding school until she reached a small path, where she stopped to wait for her two friends.

At the end of that path, the lake was sparkling like a mirror.

Annie and Patty joined Candy, and the three girls continued their way to the lake, laughing.

Stear and Archie were already there.

“Sorry to keep you waiting! It’s been a long time since we had the opportunity to have fun together!”

Candy was very excited. They were forbidden to invite boys into the girls’ dormitory, but when their homework was finished, regulation didn’t prohibit meeting anyone outside during their free time.

They hadn’t seen each other since the beginning of the summer vacation, when they had gone together to the Blue River Zoo to visit Albert and Hughley. Patty and Annie were blushing.

“We would have liked to ask you for a boat ride, but unfortunately...” began Archie in a dejected tone.

“...Unfortunately, Eliza and Neal have taken the biggest boat. There are only small boats for two people left.”

“Oh, but there are just two of them! That’s fine! So, Annie with Archie

and Patty with Stear, perfect!" suggested Candy smiling.

"But..."

Patty was confused. She liked Candy's idea...On the other hand, she didn't really know what to say to her friend, who chuckled.

"Don't worry about me. I'll take a boat ride another time. Besides, I especially want to explore around, so don't trouble yourselves."

And she walked away backwards, shrugging her shoulders, without losing her joyful expression. Archie was looking sadly at her.

"I'll take you for a boat ride later!" insisted Stear.

"No, thank you! I don't think staying with you on the lake is a good idea for anyone. So, goodbye!"

Then, with a smile at Stear who was scratching his head embarrassed, she ran towards a small hill covered with thick vegetation.

That hill had attracted her since her arrival at the summer college. Much smaller in size than False Pony's Hill, it was perhaps only a mound of earth, but the summer vegetation and the flowers were so abundant that it looked like a hat of many colors.

From the top of that "Small Pony's Hill", she saw three boats, as pretty as if they had come out of a picture, dancing on the greenish water of the lake. Eliza's boat, the biggest one of the three, had stopped. On another boat, Annie waved her hand to her. On the third boat, Patty also noticed Candy and greeted her with big gestures. Finally, even Stear himself put down his oars and did the same, which made the boat swing. The two smaller boats moved towards the middle of the lake.

The lake was sparkling under the summer sunlight like golden marble.

Candy took a deep breath. The scent of the lake and of nature...

*It's strange how this place, where I have never been before, seems so familiar to me. Where does this nostalgia come from? Terry...I guess he must already be here...*

That idea suddenly seemed so absurd to her that she began to blush.

*Oh, I'm thinking about him again...Anthony, I'm a little strange these days, don't you think?*

Candy lay down among the primroses and the forget-me-nots. She felt as if she were floating in the beautiful blue sky.

"I love freckles..."

*He said that. I heard it right. It was not an illusion...*

It was nothing more than a simple opinion, and yet, every time Candy recalled those words of Terry, she felt her heart beating faster.

*Until now I've never liked them so much, but I thank God for giving me this face full of freckles, since Terry likes them...*

She closed her eyes. The warmth of the sun on her eyelids was pleasant.

*What is he doing right now?*

Candy was almost daydreaming, when she felt something tickling her nose.

“If you sleep here, you risk getting bitten by a snake!”

“Ah!”

Startled, she jumped up. Terry was there, laughing and looking at Candy, as he waved a bit of grass in front of her nose. And she was just thinking about him...

“Really, you always have to scare me, don’t you?”

With her heart beating wildly, Candy tried to catch with her mouth the small grass Terry was holding out to her. He tickled her cheek.

“You mean it was me who was surprised! I didn’t know Tarzan was afraid of snakes! Actually, it’s rather snakes that should be afraid...”

“Oh, Terry...”

Candy forced herself to stare at him reproachfully, but her eyes remained tender. Terry was smiling too.

“What are you doing by the lake? Oh, I know! Perhaps you were looking for me?” asked Candy in a tone that betrayed her joy at seeing him again.

Inwardly, she promised herself to regain her composure.

“Not at all! This is where I always come to read in peace and quiet. It’s my favorite place. And today I’ve come across an unexpected intruder...” replied the boy, giving a slight tap on Candy’s head with a thick book he had brought with him.

To tell the truth, he had been waiting impatiently for Candy’s arrival; that could be seen in his furrowed brows, which was definitely not natural, and he couldn’t hide his pleasure at seeing that “intruder” again.

“Really? So you are a great reader? Yet you don’t look like it...” retorted Candy, glancing at the book. “What’s that?”

“Shakespeare.”

Terry handed her a thick volume with dark brown leather cover.

“Shakespeare...The writer of *Romeo and Juliet*, right?”

She had pronounced that title inadvertently. Both immediately looked away.

At that reaction, Candy understood that Terry hadn’t forgotten the day of the May Festival either. She pretended to leaf through the book in order to regain her composure.

“Oh, this is *Macbeth*...I didn’t know you loved theatre.”

“I don’t,” Terry answered, a little dryly.

“Really? However...”

With a mischievous smile, Candy opened the book and stopped on a



page whose margins were full of notes written in pencil. Confused, Terry took his book back as if to hide a secret.

“Well, actually, I do...I love theatre. I’m sorry, but I love it very much.”

Candy nodded, still smiling. That confession had caused her a warm feeling.

At the end of the day, Terry was really Eleanor Baker’s son. He might refuse he owed anything to that woman, but somehow his heart was trying to find something in common with her.

At the same time, on her boat in the middle of the lake, Eliza had just noticed Terry at the top of the hill, together with Candy.

“But...what does that mean? What are those two doing over there?”

She abruptly stood up in the boat, which swayed and made her lose her balance. Eliza fell into the water with a scream, splashing Neal.

“It’s...it’s cold! Save me! Hurry up!”

Even while struggling in the water, Eliza still found a way to order people around.

“Hey! Archie! Help us!”

Neal was calling for help from the boat that was closest to him.

“Why don’t you try to save her yourself, Neal?”

Stear, without any panic, soon joined the conversation.

“Archie, you know well that Neal can’t swim! Maybe Eliza can...Well, Eliza, you thought it was hot and decided to take a swim, didn’t you? So, does it feel good?”

The girl was too busy waving her arms and trying to avoid swallowing any water to give any scathing answer.

Suddenly, a noise was heard: it was Terry who had dived from the bank. He swam in freestyle and reached instantly the place where Eliza was struggling. He quickly hoisted her into Neal’s boat, then climbed into the boat himself. Everyone was astonished.

“Move on!” said Terry, taking the oars from Neal’s hands.

The boat quickly reached the shore. Eliza was pretending to have fainted. Maybe it was a good idea if they would take care of her, she said to herself, refraining from giggling.

Even now that the boat was safe on the shore, she remained with her eyes closed, leaning with all her weight against the one who had come to her rescue.

When Terry carried her in his arms and lay her down on the shore, she really had to try hard not to laugh.

Stear and Archie quickly landed their boats too and jumped to the ground, quite pale.

As for Candy, she was running down the hill.

“Are you crazy? The water of this lake is frozen! And if she had had a

heart attack? It might have been very serious!"

As Terry reproached them, Stear and Archie felt ashamed.

"We are sorry. We took the situation a little lightly, that's true. Eh... are you all right, Eliza?"

"No, I'm not all right...Terry..." called Eliza in a low voice. "You have risked your life to save me...Could you take me home, please? I can't walk."

"Well, if you talk like that, it's because you've muddled through," replied Terry dryly, as he walked away.

He was about to leave, when Candy said, without thinking:

"Be careful, Terry. You risk catching cold. You have to go and change quickly."

The boy ran his hand through his hair.

"It's nothing at all. I used to swim in this lake since I was a child," he answered her with a smile.

Then he ran up the hill.

Eliza had raised her head and was watching Terry ecstatically as he walked away.

"Who does he think he is?" said Neal with a nasty grimace.

That remark made Eliza completely regain her consciousness.

"Neal, what are you doing?" she told him, looking straight into his eyes. "Hurry up and find the servants, and tell them to come quickly with a towel and a blanket!"

Neal was startled and immediately went away running.

"And you, there, what are you waiting for? Do you expect me to die? Come on, Archie, Stear, help me get up! Annie, you will bring my shoes! Patty, get me my purse!"

She was hysterical. She didn't stop there, and turned to Candy.

"It's because of you that I almost drowned! I'll tell Great Aunt Elroy and the nuns, I warn you."

Then she started walking, held by Stear and Archie, who looked rather embarrassed. Annie and Patty turned anxiously towards Candy, but she gave them a slight smile so that they wouldn't worry. Finally, when everyone had left, she sighed.

"Well, she is strong...There's no worry about her heart. I bet she won't even catch a cold."

They would hurry back to the second residence of the family, where there would be the servants, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Leagan. Stear and Archie would probably be scolded.

*I'd rather not be there. I'm glad I wasn't asked to go with them...*

All the same, one thing was certain: Terry had been awesome. And he was such a good swimmer...

Candy was about to climb Small Pony's Hill again, when she noticed Terry's book in a tuft of grass. He had thrown it on the ground before

diving to save Eliza.

