

Marshall Returns From America

In the latter half of August, Marshall Stokes² went to New York,³ in order to wind up the estate of the lately-deceased brother of the lady to whom he was betrothed. As a busy underwriting member of Lloyd's,⁴ he could ill afford the time—he was over there for upwards of a fortnight⁵—but no alternative had presented itself. Miss Loment⁶ had no connections in America, she possessed no other relations, except a widowed aunt,⁷ with whom she lived, and it was clearly out of the question for either of the two ladies to travel across in person, to examine books, interview lawyers, deal with claims, etc.—they had not the necessary business experience. The task, therefore, had devolved on Marshall. He had not been able to conclude the business, but he had put it in a fair way of being concluded, and had appointed a reputable firm to act as Miss Loment's representatives. The estate was worth forty thousand dollars.⁸

Upon his return to London about the middle of September he found that his friends had departed for Brighton;⁹ Mrs. Moor—the aunt—apparently was feeling run down. A perfumed little note¹⁰ from Isbel pressed him to join them there. Marshall was unable to leave town immediately, but two days later, on Friday afternoon, he abruptly shut down work for the week-end, and motored down by himself in glorious weather. His heart was high, and as he ran through the richly gleaming Sussex country, overspread with a blue, plum-like bloom, arising from the September mists, he thought that he had never seen anything quite so lovely. The sun was brilliant, and there was a crisp, invigorating breeze.

He dined the same evening with Isbel and her aunt, in the public room at the Hotel Gondy,¹¹ where they were staying. Neither of the ladies attracted as much attention as Marshall himself. His large, loose, powerful figure went admirably with evening dress, while his full-blooded face, still covered with ocean tan, was peculiarly noticeable for its heavy, good-humoured immobility; his very hands, huge and

crimson, yet not vulgar, marked him out from other men. Isbel kept alternately glancing at him and smiling down at her plate with pleasure, apropos of nothing. Most of the talking came from him. Reserving business until afterwards, he entertained his friends during the meal with his personal experiences in the United States, the relation of which was rendered more piquant by a free adoption of the very latest slang. Aunt and niece were both perfectly acquainted with America, but they had the tact to keep this to themselves.

Isbel was dressed in black, on account of her brother's death. The gown, according to the prevailing fashion, was cut low across her somewhat full bosom, but lower still in the back. She was neither plain nor handsome; a first glance showed an ordinarily attractive girl of five-and-twenty, and nothing more. Her face was rather short and broad, with thick but sensitive features, a lowish forehead, and a dull, heavy skin, rendered almost unnaturally pale by the excessive quantity of powder she employed. The tranquillity of her expression was rarely broken by an emotion or a smile, but whenever this did happen it was like a mask lifting. The full, grey-black eyes as a rule appeared a trifle bored and absent, but occasionally they narrowed into a subtle and penetrating glance which nearly resembled a stab. Her hair was long and fine, but mouse-coloured. She was short, rather than tall, and somewhat too broad-hipped for modern ideas of beauty;¹² nevertheless, her person was graceful and well-covered, she moved with style, while her hands and feet were particularly small and aristocratic. She affected little jewellery.

She commanded all her friends, and was adored by the two or three nearest to her. Further, no matter what company she was in, and although she never exerted herself to win people, before the evening was out her personality always succeeded in making itself felt, and she became the centre of interest to men and women alike. Never self-conscious, never embarrassed, always quiet and rather ennuyé,¹³ she fascinated by the very strength of her silence, which, it was abundantly clear, had nothing in common with stupidity. She had already declined three offers of marriage, before Marshall had appeared on her horizon. Curiously enough, these offers had all been made by men very much older than herself.

She had a queer habit, while sitting, of constantly, though quite

unconsciously, attending to her person. She would keep putting her hand to her hair, adjusting her skirt, feeling her waist-band, altering the position of a necklace or bracelet, etc. It was not vanity, but a sort of nervous irritability, which prevented her from continuing still. Her aunt frequently cautioned her against the fault, which was one of those that grow by indulgence; Isbel would deny the offence, and five minutes later would begin to repeat it. The strange thing was that a good many persons of the other sex liked to watch her toying with her garments in this way. She was perfectly well aware of the fact, and it rather disgusted her.

Mrs. Moor, the third member of the party, had just entered her sixtieth year. She was—as already mentioned—a widow. Her husband, a stockbroker in a small way, had during the rubber boom¹⁴ amassed a sudden fortune, which fell to her intact upon his death, in 1911. By shrewd speculation she had increased it considerably since, and could now be regarded as a wealthy woman. Isbel's father, who had died nearly at the same time, was her younger brother. He was a widower, with only one other child, a son—the one who had recently died in New York. Isbel, who at that time was sixteen,¹⁵ became Ann Moor's ward, under the will. She was at once removed from school—rather against her desire¹⁶—and the two women commenced the more or less vagrant existence together, which they had continued ever since, drifting from hotel to hotel, in all quarters of the globe. It was a free life, and Isbel came to grow extremely fond of it. In any case, her own money was not sufficient to support her, so that in a manner she was dependent upon her aunt's whims. It only remains to add that she tyrannised over the older woman in all their personal relations, and that the latter not only permitted this, but even seemed to expect it as a natural thing.

