

For a while they stood silent on the balcony next to the wrought iron railing enjoying the view and breathing in the sweet scent of jasmine emanating from the garden. A full moon lit up the evening sky and sprinkled shimmering highlights onto the scene below. The garden was filled with brightly colored flowers that danced intimately on the tremor of a breeze as the young couple watched. "They're having a party of their own," Katherine said, thoughtfully.

Connors sensed the romantic ambience of the setting and decided he'd try to take advantage of it. "Shall we join them?" he asked, hopeful of her answer. Her face reflected softly in the moonlight as she turned. "I'd love to," she answered, smiling.

Connors slid his hand into hers as they walked down the flagstone stairway and along the path. A short distance away, he could see a small pond with a white marble fountain partially hidden by the foliage. He asked Katherine and she agreed they should take a closer look. As they approached the pond, Connors noticed the fountain consisted of two lovers, slightly covered with green moss, locked in an embrace with a kiss. What he didn't know was that John Whitman had the pond and fountain built in honor of the love he had shared with his late wife Morgana.

Connors removed his hand from Katherine's when they arrived and placed it around her waist. He waited for her reaction to his move but she just gazed pensively into the pond. She seemed hypnotized as she watched the water that trickled gently from the top of the fountain, disturbing the pond just enough to cause the Koi fish to appear surreal swimming below the surface.

After a few moments Katherine became uncomfortably aware of Connors' hand on her waist and turned, slipping out of his grasp. She smiled and walked slowly around the rim of the pond until she stood a few feet from him. He wondered if perhaps he was working a little too fast, but the smile that remained on her face contradicted his concern.

“Do you know this pond is enchanted?” he asked, not really knowing why.

“Oh?” she said, amused.

“It’s true,” he continued almost wishing he hadn’t started, “At least that’s what I’ve heard. They say that no one has ever looked in it and failed to fall in love soon afterwards.” Katherine studied his eyes for a moment trying to decide how to answer.

“I’m fascinated.” She spoke in an uncertain tone, not wanting to commit herself.

“In fact,” he continued, looking down into the water, “my Aunt and Uncle Whitman kissed their first kiss on this very spot.” He glanced back up at her to see how she was responding but her face was as noncommittal as her voice.

“And that’s why they built the estate on this site,” he added.

Katherine finally decided that she would join in on whatever he was up to. She fluttered her eyelashes playfully as she spoke. “That is so romantic,” she sighed. Conners was relieved to see she’d finally responded. He was beginning to run out of story.

“I do believe you’re making a jest of this, Katherine Gains,” he answered, turning with mock indignation. Katherine came to his side. “Oh, no! great teller of tales!” she said, turning him around to face her. “On the contrary, I’m thoroughly enchanted.” Suddenly Conners was confronted with a reason behind his little story. “You see,” he said looking seriously into her eyes. “I told you it works.” He leaned forward and kissed her tenderly on the lips.

Katherine’s response was warm for a moment. Her heart was overwhelmed with the idea of being kissed by Conners in this romantic setting; however, her mind was retaliating with the thought that, maybe she was losing his respect by being so responsive this soon. She suddenly pushed herself backwards, out of his arms. Unfortunately, she pushed a little too hard. She seemed to teeter on the

brink of the fragrant evening air for a long moment, then fell with a tremendous splash into the pond.

Her face was contorted with surprise and embarrassment and her hair hung wet and straight as she sat there dripping in the shallow water. The moment seemed to hang silently but for the distant sounds of the party in the background; the party that she'd looked forward to all day with the people she'd wanted so much to be accepted by. She looked at Conners for a few seconds and then at the fish that rushed excitedly around her and she wanted to cry.