

WILDFLOWERS

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MASSACHUSETTS - THE BERKSHIRES - DAY - 1917

Laurel lake shimmers between rolling, verdant hills. A MUFFLED HOOT signals an approaching STEAM LOCOMOTIVE.

A SET OF TRAIN TRACKS - PURPLE WILDFLOWERS spring out along the green border. With a sudden ROAR the wheels of a steam locomotive flash by at full speed.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

THE CORRIDOR

A DOUR-FACED TRAIN CONDUCTOR glances out the window. He checks his pocket watch, turns and struts down the corridor.

A LUXURY TRAIN CAR

A pageantry of high bourgeois society glitters among the posh furnishings of the luxury car.

A YOUNG BOY in a sailor suit, two sizes too small, sulks next to his slumbering CHAPERONE - a gilded-age dowager.

A FASHIONABLE LADY PASSENGER fingers a fine "white muff" as she stares into space with a look of abject boredom.

THE TOILET

ELLIE LAMONT, 19, a pert whirlwind in high heels, opens her purse and extracts a bright red lipstick. The bathroom mirror reveals her bobbed hair and flapper-forward style.

VESTIBULE - MOMENTS LATER

The door marked "toilet" opens and Ellie egresses suitcase in hand. A poster on the wall catches her eye: "Fight for the U.S. - Join the Army - Navy - Marines."

A LUXURY TRAIN CAR

The Dour-faced Conductor strides through the car.

DOUR-FACED CONDUCTOR
Leh-nox, next stop!

The door to the train car opens. The Conductor glances up and does a double-take as Ellie enters. Heads swivel as Ellie sashays through the train car.

A TOY SOLDIER lies fallen in the aisle. The Young Boy stoops to pick it up. He turns and gawks at her.

ELLIE
 (to the little boy)
 What's the matter? Cat got your
 tongue?

He shakes his head and steps aside. His eyes, round as saucers, follow her as she walks past.

The "White Muff" on a Lady Passenger's arm "wakes up" and starts BARKING its head off. Unperturbed, Ellie walks on.

LADY PASSENGER
 (to the dog)
 Mr. Peabody! Shhhhhhh!

The Slumbering Chaperone - comes to with a snort. The Harper's bazaar magazine proclaiming KNIT FOR THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE, slides off her abundant lap. She catches the Young Boy gawking at Ellie and cuffs him on the side of the head.

CHAPERONE
 Ernest Parker Henry James Monroe!

Mr. Peabody continues BARKING at Ellie as she exits the car.

EXT. LENOX - TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

The train CHUG CHUGS into Lenox Station and rolls to a stop.

Every car opens its gates and a flood of well-dressed, well-to-do patrons spills out onto the platform.

Ellie Lamont hops off the train and plunges into the melee. Once safely past the chaos, she permits herself a furtive backward glance - no sign of pursuit.

Smiling like the cat who swallowed the canary she saunters off through the station doors.

INT. VESTIBULE - TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

The Dour-faced Conductor enters the vestibule and comes face to face with the graffittied enlistment poster.

INSERT POSTER - (scrawled in bright red lipstick) "VOTES FOR WOMEN!"

EXT. THE BERKSHIRES - A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The POSTMAN'S Harley Davidson ROARS to a stop and Ellie hops off the back with her bag.

ELLIE
Thanks, Billy.

As the Harley takes off again, she deftly leaps over a ditch by side of the road and cuts across a field, trailing her free hand through the sea of wildflowers and meadow grasses.

EXT. LAURELMONT CASTLE - FRONT VIEW - SAME

A long verdant drive winds across a wide front lawn to the impressive front courtyard of a sprawling palatial estate.

INT. LAURELMONT CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

GALLERY

ALMA, 50s, the poised matron of Laurelmont, sails through the gallery past TWO HOUSEMAIDS laboring to remove the dust coverings from dozens of gilt-framed oil paintings.

PARLOR

Entering the parlor, Alma intercepts SARAH, the CHAMBERMAID, carrying freshly laundered bedsheets.

ALMA
Is the Blue bedroom ready?

SARAH
Yes, Ma'am.

ALMA
Good. Then put the fresh linens and towels in the Laurel bedroom - we can do the others later.

Sarah alters course accordingly and heads up the stairs to the second floor.

CONSERVATORY

Alma opens the double french doors of the conservatory. She strides out onto the garden terrace revealing a view of a long green way sloping down to a lake.

EXT. LAURELMONT CASTLE - FRONT VIEW - DAY

Bouquet of wildflowers in hand, Ellie strides across the wide expanse of green lawn stretching towards Laurelmont Castle.

THE BACK LAWN

Ellie turns the corner of the house and her mother comes into view.

