

Silly, she thought, yes, but also, beautiful. Would it be one of the things from this big old house she would miss?

For a second, she felt a pang of real fear at this amazing, dangerous step she was taking, and looked around the hallway as the first soft glow of dawn began to filter through the little stained-glass windows by the front door.

Then she shook the fear away. No! There could be no turning back. She had to get out of here. Seize the future! It's 1929, and the world is changing!

Wasn't that what Oliver had said to her at the dance academy?

"Make your own life, kid," he'd said, his eyes all twinkly. "You're one in a million. I can tell. You're special and you, young lady, are going to be a star."

After that, Lizzie knew she would never forgive herself if she stayed here in stuffy Mydworth, got married to some boring,

pompous man who probably worked in the City and snored all night, did the rounds of church and sherry parties and bridge evenings and the tennis club.

Her whole life – so *boring!*

God no!

She wanted – no, *needed* – the bright lights, the cheering crowds, the cameras, the red carpets!

So – she opened the front door and stepped out onto the spotless tiled steps and breathed in the summer dawn smells of Mydworth.

Maybe for the last time. Why would she ever come back?

Then she quietly closed the door behind her, and walked down the drive to the road that led to Mydworth station – and her dreams.

1. The Women's Voluntary Service



Kat Reilly – or rather “Lady Mortimer” as she was slowly (and reluctantly) getting used to being called – wiped her paint-spattered hands

on her overalls, and stepped back from the office wall she'd been painting.

“Ta-da!” she said, turning to Melissa and the Women’s Voluntary Service Director, Nicola Green, who stood together in the far corner of the new WVS office, unloading books from crates and filling shelves. “So – what do you two think? Pretty good paint job?”

The two women stopped their work and came over, stepping around the worm-eaten loose floorboards of the shabby, dilapidated room.

“I’d say you’ve missed your vocation, Kat,” said Nicola.

Kat loved that Nicola had absolutely no problem dispensing with any of that “Lady” rigmarole.

“Love the colour,” said Melissa.

“Shame half the can seems to have ended up in my hair,” said Kat. “Does it say it’ll wash

out? Do hope so. Not sure lime green is my shade! Okay then – what’s next?”

She watched as Nicola Green lit another of her foul-smelling cigarettes, spat out a loose bit of tobacco, and scanned the room.

Not a habit that Kat ever – what was the word they used here? – *fancied*.

Nicola – in her tweed jacket, faded blouse and ancient slacks – always looked to Kat like she should be in a vegetable patch somewhere, maybe planting potatoes. Or a cattle ranch, if Sussex had such things.

Kat watched her tug at a light switch in a section of wall that seemed to be only staying up thanks to the Victorian wallpaper.

“Don’t suppose you also know anything about electrical wiring?” said Nicola, as chunks of plaster crumbled to the floor. “The other rooms were okay – but I think this lot here needs replacing.”