



# The Empty Chair

*By Claude and  
Alice Askew*

Illustrated by E. J. Dinsmore

**\* A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook \***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

*Title:* The Empty Chair

*Date of first publication:* 1920

*Author:* Claude Askew (1865-1917) & Alice Askew (1874-1917)

*Date first posted:* July 29, 2020

*Date last updated:* July 29, 2020

Faded Page eBook #20200743

This eBook was produced by: John Routh & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

# The Empty Chair

by

## Claude and Alice Askew

Illustrated by E. J. Dinsmore

I've never yet told this story to anyone without observations being made upon "the long arm of coincidence."

"That sort of thing only happens in novels." I'm always prepared for this remark, and sometimes, as a joke, I tell the yarn without mentioning names, just for the sake of eliciting the invariable comment. I've even had bets on it—and won them.

"A coincidence like that couldn't occur in real life—it's impossible." So my prosaic friends have assured me over and over again.

Then, of course, I laugh and tell them that the happenings are true and that I myself can vouch for them.

I'm not sure that they are quite convinced even then. "You're a novelist," I've been told grudgingly, "and so it's only to be expected that coincidence should come natural to *you*."

As a matter of fact, I'm certain that coincidences—or what we are pleased to look upon as such—do occur in real life far more frequently than is imagined. Bring the conversation round to the subject and ask anyone—I don't mind who it is—if he or she cannot cite some remarkable instances in his or her own experience, and the chances are ten to one that the answer is in the affirmative and that you will be asked to listen to a story quite as fantastic as any that brain of novelist has devised.

Besides, I have my doubts as to what we call coincidences always being so in very fact. Human understanding is so limited and there may be factors at work of which we have no knowledge whatever. I'm inclined to believe, for instance, that, in my own case, it was not chance alone that sent my wife and myself to the Lake district for our honeymoon, or that decreed I should lose my way on the hills in a fog—with all that happened subsequently.

ou see May—that is my wife—is, in some ways, a queer little person. She dreams and sees visions, though she will hardly ever speak of them because she was brought up in a strictly orthodox manner, and Mr. and Mrs. Greening—the good people who adopted her—would have held up their hands in horror if they had suspected that there was anything unconventional about their little girl. But the disposition—the power—call it what you will—was there all the same. Had May been of Scotch extraction—she might have been for all I knew when I married her—folk would have said of her that she was occasionally “fey,” which means, I take it, that she has what we would call mediumistic faculties.

Anyway, it was she who proposed that we should spend our honeymoon at the Lakes. For my own part I had contemplated a trip abroad, but of course I was ready to yield to her whim.

“Why the Lakes particularly, dear?” I enquired.

“I don’t know exactly,” she replied, a delightful flush coming to her soft cheeks at this, her first opposition to my will. “But I have always felt that I should love the English Lakes better than any other part of the world. And I’ve been dreaming of them lately—night after night—it’s just as if they were calling me.”

So that is why we decided to spend our honeymoon in Cumberland, and people may say what they like about the long arm of coincidence in connection with what followed; I may be forgiven for having my own ideas on the subject.

Just a word or two about May and myself before I go any further. She had been adopted, when quite a baby, by the Greenings, most excellent, kind people, who owned a nice property at Glenholt, that delightful village where I had elected to rent a cottage in order that I might enjoy peace and quietude while completing some literary work which I had allowed to hang fire overlong. My cottage happened to be on the Greening estate and the two old people soon shewed themselves to be of a very friendly disposition.

Mr. Greening had been a barrister of repute. Unfortunately a slight deafness, following a gun accident, had interfered with his career, and so, having a good fortune of his own, he had settled down with his wife in the country—just before doing so, however, the couple, being childless and loving children, had adopted May under circumstances which were rather peculiar and to which I shall revert later on in my story. These circumstances were only told me in confidence when I proposed for May’s hand—she

herself was the first to speak of them and Mr. Greening went into details later on.

May was just twenty when I first met her—in the springtime of life—and if ever a name suited its owner May's suited her. She made one think of nothing so much as a tender apple blossom, and she had none of the hoydenish ways of the modern girl. She was of the spring, of the country, fresh and fragrant as a budding flower tipped with dew—and yet there was that intensity in her clear violet eyes which denoted that to her the world was wider and more wonderful than it is to the everyday man or woman. But I won't attempt to describe her further—she is my wife.