*He is such a gentleman...*

Terry's attitude, as he turned pale when he saw what was happening, and then rushed to dive without the slightest hesitation, had touched her.

He was capable of jumping into the water to save anyone.

She held the book tight in her arms. There was still little time left before dinner.

"But of course! I'll take his book back to him!"

She went away running, as if she had been invigorated.

It was not very difficult for her to find the second residence of the Granchesters.

It was a large property protected by a beautiful iron gate, almost hidden behind a thick coppice. The gate was rusty and covered with ivy. The emblem of the Granchesters was engraved in the middle, also damaged by time.

Candy boldly pushed open the gate and entered the estate. The alley was hidden by the summer vegetation. No house was visible yet.

"This is definitely an aristocratic residence...It's enormous! But the surroundings are not in a very good condition..."

Beyond a curtain of trees, one could see an old dry pond, and the yews had not been pruned in a long time.

Actually, the place seemed uninhabited.

Was it really here that Terry was spending his vacation?

Finally, behind a wood of very dense vegetation, Candy saw an old building. How old could that be? The solid towers seemed to be there for witches to rest.

In the shade of the trees, a very luxurious red car was parked. So there were people there, which reassured Candy.

She approached the car.

"Go away! Get out of here, please!"

A large door opened wide and cries were heard from the building. It was Terry's voice. A woman came out, as if she had been pushed. She was wearing a dress in a forget-me-not color. Candy knew that beauty, that blond hair...

*Eleanor Baker...*

She didn't look as young as she was in her films. Her light makeup was ruined by tears, and fatigue could be seen on her face.

"Please, Terrence, give me a few moments to talk to you! Terry..."

"I have nothing to say to you! And neither do you! You have rejected me! You have no idea how I felt while I crossed the Atlantic...Come on, go home!"

When Candy saw Terry yelling at his mother like that, with his voice

broken and his eyes wet too, she gasped.

“Forgive me, Terry...I was wrong...You know it, though, how happy I was...But...It was despite myself that I...”

Terry didn't want to know.

“Stop it! I have no mother. I don't want to see you ever again!”

Candy couldn't stand that scene any longer.

“Stop!” she screamed.

Speechless, Terry and Eleanor turned around at the same time.

“Stop it, Terry! You don't really mean what you're saying, do you? Be honest with yourself. You actually love your mother. That's why, when you were on the ship...I haven't forgotten the sad expression you had the first time I saw you...And now you want to send her away? That's so sad! Terry, please, listen to what she has to say to you. If I...if I...if I had a mother, and if she came from so far away to see me...”

Candy didn't finish her sentence. It was just the expression of an uncontrolled feeling. She already regretted having spoken. Shakespeare's book slipped from her hand and fell to the ground.

“Oh...I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. But...don't send your mother away, Terry, please...”

She had cried out those words. She stopped, turned her back and ran away. Her vision was completely blurred. It was then that she noticed she was crying too.

Weather changes every hour in Scotland, even in the summer.

Morning is generally the hour of light and of green vegetation.

Afternoon is often grey or rainy. In the evening, mist rises...

The nuns who took care of the summer class apparently wanted to relax too, since they were quite tolerant regarding the free time schedule.

Actually, Candy and her friends could see Stear and Archie almost every day. Candy almost had the impression that she had returned to Lakewood. Only that Anthony was not there.

But Annie and Patty seemed so happy! Their cheerfulness prevented Candy from being sad, and even if she had wanted to hold back time, it was going on inexorably.

*What is Terry doing? How is he? I shouldn't have interfered with his affairs. He must be angry...*

She regretted it but nothing could have stopped her from speaking at the time.

Terry and Eleanor Baker...Whatever problem existed between them, nothing would change the fact that they were mother and son.

Eleanor Baker, the world-famous actress, had come incognito all the way to Scotland to see her son.

*She loves him, that's obvious...*

In front of a window, Candy sighed.

## Chapter 14

A cold wind, announcing the end of summer, began to blow. There were only a few days left before the end of summer college. Soon they would go back to London and the rigid school rules. Candy was alone at the boarding school during the afternoon free time. Everyone except her had gone out, both the students and the nuns.

As soon as she finished her homework, she jumped from the window to one of the branches of the tree in front of her room. She wanted to take advantage of that moment when nobody was there to climb to the top of that tree. The leaves were getting more and more yellow as she went higher, and the sky Candy was looking at clearly announced autumn. The clouds were moving so low that she felt as if she could touch them.

“Those clouds...They look like marshmallows! Anyway, I know some people who must be eating a ‘white cake’ with a snobbish expression right now...”

She laughed. In fact, Annie and Patty, although unwillingly, had gone to a “white party” at the house of the Ardlays, at Eliza’s invitation.

“As for me, she hasn’t even invited me, and it’s just as well!”

That “white party” meant everything should be white: the tablecloths, the dishes, the clothes of the guests...Just imagining that immaculate color everywhere dazzled her.

“Why did Eliza had that idea of organizing such a crazy party?”

Candy laughed when she also imagined Great Aunt Elroy attending the party, all in white.

“Well, it doesn’t hurt to be alone sometimes. Come on, it’s been a long time since I’ve jumped from one branch to another...”

Candy descended to the lowest branches, and then went that way from tree to tree. She oscillated like a pendulum from the branch she was on, then moved to the tree next to it, and then did it all over again.

*I can still do it; I haven’t lost my skill...It’s too bad that some people call me a monkey...*

Candy smiled as she moved on. In order to become a lady, she had refrained from being a “Tarzan”, but to tell the truth, that required a great effort. Those magnificent trees invited her to join them.

“It’s so exciting! And how about going that way to the villa of the Ardlays?”

Candy had hardly formed that idea when she had already moved to the next branch. But the next moment...

She collapsed on the ground with a dreadful crash: half of the branch

she had just grabbed had broken.

She was used to falling without hurting herself. She got up slowly, her hands on her hips. Suddenly, a neighing was heard behind her.

“What a surprise! So monkeys fall from the sky! It’s the first time I see a wild animal around here...”

It was Terry who was looking at her with a big smile from the saddle of his white horse.

Candy screamed, imitating the sound of a monkey and puckered up her nose, which at least had the advantage of concealing her embarrassment.

Terry was laughing out loud. And his laughter was perfectly clear, without the slightest hint of wickedness.

Since the last time that he was with his mother, Candy hadn’t seen Terry again, neither by the lake nor in the old chateau, not even on the hill. And since then, she had been wondering anxiously what had happened to him.

He was riding a white horse and he was completely dressed in white. A true white knight.

“What does that mean? Haven’t you been invited to the ‘white party’, Candy?” asked Terry with another burst of laughter.

“Of course not! That’s all I had to do,” replied the girl proudly.

“Fine. In that case, I’m not going either.”

“What?”

“Well, that seems to make you happy...Obviously, I was going because I thought you would be there too. Does that suit you?”

Candy’s eyes narrowed with joy. She nodded several times.

“Well, in that case, it’s decided,” added the horseman, holding out his hand to her.

“Pardon?”

“Don’t you want to come to my house? I’ll introduce you to the ghost of a knight...”

“Oh, how romantic!”

Candy grabbed Terry’s hand with a smile, and he pulled her up on his horse.

At the same time, from the balcony of the Ardlay residence, Eliza kept looking at the front door.

*What has happened to Terry? Everybody is already here...*

A large table was set, with a white tablecloth, decorations of white flowers, whipped cream cakes, peeled white fruits, and various dishes...

“Eliza, I’m hungry! Can I help myself?” asked Stear, who was about to grab a cream sandwich.

“Not yet!” Eliza replied with a stern look. “I haven’t prepared all this

for you!”

“You wicked...”

Eliza’s forbidding didn’t prevent Stear from picking up a cookie and discreetly swallowing it. Archie was amused and did the same. Annie and Patty were completely still in their seats. They did everything to avoid Eliza’s look.

Neal was talking to Great Aunt Elroy and Mrs. Leagan, comfortably seated on a sofa, with a glass of white wine in his hand. He was trying hard to win their favor.

Eliza was getting angry and pacing up and down on the balcony.

*Nobody seems to care that my party is a failure...Aren’t they ashamed of it? It’s strange that Terry is not here yet! Something must have happened to him...*

To tell the truth, that party had been organized by Eliza only for Terry.

She had invited him to dinner in order to thank him for rescuing her at the lake, but he had politely declined that request. So she had thought of a kind of party which she hoped might please him. And then, if he saw her in a white dress, almost like a wedding dress, that would stimulate his imagination.

*He must have got suddenly sick; it can’t be anything else. Since I personally gave him the invitation, I’m sure he got it. That must have made him overjoyed! He even smiled when he accepted it...That said, I think that house is seriously lacking in servants...When I think he didn’t even deliver me a bouquet of flowers...*

Eliza nodded, perfectly sure of herself. Then Great Aunt Elroy got up from the sofa and looked outside.

“Eliza, the sky is darkening and the wind is picking up. Let us not stay on the balcony. We’d better move the party to the salon.”

“Yes, Great Aunt. We’ll move the table to the salon!” replied the girl with an apparently carefree expression.