Mrs. Moor was short, erect, and dignified, with a somewhat stiff carriage. Her face, which resembled yellow marble, bore a consistently stern and dauntless expression, rarely relaxing into a smile. She was in complete possession of all her faculties, and her health, generally speaking, was good. The art of dressing she did not understand; Isbel selected her garments for her, while her maid told her when and how to put them on. She was, in fact, one of those eccentric women who ought to have been born men. Her tastes were masculine, her knowledge chiefly related to masculine topics. She knew, for instance, how to invest

her money to the best advantage, how to buy and sell land, and how to plan a serviceable house; but what she did not know was how to flatter men, how to talk gracefully about nothing, how to interest herself in the minute details of another woman's household, or how to identify herself in thought with the members of the upper circles of society. She bowed to no authority, and took a pride in speaking her mind in whatever company she might find herself. The natural consequence was that, while her friends esteemed her highly for her genuine qualities, they were more than a little frightened of her, and never really regarded her as one of themselves. It sometimes dawned on her that she was lonely. On such occasions she sought solace in music. She loved everything classical, Beethoven in particular she venerated,¹⁷ but the history of music came to an end, for her, with Brahms.¹⁸ Weeks would pass without her once opening the piano, and then a sudden, almost passionate yearning would seize her, when she would sit down and play by the hour together. Her execution was bold, slow, rather coarse, full of deep feeling.¹⁹

The two women were excessively fond of each other, though neither cared to show it. Temperamentally, however, they were so antagonistic that frequent quarrels were inevitable. Whenever this happened, the aunt ordinarily expressed herself in very vigorous language, while Isbel, on the other hand, would become sullen and vindictive, saying little, but requiring time to be appeased.

As soon as dinner was concluded, the trio retired to Mrs. Moor's private apartment on the first floor. The waiter brought up coffee and Chartreuse. The room was handsomely appointed, a distinctive note being lent to it by the bowls of pale chrysanthemums with which it was profusely and artistically decorated—Isbel's labour of love. The evening was chilly, and a small fire was burning in the grate. They brought their chairs forward, so as to form a semi-circle round the hearth, Isbel being in the middle. She stretched a languid hand up, and took two cigarettes from an open box on the mantelshelf, passing one to Marshall and keeping one herself; Mrs. Moor very rarely smoked.²⁰

For some minutes they talked business. Marshall told them exactly what he had accomplished on the other side, and what still remained to be done.

"Anyhow," said Mrs. Moor, "it seems that the main difficulties have

been got over, and the money's quite safe for Isbel?"

"Oh, quite. She may have to wait some months before she can touch it—that's the only thing."

Isbel took little sips of coffee, and looked reflectively into the fire.

"No doubt you'll find a use for it, Isbel, when it does come."

"Oh, it's more sentimental, aunt. Naturally, I don't want to go to Marshall with empty hands."

The others protested simultaneously.

"You needn't cry out," said the girl calmly. "I know it's done every day, but that's no reason why I should be content to follow suit. After all, why *should* a married woman be a parasite? It makes her out to be a kind of property. And that's not the worst. . . ."

"Very well, child. You've got the money—don't make a fuss."

"Isbel's right, mind you," said Marshall. "There's a decent amount of cold horse-sense²¹ about what she says. A girl wants to feel independent. I'm not gifted with a great deal of imagination, but I can see it must be pretty rotten to have to keep on good terms with a man—even when she's not feeling like it—simply and solely for the sake of his cash."

"I wasn't thinking so much of my attitude as yours," replied Isbel.

"Now, that *is* rather uncalled for. It isn't at all likely that a question of private means is going to affect my behaviour. What made you come out with that?"

"Oh, I don't mean it in your sense," said Isbel. "I don't mean anything brutal or tyrannical, of course. I simply say that your whole attitude towards me would be unconsciously modified, and you couldn't help it. Being a man, the mere knowledge that you held the purse would be bound to make you kinder and more chivalrous towards me. That would be a lifelong humiliation. I should never be able to feel quite sure whether you were being kind to me or to my poverty."

"Rot!" exclaimed Marshall. "That sort of thing doesn't exist in married life."

"I couldn't bear to ask for love and be fed with sympathy." Her voice was cold, quiet, and perfectly unembarrassed.

"You girls are all the same," said Mrs. Moor pettishly. "You have that word 'love' on the brain. Most married women are very thankful to have an occasional dish of sympathy set before them, I can assure you. We all

know what love *without* sympathy is.”

“What?”

“Pure, brutal egotism, my dear. If that’s what your heart is crying for, so much the worse for you.”

“Perhaps that’s what I want, all the same. Every woman has a savage streak in her, they say. I should probably always sell myself to the highest bidder—in love. . . . You’d better look out, Marshall.”

“Well, it’s a lucky thing we both know you as well as we do,” said her aunt, dryly.

“The question is, *do* you know me?” Isbel fingered the lace of her corsage.

“The question is, what is there to know? Girls may be exceedingly mysterious to young men, but they’re not in the least mysterious to old women, my dear. You’ve over-indulged in Russian literature²² lately.”

Her niece laughed, as if unwillingly. “If all girls are so hopelessly alike, what becomes of ancestral traits?”

