

DAFFODILS

BOOK ONE OF THE KATHERINE WHEEL SERIES

CHAPTER ONE

Katy sat on the topmost step of the library ladder, completely absorbed in a book. A tendril of her wavy brown hair had escaped from her maid's cap. She sucked its ends while she lost herself in Jane Eyre's melancholy tale.

Before she left for London Lady Amelia had ordered her to spring-clean the huge book-lined room from top to bottom and, although Katy knew she shouldn't be reading the books instead of cleaning them, her duster floated unnoticed onto the polished oak floor. She only looked up when insistent tapping on the casement windows broke her concentration.

It took a moment to focus through the dazzling sunlight and see Jem waving his shears in mock salute through the glass. He took off his cap and bowed deeply to her, his chestnut wavy hair and brown eyes forming a perfect camouflage against the fading autumn leaves.

Jem smiled, replaced his cap and returned to clipping the grass verges of the manor house lawn. The curving drive that divided it rolled downhill towards the gabled lodge house, where Katy had been born. Smoke from the lodge's chimney curled erratically in the breeze. She wondered how a little smidgeon of ash could enjoy such freedom while she was stuck here dusting books.

She couldn't even join the suffragettes in their fight for the vote, much as she'd like to. She had to be content with reading about their struggle in the newspaper. Anything exciting always happened elsewhere.

Her younger brother, Albert, would boast to anyone who'd listen, "I'm joining up, I am, the first chance I get!" Albert was determined to be at the head of the queue to serve his country in the war that had broken out in August. Even if women did get the vote, they would never have the chance to fight for their country. Katy sighed.

A lone horse clip-clopped up the lane towards the manor. She could just make out the ecclesiastical hat of its rider. Her mother, Agnes, had been full of news about the new curate that morning. The old incumbent, Reverend Entwistle, had died of a seizure six weeks ago. She strained to catch another glimpse. Any newcomer was a welcome diversion from the monotony of village life, but Katy doubted that a churchman would provide much excitement.

Her eyes lingered on the blue haze beyond the hills and the familiar longing engulfed her. Katy had never been further than Woodbury. Her one afternoon off a week did not allow it. A passing train wafted steam across the horizon. If only she could get on it and stay on the iron monster. Who knew where she might end up?

She dragged her gaze back to Jem, toiling away. As he snipped at the drive's edges, the Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums nodded and smiled, as if a part of him, a tapestry of colour into which he was somehow woven. Jem would never leave Cheadle Manor. No, he would always be a gardener, content with his patch. She watched his muscular back bend and stretch and bend again.

Jem doffed his cap as the horse and rider ambled into view. The two men exchanged a greeting. The stranger didn't take off his hat to Jem in return. When Jem jerked his head towards the manor, the rider shot a sharp look at the house, before turning his beautiful bay horse around, and trotting briskly back down the hill. He was much younger than Katy had expected, and his long legs looked surprisingly athletic astride his big bay horse.

Katy returned to the refuge of her book and was soon engrossed by Jane Eyre discovering poor mad Mrs Rochester in the attic. Ten minutes later she was interrupted again. Charles Smythe burst in so unexpectedly Katy jumped and the ladder overbalanced, rocking ominously to and fro. Charles rushed over to grab it, and Katy's ankle, and steadied both just in time to stop them from crashing down.

"Easy does it!" exclaimed Charles, still gripping ankle and ladder with equal tenacity.

"Sir – you startled me!" Katy noticed his hand on her leg and, blushing scarlet, shook it off. It wouldn't do to be manhandled by the heir to the estate.

"No need to be afraid of me, Miss Propriety. Now, which one of Mother's vast domestic army are you?"

"Katy Beagle, sir."

"Katy Beagle. Hmm, I don't remember you being such a peach."

Charles had been away for a couple of years at university and should have been there still. Katy assumed that his parents, Sir Robert and Lady Amelia, thought Charles was away from home, just like them.

"Tell you what you need after a fright like that. A drop of my father's best whisky. In fact, it's the very thing I came in for. Come on down from your high perch, little bird, and join me in a snifter."

Charles extended his hand to Katy who was too embarrassed to refuse it.

"What are you doing up there anyway?" Charles poured out two enormous measures of whisky. "Good health," he said, chinking the glasses together.