As soon as Great Aunt Elroy and Mrs. Leagan returned inside, she gave orders in a piercing voice:

“Archie, Stear, come on, move the table! Patty! Annie! You too, go on, quickly!”

“Yes, all right, all right, we understand...”

Stear and Archie exchanged a meaningful look. Eliza shrugged her shoulders and left.

“And is this because of our friend who is so superior that he thinks he is exempt from arriving on time so that we have to undergo this typhoon?”

Archie seemed horrified. Meanwhile, Stear didn’t seem inclined to lift a finger and remained seated in his chair, happily digging into the pudding with a spoon.



“He accepted the invitation, didn’t he? It’s just because he said he would come that Eliza organized this boring party...”

“I don’t think Terry will show up,” whispered Patty cautiously, standing motionless with a teapot in her hands. “Not if he has learned that Candy hasn’t been invited...”

“What?” exclaimed Archie, with a sudden severe expression on his face. “What has Candy got to do with that aristocrat?”

Annie looked at him intensely. A thunder rumbled in the distance.

“Anyway...At any rate, let’s hurry to move the table. There’s going to be a heavy rain...” intervened Stear, with the pudding still in his hand.

Terry’s villa was enormous and silent. The corridors were decorated with armors, helmets and swords that seemed to be moving. Majestic portraits of the Granchester ancestors also hung on the walls. The atmosphere was quite conducive to the appearance of a knight’s ghost. Candy, who had rejoiced and had found the idea of meeting a ghost romantic, was beginning to be really scared.

“Oh! A tiger!” she cried as soon as she entered the large hall.

It was a real tiger, in a corner of the hall, showing its fangs.

“It’s stuffed, as you can see! Would you by any chance be afraid of ghosts too? Watch out, there is a snake behind you!”

“Ah!” Candy screamed again, instinctively clinging to Terry.

“Well, to make a girl throw herself into your arms, you’d better know her weak point!”

“Terry!”

The boy was beaming. Candy quickly moved away from him.

“Oh, yes...a stuffed tiger. It looks like real...” she said, fearfully caressing the beast.

*Tiger...T. G.*

Candy smiled as she recalled that she had written the initials “T. G.” on the misty window of her room, at the boarding school. Obviously “T. G.” were the initials of Terrence G. Granchester which she used in her diary.

“What are you writing?” That was the question Patty asked Candy when she saw her write something with her finger on the glass. Candy had quickly erased the initials with her hand. “Eh...Tiger...Yes, because I love tigers. They are strong and agile animals...” But maybe Patty had not fallen for that lie...

“The storm is about to break up...” murmured Terry, opening a window. “The house is old; half of the shutters don’t close properly.”

The wind was getting colder.

“Are there not any servants?” asked Candy, helping him close the window shutters.

That question had been bothering her for quite a while.

“The Cods, who worked for our family a long time ago and still live nearby, take care of opening the house when I come to spend a few days here. They also keep my horse all year round. Otherwise, the house is more or less abandoned. The current second residence of the Granchesters is in Windermere. I must say I have never set foot there.”

Terry turned to Candy and smiled at her. In the dark room, his eyes shone with tenderness.

“I’ve spent an unforgettable summer here during my childhood, with the duke of Granchester and a certain American actress...”

He told her that so suddenly that Candy was startled. She lowered her eyes.

Terry lit the candles scattered all over the place. Then the room took on a phantasmagorical appearance, illuminated by that trembling light.

A thunder rumbled suddenly. The rain burst, so hard that it looked like waves crashing against rocks. The shutters that had just been closed were banging with the wind and the rain was coming in. It was noticeably colder. Candy put her hands on her arms, shivering.

Terry slipped out, and then came back a moment later with a white dressing gown in his hands.

“Here. This is the dressing gown of...of my mother...” he explained awkwardly, looking away.

Candy turned towards him. Their eyes met. Both hurried to look away.

“Terry...You mean that...finally...”

“Eleanor Baker asked me to give her regards to ‘the freckled girl’...”

“But then...But then that means...”

She didn’t need to say any more. That could mean only one thing: Terry and his mother had finally managed to open their hearts and talk to each other.

Candy was so happy that she clasped the sleeve of the dressing gown which was too large for her. Her eyes became wet. Terry was silent now and was busy lighting a fire in the fireplace. He was obviously accustomed to doing that; quickly, colored flames began to vibrate in Candy’s eyes.

“Come and get yourself warm...”

Terry seemed a little more nervous than usual. Actually, asking the girl to come closer to the fire meant asking her to come closer...to him.

Candy obediently approached and sat on the fur that was used as a rug; then she extended her hands towards the fire.

“It’s so nice...” she murmured.

The flames were dancing on her profile. Terry couldn’t take his eyes

off that sight.

*That night too I had lit the fireplace...We stayed until dawn, watching the flames. We didn't say anything in particular, but I understood...I understood she had hoped to live with the duke of Granchester...and with me, if possible. And that dream was far more important to her than her desire to succeed as an actress. If Candy hadn't been there, I would never have understood...I would have sent her away before she could talk to me. I almost did something irretrievable...*

Candy turned suddenly towards Terry with a smile. He smiled back at her tenderly. Some things are transmitted more clearly through that than with words. Warmth filled the girl's heart.

*I love him...I love Terry.*

It was so strong that it was almost painful. And wasn't it obvious that the boy, too...

Time seemed to stand still. Terry started to extend his hand towards Candy's face...when, suddenly, he stopped.

She let out a sigh and turned to the flames again.

"There's a fireplace at Pony's Home too. Miss Pony used to roast marshmallows there."

"You often talk about food, don't you think?"

Time had started again. Terry had regained his smile and had relaxed, with his legs stretched out on the fur.

"That was the most pleasant time of the day, between lunch and snack. And we had bread and cookies too! How delicious! I wish you could taste Sister Lane's raisin cookies..."

"I would be happy to go there one day...And also to see the apple tree on which you learned to play Tarzan!"

"Would you? Then you really have to go there!" Candy exclaimed, looking at him with shining eyes. "Anyway...Soon I'll have to say goodbye to Tarzan...I've decided to become a lady when autumn comes."

She had spoken so seriously...The boy burst out laughing.

"You? A lady? I'm sorry, but that wouldn't suit you at all!"

"Oh! That's not very nice!"

She forced herself to inflate her cheeks as if she were upset, but that didn't last long and she laughed too.

"I don't even know what it is like to be a real lady! All the same, I don't want Great Uncle William to be disappointed when he sees me. I would like to be a lady he would approve of."

"He's the one who adopted you, right?"

"Yes...You see, George, his secretary, always writes to me that Great Uncle William is delighted to see me grow up as a very stylish lady..."

“That must be very stressing for you!” said Terry, still laughing.

“On the other hand, what else can I do to thank him for his kindness? Refine my gestures and my attitude, and study well, of course...All it takes is a little effort...”

Candy’s serious expression prompted Terry to become more serious too. She continued:

“I’ve tried to play the piano, or some other instrument...but I can’t keep up with the others!”

All the students of the school could play some instrument: the piano, the harpsichord, the harp, the violin...Annie, for example, was excellent at playing the piano and the flute.

“You can learn at your own pace; there’s no rush.”

“But if I don’t hurry, he’ll die before he can hear me play.”

“Is he that old?”

“Well, nobody has ever seen him. It seems he is very old. Anyway...it’s just a rumor.”

“Then I understand your impatience.”

“That’s why, if someone talented would agree to give me some private lessons, it would help me a lot...”

Candy accompanied her words with a sly expression while looking at Terry. He laughed and gave her a light tap on the forehead.

“I see...You would like me to be your private piano teacher, is that right?”

“Exactly!” she replied with a bright smile.

Terry had to restrain himself not to pull Candy towards him. The fire was going out. The rain had stopped, without them noticing, and a clear light entered now through the broken shutters.

“It would be my pleasure, Freckled Tarzan!”

While saying that, Terry bowed ceremoniously to his companion.

Candy got up too, but, as she stepped on the long dressing gown, she almost fell.

“We have to say that: this dressing gown doesn’t suit you,” the boy observed, stifling a laughter.

Candy pretended to be patronizing to him.

“I’ll show you that a beautiful dressing gown can suit me very well, young man!”

“Oh! That would be risky!”

Terry went to the back of the room, this time laughing out loud. Eleanor Baker’s silk dressing gown should not be spoiled. Candy took it off and carefully folded it.

“Down there is the music room. There is a piano and a harp,” explained Terry.

He opened the door, surrounded on three sides by shelves of books. Candy followed him, and didn’t fail to take a look at the books as she

approached the threshold.

“Terry, there are a lot of plays here! I recognize the complete works of Shakespeare.”

“Indeed...”

The boy stopped for a moment to pick up a book before immediately putting it back in its place.

Eleanor Baker, Terry’s mother, had proposed to her son before leaving to return to America with her. She certainly had understood that Terry was interested in theatre, and she had told him that he could study acting in America.

*In other circumstances I would have accepted...Before meeting you, Candy, yes, I would have accepted gladly...*

Terry didn’t take his eyes off Candy who kept looking at that huge quantity of books with admiration.

*This is the reality...I love her more than I love theatre...I have to admit it.*

She lingered there. He, on the contrary, wanted to enjoy every single moment in her company. He urged her to hurry.