I fell in love with her at once, and she—well, she soon learned to reciprocate my affection. I have knocked about a good deal all over the world, and so I could tell her of queer out-of-the-way places that I have visited, and she loved nothing better than to sit listening to the stories I had to spin of my adventures. Curiously enough it was of the rougher parts of Europe that she preferred me to speak—Russia, the Balkan States and Hungary particularly, I remember. She was less interested in places further afield. For herself she was quite a country mouse; she had hardly been away

from home more than three or four times in her life—the Greenings were not people who cared about travelling, you see.

Well, I didn't get through much work that autumn, but I fell more and more in love every day instead. At last I proposed and was accepted—subject to my not being dissuaded from my intention when those circumstances to which I have referred—and which I may say, at once, reflected upon May's parentage—were revealed to me.

I was not dissuaded. My nature is not like that. On the contrary I regarded May as a little heroine of romance and loved her all the more. I have some independent means, besides what I earn with my pen, so it did not matter to me that my people raised objections and tried to put obstacles in my way. My father and mother—bless them!—were not happy, but when they saw I was determined they gave in and consented to receive May as a daughter, but my two aunts, the Misses Anne and Lavinia Burdon—from whom I was supposed to have expectations—took a hand and said they would shut their door upon me if I married May. This made my mother weep but did not affect me—love is the essential, after all.

I quite thought that May would be overjoyed at the idea of visiting on her honeymoon some of those places which I had told her about, therefore her suggestion of going to the English Lakes took me by surprise. But her word was law, so I hired a comfortable motor car—I fancy that I can drive a car as well as most men—and engaged rooms at Keswick, which we decided to make our headquarters.

We were married in April—quite at the end of the month—it would have seemed an anomaly somehow to have married May at any time of year but in the spring. My parents came to the wedding but the Misses Burdon kept studiously away—nor did they even send me a present.

“I suppose they'll leave all their money to Robert's boy now,” my mother opined with a sigh. My uncle Robert's son is a sanctimonious young prig whom I cordially detest, but I replied that he might have the money and welcome—I had won something that was worth more than gold.

Well, I can pass right on to the day when I met with my adventure, only mentioning—as a curious fact—that May, on several occasions, manifested what I can only describe as a clairvoyant knowledge of scenes and places which we visited.

“I have seen them in my dreams,” she said with a smile, and this must have been true, for it was an undoubted fact that she, in the flesh, had never been in that part of the country, nor was her information of such a nature to have been acquired from any handbook.

It was in the third week of our honeymoon—we had arranged to stay a month in the district—that one day I went out for a walk by myself, intending, of course, to go back well in time for dinner. May had a slight headache and preferred to remain quietly at the hotel, but knowing how keen I am upon rock-climbing she suggested that this was an excellent opportunity for me to have a scramble among the fells—“a day off duty,” she called it.

I have done some mountaineering in the higher Alps and so never thought for a moment of taking a guide, although I had no acquaintance with the hills that I proposed to negotiate. A good map and a compass were as much as I should need—besides, I had no intention of doing any actual climbing—May had begged me not to, as she would be nervous, and I had given her my word.

It was she herself who suggested the route that I should take—I mustn’t forget to mention that. Some lady at the hotel had been dilating to her on the lonely beauty of the Watendlath valley and the hills and woods that hem it in. “Why don’t you go in that direction?” she suggested. “I think I should like you to. And you’ll tell me all about it afterwards?”

**S**o, as I had no preference of route, I arranged to explore the Watendlath valley and the fells in its vicinity. There could not have been a more perfect day for such an expedition, and as I trudged along, following some mountain path, now striking out a track for myself over the soft, springy turf of the hillside, I felt that it was good to be alive.

I could dilate at length upon the beauty of that walk, even at the risk of being tedious, but it has nothing to do with my tale. The only material point is that I lost my way.

I was rather amused at first for I hadn’t the smallest doubt that I should come out all right in the end. I consulted my compass, laying it down on a big boulder while I smoked a cigarette and admired the view. Then I took a path which promised to lead in the right direction.

That path meandered in an astonishing fashion, moreover it was intersected by a number of other tracks. It led me through the most

delightful scenery, however, and so I went on and on, always anxious to see what was round the next bend, till I realized that I had lost my bearings again and that it was high time for me to be on the direct route home.

