



THE NEW GIRL AT USKWEIRS MANOR

A PASTORAL ROMANCE
BY MIRIAM ROBERN

The New Girl at Uskweirs Manor

a pastoral romance by Miriam Robern

A Long-Awaited Visit

Sussex, May 1813

“This is insane.” Theresa Chesterley stood on the other side of the open door that led from Amelia’s Rosedale Room to Chesterley’s Parisian Room. Her hand was still on the knob; her luggage, freshly delivered, sat in a neat stack behind her.

“It’s quite normal,” Amelia grinned. “Haven’t you ever seen adjoining rooms before?”

Theresa ignored her jibe. “You cannot just live in your mother’s house, breaking bread with her every day, and expect her not to recognize you eventually,” she insisted.

Amelia leaned on the doorjamb. “Well it’s worked for almost three weeks already,” she retorted. She might have put some force or heat behind her words to be more convincing, but she couldn’t seem to stop smiling at her lover, standing before her in the flesh.

Chesterley heaved a sigh. “This is a recipe for heartbreak, and I worry for you.”

Amelia reached forward to take her hand and drag her into Rosedale. “Come here,” she purred, “I’ve been meaning to show you my bedroom for ages.”

“Oh, and now we’re going to fuck in your Mother’s house?” Theresa protested weakly. Despite her objections, her hips were sliding forward and her hands reaching out to encircle Amelia’s waist. The first hint of a smile won out over her crumbling scowl. “I don’t even know how loud you get. I might wreck your whole scheme if—”

Amelia silenced her with a long, lingering kiss. It had been a month since they’d last kissed, at Uskweirs while Amelia had been frantic with planning her scheme.

That week it was Theresa who refused to indulge in anything more than a kiss. Amelia had just lost her father and her brother, and was manifestly distracted with preparations for her clandestine home visit. Theresa didn’t want their first time to be overshadowed. Amelia had found the reasoning frustratingly sound, and immediately resolved to have Theresa visit her in Sussex. She imagined that she would want to see her lover, but she also absolutely knew that she wanted to see her lover naked.

With the adjoining door shut tight behind them, Amelia stumbled backwards, pulling Theresa after her while simultaneously trying to unfasten her jacket and waistcoat and also keep their lips

locked together. She was not particularly successful in any of her endeavors, and eventually fell backwards onto the bed.

“Eager, are we?” Theresa chuckled, doffed her jacket, and in the same practiced motion draped it over a convenient chair.

Amelia sat herself on the edge of the bed and leaned forward, hands tentatively reaching for Theresa’s remaining buttons. Her lover half-stepped forward to give her access, watching her with a smirk.

“This is more difficult when it’s reversed,” Amelia muttered, but made steady progress regardless. Finally the waistcoat parted. Separated only by a single layer of shirt fabric, she could not help but stroke one hand across Theresa’s belly: soft and warm. Her lover had travelled here in a crowded, sweaty coach and her skin was still dewy. Amelia pulled up on shirt fabric until she could press her face against bare skin, relishing the feel and the scent of her.

She found Theresa’s fingers stroking and then digging into her hair, hands alternating as the waistcoat was shrugged off. That garment did not get the same careful treatment as the jacket and ended up on the floor. Amelia scrabbled for the closure on the breeches as Theresa tugged off cravat and shirt.

Amelia peeled down the breeches only to find the tangle of hose and boots around Theresa’s ankles prevented them from coming off entirely. She stroked and kissed what skin she could find.

Theresa’s hand came to rest on Amelia’s shoulder and pushed her gently back onto the bed. “You’ve made a mess of things,” she mock-chided, struggling to doff her shoes and hose under the tight embrace of reversed breeches jammed overtop both.

Amelia leaned back and admired the view. Her lover was round and soft and beautiful, jiggling as she struggled with the clothes that Amelia had fouled. The movement loosed a single lock of dark hair from her bun, which tumbled and curled around her chin and shoulder. Amelia sighed in appreciation. “You are a work of art.”

Theresa flung her breeches and drawers across the room and leaned forward, looming over Amelia. One hand ran up the girl’s side, gathering and pulling the fabric of her dress as it went. “I’m eager to unveil you next.”