“You’re not coming? The piano is over there!”

“Oh! It’s wonderful! It looks like the music room of the college.”

Candy couldn’t contain her joy when she entered the music room. A grand piano was in the middle, as well as a cello, a harp and several cases of violins of various sizes, placed quite informally here and there.

“It’s a little dusty; the room has been closed for a long time. Candy, can you open the window, please?”

Terry dusted the piano and sat down in front of it, while the girl opened the French window of the music room. The beautiful blue of the sky that had cleared after the rain, and the scent of the green grass filled the room.

Terry immediately began to play. It was a cheerful and rhythmic melody.

“What is this piece called?” asked Candy, standing right behind him.

Terry turned to her and smiled mischievously.

“It’s an improvisation...I would give it the title: ‘the theme of Freckled Tarzan and the monkey’.”

“You’re always joking...”

As if to reprimand him, Candy gave him a slight push.

Terry used that as an excuse and pretended to fall, acting in an exaggerated manner and taking the chair along with him. Both burst out laughing.

But in the shadow of the wide open door Eliza was watching them with shining eyes.

She had come, worried about Terry's health. She imagined him being struck down by a sudden fever, otherwise he would never have missed her party without giving an explanation.

When she had seen his white horse behind the garden, in the shade of a tree, in a meadow of tall grass, things had become clearer for her.

*Terry must have planned to come to my party on that white horse! He'll certainly be overjoyed to see me visit him personally!*

She felt proud imagining Terry's emotional expression.

She had knocked hard on the main door, and she had called several times...Nobody had come.

Actually, the door was not locked. So Eliza had taken the liberty to enter. That would surprise him, which was even better! Then she had walked into the house, down the dark corridor.

That was when she had heard the sound of a piano, as well as laughter, which had led her to the music room.

For a few moments, she couldn't believe her eyes. Standing in anger behind the door, it almost seemed to her that her heart was going to burst out.

*Candy? Never! No, I'll never leave Terry to that miserable girl. Hasn't she got any shame? I'll never leave him to you, do you hear? Never!*

She bit her lip furiously.

## Chapter 15

*September*

*This time summer vacation is over.*

*Time has passed so quickly...Summer college was much less horrible than I had heard. In fact, it was not horrible at all! On the contrary, every day was like a dream. And that dream still lingers on my mind. The light and the wind of Scotland...If I close my eyes, the images are coming back to me...*

*I've made some progress in piano. Thank you, T. G. In this school, with all these strict rules, I don't know when I'll be able to have another lesson, but I'm going to repeat the basic exercises you've taught me.*

*That vacation was so wonderful that now I can endure even Sister Gray's severe face without displeasure.*

*However, I've also had my small share of sadness this summer...*

*I've received a letter from Albert.*

*He has gone on a trip again. This time to Africa. In his letter, he makes fun of himself, of his nature that prevents him from being satisfied if he stays in the same place. I would have liked to see him before he left because I don't know when we'll meet again...*

Candy copied Albert's letter into her diary, and thought about his smile.

*"Dear Candy,*

*It's been so long since we last saw each other, hasn't it?*

*I'm writing to you from Kenya, in Africa, where I am right now.*

*Aren't you surprised?*

*I'm sorry I left without letting you know. I was going to tell you the day you came to the zoo with Stear and your friends, but you seemed so happy that I didn't have the courage to do it.*

*I knew you would be sad.*

*In the end, I understood I was not made to work at a zoo. It was getting more and more difficult for me to see the animals deprived of their freedom. Above all I wanted to open their cages. Before getting to that, I preferred to take the plunge into the real immense nature, along with Poupe.*

*Now I work as an assistant at a clinic (for humans!). There are people from all over the world here. There's a twenty-year-old American nurse who works here, and I think she looks like you.*

*Candy, the word goodbye doesn't exist between us; you know that.*

*I'm sure we'll meet again one day.*

*So, until next time, take care of yourself, and above all, keep being yourself!*

*Albert*

*P. S. I forgot; don't worry about Hughley. I've entrusted her to a colleague of mine who will take perfect care of her. Patty can go to the zoo whenever she wants to see her."*

"Well...I no longer have anyone to visit...What's the use of running away from school now?"

It was the lunch break, and Terry had just finished reading Albert's letter on False Pony's Hill. He looked up at the sky disappointed.

"Africa is so far away...And yet, by the way he's talking, it still sounds so close..." added Candy with a sigh.

"But that's just like him...Going anywhere he wants, any time he wants, without any restraints..."

"Yes, freedom suits him. Living with the animals in the middle of nature; he must be so happy!"

*"I'm sure we'll meet again one day..."*

Since he assured her that they would meet again, she was certain that this day would undoubtedly come, like that time she had accidentally run into him, at night, on a street of London.

The girl also turned her eyes to the blue sky, where the scent of autumn already floated. The flowers that had brightened False Pony's Hill in the spring were all gone, and their seeds and berries had begun to take on colors.

Since her return to the school, this is where she spent all lunch recesses with Terry, without anyone in college knowing anything about it.

There was no appointment between them, no promise to meet again the next day at the same hour, in the same place.

It was just on the last day in Scotland, at the end of their last piano lesson, that Terry had said casually, in a low voice, but loud enough for Candy to hear him:

"Back at school, maybe I'll be spending lunch recess up there, on the hill..."

"That's what I thought too..." the girl had replied.

The mere idea of seeing him again at school was enough to fill her heart with joy. Hearing his voice and staying by his side for a little while every day was enough to make her happy.

"A nurse who looks like you...I wonder what that means...She must have a flat nose and freckles, and no doubt she blunders all the time..."



“Oh...”

She was amused whenever he made fun of her like that.

“But imagine it, a nurse in Africa...That’s courageous, don’t you think? A nurse; that’s a job one can do with real pleasure...” said Candy, looking at the horizon. “At Pony’s Home, where I grew up, when someone fell ill, it was immediately very serious because there was no doctor in the village, and the nearest town was still quite far away...Whenever one of us had a fever at night, Miss Pony and Sister Lane were very worried. Sister Lane always said that one day she would have to decide to study nursing. I was still a child and I couldn’t do anything but stay there and worry to death along with her.”

Terry was looking at her with a smile.

*You’ve experienced so many things since you were a little girl...*

“I always had doctors and nurses around me. As soon as I coughed, the attending physician would come running. The house staff would take care of everything. Due to the social status of our family, everyone bowed their heads as if it was natural. Our social life was full of flattery and hypocrisy. The duke of Granchester and my stepmother have never questioned this way of life, and they are not going to start doing it now.”

*These people are incapable of sincerely loving someone!*

“Even my father has never managed to fully live his love with Eleanor Baker. Imagine: an English aristocrat and an American actress... especially since she was still just a beginner at the time. At first he had to hide their relationship, and then he ended up abandoning her after he had taken the child! This is what I am: a stain he doesn’t want to see. I grew up among people who looked at me as if I were dirt. How many times I shouted at my father’s face: ‘If my presence bothers you that much, you shouldn’t have taken me with you!’ And he would answer me: ‘I’m sorry, Terrence. You have the blood of the Granchesters in your veins, that’s a fact, and neither you nor anyone can change that. I could never have entrusted you to a stranger. Unless you are willing to give up your name...Indeed, if you want to sleep on the streets...But in that case, it’s not you who will inherit the name of the Granchester family. Well? Are you willing to live this kind of life?’ His laughter that moment still echoes in my ears...”

*I didn’t have the courage, I have to admit it...Until now. But I’ll never become like my father! I’ll know how to take care of the person I love. All my life...I’ll make her happy.*

And in Terry’s eyes, as he was looking at Candy, there was the affirmation that...he had found that person.

Her cheeks were warm. Terry’s gaze on her profile was burning... That bittersweet feeling which rose inside her was so intoxicating that

she pretended to be very busy gathering seeds of spikes so as not to cry out. She would have wanted that burning to be even more intense.

Now, Patty and Annie used to spend their evenings in Candy's room, before the lights were out.

They kept talking about Stear and Archie. Candy listened to them, but her thoughts traveled to the one with whom she had been sharing her recesses. That was precisely the case when Patty asked her, stifling a laughter:

"Candy, you always disappear at lunch break lately..."

"Oh...well..." stammered Candy.

"Are you by any chance hiding something from us?" added Annie, nodding affectionately.

"Is it that you meet someone at this hour? Someone whose name begins with 'T', perhaps?"

"Eh? You knew it?"

Candy shrugged her shoulders, as if trying to hide herself. Annie and Patty exchanged a knowing wink.

"I would even say it's been going on since we returned from summer school, right, Annie?"

"Yes, I think so...Joking aside, Candy, you should be careful."

Annie had suddenly turned serious. Patty was serious too, and insisted:

"Eliza is spying on you..."

"And whenever she looks at you, her gaze is so dark that it's scary..." added Annie with a frown.

"Really? But...Anyway, Eliza always suspects everyone, and her grimaces are nothing new, right?"

Candy believed she would alleviate their distress.

"Well, let's hope you are right..."

Candy understood very well what Patty meant...