Katy took a sip of the smoky drink and coughed. It was like drinking liquid fire! She hoped against hope Mrs Andrews, the housekeeper, wouldn't march in and catch her. Charles drank his down in one and reached for the decanter for an immediate refill.

“Oh, silent one, I repeat – what on earth were you doing up that high ladder in splendid isolation? Educating yourself at my father’s expense?”

“Yes, sir, you could say that” Katy said, flattered to be asked even though her eyes were watering. “I was supposed to be dusting but got distracted reading about Jane Eyre.”

The literary reference was lost on Charles. “Are you cleaning the entire library single-handed?”

“Yes, sir, normally I’m lady’s maid to your sister, Miss Cassandra, but she is away in London for the season.” Katy sighed and looked at the floor. “I wasn’t needed up there, so Lady Amelia set me to sorting out the library.”

She didn’t tell him the housekeeper was incensed about it. Mrs Andrews – tall, Scottish, and forbidding – ruled the house, and her husband the butler, with a rod of iron. No one, including Mr Andrews, a softly spoken man given to melting into corners, ever dared to contradict her. She and Lady Amelia made a perfect match in that respect and while the lady of the house was away Mrs Andrews delighted in giving the orders unopposed.

“There’s plenty more urgent chores for the likes of you to do, Katy Beagle,” Mrs Andrews had said, only that morning. “Aye, Cook has a mound of beans to salt for the winter and I have piles of linen to iron and fold what with the other staff up in London. I don’t know what Lady Amelia was thinking getting a dunderhead like you to clean the library with no one supervising you. Dinna think for a minute I don’t realise you are reading the books more often than dusting them. What use is book-learning to you? You’re not even a proper lady’s maid, ye ken.”

But Charles, blissfully ignorant of these battles, hooted with laughter, “Why does Mother want the library cleaned? So Cass can get back to reading every book? I don’t think so! You might be her maid, Miss Katherine Beagle, but I’ll bet you’ve read more books dusting this library than Cass ever did. Like reading, do you?”

“I love it more than anything else in the world, sir.”

“Do you? It takes all sorts I suppose; can’t stand it myself. I’m like my dear sister in that regard. Do you like your whisky? Want a top up?”

“Oh, no, sir. It’s fearful strong.” Katy had barely touched her drink.

“Think I’ll have another for the road. I’m off to Woodbury with commissions from Mrs Andrews later. Do you fancy coming?”

“Me, sir? Into town? With you?”

“Well, why not?”

“I’m supposed to be cleaning,” Katy looked around the handsome room. “I doubt Mrs Andrews would think it right for me to accompany you.”

“I’ll sort out old Andrews – thing is, do you want to come?”

Katy dared another sip of firewater and considered his question. She looked at Charles in a new light. As children they had led separate lives and she had only seen him from a distance. His sandy hair and small frame had inspired many a local boy to mock him when out of earshot and she had laughed at his expense with the rest of them. Now, Charles sported a manly moustache, and his well-cut suit made the most of his slender shoulders. As an adult he displayed far more confidence than he had as the puny child she remembered being such a cry-baby. And there was a definite air of fashion about him. It gave him a whiff of style and substance. Slowly she nodded and smiled.

“That’s settled then. I need a playmate whilst I’m home. Damned boring with everyone up in London and soon I’ll be off to France to search for glory. I’ve signed up to serve as an officer in the British Expeditionary Force, you know. Got to have a bit of fun before that. We’ll set off after a bit of brunch. Be ready at noon.”

“But Mrs Andrews, sir,” Katy insisted. “The housekeeper is in charge while Lady Amelia’s away and I’d have to have her permission, or I’d lose my position.”

“I’ll speak to the old bat right away. Put your best bonnet on – not that silly maid’s cap.”

CHAPTER TWO

Katy’s father, Bert, was an unwitting conspirator in the adventure. As head coachman at the manor, it was his job to hand over the reins of the little gig to his employer’s son, but he remained innocent of the identity of Charles’ passenger. Had he known his daughter was to accompany his young master things might have turned out differently. As it was, no one noticed Katy slip out of the kitchen door at midday and hop up into the waiting gig. Soon they were bowling along, Charles singing at the top of his voice and Katy giggling helplessly beside him. Hens scattered from cottages and heads turned to stare as the good folk of Upper Cheadle certainly *did* notice who was sitting beside the squire’s son.

