

ALICE

Of course, I worked a bit of my own private influence as well. When the President returned from Europe, I was part of the unofficial welcoming party. I followed Mr. Wilson to the White House. Standing on the curbstone, I crossed my fingers, made the sign of the evil eye, and said, "a murrain on him!" My traveling companion kept saying, "don't let anyone hear you!" He was afraid the Secret Service would pick me up and I'd never be heard from again. The spell worked better than I'd expected. Mr. Wilson collapsed from fatigue and nervous exhaustion on a train in Wichita, Kansas. One month later, he suffered a stroke. An appropriate end, don't you think? Blood vessels exploding in the brain of the 'thinking man's president'?

TR

Alice! Is this how I raised you? My God, girl. What happened to compassion? To reconciliation? What did I teach you about good sportsmanship, if nothing else?

ALICE

I thought you would be pleased, Father. I was just doing my part to see that your legacy lived on.

TR

Quite a legacy: dirty tricks and black magic. You did it for yourself, Alice. Not for me. You couldn't bear the thought of never returning to the White House, relinquishing forever the title of "Princess Alice."

ALICE

What about you, Father? You were never content to simply fade away from public view. You missed the conspicuousness of the presidency as much as I did. But you always found a way to get your name into the papers anyway, thereby ensuring that the legend and legacy of Theodore Roosevelt would live on.

Alice turns to the invisible reporter in a slightly disingenuous fashion.

ALICE

It was really up to my brother Ted to carry on my father's legacy. Such things ALWAYS fell on Ted's shoulders. Did you know that my father was named after his father? So actually, Ted Jr. should have been called TR the Third. (she shakes her head) I thank God sometimes that I hadn't been born the eldest son. You can imagine how difficult it must have been to live up to the name of Theodore Roosevelt.

ALICE (cont)

Poor Ted. At one point, the doctors believed he was on the point of 'nervous prostration'. They scolded my father for pushing Ted too hard.

TR

But I vowed thereafter never to press Ted either in mind or body.

ALICE

Ted always worried for fear he wouldn't be worthy of his father.

TR

Worthy of me? I was so very proud of him. He won honor not only for his children, but like the Chinese, he has ennobled his ancestors. I walk with my head higher because of him.

ALICE

And what about me, Father? What about me? Did I ennoble our ancestors?

TR

And what of Paulina? Did you ever tell her you were proud of her, Alice? She was such a fragile little thing.

ALICE (to the reporter)

Of course, I know how difficult it is for a parent to balance high expectations with a gentle touch. It may come easy for some people. But not for a Roosevelt. Besides, you can't say it scarred anyone's childhood exactly. Look at my brother Quentin. He should have been the eldest son. Quentin was so much more like my Father than any of us. And he had no illusions of grandeur about being the President's son. Quentin's idea of a good time was to tromp around on the furniture in the Lincoln bedroom wearing stilts. Once he stopped traffic in Dupont Circle, making awful faces at people passing by.

TR

One of them was me, I seem to recall.

ALICE

Father's open carriage happened by - I think Father was sitting with a bearded dignitary of some sort. Quentin made his worst face. (she demonstrates) Father could have ignored him. But being Father, he didn't. He responded with the most horrible grimace he could muster. (she again demonstrates)

Alice and TR laugh.

TR

"Quentin Roosevelt," I said to him, "you have nearly succeeded in making a fool of me in public. I had the idea of asking you to hop in and ride the rest of the way with me. But on second thought, I have concluded that it is entirely too dangerous for me to be seen with you."

TR continues to laugh alone.

ALICE

My brothers would do anything for my father. Anything. Every one of them rushed off to fight in the war. "Filling in for Father" they used to say. Ted was gassed and shot in the leg.

TR's laughter faces out.

ALICE

Archie was badly wounded by a shell. Kermit survived malaria and brought back great honors. Quentin never came home. He was a pilot. But he should never have been allowed to fly. He was as blind as Father. He passed his physical by memorizing the optician's chart.

TR

Enough, Alice. I'm not so foolish that I don't recognize my role in Quentin's death. I know he enlisted simply as a sign of respect for me. I could have told him it wasn't necessary. I can't think of anyone I respected more than Quentin.

ALICE

Certainly not Alice. But surely, Quentin's death wasn't entirely your fault, Father. After all, it wasn't you who assassinated that Austro-Hungarian Archduke.