*Eliza cares about Terry too, that's evident...But I love him.*

That feeling was so strong that, without a word, she clasped her hands together upon her chest.

*I love him...I love him so much...I...I love him, there, that's it.*

That had never happened to her before. Of course, she had loved Anthony too. But this time it wasn't quite the same feeling. Now something was burning in her heart. Whenever she thought about Terry, she felt both joy and sorrow, and it was so strong that she found it hard to breathe.

Patty and Annie didn't know what to say, and were looking at the darkness of the night through the window.

Beyond the forest were Stear and Archie.

Behind her two friends, imitating them, Candy was looking out of the

window too.

On the other side of the night...Archie was also letting his gaze wander outside.

“What are you looking at, Archie?” Stear asked, sitting in front of his writing desk.

“Nothing...Well...nothing much.”

The boy quickly closed the curtains.

“Candy won’t come anymore, Archie, you have to get used to that...”

“I know...But I was just thinking about Candy and that aristocrat...”

“Terrence? Well, it seems to me those two are spending a lot of time together.”

Stear had replied cheerfully, without turning, still absorbed in his work. Archie dropped himself thoughtfully on the sofa.

“Has she already forgotten Anthony?”

“That’s good. That’s the best thing she has to do!”

“Stear!”

Stear turned around slowly. His voice had been cheerful, but his eyes were serious and troubled.

“Don’t think about it anymore, Archie. I sincerely hope that Candy will get free from Anthony’s memory as soon as possible. Don’t you agree?”

“Yes, of course, but still...”

“I don’t think Candy will ever forget him. But at least the pain will go away, and if this happens thanks to that aristocrat, well, so much the better...At least he can do something we can’t.”

Archie shrugged his shoulders at those words, and looked down with a miserable expression.

“I’ve already told you, Archie, it’s better to watch over her from a distance...Besides, you have Annie, who is pretty and sincere...”

“I don’t want to hurt Annie, but...” murmured Archie, still looking down.

“As for me, I think I’m doing the best I can for Patty. She’s a very sensible girl who understands my inventions...”

“Oh, that...Then she is indeed sensible!”

Archie finally smiled and looked up.

“Not to mention that she has a great personality. Frankly, she is adorable! Besides, look, I’m just doing something for her...” added Stear, showing his brother a pair of glasses with a drawstring which he was working on.

“What’s that?”

“Glasses with wipers to avoid blurring. I’m sure she’ll be delighted!”

Stear laughed heartily as he tried out his brand new invention.

Autumn seemed to be approaching more and more. The trees of the college had changed color in no time.

The weather was getting colder and colder. Eliza's hatred for Candy was also growing more and more.

It was enough for her to notice that Candy and Terry winked at each other whenever they crossed paths inside the college, so she understood that those two were probably meeting in secret somewhere. Instantly she was suffocated by jealousy.

*What does he see in that girl, anyway? Upon my word, something is wrong with him! A miserable abandoned child! Besides, Great Aunt Elroy has said that people of the lower classes are good at ingratiating with people of the world, the real ones. Anthony has already been victim of that girl. She has deceived everyone! They are completely unaware of her real character!*

Eliza knew what to expect. And one thing was certain: if Terry discovered who she really was, and what she was capable of, no doubt he would reject her.

*Terry is a noble. A girl from an illustrious family like me would be suitable for him.*

At that thought, a sinister smile appeared at the corner of her lips.

That day, Eliza stood at the entrance of the stable in order to meet Terry when he would come out. She hadn't failed to check his schedule and know at what time he used to go horse riding.

"Terry!" she said when she saw him pulling the reins of his horse.

She ran to him.

"Good morning, young lady. What can I do for you?"

"Well, I'd like to give you some warning..."

She tried to remain as modest as possible, speaking with her eyes downcast.

"Some warning? Let's hear it..." replied Terry a little dryly, caressing Theodora's snout.

"It's about that Candy..."

This time the boy raised his head and looked into Eliza's eyes.

"You probably don't know about her. She used to work for us. We found her in an orphanage...But she had such a bad behavior that we were forced to put her to take care of the horses."

Terry remained impassive, with his gaze still fixed on Eliza's eyes, without saying anything.

She considered that reaction as a shock on his part, and that made her happy.

"That Candy is very good at winning anyone's favor...That's how she managed to be adopted, you see. Not to mention that she has the habit of stealing. She stole my mother's jewels without the slightest scruple..."

Terry was still keeping silent. Eliza had to add some more so as to interrupt that awkward silence.

“...She is very good at pretending to be a model girl. You can’t imagine what a hard time we’ve had with her. That’s why I advise you to be careful. If rumors were spread, your name might be tarnished...” And as if that hadn’t been enough, she went on with her malicious gossip.

When Eliza, running out of slander, decided to stop, Terry got into the saddle. Then, looking at her, he said sharply:

“Thank you for your warning, young lady. By the way, you can also warn the person you have just told me about. Tell her that Terrence smokes, drinks, steals and fights. Tell her that he has already broken the rules thousands of times. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to do a little galloping with my horse...”

Eliza’s expression was twisted with vexation.

Terry turned his back on her, but he restrained his horse and faced her again for a moment.

“You should look at yourself in a mirror and see the expression you have right now. It’s the ugly expression of someone who speaks badly of others. With that, young lady, I bid you farewell.”

This time, he urged Theodora to go away galloping.

*What...?*

Eliza almost fainted. Never in all her life had she been insulted in that way.

*But...why? Why does he have to defend someone...someone like Candy?*

Black fury was coming out of every pore of her body. And that fury was not towards Terry.

*How is that possible? Oh, but this time I won’t let you do that!*

A dark flame lit up in the depths of Eliza’s eyes.

## Chapter 16

The night was pitch black, with no moon or stars.

The forest was wrapped in darkness, a world without light that extended like a deep lake.

From somewhere, an owl gave a mournful cry.

Candy was running through the forest, an oil lamp in her hand.

What had happened to Terry? That question tormented her. She was running, trying to reach the stable. Her anguish was unbearable. It seemed to her she couldn't breathe normally until she found him.

When she arrived at the stable, she pushed the door open. Another lamp flickered in the dark, at the back of the wooden building.

"Terry! Terry! Are you there?" she called in a low and nervous voice.

"Candy!"

It was him. He came towards her. Theodora was heard snorting.

"What's the matter? What happened to you? What is so urgent at this hour?"

"Pardon?"

Terry's voice was accompanied by a hazardous swinging of the lamp.

"It's you who have something to tell me, isn't it?"

"Not at all! I found your message under my door, saying that you needed to talk to me about something urgent..."

"I received the same message..."

Both were dumbfounded. Then Terry cried in a voice Candy had never heard before:

"Quickly! Go back immediately, Candy!"

At the same moment, footsteps were heard, and not just of one or two persons: there were a lot of them.

The door of the stable swung open. Candy and Terry were quickly surrounded by the light of several candles.

"What a shame! This is...this is the first time since the foundation of our college that we have suffered such a disgrace. You should be ashamed for tarnishing the good name of St. Paul's Royal College!"

Sister Gray's voice was trembling with anger. The other nuns remained frozen and stared at Candy as if they had something monstrous in front of their eyes.

"So the rumor that Candy had been urging Terrence to meet her in the middle of the night was true..." shouted Eliza in a shrill voice.

"How shameless!" added Louisa, turning her face away in disgust.

Candy was so shocked that all this seemed unreal to her, so much so that she remained perfectly calm.

Now she understood the reason for the undefined anxiety which had weighed so heavily upon her heart.

*It was a trap. The message and all the rest. Everything has been planned by Eliza...*

“What a disgraceful behavior!”

As Sister Gray looked away, Terry swelled his chest and took a step forward.

“You are mistaken, Sister Gray. This is a misunderstanding. We were trapped. False messages were sent to us to lure us here...”

“Be quiet! Understand that this time I can’t forgive your behavior. And of course that goes for you too, Candice!”

Sister Gray’s eyes, fixed on the girl’s eyes, seemed to be burning.

“Sister, we have done nothing wrong! I beg you, listen to us!”

“That’s enough, Candice! Be quiet; it’s useless to try to justify yourself. Sister Kreis, you will accompany Terrence to his room and watch over him carefully! As for you, Candice, follow me!”

“Stop! I mean...no, wait! Sister Gray, it was a trap, I tell you! Why don’t you listen to me?”

The nuns stopped Terry and took him away.

“Let me go! Let me speak to you! Wait! What are you going to do to Candy?”

Sister Gray had grabbed Candy by the shoulders and held her so firmly that she couldn’t even turn around. The cries of the boy who was being driven away by the nuns quickly became distant.

Candy used all her energy to hold her head up high and stop trembling.

Of course, they had left their rooms in the middle of the night to reply to a message. From that point of view, they had indeed broken the rules. She was ready to take the responsibility for that fault, but as for the rest, their conscience was perfectly clear. She desperately tried to justify herself.

“You have to believe us, Sister Gray! It was a trap that brought us here. Let me explain to you, I beg you!”

In response, the nun took Candy out of the stable, pushing her roughly.

Sister Gray didn’t go any further. She ordered Sister Margaret in a dry tone:

“Please lead Miss Candice White Ardlay to the dungeon!”