“You don’t claim more ancestors than other people, I hope? What is this new pose of inscrutability, child?”

Marshall thought it high time to interrupt the duel, which threatened to develop into something unpleasant.

“To change the subject,” he said, rather hastily, “have you got fixed for a house yet, Mrs. Moor?”

“No, I haven’t. Why?”

“Would Sussex²³ suit you?”

Isbel anticipated her aunt’s reply, turning to him with a friendly smile, as if anxious to counteract the impression caused by her free speaking. “Have you heard of something? Whereabouts in Sussex?”

“Near Steyning.”²⁴

“You get there from Worthing,²⁵ don’t you?”

“You get there from anywhere, in a car. It’s not far from Brighton.”²⁶

“Tell us all about it. What kind of a house is it?”

“Surely I may speak, Isbel!” said her aunt irritably. “Is it a large property, Marshall? How did you come to hear of it?”

“It’s an Elizabethan manor. Two hundred acres of ground go with it,²⁷ mostly timber. The hall goes back to the thirteenth century. I met the owner coming across.”

“And the price?”

“He declined to say off-hand. As a matter of fact, he’s not frightfully keen on selling at all. His wife’s just died in San Francisco,²⁸ so I snatched the opportunity and asked him what his plans were about going back. He hasn’t decided yet, but I’ve got a sort of idea that a prompt bid might do the trick, if it at all appeals to you.”

“Poor fellow! At least, I hope so. . . . Young or old?”

“He told me his age—fifty-eight. He was in the Birmingham brass trade.²⁹ His name’s Judge. You don’t know him by any chance?”

“Do we, Isbel?”

“No.”

“He is quite a decent chap. He and his wife have lived at Runhill Court³⁰ for eight years, so it sounds all right.”

“Is that the name of the house?”

“Yes. Historical—supposed to be derived from the old Saxon ‘runehill,’ so he says. The runes were engraved letters,³¹ intended to keep off the trolls³² and blendings.³³ I don’t suppose that interests you greatly; what’s more to the point is that the place is thoroughly up to date, he tells me. He’s spent no end on modern improvements—electric lighting,³⁴ and so forth. . . . Well now, do you feel disposed to take it up?”

Mrs. Moor wriggled in her chair, which was a sign of indecision. Isbel emitted clouds of cigarette-smoke, in the manner of women.

“An Elizabethan manor,” she remarked reflectively. “Sounds rather thrilling. Is there a family ghost?”

“Do you want one?”

“In any case, *you* wouldn’t have to live there long, child.” Her aunt’s tone was sharp. “That is, unless you’ve been altering your programme, you two, behind my back?”

“We’re not conspirators, thanks. It’s still to be April.”

“Then pray leave me to make my own arrangements. When could I go over the house, Marshall?”

“Any time, I fancy. Would you care to have Judge’s address in town?”

“Please.”

He scribbled it on a scrap of paper, and passed it over.

Isbel eyed him thoughtfully. “Aren’t you coming with us, Marshall?”

“Really, I wasn’t thinking of doing so. Of course, if you’d like me to . . .”

"We should," said Mrs. Moor. "What day would suit you best?"

"There you have me." He hesitated. . . . "Well, as we're all here together, what's wrong with to-morrow morning? I could run you over in the car. The country's looking magnificent."

Mrs. Moor consulted the paper in her hand. "But Mr. Judge is in town, you say? How can we get an order to view between now and to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, I see. . . . As a matter of fact, I have an order in my pocket."

"But, my dear boy, in that case why did you wish me to go to the trouble of communicating with Mr. Judge?"

"Yes, why did you?" supplemented Isbel, puckering her brow.

"The order's a personal one, you see, and I had no idea I was coming with you."

The girl stared at him in a sort of bewilderment. "Do you mean you intended to go alone, without us?"

"Well, yes. I purposely didn't tell you, because it's more or less a confidential matter, but the fact is Judge wants a private opinion from me with regard to one of the rooms. . . ."

"Go on. What sort of opinion? Do you mean he's planning an alteration, or what?"

"Not an alteration exactly, as far as I'm aware. . . . I'm very sorry, Isbel, but it's confidential, as I said before. Having passed my word, of course I'm not at liberty to say anything more about it, much as I should like to. . . . However, I shall be only too happy to accompany you both."

She slowly passed her palm backwards and forwards across her skirt, feeling its texture.

"It's very strange, though. So you meant to hide it from us altogether, this mysterious transaction?"

"I meant to keep my word."

"In plain language, you set a higher value on the regard of this total stranger than on ours? I don't care two pins about the room, or what he proposes to do with it, but I certainly do care that . . ."

"But, my dear girl . . ."

"Why have you done it? It's disquieting. I shan't know *what* you're keeping back now."

Mrs. Moor gazed sternly at her niece. "Do try not to be a fool, Isbel. If Marshall has passed his word, do you want him to break it? He's

perfectly in the right, only, of course, you must try to work up a scene. Just tell us right out, Marshall—would you rather have us with you, or not?”

“I shall be delighted to have you with me . . . 10.30 in the morning—will that suit?”

“Admirably. Well, that’s that. Now you can go downstairs, you two. I want to read. I shan’t see you again to-night, Marshall. . . . Good-night! . . . Ring for the waiter, please, as you go past. I want these things cleared away.”