And then I found that I had left my compass upon that rock where I had placed it. I examined my map but could not locate myself by it. And for the last two hours at least I had been walking without meeting a soul.

I might have been in a deserted land. I mounted a hillock and looked about me for signs of houses or habitation of any sort, but there were none—hill rising upon hill, rocky crag and wood-crested eminence—the same thing whichever way I gazed. A silver shimmer in the distance raised my hopes and I thought I might be descending upon Derwentwater, but after walking for half an hour I discovered that what I had seen was nothing more than a mountain tarn.

Then, to make matters worse, a mist drifted over the hills. The sun, nearly setting by now, was blotted out and a heavy white mantle was thrown over the world. Very soon I could hardly see half a dozen yards before me, and if I had been following any path at all it was quickly lost. Of course I made for the valley below, but the danger of my position was made manifest when I luckily pulled myself up almost on the edge of a precipice the depth of which I could not estimate because of the fog.

**I** was in a parlous state, as I realized when after one or two more attempts to direct my steps downwards the experience of the precipice was repeated every time. Of course what I took to be sheer falls may have been simple declivities. I couldn't tell in such a mist and I dared not take any risks—who could say that an incautious step might not prove fatal? And in the meanwhile time was passing. I managed to look at my watch and realized that it was near the hotel dinner hour. I was miles away from home and did not know in which direction to turn. How anxious May would be! Poor little girl—suppose I did not get back at all that night but had to remain out on the hills till the wretched mist had passed away? Had not somebody told me that those mists might hang about for days?

After awhile I became desperate and heaven alone knows what risks I ran. I quite forgot the caution that I had at first determined to exercise. I simply must find my way down to the valley. But it seemed a hopeless task. If I reached the bottom of a hill I found myself confronted on every side by rising ground. I floundered into mires, stumbled over boulders and once



actually walked into a stream. Anyone who has been lost under similar conditions will understand what I went through.

And at last—quite unexpectedly—I found myself brought up against the railing of enclosed ground. My heart leapt for I had almost resigned myself to the idea of a night in the open. It must have been quite half-past seven o'clock by now, and at the hotel—miles away—they dined at eight. The fog was as thick as ever.

I followed the railing for a considerable distance and at last, to my delight, found that I was walking on a beaten track—I can hardly describe it as a road. A little further on there was a gate and I could dimly see the outline of a building—evidently a lodge. But there was no light in any of the windows and it did not take me long to discover that the place was uninhabited.

**H**owever, of course, this did not necessarily mean that the house, the existence of which was indicated by the lodge, was uninhabited too.

There might have been a hundred and one reasons why the lodge was untenanted, and in any case, even if the family were away, it was more than likely that I should find caretakers in possession. I even had hopes—if the wretched mist would only clear away—of getting a trap of some sort and finding my way back to Keswick that night.

There was a carriage drive that seemed interminably long and which, as far as I could judge, was in shockingly bad condition, and then the house itself appeared—a spectral house as seen through the fog. There wasn't a single window illuminated and it was only as a forlorn hope that I made my way round to the back; then I could almost have shouted for joy, for there were lights—the house was not empty after all.

I found what I suppose must have been the back door and rang the bell—it jangled out a husky grating sound which somehow gave one the impression that it was little used. I had to ring three times before there came any answer at all.

The door was opened cautiously at last by an elderly woman who appeared more than a little frightened and who asked me in shaking tone what my business might be.

I explained as best I could. Might I ask for hospitality until the mist cleared off and then for direction upon my way? I was hopelessly lost.

The woman seemed at a loss how to reply. She opened the door a little wider and evidently satisfied herself, despite my untidy appearance, of my respectability. "I don't know what to say," she faltered, "Mr. Mostyn, he doesn't like strangers and he'd not be pleased. But I can't well send you away on a night like this, when there's not another house within a couple of miles of the Chase—and the road not easy to find even when it's light."

"Will you kindly take my card to Mr. Mostyn," I suggested, "and explain my predicament? I'm really very tired and done up."

She hesitated, then took my card and shuffled away. I was left standing by the half-open door. It seemed ages before anyone came to me—then it was a man, wearing rather shabby evening dress—evidently a butler—who appeared in place of the woman.

