August Untamed – A story

Chapter One

Gentlemen prefer all sorts of things – they are head over heels in love with girls, arrays of odd figures that never come around to being normal.

In what way?

Good of you to ask that, my dear. I am afraid I do not know. I have never known a true man. They come in very different forms and shapes that are very bemusing and not at all easy to discern.

This was a cover page of the newspaper the mother used to read and it always went like this. All of us enjoyed it quite a bit. Maybe except the father who never liked to refer to anything that was remotely men-loathing and contradictory to the beliefs of every English gentleman that did indeed prefer things of queer kind. I was one of them but for my taste, the queerness was not the cup of tea you only drink once you can rejoice in your sweet solitary silence and feel abruptly the calmness of your wounds, while bathing in the rays of sunset, sitting on the porch, drinking Chardonnet and imagining you are a mild character of the French romance that must be set in Eze or Nice, if we are about to travel to Monaco in the later part of this fairytale. For me. It was in its truest form that I desired to express it and I never did – I never excused myself from being altogether ordinary, even though I was very bad at it. Temperament was there; however, I could never act the way I was not. I always wanted to join theatre, or write plays for plethora of them in London, where I went once a week to intake the breath of something that was not at first glance familiar, but I rarely ever felt outside of my little, cozy circle, even if the city was ever so loud and horrifying. Exaggeration is my go-to state when it comes to enthralling places and ideas that make me out of space with anxiety, but I do love them dearly. I grew up in a very English home, where the gardens flourished, the people smiled a lot with their godforsaken, ugly teeth and often their homely faces would flush too from frenzied excitement. I was told that my complexion was nice, even too nice for a boy who was brought up in such a drizzly, cold weather but I never found any interest in people's sentiment for loving

the ever-so-damned boiling summer that never seemed to end. Sure, it was great, the leisure was great but I never got to understanding why it had to be in the summer, other than of course being conscious of the fact that you never do anything or wish to do anything other than lying down flat on your face and being lifeless in this unfathomable heat that of course got to me, since I have never quite known the English, lovely summer as I always spent it holidaying in different, south countries, so close to Mediterranean and as it seemed, close to sun too! Greece was like hell inside out, and Italy which I adored, but could not enjoy since I was always shamed for wanting to be without clothes all the time – the nakedness which is an atrocious thing to all my family and people who consider to be a sin to be showings one's flesh to another was so soothing, even if I burned myself to death and cried tears of agony the day after. The sun was quite dazzling but never too shiny for my taste, which as aforesaid was indeed very QUEER in many ways that I probably should not have indulged in, but the boys are boys as long as they are young, free and virile, if the latter is not understood in such a traditional manner that it condemns all fun and all the games you can find useful in your youthful years while still being free of the toll it takes to be ugly and at the same time all wrinkled up and not so pleasant looking, especially if you are a man and unlike Madame Sevigne, do not fall upon grace whilst slowly getting closer and closer to a tomb and the unappealing, or as some might call it an appalling grave which will claim you once you are ready or unready – that is not very significant a factor in this matter, you see. Dear Lord and dearest of any lords, my papa, always preached the same sermon when it came to my being a man that was unconventional in qualities that makes man a man. I was never convinced when it came to all the correctives that came my way whenever I swung a thing too much like my mother, which my darling papa used to hate and I wondered, if he detested all the manners of hers, why did he ever marry that woman, unbeknownst that it was not my long-lingering expressions he resented, but them being attached to a boy, who he never taught a proper lesson of being a gentleman, for which he was not so very proud, as I was of myself, or papa of his. He would, very often, take me to the pond, which was very close to our house and start arbitrarily talking about things that I never understood – nor did I understand the way they used to end up in our little conversations that were usually very dull and laborious as I had to work my way out of them and I was darn good at it, for I never missed a chance to

prove him wrong when it came to papa's old-world notions that never left our barn and never faded, whilst they still bothered me. Maybe I should have stopped caring.

As for my mother, who was at all times, in her room, usually at her desk or in the bed reading books and newspapers she had brought up for her, did not quite comprehended the essence of my existence as she never cared for it even a bit. She was an aloof creature that seldom smiled, always looked stern and was oblivious to every little thing I mentioned. I rarely talked to her but when I did, she always dismissed my ideas like they were not my own, but put into my sweet, little head as she called it very frequently, by my foolish friends and silly things I read all the time. She used to pat my cheek and say: "Oh dear, oh dear, how life has treated me." Like I was a disappointment that could have never been set right even if it came to her, so invincible and clever. Vanity was her sport and when she looked in the mirror, she always smiled and said to me, that one thing she kindly bestowed upon me was her beauty. The thing she never was able to bequeath was her wisdom, that she so presently admired, as she never came around to dying or an event somewhat close to it. It is not that I hated my own mother but nor was I very fond of her, especially when she recalled all that I did wrongly or the things that I could have done differently so it suited her sense of righteousness. Quite frankly, I have done most ill while trying not to fit her taste of running life, as I imagined it to be the most aggravating and futile way of living, that only a feeble, bed rotting woman would enjoy, reading The Times all day long, covered in her snow-white sheets that she only left to look at herself in the mirror – a face so formidable that even a frown was graceful coming from her beauteous, crude mouth.