ALMA

Move it to the left of the chairs.

Huffing and puffing, the scrappy SECOND FOOTMAN GEOFFREY, 19, scoots a tall, heavy ceramic urn across the terrace floor.

ALMA (CONT'D)

To the left... no, more to the left... keep going.

The urn scoots aside another foot suddenly revealing Ellie, who has walked up behind it unseen.

ALMA (CONT'D)

(all but jumping out of her skin)

Ellie! Good Lord above, Ellie!

ELLIE

(cool as a cucumber)

Hello mother!

ALMA

What happened to your hair?

Unperturbed, Ellie stems her mother's protestations with a peck on the cheek and hands her the bouquet of wildflowers.

ELLIE

These are for you! Robert here yet?

ALMA

You said you weren't coming. How did you get here?

ELLIE

I walked.

ALMA

You should've phoned. We would've sent Thomas with the car.

ELLIE

I refuse to be driven around like a pet poodle. Kitty Landon has a car-- why can't I? She drives herself everywhere and hasn't had a single accident!

ALMA

Don't start! For pity's sake, go inside and change your clothes before your father sees you!

ELLIE

I don't care a fig what that old Puffguts thinks!

ALMA

Honestly, I don't know where you get such language from.
(to the servant)
Move it back!

Geoffrey grabs the urn once more and drags it to the left. Ellie pulls off her shoes and tosses them on the lawn.

ALMA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

ELLIE

Down to the lake. To have a dip.

Alma twists around trying to keep Ellie in view as Ellie slips past her.

ALMA

A dip? Now? But they'll be here any moment.

ELLIE

Who?

ALMA

Uncle Freddy and Aunt Silvia.

ELLIE

(with an audible groan)
Oh God! Of all our insufferable relatives, why did you have to invite them?

ALMA

They're family. I want you to be nice to them. Especially Silvia. I don't want her thinking she's married into a tribe of barbarians!

ELLIE

She married Uncle Freddy... how much worse could it get?

ALMA

Eleanor Lamont!

ELLIE

How long are they staying?

ALMA

They'll stay as long as they like.

ELLIE

Well there goes the summer!

ALMA

Ellie!

But Ellie is already barreling down the hill towards the wide expanse of Laurel lake shimmering below.

ELLIE

(calling back over her shoulder)

Don't coop me up mother!

ALMA

(swearing to herself)

God in tights on a bicycle!

She stares helplessly after her daughter's dwindling figure.

ELLIE (O.S.)

Language, mother!

Alma turns back to meet the eyes of the sweating Footman who has just set the urn back down in its original place.

INT. LAURELMONT CASTLE - HAROLD'S STUDY - DAY

Industrial banking titan HAROLD HORATIO LAMONT, 65, reverently lifts an ancient looking bottle of Scotch out of its packing crate.

Outside, a CAR HORN HONKS several times. Harold moves to the window and peers down at the courtyard.

EXT. LAURELMONT CASTLE - PORTE COCHERE - CONTINUOUS

FREDDY BITTERS, a petulant 36 year old playboy, leans over and BLASTS the HORN of the limousine again.

FREDDY
Christ, what's taking so long! Get
the bags Bertie Boy.

Freddy lights a cigarette and leans against the car. ROBERT LAMONT, 23, reluctant heir to the Lamont Banking Empire opens the trunk and takes out the luggage.

Alma emerges from the house and hurries down the steps to greet them.

ALMA
Robert!

She embraces her son warmly before turning to Freddy and the FEMALE PASSENGER(Silvia) whose face we do not see.

ALMA (CONT'D)
Welcome to Laurelmont!

INT. LAURELMONT CASTLE - EAST WING STAIRWELL - LATER

The Second Footman Geoffrey trudges up the stairs to the second floor lugging two substantial suitcases.

THE BLUE BEDROOM - SAME

A gray-gloved hand parts the curtains to reveal the rolling green lawn and the lake below it. Ellie's figure is visible as she struts to the end of the pier and dives into the lake.

ALMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Exquisite, don't you think?

Alma breezes into the room with fresh cut irises.

The Woman at the window turns. At 28, SILVIA BITTERS' "Gibson Girl" looks would be the envy of most women, save for an overriding wanness which seems to afflict her very soul.

She blinks back at Alma uncomprehending.

ALMA (CONT'D)
(arranging the flowers in
a vase)
The curtains.

SILVIA
 (noticing the curtains)
 Ah yes.

ALMA
 They're Parisian. I ordered them
 from Bergdorf Goodman's. The war
 better end quickly or we'll all be
 out of decent lace.

Geoffrey enters carrying two suitcases and a hat box.

ALMA (CONT'D)
 Just set Mrs. Bitters things down
 here.