She remained sitting bolt upright in her chair, waiting for the servant to come and go, when it was her intention, not to read—she had changed her mind at the very moment of expressing it—but to play. These wretched misunderstandings over nothing at all always left her with an unpleasant taste in her mouth, which she could only rid herself of by entering that other world of pure and lofty idealism.

The two younger people walked slowly downstairs, Isbel slightly leading the way.

“Shall we see if we can get a game of billiards?”³⁵ asked Marshall, in a somewhat subdued voice.

“If you like.”

As they passed by the drawing-room the door was wide open; the room was empty.

“Let’s come in here,” said the girl.

They did so. She shut the door after them; both remained on their feet.

“May I ask,” began Isbel, and a spot of colour came into her cheeks, “if it is your intention to keep confidences from me? I wish to know.”

“My dear Isbel——”

“Yes or no?” Her tone was quietly menacing. Marshall felt that the shaping of his whole future very likely depended on the next few words addressed by him to this tranquil, dangerous-mannered girl in black.

He reflected before answering.

“Of course, if you put it in that way, Isbel, I mean to keep nothing from you. I gave my word to Judge, it’s true, but I quite see that perhaps I had no right to give it. I fully realise that personal secrets vitiate the whole meaning of marriage.”

“Then we’ll say no more about it. I’m glad. If we held different views

on that subject, it would be rather ominous, wouldn't it? . . . But what really is your compact with this man—what does he want you to do exactly? He's quite a stranger, isn't he?"

"Oh, absolutely."

"Then tell me. I shan't talk."

"I know that. In any case, the affair isn't one of national importance. The truth is, this chap Judge once had—or thought he had—a succession of marvellous experiences in one of the rooms at Runhill; an attic on the top storey which rejoices in the name of the East Room. It happened just after he'd moved into the house, eight years ago, and apparently it's been weighing on his mind ever since. For some unknown reason, it pleases him to imagine that I possess an average quantum of common sense, on which account he has invited my assistance in clearing up the mystery. In a soft moment I agreed—and that's all there is to it."

"But I don't understand. Why *you*? What made him fix on *you*?"

"I really can't say. It just resulted from a casual friendly conversation on board ship, coming home. We happened to be discussing the Fourth Dimension,³⁶ and all that sort of thing."

"What were these marvellous experiences of his, then?"

"A species of delusion, I take it. Every morning, for a week on end, a flight of stairs used to appear to him in that room, leading up out of a blank wall. He avers that he not only saw them, but used to go up them, but he hasn't the vaguest recollection of what took place on top."

"What an extraordinary fancy!"

"Eventually his wife found him out at it—that is, of course *she* saw nothing, but it frightened him off. He had the room locked, and no one has set foot in it from that day to this. Now she's dead, he appears to think there's no longer the same necessity for secrecy."

"Does he *look* mad?"

"Not in the least. Far from it."

"And you actually promised to investigate?"

"My dear girl, what could I do? I couldn't tell the man to his face that he was a lunatic, could I? There was no way out of it. . . . It will be an excuse for a run in the car, anyway."

"So you agreed, simply to spare his feelings?"

"We'll put it that way."

"I think it was rather fine of you, Marshall. . . . I'm glad you've told me. . . . I must know *all* your affairs. You see that, don't you?"

"Of course I see it."

Having gained her point, she swiftly took him in both arms, and lifted her lips to be kissed. They both laughed. . . . Marshall, however, remained uneasy. After they had separated again—for obviously it was no place for love-making—he thoughtfully scrutinised her powdered face, with its steady, indecipherable eyes.

"While we're by ourselves, perhaps you'll tell me, Isbel—what exactly did you mean just now by that remark about selling yourself to the highest bidder in love? Were you serious, or pulling my leg?"

"Yes, I must have love," said the girl quietly.

"I don't contest it. But the point is, you seem to regard love as a sort of jam, to be taken in a spoon. There's no such thing as love independent of a person. It appears to be a matter of indifference to you who that person is, so long as he makes it sufficiently sweet for you."

"Don't let's quarrel. I didn't say it to vex you. It isn't sweetness that I want."

"What then?"

Isbel was silent for a moment. She turned half-away from him, feeling the back of her hair with her white, tapering fingers.

"I don't know. . . . Love must be stronger than that. . . . I mean, one girl might be content with mere placid affection, and another might ask for nothing better than a thick sentimental syrup. It depends on character. My character is tragic, I fancy."

"I hope not." He stood looking rather puzzled. "Tell me one thing, Isbel—you're not by any chance finding our engagement . . . *monotonous*, are you?"

"Oh, no."

"Sure?"

"Quite sure. But isn't it a rather extraordinary question?"

Marshall, gazing at her quietly mocking smile, grew suddenly inflamed.

"I suppose you realise in your heart of hearts that you can do what you like with me, and that's why you are so contemptuous. It's a feeble thing to say, but I'd rather go on struggling for your good opinion all my life, Isbel, than be worshipped by any other woman without an effort on

my part.”

“You will always have my good opinion, if that’s all you want.”

He flushed up, and took a step towards her. As she awaited him with the same smile, the handle of the door turned noisily from the outside. They started guiltily away from each other.

