

Quixotes

Quixotes, the story opens with the narrator reflecting on the quiet domestic scene at home as Lark enthusiastically announces that they will be receiving a new boarder. She informs the narrator that preparations must be made for the attic room, which, although modest, had not seen much use in recent times due to the hazardous state of the nearby highway, which discouraged travelers. Despite this, Lark embraces the unexpected arrival with a sense of optimism, labeling themselves as “quixotes”—idealistic and open to whatever life may bring, regardless of the circumstances. The room, simple but functional, features just a bed and a half-bath, but its emptiness had long made it an oddity in their home, now ready to house someone who might become part of their quiet, sometimes tumultuous, lives.

Lark's excitement grows as she reveals more about the guest they are hosting, Kellan, who arrives with a special treasure—a bound galley of *I Cheerfully Refuse*, a rare book by the elusive Molly Thorn. This book, long sought after by Lark since childhood, carries personal significance as it had been difficult to acquire, with its rarity adding to its allure. Kellan's arrival with this coveted item feels almost fateful, sparking in Lark a renewed sense of nostalgia and passion for an author she had once cherished. The encounter seems serendipitous, as it not only connects Lark and Kellan over shared literary love but also serves as a catalyst for rekindling a long-held interest that had laid dormant for years. It marks an important emotional moment for Lark, one filled with a sense of excitement and connection as she welcomes both Kellan and the book into her life.

As they continue preparing for Kellan's stay, Lark offers more insights into his appearance and background, describing him as a fragile, somewhat distant figure, with a particularly notable damaged hand. Her description evokes a sense of mystery, making it clear that Kellan is not just another passerby but someone who carries with him a complex and possibly painful history. This conversation then shifts to a darker topic, with Lark recalling a disturbing episode from Michigan's labor history, where workers mysteriously vanished and were later found in skeletal form. Lark, using her signature wry humor, jokingly refers to Kellan as a "squelette" due to his gaunt appearance, evoking an unsettling comparison to the long-forgotten workers. The connection between Kellan and this eerie story only deepens his enigmatic presence in the narrative, leaving a lingering sense of unease and curiosity about his true nature.

When Kellan finally arrives, he does not meet the narrator's expectations of a lively or engaging guest. Instead, Kellan presents himself as reserved and almost melancholic, with a child's suitcase in hand, furthering the sense of him being out of place, carrying a history or burden that isn't immediately apparent. His reluctance to engage in conversation or accept any food only adds to his mysterious persona, making it clear that he is not a man easily understood. Lark, showing her typical kindness, leads him to his room in the attic, offering him a place of rest amidst the uncertainty of his arrival. As the evening progresses, the narrator and Lark exchange their thoughts about Kellan, speculating about his past, his reason for being there, and the role he might play in their lives. Lark's understanding of Kellan's silence and withdrawn nature hints at an underlying depth to his character, and both she and the narrator begin to see the potential for his arrival to alter the course of their quiet existence in ways they cannot yet predict. The mystery surrounding Kellan, his past, and his quiet presence creates a sense of anticipation for the future.