

"Don't worry about that ; you'll never get put to death," I told her.

Lighter Darkness

David Dawson

[ALBERT DARRS: He is independent, self-willed, and an extreme realist. He is concerned with his own wishes and desires. Nothing stands as an obstacle for him. This is especially true in his business dealings, for he is aiming at the position of vice-president. He is nearly 10 years older than his wife.

MARY DARRS: She is Albert's wife, small, slender. She is a sensitive, perceptive woman who offers a complete contrast to her husband. She is much younger than her husband. Therefore, she bows before his years and authority in all decisions until the latter part of the play.

MADGE LIGHTON: Mary's sister. She is extremely attractive with dark hair and eyes. She dresses expensively with much jewelry, and there is a noticeable resemblance between her and her sister. She has a moody temperament ranging from extreme gaiety to deep depression.

GEORGE THOMAS: He is about Albert's age and one of Albert's friends. Like Albert, he married a woman younger than himself. He is a stable, settled person.

Madge has come to live with her sister and brother-in-law after the death of her mother. Madge's father, whom she adored, died some years before. After that time, Madge had a complete breakdown and was hospitalized. She came home to stay with her elderly, bed-ridden mother until her death. She came to Mary and Albert and immediately suggested changing their way of living, remodeling the house, and generally criticizing their tastes. She made open advances to Albert and was frequently seen in town with older men. Mary and Albert find her presence uncomfortable and limiting. When Madge comes home drunk while Mary and Albert are entertaining an important business client, Albert raves. He demands that Madge leave and puts it to Mary to tell her. It is now the following morning.

(There is a large sofa center with end tables on either side. Upstage is a large arch with stairs coming into the hallway from the right leading upstairs to the bedrooms. There is a door up left to the outside and one up right to the kitchen. The whole room is decorated in very good taste. Albert sits on the sofa reading a newspaper.)]

MARY: (entering through the arch after coming down the stairs) She's still sleeping.

ALBERT: Hum. It figures. Drunken stupor, I suppose.

MARY: I didn't want to wake her to tell her anything. She's calm now and resting.

ALBERT: Don't be easy on her. Going soft will accomplish nothing.

MARY: I know you will be upholding me, Albert—as always. But I don't mind telling her myself. I won't be rude or rough. I don't want to be too stern. All I want is your assurance not to be.

ALBERT: You act as if you had already forgiven her.

MARY: I don't want to judge. I've learned not to—not in Madge's case anymore. She's had such—well—a difficult emotional strain.

ALBERT: (sarcastic) My parents died, too, Mary, and I came out without experiencing a complete trauma.

MARY: In Madge's thinking, it wasn't exactly fair—

ALBERT: Many things aren't fair. Don't complain. Don't try to change the world.

MARY: You are independent, Albert. You refuse to see Madge's difficulty. You're the man who enters a dark room after standing in the sunlight. You can't see, and it's more convenient to rush outside where everything is safe and light.

ALBERT: I won't have you making allowance for the woman. As you say, Mary, it is much easier to face the sunlight. Don't look in dark rooms, Mary. They never look the same when the sunlight hits them.

MARY: Do you remember when we were married, Albert? I shall not forget Mother walking up to me and whispering, 'Your young man always reminds me of your father.' Madge was quite dependent upon father. (darkly) Madge likes you. You should be gentle with her.

ALBERT: Gentle! Now that's the best joke of the year. Has she been gentle with us? She comes to stay. Takes over the place. Tries to tell us how to decorate the house, how to run it—more how she wants it done. Runs around with—heaven only knows—all older than she is. Makes a fool of herself in front of an important client. Can you expect—

MARY: Albert, you are allowing yourself to become angry. We promised to be reasonable about the affair. I realize it has been difficult for you. It has for me. (insinuating) And will be. But we can be understanding.

ALBERT: (calming) I know, I invited her here as well as you. But I wasn't so optimistic. I'm not surprised things turned out this way.

MARY: You are trying desperately to be sarcastic, Albert. Covering up something?

ALBERT: Oh, stop showing off. It's up to you to tell her to get out.

MARY: And I may do it as I please?

ALBERT: Tell her what you want. (angry) I won't be there to hear you. But just tell her and let me forget it. (doorbell rings).

MARY: Hold your voice down, Albert. The door—and Madge. (Albert goes to the door and opens it.)

ALBERT: George, good to see you.

GEORGE: (entering) I'm bringing back the gun I borrowed.