“Then we’ll see if we can get a game of billiards,” remarked Isbel in a conversational voice, turning her neck to glance at the two ladies who were entering.

Marshall assented, and they at once left the room.

Notes

1. Jacqueline Lindsay (1898–1965). The couple (with David Lindsay at 40 years old to Jacqueline’s 18) had married on 21st December 1916, while Lindsay was still in the army. The two had only known each other a matter of months, meeting at a literary club where Lindsay had been impressed by Jacqueline’s ability to speak her mind, and hold her own against men. Her previous fiancé had been recently killed in the war, and Lindsay ended his own long-standing engagement to a Scottish cousin to marry her. Jacqueline’s maiden name on the marriage certificate is Silver, but in the 1911 census is Silverman. Her family — a mother and three surviving brothers, her father having died while she was a young child — moved to America in the same year, with only her mother in the country at the time of the wedding. After Lindsay finished *The Haunted Woman*, Jacqueline and her first (and then-only) daughter Diana went by sea to visit her mother in New York (see note 3).
2. The name Marshall recalls the masculine Maskull from *A Voyage to Arcturus*, but also has a connection with Judge in this one. Both Marshall (when spelled with one “l”) and Judge are professions associated with higher degrees of authority (a marshal being a high-ranking military officer in many countries, and in the US is, as with Judge, also associated with the law); both are, as well, verbs (to marshal being to arrange or order). The name’s origins lie in the French (or Frankish) name for horse, *mare*, and *skalkoz*, meaning “servant”, and applied to the man who acted as the keeper of his lord’s horses. Stokes, meanwhile, is a Norman name (deriving from Stock, near Caen in Normandy), and might, as with “marshal”, also be read as a verb (meaning to add coal or other solid fuel to increase a blaze).
3. Jacqueline Lindsay and her then 21-month-old daughter Diana departed for New York on 6th July 1921 (shortly after Lindsay finished *The Haunted Woman*), arrived on the 13th, and returned to England on the 20th September. Jacqueline stated in her Ellis Island entry documents that she would be staying with her mother and three surviving brothers. It’s unknown why Lindsay didn’t accompany her.
4. Lloyd’s — more properly the Society of Lloyd’s, but mostly known as Lloyd’s of London — is one of the world’s longest-established international insurance markets. It does not itself provide insurance, but acts as a marketplace in which individuals, groups, or syndicates, known as underwriters, can do so. Underwriters compete with one another within the Lloyd’s marketplace, and accept full responsibility for the insurance they underwrite, but are governed by Lloyd’s bylaws (as well as Parliamentary laws preventing anyone who is not a member of Lloyd’s from underwriting a Lloyd’s contract). The term “underwriter” probably derives from the practice of someone writing their name under the total risk they’re willing to accept for a specified insurance premium. Lloyd’s is named after Edward Lloyd, the proprietor of a coffee shop that opened

in London's Tower Street in 1688. Lloyd provided his customers with *Lloyd's News*, a short-lived publication detailing information about ships arriving at or departing from the nearby docks. This only lasted for a short time in 1696, but was revived in 1734, when Thomas Jemson produced daily shipping news, including the cargoes of each ship leaving or arriving, and related information such as where pirates were said to be operating. This later became *Lloyd's List*, a periodical that continues to this day. David Lindsay's uncle Henry Edward Bolton Joyce (1833–1907) was editor of *The Shipping & Mercantile Gazette* from at least 1883, which was incorporated into *Lloyd's List* in 1884. He remained editor of the joint publication until at least 1894. Lindsay himself worked for the Lloyd's underwriting firm of Price Forbes, beginning as an office boy, and working his way up to a clerk specialising in financial problems, before he left the firm at the end of his First World War army service.

5. As can be calculated from Jacqueline Lindsay's trip to America, the sea voyage across the Atlantic could take around seven days, so either Lindsay is saying that Marshall barely spent a day on American soil, or (more likely) that he spent a week travelling, two weeks in America, and then a week returning, meaning his overall absence would have been for four weeks.
6. As with Maskull in *A Voyage to Arcturus*, Lindsay makes a small alteration to an existing British surname, Lamont, to invest his protagonist's name with new meaning. Loment sounds like "lament" and points towards Isbel's "tragic" nature. One derivation of Lamont is through Scotland to the Old Norse *Logmaðr*, meaning "lawman" — which produces an interesting connection with Henry Judge's surname (and one US English definition of Marshall's). Another derivation, from the French, could come from a number of place-names usually meaning something like "up-stream" or "uphill", the latter creating a resonance with Runhill. Isbel, meanwhile, is a Spanish form of Elizabeth (which is based on the Hebrew "God is my oath"), more commonly given as Isabel or Isabelle. Actual name-origins aside, Isbel contains a hint of *belle* (beautiful), and a statement, "She is beautiful", or a question, "Is she beautiful?", perhaps reflecting Isbel's being "neither plain nor handsome". David Punter ("The Passions of Gothic", p. 227), points out that "loment", from the Latin *lomentum*, refers to a cosmetic paste made of bean-meal, which is another apposite meaning for the heavily made-up Isbel.
7. Lindsay's own family set-up for most of his early years — between the ages of around 13 to 38 — was to live with his mother, sister, and widowed aunt, Mildred Couchman. The house was his aunt's.
8. Lindsay's post-*Arcturus* novels often start with a bequest received by the protagonist. Here, Isbel inherits her brother's fortune. In *Sphinx*, Nicholas inherits enough money that he no longer needs to work. In *The Violet Apple*, Anthony Kerr, already wealthy, inherits an antique glass serpent containing two pips said to be from the Garden of Eden. It's worth noting in a novel partly about the social restrictions placed on a woman's ability to lead a fulfilling life, that although Isbel's brother clearly inherited a substantial fortune (\$40,000 in

1922 might equate to around £490,000 in 2021), Isbel was still forced to rely on the kindness of her aunt for her livelihood until her brother's death.