Amelia’s hand darted to cover Theresa’s, slowing but not stopping its progress. She took a shaky breath, the pounding need in her abdomen replaced suddenly with butterflies. She smiled hesitantly up at her lover. “I am a work in progress,” she reminded.

“You are not a painting,” Theresa chided her softly, and kissed her temple. Pressing her lips to the girl’s ear, she whispered: “You are a dance.” Her hands dipped underneath the layers of

silk, found skin, and stroked. “In beautiful motion,” she continued, and somehow she half-lifted, half-guided Amelia off the bed to slide the gown up her body and over her head.

Amelia lay across the bed in just her chemise and drawers, heart pounding.

“Each measured step,” Theresa murmured as she ran one finger up under the chemise, fingertip grazing the bottom swell of Amelia’s breast, “necessary and exquisite in its own right.”

Squirming under Theresa’s touch, Amelia did not have the words to say “Come kiss me,” but she pulled at her lover’s arms until the message was made clear. Theresa took her time laying down beside her, her hands never leaving Amelia’s sides, her quaking belly, the narrow curve of her hip.

Their lips met, as did their breasts, their bellies, their thighs; hands stroked and clutched; Amelia pressed herself up against her lover and left the world behind.

Later, Amelia asked, still a little breathless, “Did you find that... awkward? Unfamiliar?”

Theresa nuzzled her nose up under Amelia’s ear, which she had found made the girl giggle. Now she was exploiting the discovery for all it was worth. “I did think I was going to have to make light of how this was my first time plucking out a tune on this particular instrument, but...”

Amelia half-turned toward her lover. “But what?”

Theresa’s hand trailed down Amelia’s belly. “It all felt like familiar territory.”

Amelia couldn’t help but snort at that. “Now you’re just being overkind.”

“I am not,” her lover insisted, and nestled in closer. “Shall I demonstrate?”

“I don’t know how you’d—oh!”

“These are just labia,” Theresa narrated innocently, as if she wasn’t stroking some of Amelia’s most sensitive flesh. “There’s a little scar right here, I hope it doesn’t hurt?”

“It. Does nnnot.”

Theresa shifted her weight, reaching. “And a perineum’s just a perineum,” she mused. “A stroke here, a stroke along the labia, a stroke back... you see what I mean.”

Amelia bit her lip and nodded feverishly. “Yes, yes, I see. I see...” her hips bucked and she groaned, barely slapping a hand over her mouth in time to stifle it. When she’d regained a shred of composure, she breathed, “Show me more.”

“It did take me a minute to find your vaginal canal,” Theresa explained as if she were

discussing the best route to Bristol. “But it’s just inside-out, see?”

She demonstrated, and Amelia’s eyes rolled upwards.

“The fingering to cycle through them all is a little different, but nothing I can’t get a handle on,” she went on conversationally. “Really, it’s the exact same pattern of stroke, pressure, and pacing that I’m used to. And then when the time is right...”

Amelia squirmed. “What?” she huffed. “What, when the time is right, what? What?”

“Well the time isn’t right yet, my dear,” her lover replied smugly. “You can still string words together, after all.”

“Not. For much. Longer?”

“That’s the spirit,” she murmured, and then, damn her, just kept stroking until Amelia was well and good beyond language entirely.

“When the time is right,” Amelia’s tormentor narrated, “I apply just a little pressure to your clitoris, which is right... up... here.”

Amelia jammed her fist into her lips and wailed.

“Just light, gentle pressure, little taps and bumps,” said Theresa. “You have to be gentle with the clitoris... very gentle... right up until... you aren’t.” Her hand flattened over Amelia’s sex, the ball of her hand pressing her clitoris against her pubic bone and bearing down, grinding. Her fingers spread into her labia, caressing and stroking.

Amelia’s body bucked and trembled, completely out of her control; she saw stars; a whole rushing river flowed through her from crown to toes; and then the girl simply lost consciousness.