ALBERT: Thanks, George.

GEORGE: Mary. How are you?

MARY: Fine. And Margret?

GEORGE: Same as usual, home with the kids. Battling.

MARY: Won't you sit down and stay for a moment, George? (A warning glance passes between Albert and Mary.)

GEORGE: (sitting) Just for a minute. Got to get back home or Margret will have my head on a platter. (laughing) I skipped out of washing windows to come here.

MARY: Give me that thing. I'll put this in the closet. (goes up-stairs).

ALBERT: How was the hunting? Get anything?

GEORGE: Not bad for the rest of the fellows. I'm afraid that I'm not a crack shot, though.

ALBERT: I'd like to get in a little hunting. Seems like I don't have time now. Especially now that—(cuts himself off.) (awkward silence follows. Mary enters).

GEORGE: Where's Madge? Sleeping late? (laughs) (silence).

MARY: Yes—er—she wasn't feeling quite herself.

ALBERT: As usual.

GEORGE: Margret asked me to invite you two over for next week-end. Dinner?

MARY: Yes, we would like that.

GEORGE: Madge, too, if she wants.

MARY: I'm sure Madge—

ALBERT: Madge may be leaving this week, George. (Mary glances at him.)

GEORGE: Oh, really? Going back home?

ALBERT: She hasn't told us her plans yet.

GEORGE: I'll have to drop by and see her off.

MARY: (doubtfully) Yes—(looking at watch.) I'd better get some breakfast for Madge. She'll be getting up soon. (starts exit). Excuse me? (exit—they watch her go.)

GEORGE: (nervously) The gun was an excuse, Albert, to see you.

ALBERT: Problem?

GEORGE: I really don't know how to say it. The words escape—It's Madge, Albert.

ALBERT: You mean her leaving.

GEORGE: I think her leaving is best. You see, she and—

ALBERT: Why don't we forget all about Madge right now? I'd like to. (Madge enters through the arch. Albert deliberately avoids speaking to her.)

MADGE: Good-morning, everyone.

GEORGE: (lifts quickly) There's the old sleepy-head. Wish I could sleep late. But with three kids running around the house—well—

MADGE: How are you, George?

GEORGE: Fine.

MADGE: And Margret?

GEORGE: (laugh) Same as always. By the way, Albert tells me you are leaving us. We'll miss you.

MADGE: (frowns) Yes—(glances at Albert) I may be.

GEORGE: How soon?

MADGE: (lift) I don't know. I haven't made any plans yet.

GEORGE: Going to be lonely without you. Why didn't you tell us?

MADGE: (low) Well, I—(lift) It was rather unexpected. I hadn't planned. You know how I am lively one minute—bored the next.

GEORGE: (laughing) I know you better when you are lively.

MADGE: Perhaps you do. (Glances at Albert) uncomfortable silence).

GEORGE: Well, I've really got to be going. (starts to door). Just in case I don't see you again—(frown) I guess, this is good-bye, Madge.

MADGE: (smile) Yes, I guess it is.

GEORGE: (Albert stands at door). Is anything wrong, Albert?

ALBERT: Personal problem, George. You understand.

GEORGE: We all have them. Well, good-bye. (addresses both). Tell Mary good-bye for me, Albert. See you this week-end.

ALBERT: Of course. (George exits. Albert closes door, walks to center. Short silence.)

MADGE: So I am leaving.

ALBERT: Sorry you had to find out that way.

MADGE: Well, at least we are doing it neatly, you might say. No scandal and all that. Clean linen.

ALBERT: Don't be cynical. I think it best—for all of us.

MADGE: Yes, it would be convenient with me out of the way, wouldn't it? For all of us. If Mary were ever to find out—

ALBERT: Your advances were not accepted. They were unwanted.

MADGE: So you told her that. Well, that's convenient, too. No hurt feelings.

ALBERT: Oh, stop it. It's past. What happened between you and me should be forgotten.

MADGE: Like a lot of other things, huh? With me out of the way, there's not a worry, is there?

ALBERT: Oh, for—

MADGE: (lightly) Oh, now, you needn't worry. I'm not going to tell anything. We'll just go through the motions. Nice leave taking.

ALBERT: You're taking it calmly. I'm glad.

MADGE: Did you expect me to scream and rant? Oh, that flashed through my mind. But, what's the use? I'm better off out of everyone's way.

ALBERT: Don't go talking like that.

