



Stags' Leap

DEAREST PIG

It's been a while since I wrote, over a hundred years, and so you will scold me as you are used to doing, telling me how spoiled I am, and though it may seem odd to you that we still have this connection, with us both being long dead, I've thought about you so much recently. Perhaps it is the spring air, its uncanny softness, the way it steals over the mountainside and woos the stones with its warm breath, brightening the sky behind the vultures, even fluffing up the underbelly of the badger so that he wattles along looking almost gracefully wicked and pleased with himself.

You know what it can be like here. For me it was my paradise, the place I came to when I married, and yet it felt so much like a continuation of my childhood in Benicia, among many loving brothers, that I felt twice blessed. You would all come to visit, and that was my biggest pleasure, you on your breaks from seminary school, and later, when you had your mission. Even now. Wildflowers carpet the hillside like hands soothing a beautiful quilt over a bed, and we rest in a grotto when the heat becomes immense; falcons rise up when we walk.

We had a window made in which was written this feeling. *Ne cede malis* was how it was said. I didn't understand it then, perhaps because I didn't need to, but we had found the rip in time. What came later also became contained within this feeling as in a frame... losing the estate to our creditors, my husband becoming one of those fathers who bury their own sons. I feel that we are almost continuous now, rising up from our chairs on the lawn, climbing the grassy hill absurdly dense with blossoms to where it becomes steep and breathless and a little dangerous, grandly surveying our domain with sticks like we used to from on top of the fence, making jokes. My son, Horace Jr., harnesses his pony up to the cart and proudly escorts guests around the estate. We can see him below, like a dot that is always growing larger, but never arrives. It is all so close I can almost feel the rough bark



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of the oak under my fingers and smell the fragrance of pennyroyal where we've crushed it by the spring in that little grotto. We were recklessly happy.

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Based on the salutation of a letter hand-written by Minnie Mizner Chase, dated November 14, 1892, to her brother, Henry, while he was a student at General Theological Seminary in New York

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