Afterglow had to be set aside for propriety, as dinner was served promptly at five. They kissed hurriedly, not wanting to arrive late and risk the dowager’s ire. Theresa collected her travel clothes from where they were scattered across the floor and returned to her room to change. On still-shaky limbs, Amelia pulled on her clothes and then sat herself down before her vanity to fix her cosmetics.

It took her twice as long as usual because her hand kept slowing to a stop, eyes unfocused, lips quirked in a soft, vacant smile.

Dinner was simple; the dowager’s personal taste ran towards the plain and she reserved the full breadth of her kitchen’s ability for when she was entertaining guests she cared to impress. Neither Amelia nor Theresa qualified, and certainly not Iris.

As the children took their dinner separately, Mother often took this opportunity to talk about

them while they weren't there. "I heard you taking the boys out for another walk this morning," she observed, which was a trap.

"Fresh air does them good," Amelia smiled, walking into the trap because it would make her mother happy to spring it.

"Hard not to notice when they tromp up and down the stairs so loudly," the dowager remarked archly. "I almost miss the times when Iris was in charge of her own children. By the time she finally had them up and moving, I'd been an hour out of my own bed. I was never awakened by shrieks and clamour."

Theresa offered to ladle Amelia's soup, which she gratefully accepted and smiled at her mother. "I'll remind them that we need to leave quietly in the future, milady."

Iris, unsure if she had been praised or condemned by her mother-in-law, decided to press the matter. Perhaps she could score points against the governess. "Miss Wright, I thought you were here to prepare Eustace for school. How do all these long walks accomplish anything of the sort?"

"We take books and a blanket," she answered. "I find Eustace reads better in the sunlight."

"He reads, now?" scoffed the dowager, plainly disbelieving. It was an old argument she'd often leveled at Iris, who'd been unable to get the boy to sit and finish a book of any length. The woman looked down at her soup, knowing now she had never had any hope of scoring points in her mother-in-law's estimation.

"A little," Amelia hedged. "A paragraph or two, alternating with chasing his brother around a field." She smiled at Iris. "Your boys have a profundity of energy, milady."

The lady responded with a curt, sour smile.

"I'm sure Miss Chesterley is disinterested in this talk about children she's never met," the hostess opined, willfully ignoring the fact that she'd started the conversation in the first place.

"I hope to meet them, milady," Chesterley responded with a gameful smile. "I'm often enamoured of other people's children."

"But not your own," the dowager observed archly. Did she think she was insinuating righteous judgment, Amelia wondered, or was she now walking into Chesterley's trap just as Amelia had hers?

"I've never been so blessed," Theresa answered. "And don't expect to. So I must content myself with others' children." Amelia looked sidelong at her lover. She had the look on her face when she accepted a challenge; was she really so foolhardy as to try and take on Amelia's

mother?

Iris was plainly just as lost as Amelia. “Are you also a governess?” she asked as the soup was removed and platters of fish and vegetables were laid out between them. Amelia noted with amusement that nothing was sauced as it normally was; apparently Theresa did not merit butter.

“Oh, heavens no, I don’t have that kind of patience,” the visitor laughed. “I am better cast as the well-meaning aunt, pleasant in small doses. I’m also in the habit of traveling with sweets in my pockets.” She helped herself to fish and asparagus, and placed a generous helping of both on Amelia’s plate while she was at it.

“How small do you expect your dose to be this visit?” asked the dowager with an icy smile. The lady managed to serve herself without breaking eye contact with Chesterley.

“I think I’m mostly here to deliver a package,” replied Chesterley with an answering smile just as fierce as the lady’s was cold. “I wouldn’t want to presume any further on your hospitality, milady.”

“I had hoped Theresa could speak with the boys, as well,” Amelia put in. “She’s far better versed in domestic history than I.”

Her mother ignored Amelia’s addendum. “Not my hospitality,” she corrected Theresa, “but that of my Youngest. The letter that predated your arrival was quite specific about your stay. I don’t think my husband ever went so far as to stipulate which room to put guests in, but left that to my expertise. I’m afraid you may be awakened by childish footsteps, as you are sleeping adjacent to Miss Wright.”

Theresa’s lip quirked at that. “Milady, I can’t imagine I’ll have any complaints about sleeping next to Miss Wright.”

