

## Kiss Kiss

You see, I was only eleven when it began. I'm twenty-three years of age now. Just over twice that lifetime. But did I know more when I was younger? Was I more wise then than now?

The estate was small, and although my father was a prince, we were by no means rich. That is, we had fires in winter, and furs heaped on the beds. There was plenty of game in the forests for my father and his fifteen men to hunt and bring home as dinner. We had wine and beer. And in the spring the blossom was beautiful. And all summer there was the wheat, and afterward the fruit from the orchards. But I had holes in all but my best dress, as my mother did. One day, I would have to have something fine, because I would need to be married. I didn't question this, the only use I was, being a girl: the princess. Sixteen was the normal age. My mother said I was pretty, and would do. It was all right. And on my eleventh birthday, my father gave me an incredible present. Since we didn't have so very much, seeing it, I knew, despite appearances, he must think I had a proper value. My mother gasped. I stood speechless. I really didn't need him to say, "It's gold. Gold over bronze. Be careful with it."

I said nothing. My mother said, "But, dearest—"

He cut her short, as usual. "It can be part of her dowry. They're popular in the city. They're lucky, apparently. You may," he said, "throw it up and catch it. Don't roll it along. It would get scratched."

"Thank you, Papa."

I held the golden ball in utter awe. It was very heavy. It was, I think, for strong young lordlings to throw about. My slender wrists ached from its weight. But I took it out through the neglected garden, and walked with it down the overgrown paths, to the lake among the pine trees where, in the worst winters, the wolves came, blue as smoke, and howled.

I've heard it said that sometimes when a man stands near the brink of a cliff, he may think, What if I step over? Just such an awful thought came to me as I stood by the lake, which was muddy and rushy in the summer evening. Suppose I let go the golden ball, and let it roll, scratching itself, over into the deeper water?

No sooner had I thought it than a bird screeched in the trees of the forest on the lake's far side. And I started, and the ball dropped from my tired hands.

It rolled, flush, through the grass, in through the reeds with their dry, brown-purple flowers. I ran after it all the way, calling to it, stupidly crying, "No, no—"

And then it slid over the water's edge, straight in and down. Under the surface I saw it glimmer for one whole second, like a drowned sun. And then I saw it no more.

What could I do? I didn't do anything. I stood staring after the lucky golden ball, lost in the brown mirror of water, sobbing.

My father hadn't ever beaten me, at least not with his hands. He had a hard tongue. I dreaded what he would say. I dreaded what I'd done. To be such a fool.

Gnats whined in the air. One stung me, and I scratched my neck, still crying. The scratching made a noise in my ear that suddenly said, "Little girl, little princess, why are you weeping?"

I stopped in amazement. Had I imagined it? The voice came again. "Can I help you, little princess?"

No one was there. Only the gnats furled over the dry flowers. At the edge of the water, in the shallows,

something was stirring.

The sun was among the pines now, flashing. It caught the edges of the ripples in brassy rings. And two round eyes.

"Have you lost something precious?"

What was it? A frog . . . no, it was too big. The round eyes, colored like the duller flashes of the sun.

"Yes—I've lost—my golden ball."

"I saw it go down. I know where it is."

I thought, blankly, I've gone mad. It's the fright. Like the girl last year when the wild horse ran through the wedding party. She went mad. She was locked away. They'll lock me away.

I turned, to rush off up the sloping ground, toward my father's disheveled towers.

The voice called again. "Here I am. Look. You'll see, I'm well able to go after your precious ball."

Then I stopped and I did look. And it came out of the water part of the way, and I saw it.

I gave a squeal.

It said, "Don't be afraid. I'm gentle."

It *was* like a frog. A sort of little, almost-man thing that was a frog. Scaled, a pale yet dark green, with round, brownish glowing frog's eyes. It had webbed forefeet that might be hands. It held them up. They had no claws. And in its open mouth seemed nothing but a long dark tongue.

I was terrified. It was a sprite, a lake-spirit, the sort the old women put out cakes for in the village, to stop their mischief.

It said, plaintively, "Don't you want your golden ball, then?"

My first adult decision, perhaps, was between these two evils. My angry father, and the uncanny creature from the lake.

"I want the ball."

"If I fetch it," said the frog-demon, "I must have a favor in return."

"What do you want?"

"To be yours."