The girl opened her eyes wide.

*The dungeon?*

“Tomorrow I will personally report these events to your guardian.”

Candy turned to Sister Gray’s silhouette that was illuminated by the light of the candles.

*To my guardian...She’s going to tell Great Uncle William?*

The girl’s imploring look didn’t change in the least Sister Gray’s resolution.

Sister Margaret also pushed her brusquely from behind. Candy didn't even have the strength to protest any longer. With tears in her eyes, she saw Eliza's shadow approaching victoriously, the corners of her lips twisted by a cynical smile.

The flame of a candle that was about to go out made the girl's shadow flicker, as she was sitting against the rough stone wall, hugging her knees.

*The dungeon...*

She couldn't believe she was there.

What had happened in the stable seemed like a nightmare to her.

But no, it was real.

There was absolutely nothing in that room except a tattered blanket probably eaten away by rats.

The dungeon...

The students spoke of it as a gloomy place, but nobody had ever seen it, so Candy had even doubted its existence until now.

The candle would go out soon.

That candle was also forbidden, and apparently she owed it only to the charity of Sister Margaret who hadn't spoken a single word to her but nevertheless had left that flickering source of light to her.

Sister Margaret had completely misunderstood that matter too. Candy had tried to explain to her but she had sharply refused to listen to her. Candy bit her lip so as not to cry. And now the tears were falling on her knees.

If that story reached Great Uncle William, he would be very disappointed.

The last thing Candy wanted was let him down. She didn't care if she would be expelled from St. Paul's Royal College; she would rather see her adoption by the Ardlay family annulled rather than cause Great Uncle William's contempt.

"But Eliza...Why did she do that?"

*"Tonight at nine I'll wait for you in the stable. I have something very important to say to you. I beg you to come.*

*T."*

*What a fool I've been to believe so easily what was written on that piece of paper...*

She had been worried; she had thought something had happened to Terry. She had gone there driven by anxiety and not just by the desire to see him.

*What is unbelievable is that we both fell into that trap the same way...*

Candy lifted her tear-drenched face. That was not the time to cry.



“Terry...Where are you? Have they put you in the dungeon too...?”

She got up and put her ear against the wall.

How many cells like hers were there in that basement? She didn't know.

In any case, everything was silent on the other side of that wall.

“Terry...Terry...”

Candy called him several times. But her voice was just absorbed by the stones that surrounded her.

The candle was about to burn out.

Candy wasn't crying anymore. She was just staring at the flame.

At the same time, Terry was looking outside through his bedroom window.

The night was dark. Terry clenched his fists impatiently.

*Candy... Where are you?*

Terry was confined to his room. That was his punishment. The door was locked from the outside, and a nun stood guard in the corridor.

“Damn! Here I am, locked up in my room, without even having been able to explain...I hope they haven't punished Candy even harder...”

The boy was anxious, and began pacing up and down to calm his anger.

Until now he had never worried about breaking the college rules since the Granchester family was one of the biggest financial contributors to the institute. And that was not all. His ancestors had provided substantial help during the founding of St. Paul's Royal College. The church of the establishment itself had been funded by a Granchester. To tell the truth, he had hoped several times that the director would expel him, but his mischief and violations of the rules had always been excused, as if they had been nothing but trifles. For that reason, he felt a deep contempt for the director.

Yet he knew that Sister Gray was not an indulgent woman.

*Could it be that she put all the responsibility, including mine, on Candy?*

He definitely could not stand idly by. He had to help her.

*Escaping from this room is not a problem...*

He quietly opened the window that led to the balcony, when, at that moment, a shadow threw itself nimbly into the room. And that shadow jumped on him.

“You bastard! What have you done to Candy?”

Terry staggered in shock. It was Archie, who grabbed him by the collar of his shirt.

Stear entered after him, pale, clenching his fists.

“What happened? Where is Candy?” demanded Terry, his eyes full of anguish.

“Don’t play the fool! They have put her in the dungeon because of you!”

Stear had to intervene to prevent his brother from hitting Terry.

“You heard it right! Everyone at school is dying to know what will be decided about you, and about Candy,” explained Stear, grinding his teeth.

Terry was stupefied.

“In the dungeon...”

“And that’s not all! She risks being expelled from college as soon as the Ardlay family has been informed.”

“Candy? Expelled?”

Terry staggered.

“It’s all your fault! Why did you bring Candy to the stable in the middle of the night?”

Terry turned away and preferred to look at the wall, completely dejected.

“It wasn’t me who wrote to her.”

“Stop it! That’s not the time to deny it!”

“It wasn’t me! I also received a message from Candy asking me to go to the stable!”

And Terry took out of his pocket the note he had received.

*“Tonight at nine I’ll wait for you in the stable. I have something very important to say to you. I beg you to come.*

*Candy”*

“But this is not Candy’s handwriting!” exclaimed Stear, fixing his glasses which had almost fallen under the shock of his surprise.

Archie also stared intensely at that piece of paper, without saying anything.

“I’m sorry I didn’t think,” confessed Terry. “However, on second thought, it was obvious that she would never have slipped a message like that under my door. Besides, it was impossible for her to come here. But when I found it, I didn’t ask myself any questions; I was so afraid that something had happened to her...”

Archie looked away. He could put himself in Terry’s shoes. He would have reacted irrationally too...

*So, that aristocrat...He’s actually serious about Candy...*

Stear looked straight into Terry’s eyes.

“Evidently that message is false!”

Terry took the message from him and crumpled it in his fist.

“And I’ve got some idea about who did it...”

He lifted his head. Stear was startled and gasped.

“Someone from your family...”

“Eliza!” moaned Archie furiously.

“Presumably with Neal’s collaboration.”

“In that case, we can fix that. Tomorrow morning we’ll ask for an interview with Sister Gray, and we’ll show her this message as proof!”

Stear clenched his fists resolutely. Eliza and Neal belonged to the Ardlay clan, but he wouldn’t hesitate to denounce them.

“I can also testify about the cowardice of those two,” confirmed Archie with a nod.

Only Terry didn’t seem enthusiastic about it. After a few moments, he asked in a serious voice:

“Are you sure that would be enough to solve the problem? Your cousin...That vixen and her brother are not that easy to catch...Of course, I think they are the ones who wrote this message, but other than that, what proof do you have? If she denies everything, it’s over. The director has more confidence in her than in Candy. It could make things even worse...”

“But we can’t leave Candy in this situation! It may suit you to stay calm as an aristocrat...You haven’t been punished like her!”

Archie got closer to Terry.

“Me? Do I look calm?”

The two boys looked straight into each other’s eyes threateningly. Stear had to interpose between them.

“Granchester isn’t entirely wrong, Archie, you have to admit it. Our enemy is powerful and Candy is in a weak position. Those two won’t hesitate to lie; we have already experienced that several times.”

“But we definitely must do something, otherwise Candy risks being repudiated by the Ardlay family! And they were already against her adoption...”

“Repudiated?” exclaimed Terry in a husky voice.

Stear nodded.

“Everything depends on Sister Gray’s report. It’s possible that Great Uncle William couldn’t veto a general decision. Granchester, I guess you know about it: Candy has no family. The Leagans have already tried to send her away in the past, and they have given her a hard time...Candy has never complained; on the contrary, she has always kept her smile, and has always been the first to encourage us. We want her to be happy; she deserves so much to be happy!”

“We want her to be happy...”

Stear had spoken very quietly. Terry looked up at him with shining eyes.

*They want her to be happy? I don’t “want” her to be happy...I’ll make her happy!*

He took a deep breath. He had made his decision.

“You don’t need to worry. I know how to protect her!”

As soon as he uttered those words, Terry stepped onto the balcony and jumped.

“Hey! Wait!”

Archie and Stear rushed to follow him, but Terry had already disappeared in the darkness.

Terry was running in the forest. He was burning with anger, but at the same time he was perfectly calm.

He wanted to laugh at himself.

*Me, a rebel? I take advantage of my father’s money for fun, and of his title so as to take no risks at all! And I get upset when people call me an aristocrat, but I still make the most of it, don’t I? Candy, I know how to protect you.*

The northern tower. That was where the dungeons were, wrapped in a gloomy silence, similar to that of a cemetery. Even the owls avoided screaming there, as if that place frightened them.

*And Candy is locked up in this sinister place! It’s only her, and not me...*

The underground access to the dungeon was closed with a solid wooden door. Terry began to strike it with his fists, as hard as he could.

“Candy! Can you hear me?”

In vain. Terry’s calling was lost in the darkness.

“Candy! I can’t get in, but I’m here! I’ll stay here all along!”

He closed his eyes and leaned against the stone wall.

He was ashamed of his helplessness.

If he was an adult...If he had the power, he would leave that college once and for all with Candy, without even looking back.

*But what can I do?*

He bit his lip until he made it bleed.

## Chapter 17

The following morning, inside the college, there was nothing else but talk about Candy. Everybody had gathered in groups earlier than usual. The atmosphere was filled with excitement.

“Did you know? Candy asked Terry to come to the stable!”

“Candy was locked up in the dungeon!”