When the gig, easily recognisable by its livery, swept into Woodbury High Street, Katy revelled in the surprised looks, as they thundered past the townspeople. The whites of Larkspur’s eyes showed in frightened rinds as Charles flicked his driving whip along the top of her dappled grey back.

Katy kept her own back ramrod straight and held her head up high when fingers pointed at them as they drove, far too fast, along the cobbled road. Charles threw back his head and laughed when she nudged his arm and said, “Sir, everyone’s staring at us!” He drew up with a flourish outside the King’s Head inn and shouted out for the stable boy who took the horse and gig through its narrow central archway into the yard behind.

Katy didn't dare withdraw her arm when Charles tucked it under his, sailed into the coaching inn and ordered ale for them both. Katy had never been inside the old building before. A bright fire danced in the grate adding its woody aroma to the smell of beeswax furniture polish and stale beer. Wood panelling lined the dark, smoky room and men sat in twos and threes at the tables, discussing the latest news of the war. Charles steered her to an alcove whose bay window overlooked the busy street. Katy sipped her ale and relaxed against her leather armchair hardly daring to believe she was there.

"Now then," Charles drank his beer down in big gulps, "let's look at the shopping list." He took the single sheet out of his pocket and frowned in concentration.

"Is there much to buy, sir?" Katy felt very important being included in the process.

"Hmm, butcher's, baker's and candlestick makers!" Charles laughed at his own joke and Katy, the ale increasing her confidence, joined in. Some farmers were propping up the bar and they turned to look at the pair by the window. It gave her a ripple of excitement to cause such a stir and she put her hand out to Charles to take the list from him.

She scanned the piece of paper quickly. Mrs Andrews's neat handwriting was easy to read. "We should leave buying the meat until last then it's less likely to spoil."

"Good thinking, Katy. Trust a woman to know what's what." Charles looked pleased.

Encouraged, she went on, "Yes, I think the chandler's should be first for the candles. Then the grocer's for the sack of flour and, oh! Could I choose the ribbons Mrs Andrews wants for the lavender bags?"

"I think you should, Katy. I know I wouldn't have a clue. Tell you what, I'll go to the chandler's shop, and you go to the milliner's. I'll meet you at the grocer's in half an hour. How's that suit you?"

Katy's heart skipped a beat. She'd never been allowed off the estate during working hours before, let alone been authorised to buy things for the big house. She knew she could do it though. There was more to her than scrubbing and dusting. If she did this right maybe Mrs Andrews would give her more commissions like this. Eyes bright, she nodded back at Charles. He drank up the rest of his beer in one swift movement. Katy left half of hers. They got up and Charles tossed a couple of coins on the bar counter before steering her, his arm around her waist, back out into the sunlit street. They parted at the milliner's shop.

Katy pushed open the shop door and the little bell clanged her entrance. There was no going back now. Mrs Friedenburg looked up from her lacy bundles. Her eyes narrowed when she saw Katy.

Katy felt herself blush but stepped forward boldly. "Good morning."

"Gut morning, Miss?" The milliner said, in her strong German accent.

"Miss Beagle."

"Ach, yes, Miss Beagle, I know your mother. And vat can I do for you?"

"I work at the manor house and Mrs Andrews has sent me to buy some ribbons for her lavender bags."

"Ah, so? She is late with her lavender this year but I haf just the thing. Come with me." Mrs Friedenburg walked across to the shelves at the rear of the shop.

"Thank you." Katy felt very grown up as she went to join her.

Mrs Friedenburg laid out various narrow ribbons in pastel colours for Katy's inspection. Katy took her time; she was enjoying herself too much to rush choosing. In the end she picked out some blue-grey silk ribbons. The shade was almost a match for lavender stems.

"A very elegant choice, Miss Beagle." Mrs Friedenburg nodded her approval.

The doorbell announced another customer. Katy looked round. Her stomach sunk to her boots as Mrs Threadwell and Mrs Hoskins, from Lower Cheadle, entered together. Both women stood stock still at the sight of her.

"Is that you, Katherine Beagle?" Mrs Threadwell ran the Post Office in Lower Cheadle and held full command of the local gossip grapevine.

It would be her, of all people, to see me here, thought Katy and curtsied her assent.

"Well, I never!" Mrs Hoskins, housekeeper to the vicar, rolled her eyes at her friend.

The doorbell rang out a third time and Agnes Beagle, Katy's mother, joined the throng. She stepped into the shop. When she saw her daughter, her kindly smile froze and turned it sour.