It was so unequivocal—and yet, as I found out soon enough, so subtle. "Mine? How?"

"To belong to you, princess."

Was it pride or avarice, a desire for some power in my powerless existence? To have a spirit as my slave. No. I think I only knew I had to get back the ball. And because it hadn't said to me, I must have your virtue, or, I must have your firstborn child, as in the stories they do, I was just relieved to say, "All right. You can be mine. Please fetch it for me!"

After it had gone down, with one treacly little *plop*, I stood there thinking I'd been dreaming. I even

started to search about for the golden ball, in case that too was a dream, a bad one.

The sun went into the blacker, lower third of the forest, and the sky above grew coppery. Crickets started across the fields. An owl called early for the shadows.

Then the water parted again, and up came the necessary golden ball, real and actual and there. It was clasped by two scaly frog hands.

I went gingerly down and took the ball, snatched it. I held it to my breast with all my fingers.

Then the frog-thing's face broke the water. Even then, I could see how sad its face was, the way certain animal faces are. Its eyes might have been made of tawny tears.

"Remember your promise."

"Yes."

As I hurried back toward the pile of the house, I heard it coming, hopping, after me. Not looking, I said, "*Go away!*"

"If I belong to you," it said, "I must be with you. Every minute. Day and night."

Then I saw, the way the maiden does, always too late in the tale, what she has agreed to.

"You can't! You *can't!*"

"You promised me."

I started to pray then to God, in whom I believed, but from whom I expected nothing, ever. He'd never answered any of my youthful prayers. And didn't do so now.

But the frog-thing came to me, quite near. It stood as high as my knee. It had frog legs, huge webbed feet, without claws. Sunset gleamed on its scales. In its scratch of a voice it said, "I won't speak to them. I won't tell them you lost the ball. I can do things they'll like. Find things. It will be all right."

But I ran away. Of course. Of course, it ran after.

In the garden, by the broken statue of a god, an old god even more deaf than God, I had to stop for breath. The golden ball had weighed me down. I hated it. I hated it worse than the frog-demon. In that moment I knew, too, how much I hated my father.

The frog had reached me without trouble. It hopped high, right up on the stone god's arm. And out of its mouth it pulled a most beautiful flower. Perhaps it had brought it from the lake. Creamy pink, with a faint perfume, thinner and more fresh than a rose.

The demon leaned, and before I could flinch away, it had put the flower in my hair.

I thought, out of my new hatred for my father, Anyway, he'll kill this thing as soon as he sees it.

I tossed my head, and the flower filled the air with scent. I hated everyone by now, and all things. Let them all kill each other.

"Come on, then," I said, and went toward the house, and the frog-thing hopped along at my side.

They called it Froggy. That was their way. They used to throw it scraps from the table. It wouldn't ever

touch meat. It had a little fish, and it liked green things and fruit, but I don't know how it ate, for it seemed to have no teeth. And this I never learned.

In the beginning, they were more circumspect with it—after, that is, the first outburst.

When I came into the hall, the women were at the hearth, and the boy was turning the smaller spit for the dead hares my father had taken in the forest. The house had a kitchen, but it was used only when there were guests. Half the time the bread was baked there too.

The owl-shadows were gathering, red from the fire, and one of the men was lighting the candles. In all this flicker of red and dark, no one saw the frog for some while.

I went up to my mother, who was wearing her better hall-dress that had only one darn in it. She took hold of me at once, and called her maid to comb my hair.

It was the maid who saw the frog first. She screamed out loud and pulled out a clump of my hair.

"Uh—mistress—ah! What is it?"

I was too ashamed to speak. My mother naturally didn't know. She peered at the thing.

It stood there patiently, looking up at her with its sad face. It had vowed not to speak to anyone but me.

The maid was crossing herself, spitting at the corner to avoid bad luck.

At the fire, they had turned and were gawping. And just then my father stormed in with his men and three of the hunting dogs, stinking of blood and unwashed masculinity. One of the dogs, the biggest, saw the frog at once. He came leaping for it, straight across the hall. As this happened, the frog gave a jump. It was up a tree of lit candles, wrapped there around one of the iron spikes, and the wax splashed its scales, but it didn't make a sound.

The dog growled and drooled, pressed against the candle-tree, its eyes red, its hair on end.

My father strode over at once.

He said to me, as I might have known he would, "Where's your golden ball, girl?"