“She’s going to be expelled, that’s for sure! She’s not going to get away with such a shameful behavior!”

Every time they heard those whispered comments from one group or another, Annie and Patty exchanged a sad look and wanted to cry.

They didn’t believe those rumors at all. But they didn’t have the courage to accuse Eliza who was repeating her version of the night’s events in a loud voice for the umpteenth time so as to be sure that everyone around would hear her.

“I began to be suspicious when I saw Candy being around Terrence. Those miserable orphans become lustful as soon as they hear the word ‘noble’.”

Louise and her friends nodded in agreement.

Annie lowered her head while Patty put an arm around her shoulders.

“Look, there is Terry! Is his punishment in his room over?” exclaimed Louise when she saw the boy from a window that was illuminated by the morning sunlight.

“That’s completely normal; he hasn’t done anything wrong!” replied Eliza, her mouth twisted by a grimace. “It was Candy who brought him to the stable...”

She smiled as she followed Terry with her eyes as he walked straight, looking ahead of him in the corridor. Terry had been forgiven, and Candy was in a dungeon...This time she was sure Candy would be thrown out of the Ardlay family and her adoption would be annulled. It was about time, she whispered to herself with a sneer.

When she saw that, Annie began to tremble. Where was Candy? What had happened to her?

She turned to Patty as if her friend was her last resort.

“Don’t worry, Candy is fine, I’m sure of it...”

Actually, she was mainly trying to convince herself that the situation might not be as desperate as it seemed.

Terry had just to walk down the corridor with a slight smile at the corner of his lips, and that was enough for everybody’s eyes to turn on him.

He didn’t care at all. He had only one thing on his mind: Candy.

He had made his decision.

He knocked on the door of the director's office.

"Come in!"

Terry opened the door slowly.

Sitting in front of her desk, Sister Gray opened her eyes wide with surprise.

"Terrence! What are you doing here? You were confined to your room!" she cried severely. "Return there immediately! How did you open the door? What about the boarding supervisor?"

"Sister Gray, I left my room despite your prohibition because I absolutely need to talk to you. The supervising nun is not to blame and thinks I am still inside. I beg you to grant me a few minutes."

Terry didn't usually address her with so much deference. Sister Gray hesitated for a moment. However, it was just for a moment...

"There is no question of that! Terrence G. Granchester, the fact that you left your room despite your punishment is further violation of the rules!" she said, pointing to the door.

Terry ignored that gesture.

"I won't take much of your time, Sister Gray. I beg you; this is the first and the last favor I'll ever ask of you."

Terry's steadfast attitude made the nun hesitate. She lowered her hand.

"Be brief..." she replied, lifting her head and looking away.

"Are you going to expel Miss Candice?"

"Of course," answered Sister Gray dryly.

"Then why don't you expel me too? Why didn't you put me in the dungeon?"

Hearing Terry's threatening tone, Sister Gray turned to him.

"Because she is a troublesome girl. She lacks discernment as to her place as a woman."

"Then I'm a troublesome boy too, and I severely lack consciousness of what a man's place is. Would you pretend it is not so, Sister Gray? Or maybe you'd better tell the truth: you need my father's financial help, and you plan to take advantage of this case to secure a new donation..."

"Terrence! I demand that you take back those words immediately!" shouted the nun, getting up. "Of course, our establishment has a very old and very important debt of gratitude towards the Granchesters, but that does not authorize you, as a member of this family, to make insulting remarks about me!"

"Well, then, show me that you don't forgive me for insulting you," retorted Terry in a perfectly clear voice, looking straight into Sister Gray's eyes. "Give me the same punishment with Candy...after investigating into the real circumstances of this case, of course. It was

a trap. Someone tricked us by using false messages. Verify it and you'll see. Please..."

Terry lowered his head as he made his request, extremely serious.

The nun's outraged expression had vanished. Sister Gray looked into Terry's eyes, very calmly.

"Whether you were trapped or not is not the question. Whatever the reason, both of you met outside of the school late at night. This is an indisputable fact."

The argument was solid and weighed heavily. Terry stepped back, suddenly turning pale.

The leafless trees through the large window behind Sister Gray seemed to be shivering.

*She's right...I went to the stable to meet her. I would rush anywhere if Candy called me. And no doubt she would too.*

Terry's shoulders sank.

He had just understood in a flash. It was hopeless. He let out a deep sigh.

"Sister Gray, if you are determined to expel Candy, I ask you to let me take her place."

"I beg your pardon?"

The director wondered if she had heard correctly.

"Expel me. I'll leave college as a sign of atonement. There has been a disturbing incident, I admit it, and we'll have to make amends for this scandal. For that reason, one of us must be punished."

The honor of St. Paul's Royal College was at stake; that was perfectly clear to Terry.

"But your father..."

"My father has nothing to do with this story. From this day I renounce the name of Granchester."

The tone of the boy's voice was firm. His resolution was unwavering.

"Terrence!"

"Don't say anything to Candy's guardian...I mean, Miss Candice's guardian. This is the only thing I'm asking of you."

Terry bowed his head again.

"Sister Gray, thank you for everything you have done for me until now. And please forgive me for being rude to you on so many occasions."

Terry left Sister Gray's office. She remained motionless and silent, her eyes fixed on the door that had just closed. The college was wrapped in silence. No doubt lessons had begun.

*It's better this way, thought Terry. This is the only thing I can do for her right now. Candy, in the end, I...I can do nothing but pray for you to be happy...*

He slowly came out of the school.

*Before meeting Candy, I lived here as if wandering in a cemetery...*

*Then I met her in that forest...*

“You know, this is False Pony’s Hill...”

“What impertinence! My name is Candice White Ardlay!”

The voice of the one who occupied his thoughts echoed in the depths of his mind. Her smile appeared in front of his eyes.

*No, it was long before that...I met her on the deck of a ship, in the fog, on a freezing cold night.*

Terry stopped, as if he felt a pain in his heart.

*...And soon, everything will be over...My youth...My love...*

St. Paul’s college, the garden, the forest...He turned his back on all of that.

Then, as if to leave everything behind, he started walking again.

“Oh! The light! The wind! The fresh air! A nice soft bed!”

Candy stretched herself on the large bed.

The daylight began to fade, and a chilly wind came in through the window that was left wide open. Candy took a deep breath.

“Freedom is such a beautiful thing! For once I understand that feeling of joy you have when you get out of prison! Let’s say that the lesson was worth the trouble.”

With a big smile, she rolled over on the bed and landed right on the floor.

She went to the window and looked outside. Everybody must have returned to the dormitory; anyway, the backyard was deserted.

“It’s incredible but true. Sister Gray can sometimes be benevolent and considerate. I didn’t expect her to change my stay in the dungeon to confinement to my room...Maybe Terry managed to explain to her that we were trapped...”

The most important was what Sister Margaret had told her: this time the college would not contact her guardian. She had almost jumped for joy. The rest was of minor importance; at least Great Uncle William wouldn’t be disappointed in his adoptive daughter. Considering his old age, too many emotions could harm his health...

*Where is Terry right now? How is he?*

That was her main concern, but she was forbidden to see anyone, even Patty and Annie. Confined to her room “in silent retreat”; that was her punishment. The room was locked from the outside and the supervising nun came from time to time to check that it was still locked, like some kind of guard patrol. Obviously the situation was far better, compared to the night she had spent in the dark and damp dungeon.

In complete darkness, facing fear, and on the verge of freezing to the



core, she had hugged herself tight. And after a while, although immersed in darkness, she had found peace of mind.

Once you get used to darkness, it's not so terrible as you think. On the contrary, it can be something pleasant. When your heart is calm, darkness becomes like a treasure box.

Candy let out a sigh. She regretted being so imprudent.

*What a fool I am! I believed what was written in that message without asking myself any questions and I walked right into the lion's den. However, I don't need to think long to understand that Terry would never have left such a message under the door...But I'm worried about what could have happened to him. Because I...I... Because I love him! Yes! That was it...This time she was fully aware of her feelings for Terry.*

*I can't fight against that feeling. And people can blame me as much as they like...*

To love someone...Until then, she had believed that there was only one way to love someone; that love was...just love. But now for the first time, she understood that love could have different colors, like the light through a prism, according to the person one loved.

Her love for Anthony had had an iridescent color, so beautiful and delicate. It had not faded. It would never fade.

The color Terry gave off was so powerful that it almost suffocated her. *As long as Terry hasn't been put in the dungeon...Well, since they let me out, no doubt he's out too...*

She missed him; it was unbearable...

And he must have been worried too.

She slipped under her bed, and made sure that the rope she had made out of sheets was still there.

Now she only had to wait for the supervising nun.

Couldn't time go a little faster?

She couldn't even speak to the nun who brought her dinner.

Candy finished her meal in front of the nun, thanked her with a bow of her head, and then got into bed.

Her custodian finally left.

Her plan was to break into Terry's room. Obviously, if she got caught she would earn a more severe punishment than being confined to her room...She had to develop a very meticulous plan and not to make the slightest mistake.

As soon as the inspection was over and the lights went out, Candy placed her pillow under the duvet to make it look as if she were sleeping. She didn't know at what time the supervising nun had to pass again.