"Katy!" she exclaimed, "whatever is you doing here?"

"Quite," Mrs Hoskins said, "we'd all like to know the answer to *that* question."

Katy was grateful Mrs Friedenburg smoothed over the awkward moment. "Ladies, please to come in, come in. How gut it is to haf a full shop. I haf been so quiet lately since the war started. It is not my fault I am German, after all. Tell me, how can I help you?"

Mrs Friedenburg shepherded Mrs Threadwell and Mrs Hoskins over to the counter and kept them chatting.

The two matrons kept looking back over their shoulders as Agnes clutched Katy's arm and hustled her into the darkest corner of the shop.

"Katy, what are you doing?"

"Ow, Mum! You're hurting my arm!" Katy tried to pull away.

"I'll do more than hurt your arm, my girl, if I find out you've been flouting the rules. Why ain't you up at the manor? I thought you was cleaning the library for her ladyship. Does Mrs Andrews know where you are?"

"Let go of me, Mum!" Katy felt both cross and flustered. The adventure was spoiled now. "Mrs Andrews has sent me on an errand for her. Look. Here's the list."

The written evidence was shoved under Agnes' eagle eye. Though a poor reader herself, she could recognise the housekeeper's distinctive style. "Well, how did you get here then? You never walked? You wasn't on the omnibus, that's for sure."

Katy felt her face grow hot and pink as she answered, "Mr Charles brought me in the gig, didn't he?"

"Mr Charles? On your own? And you thought that was right and proper? I never even knew he was home, what with the Smythes away in London. What was you thinking Katy? Going with him unescorted and all? We'll never live this down. And there's Mrs Threadwell and Mrs Hoskins too. Everyone'll know about it, sure as eggs is eggs."

"Well, it don't matter if they do. I've done nothing wrong. It's just shopping after all."

Agnes wagged her finger. "I tell you what else too; Jem's mother won't like it. Oh yes, Mary Phipps will have something to say when she gets to hear about your gallivanting. You could lose Jem over this."

"Well, I haven't got him yet anyway – we're not engaged or anything," Katy squirmed under her mother's barrage.

"Nor will you likely ever be at this rate," replied Agnes.

The busy doorbell rang out again. Charles Smythe swung the door open wide, nodded at the two ladies sifting through piles of snowy white linen at the counter before spotting Katy standing with her mother at the rear of the shop. Smiling broadly, he strode towards them, saying in a loud voice, "I say, Kate, what's keeping you? I've got the candles and have been waiting for you outside the grocer's shop for ages. Got lost in the ribbons, have you?"

Katy didn't know which way to look, as four pairs of middle-aged female eyes locked on to her face. All were curious and her mother's were fuming.

Charles appeared oblivious to it all. He turned to Mrs Friedenburg. "What do we owe you Mrs F? Actually, stick it on the tab for Mrs Andrews, would you? Come on Katy, let's finish what we started."

"Just a minute. Er, sir," Agnes said. "I need a word with my daughter first, if it's all the same to you, Mr Charles?"

Charles looked both surprised and annoyed at Agnes' breach of etiquette but said, "Oh, very well. Kate – I'll be at the grocers. Join me there when you can." He slammed the door on the way out.

The little bell trembled.

Agnes grabbed Katy's arm. They followed Charles Smythe out of the shop and out of earshot of the ladies from Lower Cheadle.

"Don't you need to buy something in the milliner's, Mum?" asked Katy, watching Charles Smythe disappear into the grocer's shop, five doors down the High Street.

"Shopping can wait. What I've got to say cannot." Agnes bundled Katy round the corner of the little shop and into a dark alleyway.

Noxious smells assaulted Katy's nostrils and made them flare in distaste. The afternoon was not turning out the way she'd hoped at all.

"Now then, Katy Beagle, let's get a few things straight. Maidservants do not go traipsing about the country with their master's sons. Right?" Agnes's eyes bore into Katy's.

"Right?" insisted her mother.

"I suppose."

"And I suppose you understand that you could lose not only Jem but your job?"

"Look, Mum, I'm not after marrying Jem at the moment. You and his mother might want me to but it's up to me at the end of the day and I'm not interested, not yet anyway. I don't want to get stuck in a little cottage with a family at my age. I want to travel – to see the world before I settle down. You never know, Mrs Andrews might want me to do more shopping if I do it right but if I keep Mr Charles waiting much longer, he won't ever ask me again. You've got to let me go and find him!"