"Here, Father."

He looked at that. Then up the candle-tree. My father frowned.

"By Christ," said my father.

Although I hated him, hate can't always drive out fear, as love can't. In terror I blurted, "It came out of the lake. It followed me home. I couldn't stop it. It wants to be with me."

My mother put her hand over her mouth, a gesture she often resorts to, as if she knows she might as well not cry out or talk, since no one will bother.

My father said, "I've heard of them. Water demons. Why did it come out? What were you doing?" He glared at me. This must be my fault. And it was.

"Nothing, Papa."

He folded his arms, and glowered at the frog. The frog eased itself a little on the stand. Leaning over from

the waist, it bowed, like a courtly gentleman, to my father. Who gave a bark of laughter. Turning, he kicked the dog away. "It's lucky. They bring good luck. We must be careful of it."

He ordered them to carve some of the half-raw hare, and offered it to the frog, which wouldn't have it. Then one of the women crept up with a cup of milk. The frog took this in a webbed paw, and had a few sips. Despite its frog mouth, it didn't slurp.

Once they had driven the dogs off, the men stood about laughing and cursing, and the frog jumped onto the table. It got up on its hands and ran about, and the men laughed more, and even the women slunk close to see. When it reached the unlit candles at the table's center, it blew on them. They flowered into pale yellow flame.

This drew applause. They said to each other, See, it's *good* magic. It's funny. And when it scuttled over to me and jumped out and caught my girdle, hanging on there at my waist so I shrank and almost shrieked, they cheered. I was favored. They'd heard of such things. It would be a *good* year, now.

It was. It was a good year. The harvest was wonderful, and some gambling my father did brought in a few golden coins. Also, the frog found a ruby ring that had been lost—or hidden—by an ancestor in the house. All this was excellent. And they said, when they saw me coming, the demon at my side, "Here's the princess, with her frog."

But that was after. It took them a little while to be so at home with it. And that first night, after my father encouraged me to feed it from my plate, let it share my cup of watered wine, when it started to follow me up the stone stair, where the torches smuttily burned, he stood up. "Put it outside your door," he said. "We don't know it's clean in its habits." This from one who had, more than once, thrown up from drink in my mother's bed. Who defecated in a pot, who occasionally pissed against indoor walls. The servant women being expected to see to it all.

When we reached my room, I tried to shut the frog-demon outside in the passage. But it slipped past.

"I must be with you," it said, the first time it had spoken since we came in. "Day and night. Every minute."

"Why?" I wailed.

"Because I must."

"Horrible slimy thing!"

I tried to kick it aside. Did I say I was a nice girl? I hadn't learnt at all to be nice, and was almost as careless and cruel to servants and animals as the rest of them.

But it eluded my foot, which anyway was only in a threadbare shoe, not booted like the feet of the dog-kicking men.

It wasn't slimy. I'd felt it. It was dry and smooth, its scales like thin plates of polished dull metal. When it sprang lightly on my bed, I took off my useless shoe and flung it. But the frog-demon caught my shoe, and put it on its head like a hat.

At that, finally, I too laughed.

I didn't want it on my pillow. But onto my pillow it came. Its breath was cool and smelled of green leaves. In the dark, its eyes were two small lamps.

It sang to me. A sort of story. At last I lay and listened. The story was the accustomed kind my nurse had

told me, but I was not yet too old for it. A maiden rescued from her brutal father by a handsome prince. Even then, even liking the tale, I didn't believe such men existed. I knew already what men were, and, without understanding, what they did to women, having seen it here and there, my father's men and the kitchen girls. It had looked and sounded violent, and both of them, each time, seemed to be in pain, scratching and shaking each other in distress.

Even so. No one had sat with me and told me a story, not for years.

In the night, I woke once, and it was curled up against my head. It smelled so green, so clean. I touched its cool back with my finger. It was mine, after all. Now I too owned something. And it would talk only to me.

Already when I look back, my childhood seems far away, my girlhood even farther. Old women speak of themselves in youth as if of other women. Am I so old, then?

During the time they all came quite round to it, and called it Froggy, and the Princess's Frog, I must have been growing up with wild rapidity, the way the young do, every day a little more.

While it performed tricks for them, found for them things that had been lost, seemed to improve the hunting, the harvests and the luck, I became, bit by bit, a woman. You see, I don't remember so much of it, because so much was always the same. It's all, in memory, one long day, one long night. The incidents are jumbled together like old clothes in a chest.

