
STONELEIGH: THE THIRTEENTH LABOUR

He dreams a spacious blue saloon where burnt ochre scagliola columns disappear in cirrused skies of Ancient Greece. In Wedgwood cameos around his head plasterwork gods bicker and betray their kin.

Surf-white unicorns surge from crested walls. Sand billows frame the multi-panes of windows that fragment the view: green; wide gravel walks; green; a patchwork square of river; green willow plumes; one solitary fir.

Next door, the ladies perch on velvet thrones. He's never seen their feet, but fears identical dishabille robes hide the same dark paws and claws that crouch beneath the butchered table. The ladies rise and crimson beetles scatter from their skirts.

The library walls are lined with books that will not open. A game little dog trots at his heels; it follows him from shelf to shelf. He knows somewhere there is a book with all the answers. He knows he will not find it.

Swansdown and ostrich snowflakes drift and from afar he hears his sister sing a lullaby. He smells the smoke from burning documents; dust mingles with a haze of wine. The 5th Baron Leigh slumbers amid celeste and white rococo waves. His cheeks are damp with salt sea spray.