"Mrs Andrews won't ever let you out of her sight again, I shouldn't think, you silly girl!"

"She can't tell Mr Charles what to do." Katy stared back at her mother. "And it was his idea. He asked Mrs Andrews first about bringing me with him, so she knows where I am. So, you can leave off, Mum. If you don't tell Jem's mother she won't know, will she?"

"You think Mrs Threadwell won't tell the whole world she saw you out with Mr Charles? Mrs Andrews can't deny Mr Charles anything he wants, that's true, but what will Lady Amelia say when she gets home, hey? Have you thought of that?"

"If Mr Charles asked me to go then I can't rightly say no, can I?" Katy was itching to get away. Charles Smythe must be nearly done at the grocer's and if she didn't meet up with him soon, she'd be travelling back in the omnibus with her mother and lose her chance of a ride in the gig with him.

But her mother didn't seem in any hurry to release her. "Why's Mr Charles home anyway? He should still be up at Oxford, as far as I know."

"It's the war; he's signed up. He'll be away soon enough to France. Said he's got a commission, whatever that is." Katy felt her prior knowledge of this exclusive news regained some of her lost dignity.

"This war! It's got a lot to answer for. I hear of nothing else from our Albert but I'm not letting him go. He's too young. Everyone says it'll be over by Christmas anyway."

“Maybe, Mum, but I must get back to Mr Charles.”

“Hmm, go on then but I don’t approve, and don’t you go thinking that I do!”

Katy, once released from her mother’s grip, raced off to the grocer’s shop. Charles looked grumpy and remained so for the rest of the trip. The shine had gone off the adventure for them both.

CHAPTER THREE

Katy bumped into Jem in the kitchen courtyard one drizzly morning. He was barrowing in the morning's vegetables to Mrs Biggs, the cook, and Katy had been given the humble task of scrubbing the kitchen steps, despite the rain or maybe even because of it, knowing Mrs Andrews. Katy felt awkward and at a disadvantage, kneeling on the hard cobblestones but she told herself she had nothing to be ashamed of and stood up, lifting her chin, as Jem approached.

"Morning, Jem, how are you?"

"Morning, Kate. I'm fine. Glad to see you at the manor house instead of going out with Mr Charles."

Katy brushed her damp hair from her forehead with the back of her soapy hand. "You're not my keeper, you know."

Katy tried to push past him and get back to the house. Jem's arm shot out to stop her. She turned; eyebrows raised.

Jem let his hand rest on her arm. "Just thought – if you want to go out to places – I could take you."

"You couldn't take me out in the gig though, could you? And you only have Sundays off anyway."

"That's true, Kate, but do you trust Mr Charles?"

"What are you saying, Jeremy Phipps? Just because Charles happens to enjoy my company and wants to spend time with me doesn't mean we're more than just friends."

"Just friends? That's been said before. How can a maidservant be a friend to Sir Robert's son? People of his sort – his class – they don't play by the same rules, especially with their servants."

"Charles doesn't see me as a servant. He sees me as his equal, as a friend, like I said."

"*Mr Charles*," (Katy winced at Jem's emphasis on the mister), "might say that Kate – he can say what he likes, can't he?"

"You're just jealous, Jem. Just because – *Mr* – Charles sees something in me that you can't."

"I see everything in you, Kate, you know I do. Maybe I am jealous – who wouldn't be? Everyone's talking about you. I'm surprised Mrs Andrews doesn't put a stop to it."

Katy bit her lip. He'd hit a nerve there. "Mrs Andrews can't tell Mr Charles what to do any more than you can!"

"Kate – don't do this. Why won't you marry me and let me look after you?"

"I'm not a child, Jem. I don't need looking after, thank you. I've told you before – I'm not ready to marry anyone. I don't want to get tied down before I've lived my own life."

"I thought you'd say that. You always do."

"Well, seeing as you ask me nearly every week you ought to be used to the answer by now."

Jem laughed. "Kate, Kate! You know I'll be here waiting when this is over, but please, Kate, take care. Don't, don't let him – you know."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, Jeremy – what do you take me for?"

"Just take care – that's all." Jeremy's shoulders slumped.

He squeezed her hand and walked his long, loping walk back to the greenhouses, leaving the barrow piled high with the fresh vegetables for her to deal with.