9. Brighton is a large town on the south coast of England, in East Sussex, 47 miles due south from London. It became known as a health resort in the mid-18th century, and the then Prince Regent (later King George IV), spent a lot of time there indulging his tastes in gambling, theatre, and dalliance with the opposite sex. The town, at the time, felt cut off from London by the South Downs, the chalk hills that run parallel to the southeast coast. The Prince Regent had Brighton's Royal Pavilion built, a mock-Oriental mini-palace (Arthur Conan Doyle mentions "the strange Eastern domes and minarets of the Prince's Pavilion" in his historical novel *Rodney Stone*), that continued to be used by the Royal family until Queen Victoria had Osborne House built on the Isle of Wight in 1845, and sold the Pavilion to the Corporation of Brighton. By this time (and this is probably the reason Queen Victoria sold the Royal Pavilion), Brighton could be easily reached by railway, and was becoming a popular holiday and health resort for all classes. A 1910 Baedeker travel guide calls it "the most frequented seaside-resort in the British Islands", with an annual influx of over 50,000 tourists. Lewis Melville, in *Brighton: Its History, Its Follies and Its Fashion* (p. ix), says "the great majority of holidaymakers in the southern and midland counties have, almost as a matter of course, paid it at least one visit. Indeed, in these districts it is difficult to find a man or woman of the upper and middle classes who has not been there, or, for the matter of that, to come across any members of the better-paid working class who have not at some time or other taken advantage of the cheap day-excursion trains." Thackeray, in *Vanity Fair* (1848), paints Brighton in a similar way: "But have we any leisure for a description of Brighton?—for Brighton, a clean Naples with genteel lazzaroni— for Brighton, that always looks brisk, gay, and gaudy, like a harlequin's jacket— for Brighton, which used to be seven hours distant from London at the time of our story; which is now only a hundred minutes off..." He was similarly enthusiastic about its status as a health resort in *The Newcomes* (1855): "It is the fashion to run down George IV, but what myriads of Londoners ought to thank him for inventing Brighton! One of the best of physicians our city has ever known, is kind, cheerful, merry Doctor Brighton." In Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger* (1910), we get a slightly different view, as the protagonist comes to the town for the first time. His midlands family raised itself out of poverty only a generation before, and he has never seen anything like it: "Edwin had only seen the pleasure cities of the poor and of the middling, such as Blackpool and Llandudno. He had not conceived what wealth would do when it organised itself for the purposes of distraction... He suddenly saw Brighton in its autumnal pride, Brighton beginning one of its fine week-ends, and he had to admit that the number of rich and idle people in the world surpassed his provincial notions. For miles westwards and miles eastwards, against a formidable background of high, yellow and brown architecture, persons the luxuriousness of any one of whom would have drawn remarks in Bursley, walked or drove or rode in thronging multitudes... The air was full of the trot of glossy horses and the rattle

of bits and the roll of swift wheels, and the fall of elegant soles on endless clean pavements; it was full of the consciousness of being correct and successful.” (vol. 4, ch. 3) Brighton, then, was associated with fun and holiday, health and wealth, and with the respectability of the Royal family, but along with that there couldn't help being an air of the licentiousness of the Prince Regent and — inevitably, with all popular holiday destinations — the seedier side of life, as it was viewed at the time. This element can be found in Somerset Maugham's 1915 novel *Of Human Bondage*, where Mildred, a woman the male protagonist is in love with but who has an illegitimate baby, goes to Brighton to find someone she can pay to bring the baby up; later, the couple holiday in Brighton, where Mildred thinks “they would be alone there, everyone would think them husband and wife”, to the extent of sharing a hotel room. In Maugham's novel, Brighton is a lively resort one goes to in order to escape one's troubles, a bustling place with an air of the Bohemian, where every class and type of person rubs shoulders, but where, at the same time, one can expect anonymity: “There were the Brighton shop-boys who walked in twos and threes, swinging their canes, and there were the Brighton shop-girls who tripped along in giggling bunches. They could tell the people who had come down from London for the day; the keen air gave a fillip to their weariness. There were many Jews, stout ladies in tight satin dresses and diamonds, little corpulent men with a gesticulative manner. There were middle-aged gentlemen spending a week-end in one of the large hotels, carefully dressed; and they walked industriously after too substantial a breakfast to give themselves an appetite for too substantial a luncheon: they exchanged the time of day with friends and talked of Dr. Brighton or London-by-the-Sea. Here and there a well-known actor passed, elaborately unconscious of the attention he excited: sometimes he wore patent leather boots, a coat with an astrakhan collar, and carried a silver-knobbed stick; and sometimes, looking as though he had come from a day's shooting, he strolled in knickerbockers, and ulster of Harris tweed, and a tweed hat on the back of his head. The sun shone on the blue sea, and the blue sea was trim and neat.” (ch. LXXIII.) The less reputable side to the holiday resort would come to the fore, culturally, fifteen years after the publication of *The Haunted Woman* in Grahame Greene's 1938 novel *Brighton Rock*, in which we see a town where there is organised crime, violence, and murder. Brighton, here, was a place to go for an illicit weekend with a lover, or to come up with the necessary evidence for a divorce. Ernest Gorse, the criminal protagonist of Patrick Hamilton's novel *The West Pier* (1951), practised his con-artistry in the Metropole Hotel of the 1920s — and so was there at the same time as Lindsay's Isbel Loment and Mrs Moore were at the Hotel Gondy. Lindsay gives no hint of this dual nature — the luxurious and the seedy — of the town in his scenes set there, but perhaps knowledge of it might add something to a novel which is all about a hidden life, and socially stifled passions.

