



Another Land

PATERSONS IN SCOTLAND

David Carlyle

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Patersons in Scotland
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Chapter 1

1876 – April 23, 1880

Edna looked around her big room in the McCarty mansion near Inverness, Scotland. She rarely argued with her father, but this morning she penned a plan to do it, because no time remained for calm persuasion. She sat at her desk, dipped a pen into her inkwell, and wrote:

'Monday, August 7, 1876
Quarrel with Father
Stamp foot
Cry
Refuse to go'

She looked briefly at her composition, touched a corner of it to the candle in her room, and dropped it on the stone floor to burn completely. She took a deep breath, squared her shoulders, and walked to the dining hall to meet her father for early breakfast. He waited there for her.

She raised her foot and opened her mouth, but then hesitated, and Arthur, her father, spoke first. "Are you all right, Edna?"

"Yes, Father, I'm all right." She didn't stamp her foot, but hesitated again.

"Your face is flushed. Are you sure you're not sick?"

"Yes, Father, I'm fine." She lowered her foot.

"Sit down and enjoy your breakfast. I want to watch you eat your pancakes here one last time before you go."

Edna sighed and sat. "Very well, Father. I must talk to you, however.

You know I don't want to go, don't expect to survive the trip, and even if I leave an heir, don't expect you to live long enough to meet or protect that heir, if perchance he or she tries to find you."

A clock in a hallway chimed six times. "You're the apple of my eye, Edna, but you speak nonsense. We'll have plenty of time to talk during our ride to Glasgow Port. I told the liveryman to pull up to the south mansion door at exactly 7:00, and the butler to come to your room for your trunk at two minutes till. So we can't waste time now."

Edna and her father ate their breakfast quickly, Edna went back to her room, and closed the door. Someone knocked and called through the door. "Miss Edna? I'm here for the trunk."

"I'm not going today. Please tell my father."

The clock chimed seven times. Someone again knocked and called, "Edna, this is Father. I'll carry your trunk myself. May I come in?"

"Did the butler say anything to you?"

"He said you didn't open the door for him."

Edna sighed again and opened the door. Arthur hoisted the trunk to his shoulder and walked ahead of Edna, out the south mansion door, and to the carriage. He gave the trunk to the liveryman, and held the carriage door for her.

Edna stepped up into the carriage and said, "You know I don't want to go. Will you change your mind?"

Arthur merely shook his head and entered the carriage. The liveryman began the two-day trip to Glasgow Port to meet a ship to New York. Arthur summarized his plan for Edna to board the ship, audit classes for four years at the University of Rochester in New York, and then return. "Your brother Eric studied there, and you deserve the same opportunity he had."

Edna allowed her father to finish. "I don't want to go, but it appears I must. You'll keep an eye on Rex Smalley won't you? I don't trust him for a minute, and I hope you don't either after what he did, and the rumors we heard. I'll feel much better if you allow me to stay with you."

A smile erupted on Arthur's face. "Don't concern yourself about Rex. I understand why you fear him, and I already told you I'll do whatever I must to keep him away from you. That's another reason I want you out of the country for a while, and want him here where I can watch him. He's looked after my estate almost three years, however, and does fine work with the land and shops. He serves at my pleasure, and knows plenty of other people want his job." Arthur took time to fill and light his pipe. "It's normal for people to envy our wealth. They pestered your Grandfather Erroll all the while he built our estate, but he lived a long and happy life. I'll do the same."

"All right, but be careful. I have a secondary reason too, to want to stay here. I'm not sure I can keep pace with the men at the university. I'll be younger than most of them, and will be a foreigner in their land."

"We've discussed your fear many times, Edna. You did well with your private tutors at the mansion, and you'll do fine at the University." He patted her arm.

"Very well, Father. I know you don't know best this time, but I suppose I must honor your wishes. You'll send a letter to me every time you go to Glasgow, won't you?"