GEOFFREY
 And Mr. Bitters?

ALMA
 You can put his things in the
 Laurel bedroom.

Geoffrey sets the hatbox and one suitcase down, then carries
 the other back out the door. Alma smiles warmly at the
 younger woman.

ALMA (CONT'D)
 The Blue room has the best view of
 the lake.

Silvia sinks down upon the bed as if all the energy had
 suddenly rushed out of her.

ALMA (CONT'D)
 (taking her cue.)
 You must be tired. Travelling can
 be such an ordeal.

SILVIA
 It would be nice to lie down a bit
 before dinner.

ALMA
 Yes, yes of course.

Alma draws the curtains and heads for the door.

ALMA (CONT'D)
 (pausing in the doorway)
 I'm so glad you've joined the
 family.

As soon as Alma leaves, Silvia pulls off her gloves and runs her fingertips over her wrists.

INSERT: A series of thin horizontal scars criss-cross the soft underside of her wrists and arms.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Silvia jumps.

SILVIA

Yes?

EAST WING HALLWAY

Alma stands in the hallway before the bedroom door.

ALMA

(through the door)

There are fresh towels in the bathroom -- if you feel like washing up.

IN THE BLUE BEDROOM

SILVIA

Thank you.

Silvia waits for ALMA'S FOOTSTEPS to FADE AWAY, then goes over to the door and locks it. With a sigh of relief, she collapses onto the bed.

EXT. LAUREL LAKE - SAME

Ellie moves through the water like a born mermaid. Her head breaks the water as Robert strolls down the dock, cigarette in hand, towel in another.

ELLIE

Took you long enough.

She grins up at him, treading water.

ROBERT

Couldn't get away. Acuh-cuh-counts piled up. Everyone's cuh-clamoring to buy Luuuuulliberty Bonds.

For ease of reading, Robert's stutter is not indicated from this point on in the script.

ELLIE

Excuses. Excuses.

Robert's eyes twinkle. He crouches on the dock.

ROBERT
You gave mother quite the
conniption.

ELLIE
(innocently)
Did I?

ROBERT
I think you may have exceeded
yourself this time.

She heaves herself out of the water and onto the dock. Ellie plucks the cigarette out of his mouth and takes a long drag.

ELLIE
(tossing her hair)
What do you think?

ROBERT
It's short.

ELLIE
The phrase is "a la garconne". It's
very chic.

She sticks the cigarette back in his mouth and takes the towel out of his hands.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
(shaking the water out of
her hair)
Coco Chanel did it.

ROBERT
(sarcastically)
In that case, mother should have no
objections!

ELLIE
It's my hair. I can do what I like
with it.

ROBERT
Jasper might fancy it.

Ellie makes a face.

ELLIE
I'd rather kiss a toad!

ROBERT

Tell me what's your plan for the summer? How exactly are you going to fend off marriage proposals? No doubt, mother is scouring the society pages for eligible young men.

ELLIE

Marriage is not in the cards. I'm going to be a bachelor

ROBERT

(with a wry smile)
A bachelor?

ELLIE

If this is your idea of gratitude, I'll march right back to the station and hop the next train back to New York. For your sake, I turned down a perfectly wonderful invitation from Kitty Landon to spend the summer in the Hamptons.

Robert flicks away the butt of his cigarette and hangs his head. Ellie settles herself on the pier to dry off.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

So what's this all about? Why the cryptic telegram?

ROBERT

You must promise not to tell.

ELLIE

Oooh a secret! Does his Nibship know?

ROBERT

No. Not yet. But he'll know soon enough.

ELLIE

Did you quit the brokerage?

ROBERT

No, worse. I've been offered a fellowship. At Harvard. In poetry.

ELLIE

Oh Boober... that's wonderful!

Leaping to her feet, she throws her arms around him and gives him a big congratulatory smack on the cheek.

ROBERT
You know I can't accept it.

ELLIE
Why ever not?

ROBERT
He'll never let me.

ELLIE
Don't let ol' Puffguts get to you!
You know he lives to torture you!

ROBERT
(quietly)
He's got quite the knack for it!

ELLIE
To hell with him! Look, let me
tell him. I'll make Harold Horatio
Lamont see reason.

ROBERT
(shaking his head)
You can't always fight my battles
for me. This time, I've got to face
him on my own.

ELLIE
Then we'll find a way to break the
news to him, so that he can't say
no!

ROBERT
(smiling inspite of
himself)
How do you propose to manage that?

ELLIE
Leave that to me. First, we call
for reenforcements.

ROBERT
Who exactly do you have in mind?

ELLIE
We'll telephone Louise first thing
in the morning.

He grins inspite of himself. She puts her arm through his and they climb up the hill towards the house together.