But she had to see Terry at all costs, if only taking a glance at him through his room window. She wanted to make sure he was safe and

sound.

She went out on the balcony, threw the rope of sheets she had prepared which caught on a big branch, and jumped.

The night was freezing cold. There was no moon either. It was completely dark, which would turn out to be favorable for her.

The boys' dormitory was wrapped in darkness, and there was no light in any room.

Candy spotted Terry's window, and slid from the tree on which she was to the balcony. The boy's room was as dark and silent as the others. She listened. The silence was so deep that the room seemed uninhabited.

*It's too quiet...Isn't he here?*

Anxiety began to fill her heart. She gently pushed open the balcony door. It was not closed...

"Terry...?"

She entered the room, calling him in a low voice. There was no answer. Her anxiety was growing.

She lit the lamp that was on the table.

The room was empty!

*Why is everything so tidy?*

The light illuminated an envelope on the table.

Candy held her breath.

*"To anyone with good intentions:*

*Please hand over this envelope to Miss Candice White Ardlay."*

*A letter for me?*

With a trembling hand, Candy opened the envelope.

*"Candy,*

*I have decided to leave college. I'm leaving for America. There is something I have to do there.*

*Wherever I am, I wish you to be happy.*

*Terrence"*

It was short.

She read it again. But there was nothing more.

*Terry...to America? But why does he leave so suddenly?*

The letter slipped from her hands and fell to the floor.

She had been taken out of her dungeon as if by a miracle...She would not be expelled...Her guardian would not be informed...

Sister Margaret had said that those exceptional favors were due to a special arrangement with the director...

*Would Terry...*

When Candy bent down to pick up the letter, she noticed that her fingers were trembling.

Suddenly, the door handle clicked. Someone was trying to open it.

“Damn, it’s locked!”

It was Neal’s voice. Candy held her breath.

“That’s good. I’m glad he was expelled.”

Neal was not alone. He was talking to someone.

“It seems his father has disowned him! He’s left for America with his tail between his legs!”

“Yes, that’s what I heard too. He’s leaving on a ship at dawn. Well, he can take care of the horses instead of that girl who used to work at your house, right, Neal?”

“Oh, yes, that’s a good idea! He could replace that poor girl; that would suit him!”

A kick against the door was heard.

“Well, it’s locked; we can’t get in. What a shame...It seems he has left all his things. I would have liked to check...”

The footsteps of Neal and his friend moved away.

Candy had squatted against the wall with her face in her hands. Her tears kept flowing and she had to restrain herself from crying out loud.

*Terry...He sacrificed himself...He was punished in my place. He left college to go to America...Oh...He’s taking the ship at dawn? I have to catch up with him and stop him...*

Candy jumped up.

That was not the time to cry.

*I must run after Terry...I absolutely must convince him to stay!*

She held the letter tight against her heart, and left through the window, jumping on the tree. Tears blurred her vision, the branches scratched her, and she hurt her knees against the trunk. With great difficulty, she managed nevertheless to find her room.

*The port...*

The port where she had disembarked arriving from America.

It wasn’t near, but if she left immediately, she might still get there at dawn...

Candy picked up all her savings and went out the same way.

And what if someone saw her? That was the least of her worries.

Running and searching for a carriage, she felt like she was living a nightmare.

“To the port, please! Southampton...Quickly, I beg you...”

In tears, Candy asked the first coachman she met.

“What’s wrong, miss?” said the man surprised.

“I absolutely have to prevent someone from getting on a ship! Faster, please!”

The coachman nodded, and whipped his horse.

The cab began to advance at full speed on the deserted road which was still wrapped in darkness.

The horse’s hooves and the rattling of the wheels echoed on the cobblestones.

Candy was praying.

*Help me get there on time...Help me see him...I haven’t told him yet that...*

The tears were flowing so quickly now that she couldn’t pray anymore.

That was true...She hadn’t confessed to Terry yet...

*I haven’t told him yet that I love him. I love you, Terry...I love you so much...*

The cab continued its mad race.

The sky was starting to light up.

*Oh, please, night, last a little longer!*

Candy was watching the sky.

*Not so fast...At least until I reach the port...*

She kept on repeating Terry’s name.

The horse-drawn carriage, which had run at full speed until then, began to slow down.

“Sir?” asked Candy plaintively, leaning out of the carriage window.

The coachman turned around and replied with a contrite expression:

“Listen, miss, we won’t make it. I told you I would do my best, but we’ll never get to the port before sunrise. Look, it’s almost dawn!”

“But...Sir, I absolutely have to...”

Tears came to her eyes again.

“I know; you told me you had to see someone at all costs. I did everything I could, but an impossible thing will remain impossible...”

The coachman wiped his face with a handkerchief, with a really sad expression. His horse seemed exhausted and panted loudly.

Candy lowered her head.

“Forgive me...Yes, you are right...But take me to a place close to the sea so I can see at least the ship...”

“Trust me for that. I know the perfect place!”

The coachman nodded, and urged his horse to move again.

Finally, Candy saw the sea in the distance.

The sun was rising when the cab reached the top of a hill.

Candy got off the carriage and looked at the sea, covered in mist like a silk grey cloak. It seemed very close, but the distance that separated them was still great.

Suddenly, a passenger ship appeared slowly through the morning mist.

“Terry...” murmured Candy.

He was on board, there was no doubt about that.

“Terry!” she cried out loud this time, running down the hill.

Oh, if only she could fly...Why didn't she have wings?

“Terry! Terry!”

Her tears were falling on her trembling lips. The strong wind took her voice away. But she didn't stop calling him.

*Terry, why did you get punished in my place? Do you really think this will make me happy?*

She wanted to hit him in the chest with all her strength...

Then it seemed to her that she heard his voice.

*“There is something I have to do there.”*

That was what he had written.

*Is that true, Terry?*

The mist was beginning to dissipate. From the sea rose a song to the glory of the rising sun.

The ship was glowing now, as if covered in golden dust. The light created a dazzling path on the water.

Candy took a deep breath.

*Oh, Terry...You have started following your path...There is something you wish to do. No doubt that's what you were really thinking.*

The girl had stopped crying.

The ship was moving on the sea with iridescent reflections. The boy was moving towards his brilliant future...In any case, that's what she wanted to believe.

Without even blinking, although her eyes were still moist, Candy was looking at the ship that was going away.

*I have to find my way too. And one day I'll see him again. Of course! If we are still alive...Yes, we'll see each other again!*

The ship had already disappeared on the horizon. Candy was still there, whipped by the cold wind, at the top of the small hill...

## Conclusion

*I can write as much as I want, but I can't express exactly what I feel about T. G.*

*He has gone and left me so many memories...But no, I don't want to say the words "memories" or "gone".*

*Because we'll meet again some day. Yes, definitely. T. G., I'll be thinking of you until the moment of our reunion.*

*Don't be angry. I know you sacrificed yourself for me, to protect me, but I won't stay any longer in this school.*

*The path of my life is not here, I can see that clearly. If I stay, a bright future awaits me, that's for sure. But I understood one thing: that won't lead me to happiness. I have to find my way on my own. It's you who taught me that.*

*Thank you, T. G.*

*And then there is something I would like to say to you out loud:*

*Terrence, I love you. I love you more than anyone...*

The last page was now covered with a fine handwriting; there was no blank page left.

Candy closed her diary and let out a long sigh.

The word "diary" in golden letters on the cover, bright when she had come to the college, was slightly worn out now.

The girl meticulously wrapped the diary in a white paper. Then she attached a card with a message on it.

*"Please send this package to Sir William A. Ardlay."*

Candy was sure of one thing: if Great Uncle William read that diary, he would understand the reasons for her decision to leave college.

She opened the drawer of her writing desk and took out a white tie. It was the one Terry was wearing on the day of the May Festival, and which he had given to her.

*Some day I'll give it back to you, right, Terry?*

She put the tie in a small bag. There were two more objects she wanted to take with her: the cross of Miss Pony and the badge of Prince on the Hill.

She looked again at her room, so richly furnished. It was beautiful, surely, but she had gained nothing of what was in there on her own.

*"Thank you for everything, Great Uncle William!"*

Candy bowed, as if he were there, in front of her.

Then she went out quietly.

It was still early, and the dormitory was silent. Annie, Patty, Stear and

Archie must be still asleep...

*I'm sorry for leaving like this, without saying anything to you...*

When she went out of the dormitory, a smell of wet and cold earth overwhelmed her.

*Goodbye, Sister Gray, Sister Kreis, Sister Margaret...*

She started walking towards the iron gate of the main entrance. The gardener, who was working very early, was picking up the dead leaves and didn't even notice her. At this hour, the gatekeeper had already unlocked the gate, and was busy sweeping the ground.

*Goodbye, forest of the college, goodbye, stable, goodbye, Theodora...*

*Goodbye, False Pony's Hill...*

Candy stood for a moment in front of the large iron gate. She pushed it and it opened, emitting its usual dull sound. As expected, nobody was there.

*Goodbye, St. Paul's Royal College...*

She turned around. The school seemed stubborn and sullen.

The path she was taking now was bright and full of light.

Candy took a deep breath, and began to walk.