"Yes, Edna, every time. You study hard and come back here smart, you hear?" The smile remained on Arthur's face.

Edna abandoned her sad look and giggled. "Yes, Father, I hear. Do you really think I'll come back any other way?"

Edna's ship waited at a dock on the south side of River Clyde when she and Arthur came to the river's north bank. They crossed on a ferry, both went on board the ship, and Edna worried again. "Don't forget to watch out for Rex Smalley. I've not recovered from the loss of Mother, and I don't want to lose you too." After a quiet moment she disclosed a recurring dream. "I see myself leaving Scotland as an adult. And I see myself—or someone—coming back later as a child, but you're not here."

Arthur first laughed, but then responded seriously. “We all dream strange things, Edna. Put it out of your mind, and enjoy the new places you’re about to see.” They embraced, and he left the vessel. Edna stood by a rail as he waited for the ferry and eventually stepped onto it. She watched Arthur until her ship steamed away from the dock, then went below deck, and stayed there during most of the trip. She disembarked when her ship docked at New York’s South Street Seaport, and soon after, boarded a boat to go up the Hudson River/Erie Canal waterway to Rochester.

Arthur prearranged permission for Edna to audit history classes at the University of Rochester before she left Scotland. She didn’t register as a regular student there, because the university admitted only men as full students. Arthur sent money ahead to pay for her room and board at a prestigious rooming house nearby, and she hired a coach to take her from the boat to her new home.

Edna studied without incident for a time. She found a church near the school, and met an older man there, named John Paterson. John had reddish sandy hair like hers, looked vigorous and strong like her father, and stood nearly as tall as her father at perhaps barely under six feet. John talked often to her, and asked her several times to go with him to Sunday dinner at his mother’s home, where he lived.

Edna rejected John’s invitations with a variety of excuses—weather’s too hot or too cold, must study, must help roommate—but she eventually agreed to dinner on a blustery December Sunday. John tried to prepare her to meet his mother. “Mom’s a really nice person, but she can talk pretty rough sometimes. I’m over twenty-seven years old—maybe I shouldn’t tell you this—but Mom ran off the only other girl I introduced to her, and made her cry.”

“I hope she likes me, but she won’t chase me away, because I accepted an invitation to visit you, not her.”

Confident talk notwithstanding, Edna suffered a rocky start with

Aileen, John's mother. She met them at the door when they arrived at the house, looked long and hard at Edna, and commented, "You're a young and smarty looking thing, aren't you?"

When John didn't respond, she gave an uncharacteristically catty answer. "Yes, I'm probably everything you're not."

Aileen didn't reply, Edna and John laughed and talked during dinner, and they included Aileen in their conversation. Edna offered to help wash dishes after dinner, but Aileen snapped she could do it herself. Edna looked at John. "I must finish a reading assignment before tomorrow. I should go now."

"Oh, no! So soon? May I walk you?"

"I suppose."

They said goodbye to Aileen, and commenced the walk to Edna's rooming house. Edna spoke about her visit. "I don't like to be where I'm not welcome. I think I made it worse when I first answered Aileen—I don't usually talk that way, and surprised myself when I did. I think I shouldn't come back."

"I understand how you feel, but must tell you I liked you the moment I saw you, and I still do. I don't want Mom to disrupt our friendship. Maybe we can go to the University Library or someplace, later this week?"

Edna waited a moment. "We can even go to a restaurant or a concert, because I have more money than I know how to spend. My father sends more each time he writes."

"That's a good thought, Edna, but I don't want you to pay my way anywhere. I can afford a restaurant occasionally, because I have a decent job as a foreman in a shoe factory, but money's tight for me. Mom doesn't have an income, and I pay for her needs, so most times I'll propose less expensive places. May I ask you again soon, maybe even right now?"

"I suppose now's no worse than any other time."

"How about the University Library tomorrow evening at seven?"

“We can’t talk in the Library. We need to find another place.”

“Do you have a place to sit in your rooming house?”

“Yes.”