10. In the *Daily News* serialisation, this is “A little perfumed note”.
11. Major seafront hotels began to be built in Brighton from the early 19th century, including The Bedford in 1829, The Grand Hotel in 1864, and The Metropole in 1890. Others mentioned in *The Dunlop Book* (1920, p. 528), a motoring guide to

the UK: The Royal Crescent, The Old Ship, The Court Royal, The Albemarle, The Royal Albion, The Old Steine, The Royal Pavilion, The Waverley Temperance Hotel, The White Lion, and The Bristol. (In his 1910 novel *Clayhanger*, vol. 4, ch. 3, Arnold Bennett describes Brighton's seafront as nothing but lodging-houses and hotels: "The bricks and stucco which fronted the sea on the long embanked promenade never sank lower than a four-storey boarding-house, and were continually rising to the height of some gilt-lettered hotel, and at intervals rose sheer into the skies—six, eight, ten storeys—where a hotel, admittedly the grandest on any shore of ocean, sent terra-cotta chimneys to lose themselves amid the pearly clouds.") There seems to have been no Hotel Gondy in Brighton, and it's most likely Lindsay invented the name. (As Isbel at one point leaves her hotel and catches a bus from Preston Street, a road that runs perpendicular to the seafront, it's possible Lindsay's "Gondy" is a stand-in for either the Bedford or Metropole Hotel, which stood either side of Preston Street.) Lindsay most likely got his hotel's name from the author of *The Memoirs of Jean Francois Paul De Gondy, Cardinal De Retz, Being Historic Court Memoirs of the Great Events during the Minority of Louis XIV and the Administration of Cardinal Mazarin* (1705). (Lindsay's reading of 17th and 18th century French memoirs led to his writing the adventure-and-intrigue novel *The Adventures of Monsieur de Mailly*.) Jean-François-Paul de Gondy (1613–1679), the Cardinal de Retz and second Archbishop of Paris, also appears as a character in Alexandre Dumas's sequel to *The Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years After* (1845), where he is (inaccurately) presented as a hunchback, but (accurately) as an agitator of the "Second Fronde", a rebellion or civil war in early 1650s France, following which he was arrested, escaped, and lived in exile for ten years, before reconciling with Louis XIV and becoming his envoy to the Pope. Gondy came from a family of originally Florentine bankers (onetime partners of the Medici), and so his name perhaps suggests something of the opulence of an upper class hotel, despite his air of historical villainy.

12. The post-war years saw a change in what was considered the fashionable body-shape for women, away from the often extreme hourglass figure of Victorian and Edwardian fashion, which both squeezed the waist and (in the case of multi-layered Victorian skirts) exaggerated the hips. Now the "boyish" look came into vogue. Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, in *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain 1918–1939*, put this down to a "reaction against the over-fed under-exercised monumental woman" (p. 39). But it also, as they explain, had its roots in changes in women's lives: "In the war, the shortage of sugar and butter and the popularisation of hockey and tennis greatly reduced women's weight; and when they were freed of their tight corsets the popular 'hour-glass figure' gave place to the neatly cylindrical. To the post-war eye, Italian prima donnas and old postcard portraits of Edwardian stage favourites had an irresistibly comic look." (p. 39) Graves and Hodge date the arrival of this look to about 1912 in England (it having originating, according to them, in Germany), but to the newspapers of 1920 it seemed a recent development: "The waist-line is making one of its periodic quick changes this autumn. 'Where is the waist?' is the first anxious