MADGE: (reflective) It's easier this way. No trouble to me, or anyone. You know, something happens when I come into a room. Like now. It's a stage all set for me. And I'm happy. Sometimes

when the room is dark, I get afraid. It seems so lonely. So I turn the light up very low and decorate the room with my own people swimming in a sea of rose-petal perfume. And sometimes the people are already there—waiting for me. (quickly to Albert). Oh, you needn't be alarmed, Albert. You aren't the first—maybe the last.

ALBERT: I don't want to hear about your former love affairs.

MADGE: You know, George was perfect—a father—and he was in the room waiting for me.

ALBERT: George? He is married and has children.

MADGE: You are married too. George was a father, though. But he was waiting for me. Of course you weren't. But the room wasn't dark very long. But, then, you don't notice the darkness, do you?

ALBERT: What's that supposed to mean?

MADGE: Oh, nothing. When am I leaving?

ALBERT: Well—I—

MADGE: Suppose you leave it up to me? Soon?

ALBERT: Thank you for being so gracious about it, Madge. (sits beside her, puts hand on her arm). I mean, you and I—it just couldn't last—

MADGE: (violent outburst.) Don't touch me. I don't want you to touch me—ever again.

ALBERT: Madge—

MADGE: I don't even want to see you again. I wish that I had never met you. You run off and leave me, just like—You—

ALBERT: Madge, please, I don't see. . . .

MADGE: There are many things you don't see. And never will. (calms suddenly). And never will.

ALBERT: (walks toward her.) Madge—(She looks at him, runs upstairs.)

MARY: (entering from right) Albert. What—

ALBERT: She's all right. She took it calmly. So well. Until—

MARY: You told her? (sits.) Oh, Albert, why?

ALBERT: It was an accident. George let it slip. I did my best to carry it off.

MARY: She was shouting. You didn't—

ALBERT: I didn't do a damn thing. That's just it.

MARY: You were discreet—gentle with her?

ALBERT: Are you off on that line again?

MARY: It wasn't fair. What you did, Albert.

ALBERT: What wasn't fair? I talked to her calmly, rationally. Then she blew off like an alarm clock.

MARY: You shouldn't have just let her down like dropping a dishonored child. Madge won't understand the situation.

ALBERT: What are you talking about?

MARY: Oh, stop evading. I've known about you and Madge. I—I found out.

ALBERT: You knew? And you never. . . .

MARY: (violently) Yes, all along. Did you really think you could

hide it?

ALBERT: It's all over now. We can all forget it. Let it die. We'll survive.

MARY: Survive? Is that all? There's more than that. To expect her to forget you as if—if you had died or something. I can overlook the affair—to an extent excuse it. But Madge still isn't yours. Madge belongs to a world of fantasy, of music, roses, and love.

ALBERT: So all of this is suddenly going to be my fault? I should have seen it coming. The point is that woman has to leave this house today—now.

MARY: Why? Why the sudden change? You made advances, too. Perhaps you are as much to blame for trying to invade her world with your own. Tell me, Albert, will it be just as convenient to have me 'out of the way' some day?

ALBERT: You're talking in riddles. And you delight in twisting all I say, don't you? It gives you some perverted pleasure, doesn't it? The woman's sick, Mary. She needs someone to look after her—

MARY: Sick? Did you just realize the fact? But I wanted to tell her what you never could.

ALBERT: Tell her what?

MARY: That I was leaving. That I understood. That I was going away with her. That when she left, I would go to help her—

(There is the loud shot of a gun. Mary sits horror stricken. Albert stands frowning. He recovers quickly, dashes from the room, and runs up the stairs.)

The Field

Barbara Taylor

WE HAVE been thinking about selling the field. We really do not need it, and we could use the money. It does not serve any purpose at all, and because of its location we could probably realize a comfortable profit from it.

Every spring, somebody here decides to raise a garden on it ("It is silly to let that ground go to waste"); however, very little ever gets planted—mostly a handful of pop-corn, a few pumpkin seeds (carefully saved from the Halloween jack-o-lantern), some water-melon seeds, and once, some carrot seeds which produced six hard, short stubs with bushy green tops because the ground had not been dug deeply enough. Then later on, somebody says that it would have been silly to raise a garden out there; about the time we would have been able to harvest, the vegetables are so cheap in the stores it would not have been worth the effort involved. Another thing, if we plowed up the field for a garden, we would plow up all the strawberries. And if we plowed up all the strawberries we would never see all our relatives and friends because everybody is busy until about June the first, when the berries start to ripen. Then