“How about if we meet there, tomorrow evening at seven?”

“I don’t like that either. Maybe someplace away from people I know. How about that little coffee shop right there?” Edna pointed a finger held close to her side.

“Anywhere’s fine with me. Shall I come by for you?”

“I’ll meet you here.”

“I’ll be here at seven o’clock.”

Edna and John continued to walk until they came to her rooming house. She went inside immediately, so John returned to Aileen’s house. He arrived at the coffee shop ten minutes early on Monday, and she showed up exactly on time. After some small talk, he asked, “Why did you not want me to come to your rooming house?”

Edna looked at the floor. “I must tell you the truth. I like you, but I’m glad we’re here this evening, and not there. I’m afraid the girls at the rooming house will poke fun at me because you look older than me.”

“Do I look that terribly old?”

“Not to me, but maybe to an impartial observer.”

“I’m only twenty-seven.”

“I’m eighteen, so you’re half again as old as I.”

“Does age matter that much to you?”

“It matters not a fig to me.”

“Then why talk about it?”

“Good question. Let’s stop.” A fleeting smile crossed Edna’s face.

“Agreed.” A broad smile appeared on John’s face.

They talked at the coffee shop until after ten that evening. John walked Edna to the rooming house, and inquired, “May we visit again soon?”

“Yes, let’s. And we can visit here in my rooming house next time.

I'm more interested in you than I am in the girls' opinions on any subject under the sun."

"I don't want to cause trouble. Do you prefer we meet at the coffee shop again?"

"We can, but perhaps we can both go to church on Wednesday night, and stay after."

"Great idea, Edna. I'll come by your rooming house right here, at a quarter to six, if that's suitable."

"Wonderful."

He went to Edna's rooming house on Wednesday, but she came out late, with tears in her eyes. "I can't go anyplace this evening."

"What is it, Edna? Can I help in any way?"

"No."

"Will you tell me what's wrong?"

"Everything's wrong. I somehow upset the boys in a class I attend, and they called me a 'sissy trying to act like a man.' I must stay home tonight and write a letter to my father. I need him to send me ship tickets to home."

"Wait a minute, Edna. You can't let an insult drive you away. May I attend the class with you, and explain a few things about proper behavior to the young men?"

"You can't do that. You can't miss work, and even if you do miss one time, you can't miss every time. They'll merely wait and take it up again after you're gone. You can't help."

"Whatever you do, don't go away. Let's go to church tonight according to our plan, and plot a better response."

"What better response, John? There are around thirty of them, and one of me. They can say anything they want to say, and the professor won't stop them."

"Won't you go with me? Maybe the professor is the answer. Maybe we can think of a way for you to intimidate them."

Edna continued to cry and shake her head no. "They're beasts,

John. You can't imagine what they're like. I can't go back among them."

"Please go with me. Perhaps if nothing else, I can comfort you."

"No." She turned to go back inside the rooming house.

He called after her, "Please go with me. If I can't comfort you, maybe you can comfort me."

"I can't do that, John. Can I?" She turned back and stopped crying for a second.

"You can, you alone. Nobody else can do it, only you." John smiled.

"That's an intriguing thought. I've never helped anyone in that way. Do you mean it?" She dabbed a handkerchief at her tears, and grinned a moment.

"Of course I mean it. Don't make me go back home alone, and be like that all night." He smiled bigger, but then frowned. "We can figure a way to deal with those morons, I promise."

"Well, perhaps we can go for a short time, but if we don't think of something quickly, I'll come back here."

"Great, Edna. You ready to go?"

"No, I need to freshen my face."

"I'll wait." John waited, Edna returned, and they walked to church. He suggested a two-pronged strategy to her. "Hit 'em first with a snappy comeback. If that doesn't work, tell 'em I'll hunt 'em down and smash their faces. I'll—"

"I won't threaten them, John. And an appropriate comeback doesn't exist."