Amelia very delicately did not choke on her fish.

“You can’t serve me at the table,” Amelia told her later, quietly, as they walked down the hallway. She found herself blushing over the memory of the gesture. “Mother will notice.”

“But I like deciding what goes in your mouth,” Theresa answered in a wicked whisper. Amelia shoved her playfully, and her lover lifted the small wooden chest in her opposite hand. “Careful, these are delicate!”

They found both boys in Gregory’s room. Eustace often wanted to play with Gregory’s toy soldiers, which had once been his until he’d been informed he’d grown out of them. Gregory paid his elder brother no mind, enraptured with an adventure novel that Amelia had acquired for him without telling any other adults in the house.

“Good evening, boys,” Amelia said on entry, and waved at Theresa following behind her. “This is my friend Miss Theresa Chesterley. She’s brought something from London, Eustace, that I had hoped I could show you.”

“Can I see, too?” came Gregory’s immediate and predictable question.

“Of course.”

But Eustace played it cagey. “What is it? And why is she dressed like a man?”

“Miss Chesterley prefers breeches to skirts, as I imagine you do,” Amelia explained breezily. She cleared a few books and blocks from a table and gestured Theresa to set down and open the chest.

Both boys craned their necks, Theresa’s breeches forgotten in favour of the mysterious chest from far-off and near-mythical London.

Theresa smirked. “You can come look, they won’t bite.”

Both boys tumbled forward, stepping in front of the two ladies without much regard for the position of the ladies’ toes and the placement of their own feet, all to look inside.

“Glass circles?” said Gregory, unsure if he should be disappointed.

“Spectacles, Gregory,” Amelia corrected, laying her hands on Eustace’s shoulders and planting him in a nearby chair. Meanwhile Theresa lifted one pair out of its velvet lining, and held it out for Gregory to examine.

Eustace crossed his arms and pouted. “That’s nothing keen. Lots of old people have spectacles. Why should we care?”

“I think you might get some use out of them, Eustace,” Amelia suggested gently. “Would you be so kind as to let us try a few?”

“What do I get out of it?” he asked sourly.

“With any luck, a pair of spectacles,” she laughed. “But let’s say: tomorrow you can pick where we go for our morning walk.”

He huffed. “I don’t want to walk. I want to go for a ride.”

“Horses!” shouted Gregory excitedly.

It was more than Amelia expected to give, and more than she had leave to promise, but she knew by now that Eustace responded to carrots better than sticks. And if he was going to tell her

what carrot would work best... “If you put up with trying on spectacles, I shall ask your grandmother if we can go for a horse ride. And if she says no, you can pick the destination of our walk. Including, if you so choose, the ice house.”

“We can watch the workers?” he verified truculently. “You won’t complain that we are in their way?”

“We can and I will not,” Amelia promised. The half-completed ice house was being built at her direction, through the intermediary of Julian Clark. The workers did not know that she had employed them, of course, but from experience she knew that a smile and a swish of skirts would gain them a guided tour. The boys loved it and the workers would take any excuse to pause their labours; Amelia just wanted the thing done already so she could chill her virus amantis equae. But an hour or two’s delay was an acceptable wager to see if her gambit tonight would pay off.

“They make everything look funny!” Gregory exclaimed, holding a pair up to his eyes. He staggered around, his free hand flailing.

Theresa darted forward and plucked them from his fingers. “Careful, Gregory. They are very breakable.”

“They flex, you see?” Amelia explained to Eustace. “And these little pads go on either side of your nose.” She demonstrated by pinching the glasses across her own nose, and then forced herself not to cross her eyes looking through the lenses.

Eustace took a pair from one end of the box. “What use is it if it makes everything look funny?” he asked, and distastefully clipped it onto his face. He looked over at Gregory and his face took on the look of someone who had bitten into spoiled mutton. “This is going to make me sick.”

“You put on the strongest of the lot,” Theresa laughed, and reached forward to help him take them off again. He jerked backwards, scowling, and removed them himself. Blinking, he handed the pair over. Theresa took it and replaced it at the top of the chest. “Doubtless those are far stronger than you require.”

“Try these,” his governess suggested, plucking the pair off her face and handing it to the boy.