"Will you come in, Sir?" he said civilly. "Mr. Mostyn was about to sit down to dinner. He asks me to say that he will be glad if you will join him. Should it be necessary a room will be placed at your disposition for the night. Allow me to show you the way."

Naturally I expressed my gratitude, and followed the man along a passage which traversed the servants' quarters and then opened upon a hall of considerable dimensions which was, however, only dimly lit by an oil lamp placed upon a table. By the side of this table stood a tall soldierly man, who had white hair and a heavy white moustache and who wore evening dress—very evidently my host.

He extended his hand and gave me friendly, if not effusive greeting. His voice was mellow and low-pitched. "It is easy to lose one's way among these hills," he said, "and the mists are very treacherous. I am happy to be of assistance to you. You will, I trust, accept my hospitality for the night."

"If there were any way of getting back to Keswick—" I ventured—"should the mist clear, of course—I should prefer that. I could walk if I were directed. You see my wife will be anxious—"

"Ah, I understand that," interrupted my host, "and I will willingly do my best for you. We are eight or nine miles from Keswick and the road is rough, but, if it should become possible, I will arrange for Keeley—my man—to drive you in the trap. He has a brother at Keswick and could put up there for the night. In the meanwhile Keeley will show you to a room and find you some dry clothes—you seem to have got very wet."

I had—that plunge into the stream was anything but a pleasant experience. I was very glad to accept Mr. Mostyn's offer. I was conducted up the broad staircase, Keeley, the butler, preceding me with a candle. There was no light either on the stairs or in the corridor above, though in every other respect the house seemed to be that of a wealthy man. This lack of light and the silence that prevailed instilled me somehow with a sense of mystery and I wondered what manner of man my host might be.

**T**he room into which I was conducted was large and sombre. The shutters were closed and I got the impression that they had been in that condition for a very long time. The furniture and the bed were old-fashioned—I was quite sure that no one had slept in that room for ages.

Mr. Mostyn had followed us upstairs—otherwise I believe the servant would have made some communication to me. I could see from his eyes that he wanted to speak—only he was not given the opportunity. He was sent off for dry clothes, and when I had been provided with all that I could need, he had to accompany his master downstairs—always with a candle, another having been lit for me—to tell the cook that dinner could be served in a few minutes.

“We are very quiet people, my wife and I,” said Mr. Mostyn half apologetically, “and it is long—very long—since we have received company. We only keep two servants, Keeley and his wife, for our wants are small. You must take us as you find us, Mr. Burdon. When you are ready will you join me in the hall?”

Keeley made a queer face at me over his master's shoulder, but of course I hadn't a notion what he meant to convey, and the next moment I was left alone.

My reflections, as I made a hurried toilette, were not altogether pleasant, but they may be easily imagined. I was troubled about May, knowing how anxious she must be, and I was mystified by my surroundings. This was no ordinary household into which I had fallen. I hoped devoutly that the mist would clear and that I could get back to Keswick that night.

Mr. Mostyn was awaiting me in the hall and he ushered me at once into the dining-room. I wondered when I was going to meet my host's wife, and I was more than a little surprised when he seated himself at the head of the table—a small square one—and motioned me to a place at the side. There was a third place laid, opposite Mr. Mostyn, which was evidently intended



How I got through the ordeal I don't know—but I did, and that without betraying anything beyond a ridiculous awkwardness. You see, I had suddenly understood the meaning of the butler's expressive looks. He wanted me to play up to his master's hallucination. Well, I did my best.

I had to go on acting a part for the whole of that extraordinary meal. How I managed to keep it up I really don't know. There were moments when I could have burst out laughing—but more often a lump came into my throat and I felt my eyes brimming with tears.

For it was all so true to Mr. Mostyn. His wife was there—there in the flesh. Yet I knew that she had been lost to him for many years. Keeley seized an opportunity when he was changing my plate to whisper in my ear: "She left him—more than twenty years ago. It's a delusion—but he is happy."

Well, I can say this for myself—I did nothing to dispel that delusion. And yet it was all so weird, so fantastic, that it almost seems a dream when I think back on it now. There were moments when I could even imagine a vague shadowy figure seated in that chair.