"I can think of several. For example, 'You look like you might know a lot about sissies. Tell me how it happened to you.' Or, 'If I'm the first girl to make you feel inferior, you should get out more.' Or even, 'I'm sure your mommy will tell you about women if you ask her.' We can think of those all night, Edna! You can make those poor saps cross the street to avoid you!"

She smiled, but rebutted, "Maybe you can say those things, but I can't. I just can't."

"There's a hitching post. Walk up to it and practice."

She giggled. "That's silly, John."

He laughed also, but insisted, "It isn't silly. Think of the guys in the class as like hitching posts, except they wear pants and are dumber."

"You describe them accurately, John." She giggled again. "I can't practice in front of you, but I'll practice on a bedpost in my room. And perhaps I'll try it on the guys tomorrow."

"Does that mean you won't go back to Scotland soon?"

"I suppose it does."

"Does it mean our original plan to stay late at church is still on?"

"Yes, for now anyway."

They talked at the church until the pastor chased them out so he could lock the building. Edna's putdowns backed the men in her class off a bit, and she remained in the class.

Edna and John continued to date, to go to ball games, hockey games, skating rinks, picnics, and every other place they could imagine, except never to Aileen's house. They fell deeply in love, but Edna canceled a couple dates in a row during the late winter of 1879, and provoked John to trap her in a corner of the church the following Sunday, to question her. She cried as she explained, "My older brother, Eric, lived in France for several years, and we never heard from him. He came home, and then my dear, wonderful father died, as I feared he would. Eric didn't write me until about a week ago, when he said the estate is broke. He can't send more money, and I have no inheritance. You liked me as a rich girl, but I'm someone different now, not worthy of you."

"You're the most worthy person alive. I want you to stay here forever. Can you be happy here, rather than in Scotland?"

"I don't know for sure, John, but it doesn't matter. My father's gone and I can't afford a ticket back anyway. Why do you ask?" A grimace flickered among her tears.

“I can’t bear to see you go, and want you here with me. You have no way to earn money . . . I intended to ask you to marry me soon anyway, but now seems the appropriate time.”

Her sad look faded, and she giggled and blushed. “John, you know I want to say yes. I waited for you to ask, but as I said, I’m different now.”

“You think money defines you? It doesn’t! I love you, not the money you do or don’t have.”

“Don’t feel you need to marry me as a charity case. Father already paid my school expenses through this year, so I’ll continue until I finish in the spring, and when college ends, I’ll find a job.”

“Edna, I don’t see you as a charity case or as somebody I ‘need’ to marry. You’re the one person I pine to marry, but I have a problem as well. You know where I live, and who owns the house. I’ll naturally want you to live with me, and Mom won’t like it. She’ll always be my mom and needs me to support her, and if you marry me, you’ll always be my wife and I’ll always love you, but you need to know about the turmoil that’s sure to follow.”

She frowned, and then spoke slowly. “I love you, John, too much to allow you to marry me out of pity. But if you truly want to marry, then my answer is yes. As for your mom, if she doesn’t like me, I’m sorry about it. But if you and I marry, the worst she can do is kick us out of her house. If she does, she does, but I don’t care if we live in her house, or on the street. I’ll be happy if we live together—anywhere.”

“That’s—”

“I could have bought us a house far away from Aileen six months ago, but not now. I know your mom doesn’t like me, but I can live in her house if she can take it, and if you can.”

“Are you sure you can? I want you there, and I hope you know that. Mom’s likely to move upstairs and let us have the downstairs except during meals, but she’ll always be there, will always resent you, and will continually throw little jabs at you. Can you endure that?”

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“Oh, sure. And if she talks bad to me, I promise I’ll grin and bear it.”

“When she does, you can know I support you, and you can know now my support won’t always be silent.” John paused. “I take everything we said as a definite plan to marry. Do you see it the same?”

“Oh, yes, John! I don’t want to face people without you. I love you and need you more than you can know, and will be completely yours as long as I live.”