I recollect my bleeding starting, and the fuss, and how I hated it—I do so still, but the alternative state of pregnancy appeals less. I recall the bear in the forest that winter who mauled one of the men, and he died. I remember the priest coming on holy days and blessing us, and that he too liked to touch the buttocks of the maids, and once those of the kitchen boy, who later ran away.

The priest looked askance at Froggy. He asked was it some deformed thing from a traveling freak show, and my father prudently said he had bought it for me, since it was clever and made me laugh. Also, he said, it was fiercer than the dogs and would protect me. That was a lie, too. The frog was only gentle. Although, in the end, the dogs respected it and gave up trying to catch it. The biggest dog would let Froggy ride him, and all the while Froggy would murmur in the dog's ear. This was after the big dog was bitten by a snake in the forest, and ran home yelping, with terror in his eyes, knowing he would die of snakebite, or the men would cut his throat.

But Froggy, when the dog fell down exhausted, scuttled over and latched its wide mouth on the bite. Froggy sucked out the poison, and dribbled it on the floor with the blood. Everyone stood back in astonishment, one of the men muttering, stupidly, that if the dog died it would be Froggy's fault. But the dog recovered, and never forgot.

The women took to tempting Froggy to lick cuts on their hands to make them better. Froggy never refused. They said it was because they rubbed on honey first. They called this a "frog's kiss."

It never spoke to anyone but me.

And I remember one afternoon, when I had the familiar black pain of menstruation in my belly, I was lying in the spring grass, and Froggy was sitting quietly on my stomach, where the pain was, kneading me gently, until I was soothed and the pain died. The sun was in the orchard trees, which were just then losing their blossom, and all this yellow-white-green shone behind my frog, all puffed with light. The frog sang or chanted. Some old tale again. What was it? A knight who rescued a maiden. I saw for the first time how beautiful it was, this creature. Its amber eyes like jewels, the smooth pear shape of its body like burnished, carven, pale, dark jade. The paws that were webbed hands and feet, and had no claws. The

sculpted mouth, with its rim of paler green, toothless and fragrant. The healing tongue.

I smiled at the frog, not from amusement, but from love. I loved it. It was my friend.

After this, I seemed to learn things. The meanings of birdsong. The ways of animals, and of weather. I was more gentle too. Who had I learned that from but Froggy? There was no one else.

My mother pulled me to her about this time. She was, despite the luck, still unchilded, and my always-displeased father had slapped her. There was a bruise under her eye where one of his rings had cut her skin. She seemed proud of the bruise, often touching at it in the hall, as if to show off that her husband still paid her attentions.

"Look at you, such a big girl. You must have more binding for your bosoms. And you mustn't run about so much." Sometimes I would receive these lessons; no one else took any notice of her. Finally neither did I. But now she added, playfully tweaking my ear, "You must have earrings. He'll want to find you a husband soon. He's mentioned it. A man with land and soldiers. You're a pretty girl, if only you'd leave off these sluttish ways. Do you ever comb your hair? I'll send you the girl to brush it every night with rose oil."

I thought of my father, planning to marry me to some large, uncouth and appalling landowner, someone like himself. From my thirteenth birthday until now, I'd tried never to think about it. But I was fifteen. The awful appointment approached.

I ran off as soon as I could, the frog bouncing after me like a jade ball—the golden one had long ago been put into a coffer.

In fact, I don't remember I ever spoke of my troubles to Froggy. He was always there. Every minute. Night and day. He knew. And when my stomach hurt he kneaded it, or when I woke crying from a nightmare he comforted me, or made me laugh. I'll say He, now. I might as well.

I sat on the old stone horse statue at the foot of the garden, which now I was tall and agile enough to climb, and Froggy sat in my lap, plaiting for me, web-fingered, a crown of red daisies. Butterflies danced, and the willows by the lake looked very bright. Later there would be a summer storm.

Froggy told me a story. It was new. A prince was cast into a dungeon. His lady came to find him and rescued him by putting magic on the bars.

At first I didn't know why the story was so strange.

Then I said, "But it's the man who rescues the maiden. She's weak and helpless. She can't do anything. He's strong and clever. It has to be him."