I don't know what I ate—I suppose I partook of the food that was set before me, but I have no recollection of it. I was fascinated in watching how Keeley—gravely and naturally—changed the plates before that empty chair, removing them at the right time, as though it were the most ordinary thing in the world. Mr. Mostyn never seemed to notice that the food was untouched.

And the conversation! Mr. Mostyn talked to his wife across the table. He would allow due time for her replies—which always seemed satisfactory to him. And I had to play my part in that conversation too! Heaven knows how I contrived to keep it up!

**W**hen dessert was set upon the table Keeley announced that the mist was clearing off and that he thought it would be quite possible to drive to Keswick—a most comforting piece of intelligence. Should he get ready and bring round the trap?

Naturally, I was eager to go. Mr. Mostyn accordingly gave the necessary instructions and Keeley departed. Soon afterwards my host rose formally, opened the door, standing there, stiffly erect, for a few moments before he re-closed it. He had opened it to allow his dream wife to pass out!

After that we smoked and discussed a bottle of most excellent port. My host appeared perfectly rational—altogether a charming personality. At last

he spoke of his wife.

“Is it not strange,” he said, “that to me she never looks a day older than when I married her twenty-three years ago? She seems as much a girl—a child—to-day as when I led her to the altar. We have only been separated for six months in all that time. It was because of a misunderstanding, and I was to blame—only I—I tell you this, Mr. Burdon, because you have a young wife yourself. Value her and cherish her, my dear sir—and you will never suffer as I suffered during those terrible months. I was ill—I think I should have died had she not forgiven and forgotten. I had sought for her in vain, you see, until I broke down. And then she returned of her own accord and nursed me back to life. We have never parted since.”

In those few simple words he told me the whole of his tragic history—and I can answer for it that my eyes were wet.

Presently he reverted to the subject of his wife’s apparent youth. “You have seen her to-night,” he said; “well, I should like you to tell me if to you she appears much older than she does in the portrait which I had painted of her soon after our marriage. It hangs at the far end of the room. Come and look at it.”



He took a candle from the table and led me before the picture.

J. SIMON

He took a candle from the table and led me up to the picture. And when he lifted the light so that I could see the features of the dainty damsel smiling down at me from the canvas—represented, as she was, standing in a field of spring flowers by a blossom-laden tree—white-clad and with her fair hair making a halo about her face—I could not hold back the cry of amazement that rose to my lips.

For I was looking at what might have been a portrait of my own wife!

I can tell briefly what happened after that. I managed to repress my excitement—though how I did so Heaven alone knows. But I was afraid of the consequences if the truth were revealed suddenly to Mr. Mostyn.

For the truth was apparent to me almost as soon as I looked upon that picture. By the sheerest accident—coincidence, if you prefer the word—I had found my wife's father, solved the secret of her birth.

And here it will be well for me to explain why my family raised objections to my marriage when they were told all that was known of May's story—why my two aunts threatened to close their door upon me. May was a workhouse child—adopted as an infant by kind Mr. and Mrs. Greening. The mother had refused all information about herself—she had been brought in one night footsore—starving—ill. The matron affirmed, however, that she had the manners and the voice of a lady. She died two or three days later in giving birth to her daughter. The child was christened May because she was such a sweet, fragrant little thing and because it was in that month that she came into the world. Afterwards, of course, she took the name of Greening.

The mother was spared a pauper's grave by the charity of the Greenings, but the mystery of her identity had not been solved.

It was left for me to do so—by the marvellous coincidence that took me to Mr. Mostyn's house that night. Yet was it altogether coincidence? Was there not, perhaps, some little understood instinct at work in May's brain, an instinct which made her select the English Lakes for our honeymoon—"they seemed to call her," she said—and which instigated her to advise me as to the direction I should walk that day? Was it not strange, too, that she should have taken such interest in certain places abroad which—as it transpired later—were precisely those which her own mother had visited during a year of travel directly after her marriage?

I don't attempt to explain these things—they may carry no weight—I merely state facts.

Upon the drive back to Keswick I learned from Keeley some further particulars of Mr. Mostyn's strange story. For three years there had been no happier couple in all England than Gerald Mostyn and his bride. Langton Chase had belonged to the Mostyns for generations, and it had been a proud house till the events occurred which separated the young husband and wife. That was twenty-one years ago.