inquiry of dressmakers as they examine the between-seasons models now arriving in Bond Street and its satellite streets of fashion. It is often a puzzle to find the waist, for after having gaily flitted up and down the barometer of fashion, from Empire heights to the natural Venus line, the fashionable waist has suddenly dropped to zero... 'It is the return of the straight boyish figure, without a trace of the natural waist-line,' says a dress buyer newly back from Paris." ("A 'Down-with-Waist' Campaign", *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 19 August 1920, p. 4) Some commentators celebrated the health benefits of this look, as it did away with the need for unnaturally-constricting corsets: "The part which women have taken in so many forms of war work is, to a great extent, responsible for this common-sense return to fashions which prevailed hundreds of years ago. Tight corsets and constricted waist-lines were of a necessity scrapped, along with several other things, when a girl was on the land, or putting in long hours of hard work in shell factories, or doing route marches... But after a little experience of the new freedom of movement there came a feeling of much better health which was not wholly due to the change of occupation; and girls who have now accustomed themselves to sensible garments and the attractive, straight, boyish figure will not be in a hurry to clamour for eighteen inch waists again." ("The Waist-line and Health", *Leeds Mercury*, 27 June 1919, p. 11) There were some dissenting views, perhaps from those who had justified a lifetime of wearing corsets with its own (imagined) health benefits: "Owing to the continued fancy for the slim boyish figure with the low waist line, many women are discarding corsets and wearing just a belt and a kind of abbreviated stiffened camisole over the breasts. This need not prevent anyone from buying a pair of corsets, because in spite of the décolleté vogues there are still lots and lots of us who absolutely refuse to discard corsets for the very homely reasons that we do not want to have more colds than are necessary." ("Our Ladies' London Letter", *Leicester Chronicle*, 27 November 1920, p. 7) The popularity of the "boyish" look lasted until the 1930s. As Graves and Hodge point out, fashions in the 20th century would, from this point, change more rapidly, driven as they were by clothes being produced in newer, cheaper, and often more easily worn-out modern fabrics such as rayon.

13. Affected by *ennui*.
14. The first Rubber Boom lasted from 1879 to 1912. Rubber had been used commercially before this, but until Charles Goodyear's discovery of the vulcanisation process in 1840 it was unstable with changes in temperature. (It would become sticky when warm, and hard when cold.) After this, the Amazon area, which was at the time the sole source of rubber, experienced something like a gold rush, as rubber could suddenly be turned into all sorts of products: pneumatic tyres, elastic and waterproof clothing, sports balls, and children's toys to name but a few. The resulting maltreatment of the native population who were employed to tap the rubber trees of their liquid latex was among the worst commercial exploitation of human beings in history, with frequent brutality leading to enormous death tolls. At its height, the Amazon area was producing as much as 42,000 tons of rubber a year, and had a world monopoly until British explorer Henry Wickham smuggled rubber-tree seeds out of South America in

1876. Although these were intended for commercial use, it wasn't until around 1896 that this began in earnest, after the British had developed methods to extract as much latex from each tree as possible without damaging it. When commercial rubber plantations began in British-controlled countries such as Sri Lanka, Malaya, and areas of Africa, these were so much more efficient than those in South America that, from this point on, the British controlled the world rubber market. This led to a huge boom for investors, particularly between 1906 and 1910. For instance, in 1908 the Pataling Rubber Estates Syndicate paid a 45% dividend to investors in its Malayan rubber plantations; in 1910 that had increased to 325%. (This was the peak, though a second boom came with the Second World War.) It's quite likely this is how Mrs Moor's husband made his fortune, as an investor in British-owned rubber plantations.

15. The age of majority for young women at this time was twenty-one. (They could not vote until the age of thirty, however.) Lindsay giving us Isbel's age in 1911 — sixteen — and in the novel's present — twenty-five — means we can arrive at a window of possibilities for what year the novel is set in. If Isbel had had her 1911 birthday by the time of her father's death, and has had her current-year birthday by the time the action of the novel starts, then this is 1920. It's the same if she hasn't had her birthday in both 1911 and the novel's present. If, though, her having had her birthday or not in the year her father died, and her having had her birthday or not in the present don't match, the novel will be set in either 1919 or 1921. Lindsay started writing *The Haunted Woman* in 1920, which is perhaps another reason to take that as the novel's present.
16. The disappearance of Lindsay's father in 1888 (he was assumed to have been the victim of some sort of accident, but it later turned out he had abandoned his family and emigrated to Canada) meant that, although Lindsay had won a scholarship, his education was cut short (finishing school at the age of 14), as he was required to earn a wage to help support the family.
17. Lindsay, too, venerated Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), the composer who embodied the shift from Classical to Romantic music, and typified the latter era's notion of the troubled genius whose art is rooted in self-expression, and who has a deep commitment to political liberty. Lindsay refers to Beethoven by name in four of his seven novels, and for his two major works — *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920) and *Devil's Tor* (1932) — cited specific symphonies as a direct inspiration. (The 5th Symphony for the “Wombflash Forest” chapter of *Arcturus*, and the 1st movement of the 9th Symphony for *Devil's Tor*. For the first, see Pick, “Sketch”, p. 23, for the second, a letter to Robert Barnes dated 14th October 1930, in the National Library of Scotland, Acc. 9956.) Victor Gollancz, writing to Lindsay's friend E H Visiak in 1962, said that Lindsay “seemed to me far more of a Beethovenian than of a writer” (“Letters to E H Visiak”, *Adam International Review*, p. 67), and perhaps some glimpse of Lindsay's own artistic intentions can be found in his “Sketch Notes” number 357: “Up to the present there is no Beethoven of literature.”
18. Perhaps the music of Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) marks an end to the history of music for Mrs Moor because, like Lindsay, she was a reader of *Grove's*