Now that you know two wretches that gave life to me and spawned me into this cruel world, you must have an idea why I am estranged to normal flow of things, which must sound like a donkey trying to avoid the way that has been paved by its forefathers, just to be stubborn like a jackass it is but I never found myself truly exceptional either – I just never agreed to things, so pompous and lofty that my father and mother loved, also the only occasion they could ever reconciled on. They never saw each other very often as they had bedrooms on different floors, so it was altogether a very perfect marriage that I never wanted to disturb by my infringement on their sacred privacy, the breaking of which bothered me as much as it bothered them – never was I too enthusiastic to see them.

The days were spent with my grandmother, who to some people's astonishment, was a fine woman and never barged on my daily life as her son did, with all his advices that I could not care less for. The strenuous thing about our relationship was that she always forced me to be nice towards people who I did not like, including my parents, for whom I had to reserve my very little love as she often said like a prayer she never forgot. Ludicrous abnormality to everyone, I was, but I never gave a fig when it came to my sweet grandmother and her embrace that made me feel like a little boy, running in the garden, picking lilies for her again, so she could tie them into her hair and walk around all day, looking like a madwoman of oldtown. She was the one that took me to Constantinople when I was still very young. There I met all the savage, rouge men that made me feel the zeal to life, as I looked at them, their sizzling, muscled bodies lining up in the street to divulge in life which was so otherworldly and strange to mine. I never understood what was about their tea-colored faces and streets smelling of the same, that excited me so. Maybe it was their undoubted charisma and their brows meeting each other, when they did not understand the words, we said. I met Turks and Greeks but never really could tell them apart as they had the same shade about them. They shared the city that belonged to both and were very passionate about it. Their sweaty arms used to blind me, when I walked the streets hand-in-hand with my grandma, who very often smiled at their charming, big faces graced with set of pearly teeth as they paraded their bear-like hands and tall legs whilst dragging all sorts of heavy things. That impressed on me quite a deal. I never confessed on these afflictions that came at a very young age but I was definitely bewildered and dazed, maybe from the sun or the men who were sun-like and so different from all the refined, self-assured and tied up men I knew. I wanted to be like them and I wanted to explore like they did. Sailors and people of all kinds came to squares we walked and through this, I learnt that a life lived in seclusion can seldom be stirring or worthwhile. I was almost roused by this idea, exhilarated when I saw all the Italians screaming on top of their voices to each other. It stimulated and made me want to live, which contradicted my foggy dreams of never spending a day in heat or sun loved kingdoms of God's green earth. I loved the gloom and dusky mornings with crows croaking and cawing of ravens. Maybe I did not know what I truly wanted and all these dreams of mine were farfetched and imagined a little too

soon, thusly fever nightmares that would never come true as England engulfed by my adored, precious mama and papa was a true dream catcher.

Life is meant to be lived, my beloved, my grandma used to say, that is why it is called life. Maybe my life was translated and instead of it being transliterated from Lif to living, I ended up with the lousy Eve that never made sense to me or to anyone. One thing I knew that I was trapped like my dreams, gentle yet precocious and I wanted out – maybe even about to know life so intimately that the poems slipped right of my tongue, like Keats and Byron and Shelley and all the madmen and women on the Lake Geneva, blight enough to believe possession of such ability to weave the modern Prometheus unbound and bound again for his ills or somebody else's. If she was eighteen, so am I. if she kept her pacing steed, so could I but tomorrow was so near, yet so far for me not to drag my feet and become once again a stupid jester that never fails to stay the same, not stepping outside, until it is dark. My terror of being my father, walking up and down the lane and my mother, a female Schopenhauer, an ascetic misanthrope that locked herself out of this world, or waking up at a very young old age, finding a white marble in my hair, with thoughts amicable, so near to my bosom that I have wasted away my life, my fine, inestimable days and exquisite joys of being contented.

My grandma would laugh and say, at least you have seen Hagia Sophia hanging down from the sky and San Marco too! For me the consolation was this, not seeing them but building them from the ground but I never dared to say it.