"Oh, no," said Froggy. "Not always. A man may be made weak, and overthrown. And do you think men are so clever, then?"

I shook my head. I gabbled, in sudden horror and fear, '-Til have to marry one of them. He'll take me away." And then I said, "He may be unkind to you as well."

"But I shan't be with you," said Froggy softly. "If you marry this man."

Astounded, I stared. He raised his wonderful topaz-amber eyes. "Not be with me—but you're always there."

"Then, it would be impossible. He'd kill me, you see. Or I'd die."

I put my arms round Froggy and held him. He never struggled, as an animal, a puppy or a cat, would do. I laid my cheek against the crown of his head, the scales of smoky jade. "You're my only friend. Don't leave me."

"It must be. If you marry the man your father finds for you."

My tears would have streamed over him. But I said, at last, "It won't happen. I'll stay here. I won't be married. Ever."

I might as well have said, Night won't fall, or, The sun won't rise tomorrow. Before I first bled and ran about screaming, thinking I was dying—no one had bothered to prepare me; it was Froggy who calmed me instead—before I bled, I'd never have thought such a filthy thing were possible. And with marriage, the threat had always been there, as long as I could recall.

My husband-to-be visited us just before Christmas that winter.

He was like the bear they said had killed my father's man, and clad in a black bearskin cloak with clasps of gold. He had a gold stud in his ear too. His boots were leather, his shirt embroidered. His men were well turned out and well armed. He stank of everything. I can't begin to itemize his smells. He was about forty, and I nearly sixteen.

I, contrarily, had been bathed in the porcelain chair-bath, and my hair had been washed and brushed with rose oil. I had on my best, newest dress, without darns, and earrings of gray-white pearl, and a ring of gold.

When he saw me, he struck a pose, my intended husband; he bowed and fawned, as if I were some great lord, or a bishop, or a king. Everyone laughed heartily, and he straightened up, all good nature.

"You see, I like her. I'll take her." Then he kissed me. He had shaved, but already his skin was rough and he scraped my mouth. But that would be nothing.

The dinner was lavish. My frog did wonderful tricks, lighting the candles, cutting a fruit with a tap of his hand, finding things people had hidden and juggling the bones of some poor little birds we had eaten.

In the end, we were able to go, the women and Froggy, to leave the men to get spectacularly drunk. My mother took me to her bower, the shabby room that led from the bedchamber. She sat me by the fire to pat my flushed face and feed me sugared walnuts.

"What a good girl. He liked you so. Oh, it will be a lovely wedding. The church all hung with flowers. The day after your birthday. And you must have three new gowns, your father says. He's a generous man. And your husband will shower you with things in your first months. He's rich. Be careful to please him and you may even see yourself in silk!"

"How do I please him?" I asked, sullen with terror.

"It's simple, child. Never, ever say no. God said women must be obedient. Do whatever your lord wants. And—well, I'll speak of that later, your wedding night. But you must always pretend that you like what he does. Recollect always, he's your superior. You owe everything to him."

I couldn't say that he made me sick, that I wished to throw up from his kiss. I knew about sex, although she had tried to hide it from me, as she had successfully hidden menstruation. The thought of that struggling and grappling and the obvious pain, with *him*, repelled me so greatly I couldn't even think about it.



I said, "I see, Mama." And at my feet, the frog ate a little sugar, staring into the fire that made his eyes look, also, green.

When she sent me to bed—I must be at my best to see the monstrous husband off tomorrow; in fact, she knew my delighted, drunken father would want intercourse with her tonight—I ran, Froggy in my arms, and shouted at the woman with the rose oil to go away.

Then, rocking Froggy, I wept, until needles seemed to be drawn through my eyes.

My own fire was out by then. It was growing stealthily and awesomely cold. I said, "Let's go into the forest. The wolves may kill us or we'll freeze. Let's do it. Anything. Anything instead of *him*."

There was a long silence. I heard the stars crackling like icy knives in the black sky. Then the frog spoke back to me.

"There's another way."

"No. No other way. Nothing."

"Yes. Do you remember the maiden who was rescued?"

"Oh, that story—"

"Do you remember the prince that the maiden saved with her love?"

"Shush," I said. I would say today, But this is true life. This is real, and inescapable. Here, there are no miracles or magic. Then I said, "Don't talk about those silly things. They can't help me."

"Yes. I'll tell you how."