The quarrel had been a foolish one and for the usual cause—jealousy. After his wife had left him Mr. Mostyn discovered how utterly mistaken he had been. But he had spoken harsh words which rankled in a tender soul and Nita Mostyn never came back.



The grief-stricken man sought for her high and low but for a long while fruitlessly. Then he obtained some intelligence. She had been for three months, after leaving him, companion to an elderly lady, an invalid, whom she had hardly left night or day. But she had thrown up this situation—it was easy to guess why, poor soul—and no further trace of her could be discovered. What she must have suffered from that time till death claimed her in the workhouse can only be conjectured. Yet, though she was about to bear him a child—a child of which he knew nothing—she had not sought to return to her husband. He had said in his anger that he never wished to look upon her face again.

Mr. Mostyn became ill in consequence of his failure to trace his wife. He lay at death's door for many weeks. But he recovered suddenly—his physical health, at least—declaring that his wife had come back to him, and this delusion persisted ever after.

It is a curious fact, as I afterwards ascertained, that his recovery synchronized exactly with his wife's death.

By degree Langton Chase sank into the condition in which I had found it. Mr. Mostyn hugged his delusion to himself—he cut himself off from the world. It was better so. The faithful Keeley and his wife tended to their master, acting the parts that were demanded of them. Silence and subdued light were in the order of things—the silence which a man demands who holds daily converse with the ghost of his lost love, the subdued light which enables him the better to realize her presence.

**I** took Keeley into my confidence and it was thus that we strung the story together. The old fellow was astounded—as may well be imagined—at the new development, as well as deeply moved.

He was convinced, however, of the genuineness of my representation as soon as he set eyes upon May—which he did that same night. I need not dilate upon her joy at seeing me safe home again, nor upon the manner in which the news was imparted to her—all that may well be left to the imagination. It almost seems to detract from the romance of the story—to bring it down to the recognized fiction level—when I admit—as I must—that, later on, definite proof was forthcoming to show that May's mother, the poor girl who had died in the workhouse, and Mr. Mostyn's wife were one and the same person. But so it was. The fact was decisively proved by handwriting which had been preserved, as well as by a tiny locket, with hair

in it, which had been taken from the dead girl and handed to Mr. Greening. The hair was that of Nita Mostyn's husband.

"To think of it," Keeley kept repeating, "that the master had a child after all! Why, he longed for a child, prayed for one! But how shall we break it to him—how?"

This was a difficulty certainly, but it was eventually solved, and Keeley himself engineered the solution. He it was who broke the news to Mr. Mostyn of the existence of his daughter. He invented a story which would seem plausible to the ears of the man who labored under the delusion that his wife was still alive and with him.

Mrs. Mostyn, so he declared, had become a mother during those months of her absence from home after the quarrel—true enough this—the child had been put out to nurse and lost—and Mrs. Mostyn, after her return to her husband—her supposed return—had never dared to avow the facts for fear of the terrible trouble which such an avowal would cause. Now, however, by accident, Mr. Mostyn's daughter had been found and was only waiting to be taken to her father's arms. Keeley affirmed that he had been deputed to break the news.

And so, a few days later, I took May to Langton Chase. I shall never forget her meeting with her father. He accepted her at once—the likeness was so astonishing that there could be no question. She must have been the exact image of that cherished ghost who sat opposite to him at table night after night.

At dinner that evening we were our three selves—and the empty chair. It was strange to watch Mr. Mostyn's eyes as they turned now upon his living daughter, now upon the place where he imagined his wife to be seated. And how cleverly May played her part—hard as it must have been for her!

At Mostyn's invitation we moved into Langton Chase the next day. The fondest intimacy had sprung up between him and his new-found daughter. And by degrees we noticed a subtle change come over the man. It was only to May that his eyes wandered and he ceased to hold converse with the shadow.

And some ten days later, when we seated ourselves at dinner, he turned to the old butler and said tremulously: "Keeley, you may remove that empty chair!"

THE END

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

Illustrations have been relocated due to using a non-page layout.

When nested quoting was encountered, nested double quotes were changed to single quotes.

Space between paragraphs varied greatly. The thought-breaks which have been inserted attempt to agree with the larger paragraph spacing, but it is quite possible that this was simply the methodology used by the typesetter, and that there should be no thought-breaks.

[The end of *The Empty Chair* by Claude & Alice Askew]