“So it will make me just a little less sick than before?” He took the proffered spectacles but did not put them on his face.

“Scientific method, remember?” Amelia tried. “We test, we gather results, we change the test based on the results, we try again.”

“It can’t be the scientific method without a hypotenuse,” Gregory reminded her.

“The hypothesis,” said Amelia gently, “is that one of these pairs of spectacles will suit Eustace’s eyes.” Perhaps she should not have attempted this in the evening, when everyone was tired from a busy day.

When she looked back, Eustace was scowling through a new pair. “Where they pinch my nose feels funny,” he grouched. “But at least these do not make me feel sick.”

Amelia snatched up one of the books at the edge of the table and opened it to a random page. “Try this.”

But he looked away with distaste. “You know I don’t like reading by lamplight.”

She placed a gentle hand on his shoulder—a dicey gambit; he did not always like being touched—and held the book before him. “Please try, Eustace. And then tomorrow we will ride horses and watch the workers at the ice house.”

He snatched the book from her hand and brought it up to his face. Then with a confused grunt, he pulled it away from his face. He looked down at the page in disbelief. “This is... better.”

“So now we try the next one up and the next one down,” Theresa explained. “Mister Hawley said it would take some trial and error to find the best match.”

“Who’s Mister Hawley?” asked Gregory, although he was walking away.

“The glazier who grinds the lenses and crafts the frames for—” Theresa started to answer, and then realized the boy wasn’t listening. She let him go play with his discarded toy soldiers.

The two ladies plucked spectacles off of Eustace’s face and pinched new sets on in a long sequence, asking each time, “Is this one better? Or this one? One or two?” Meanwhile Eustace held the book further and further out, gobsmacked at what he was seeing.

Finally, the boy shouted, “I can read this! I can read this like it’s the brightest daylight and it’s an inch away from my face and... but I can see the whole page and not just a column, and it’s all plain and visible to me, all at once!” He looked up at Amelia owlishly, eyes magnified by the lenses. “How is this possible?”

She allowed herself to grin down at the boy in triumph. “Do you remember, two weeks ago, you told me you had to squish your eyes just right to make the text plain?” She demonstrated the squint that he’s showed her then, bunching up her lips as well to make it comical.

The boy giggled. He actually giggled, and it wasn’t because he was torturing his brother for a change.

She tapped the spectacles on his nose. “These lenses squish the light as it comes to your eye. So now your eye doesn’t need to be squished.”

“This is amazing,” he breathed, turning back to the book and flipping pages. He came to a woodcut illustration of a monkey up to no good and chortled.

Theresa slipped a tooled leather envelope, lined in velvet, from the side of the box. “Your spectacles go in here when you’re not using them,” she told him, not that he was listening. Too intent on his book. She resorted to slapping the slipcase onto the page to get his attention, then repeated herself. “They are very delicate, and easy to break.”

“They’re mine?” he gasped, and looked from Theresa to Amelia in amazement. “To keep?”

“To keep,” Amelia confirmed with a short nod. “We’ll order another pair of the same magnification, because I suspect having an emergency replacement on hand might be prudent.”

Eustace blinked up at Amelia for a long moment. Finally, he said, “Thank you, Miss Wright.”

She couldn’t help but smile in response, and patted the boy’s shoulder. “You’re very welcome, Eustace.” She leaned forward to close the chest and throw its latch; Theresa hefted it off the table. “But now I think it is bedtime.”

“Can’t I read for a little while?” the boy pleaded.

“I’m not your nanny,” Amelia laughed. “When have I ever told you your bedtime? I meant it’s bedtime for me. And probably Miss Chesterley.”

“Oh, definitely,” came the eager response. “Bed is calling to me most persuasively.” She sauntered to the door, and Amelia was quick to follow.

If you’d like to see more like this, please consider subscribing to my patreon at <http://patreon.com/miriamrobern>

- I post all chapters a month early for subscribers, so you can read ahead.
- I also post epub and pdf versions of the book for everybody.

Thanks for your support, whether it’s becoming a subscriber or posting comments online. It’s people like you who let people like me make stuff like this!