I held him in my arms and he spoke and I listened. His voice—the very voice he used to charm the dog, to charm *them*—scratchy and little, mesmerizing in the silence.

"A spell can be broken so simply, princess. Do you love me by now?"

"Yes."

"Then all you need do is kiss me. On my frog's mouth. Is that unthinkable?"

"I had to kiss *him*."

"I'm not like that."

I looked down at him, my slumbrous, umbrous jewel.

His holy frog face. My friend. "I'd have done it—I just thought you might not like me to—"

"I?" He couldn't smile. His eyes smiled, half closing, like a cat's. "Do it now," he said.

I never in my life did anything more easily. I lifted him up and kissed him. His mouth was like a summer leaf, cool, a little moist, smelling of fresh salad, and with a crumb of sugar from the walnuts—*sweet*.

When I opened my eyes it was because my hands and my arms were empty.

"Who are you?" I said. I was so afraid, I was numb.

He said, "My God, it hurt so much. Worse than before. Oh, God."

He leaned on my wooden chair, and then dropped into it. His shining golden hair fell long over his pale face. I had never seen a man who was so beautiful. He wasn't like a man. An angel, perhaps. I heard him breathing. Presently, in his musical voice, he said to me, "Little princess, my enemies worked against me. They changed me to the form—of what you saw. But your loving kiss—has brought me back. Now I'm yours forever, and you're mine."

His eyes, as he looked at me, were not amber or green. They were very dark, the color of night, just as his hair was the color of day. His garments too. Fur, gold, steel, gems.

What did I feel? I was excited. I tingled all over. The fairy story had come true.

I didn't need to hear the sound of hoofs below, galloping, bells ringing from the village, to know his men were coming, all glorious as he was, washed, perfumed and brave, armed to the teeth. Spell broken, he could drive the unwanted husband away. And my father—he would never cease to be grateful to me for the alliance I had brought him instead, this other husband, a prince who had been a frog.

And yet, I went back to him slowly. He was now far larger than I. My head, when he stood up, reached just below his shoulder. The enormous rings on his fingers were icy. He had a smell like fire, not water. But it was very cold.

My arms were empty, but he took me into his instead. What was wrong? What did I miss?

Oh, I missed my friend.

There was never such a wedding. They still talk about it, seven years after. Of course, I left my father's house. A bride does. She belongs to her husband. But he owns a principedom. My father cried large tears of greed as he bade me farewell.

There's everything here. A bed all my own, with a canopy shaped like a firmament and stitched with diamond stars, a different bath for every day of the week—marble, rose quartz, cinnabar and so on. There are foods, and drinks, I'd never heard of. He has a menagerie, with lions. His people, now he has come back, worship him like a god.

It was almost a year before he began to eat meat again. This was advised to make him strong, and it worked, because soon after I conceived a child and it was a son. I've given him three sons now, and my body has changed shape a little. This happens. A woman's lot. Sex remains a mystery to me. But yes, it does hurt.

In our third year together, he struck me for the first time. It was over some small quarrel—I'd forgotten my mother's rule of obedience. I mean, God's rule. My husband was gracious afterward, said he was sorry and sent me a rose made of rubies, just the color my blood had been from the broken tooth.

Despite the baths, he's just a little understandably lax that way. He smells of health and meat and wine, sweat, lust, sometimes of other women. From politeness, he says, he shuns me during menstruation. He never sings to me, or tells me stories, being very busy. He kicks the dogs.

I don't know why he changed so much, changed spiritual shape as pregnancy and birth physically have altered me. Was he always this way when human? Yes, naturally. A fine, noble, virile man. A prince. He doesn't juggle, never lights candles himself. Evidently, he's mislaid all the magic.

Every night when I'm alone, as increasingly now, thank God, I am, in my heavenly bed, I say a prayer for the one I had. He taught me so much. He was my friend, my frog. He never left me. I loved him. Not like

a baby or a pet, not like a man. A unique and crystal love, all shattered now in pieces. I didn't know what was happening, and he must have suffered, being that other one. And so we wasted it, that perfect time. Now it's forbidden to all of us to speak of it, the period of his life when he was enchanted. When he was a frog.

Nevertheless, I dream of it still. Sometimes. All that we did when I was slender, young and free, and how I loved him so. And how I lost him forever to that hateful betrayal of a kiss.