Katy felt a moment's misgiving. Jem was as sound as a bell, and she was very fond of him. They'd been playmates as children and the first to lead others into scrapes. They'd always stuck up for each other if any mischief got discovered and argued like brother and sister. Jem remained her kindred spirit and her best friend. But how could she marry him with this restlessness inside her?

She longed for more out of life, for wild adventures – like those she read about. The thought of a little cottage and a bevy of babies filled her with horror. There was a whole world out there – she could almost smell it – and she was damn well going to see it before she'd let domestic drudgery swamp her. Why, if those suffragettes won their campaign, she'd soon be able to vote; be counted as a person in her own right.

She picked up her pail of scummy water and poured it down the drain, then looked out across the stable yard.

As she turned to go back inside the house to see what other dreary jobs Mrs Andrews had in mind for her, the sound of horse hooves click-clacked over the cobbles. Katy turned to see if it might be Charles back from his ride. Her heart fell when she saw it was the new curate. To her surprise, he dismounted in a single graceful movement and marched straight up to her.

Imaginary butterflies sprang into life in her stomach. The new curate was tall. He still didn't take off his hat. Was it glued to that extraordinary hair? His golden mane was long, touching his collar in an old-fashioned style that belonged to the last century. He was talking to her, no, *at* her. She stared up at the curate's face, noting his straight nose and startlingly blue eyes under beetle black brows.

"Miss Beagle?"

"Yes, sir?" Katy bobbed a curtsy, uncertain of protocol when holding a smelly bucket.

"I was hoping to bump into you."

Katy's astonishment rendered her mute.

Reverend White cleared his throat and began, "Miss Beagle, there has been some gossip about you of which you should be aware. I overheard Mrs Threadwell at the Post Office saying you were, um, consorting with Mr Charles and accompanying him on trips in his gig. Is this true?"

What could she say? She couldn't deny it but what right did this stranger have to interrogate her?

"Well?"

Katy stared back at the cleric with eyes as blue as his own. She knew hers were a deeper, more violet kind of blue but his were the palest turquoise she had ever seen. She imagined the sea being that colour.

She nodded, not trusting herself to speak.

"As your pastor, Miss Beagle, I feel it is my duty to advise against such behaviour. Your position at the manor might be in jeopardy should Lady Amelia discover how you've been spending your days in her absence."

"I'm just doing as I'm told. If Mr Charles asks me to go with him, I can't rightly say no, can I?" Katy said, repeating the words that had worked with her mother.

"Would you like me to speak with him? Is he, um, forcing you in any way?"

Good God, did all men have one-track minds? Anger rose to warm her reply. "Mr Charles and I share similar tastes in music and books, that's all. There's no more to it than that."

The Reverend snorted. How dare he laugh at her! Katy turned to go.

"Books and music? I think you had better remember your station, young woman. And have a regard for your reputation too."

Katy didn't give him the satisfaction of listening. She'd already started walking back to the house, as his last words trailed after her. She looked back over her shoulder before entering the house. How odd, the Reverend was still watching her. When she stared back at him, he turned and clucked his horse towards the stables.

Jem pulled up bean poles with a savage lunge. The bean stalks had withered on them, their seeds hard and dry like their old pods. Summer was over. As he worked, his perennial worry nagged at him. What more could he do, or say, to get Katy to come round? He'd told her he loved her; he'd asked her to marry him but no, he wasn't good enough. He was half inclined to believe the old biddies in the village who gossiped that Katy had set her sights on Charles Smythe, heir to Cheadle Manor, no less, and meant to have him. That was impossible of course. Just wishful thinking in his view. Katy could no more leapfrog the class difference than he could himself, not that he'd ever try.

Trouble was she read too many bloody books. They filled her head with all sorts of silly, impossible ideas. Frustrated though he was, he understood why she wanted more out of life. If he could help her to travel and see the world, he'd do it. He'd thought about emigrating to Australia and asking her to go with him, as his wife but he didn't really want to leave his home. The Phipps had worked this land for hundreds of years and he loved the loamy soil he stood on.

He might understand Katy's restlessness, her brother Albert was the same – it was a family trait – but he didn't share it and never would. For Jem it was enough to see the seasons change, to yield the crops from the rich Wiltshire soil and feel a part of the natural rhythm of the countryside that he loved so deeply. He couldn't give Katy the adventure she longed for, but she had his whole heart just the same.

