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## In the Blue Shadows

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## In the Blue Shadows // Lucy Graham

There was nothing relaxing about the rain on this particular day. I usually enjoyed it, but today I knew how bitter the air felt and how sharp and cold the drops must be. I was sitting in my grandmother's darkening living room, waiting for her to return home. The room had a pale blue carpet, and there were several miniature porcelain boxes all over the tables, from places like Russia and the Czech Republic. Some of them were decorated with horses and unicorns caught in mid-motion, while others had stylized bears and lions, the thin blue outlines forming majestic bodies with crescent teeth bared in terrific roars.

I was expecting my grandmother to open the door at any moment, to feel the wind from the outside, and then for her to call my name softly. I anxiously waited for her voice to dissolve my solitude, and for the bright kindling of a lamp that could ease my melancholy. I was frozen on the cusp of her arrival, paralyzed by indecision: should I try to distract myself with one of her books, like *Robinson Crusoe* or *Heidi*, or should I make a mug of hot chocolate and play around on her grand piano, just to soften the prickling of the rain, the resonant tock of the grandfather clock, and the jarring silence that somehow existed between them?

I'd wrapped a knitted gray blanket tightly around myself, and here I sat, swaddled like a mummy. No matter what I resolved to do with this empty time, I only vacillated like the clock's brass pendulum and found myself right back in the middle, doing absolutely nothing. I couldn't stop the rhythms of the clock and the rain, nor could I hold the shadows still. As I let my head sink into my hands I pondered the possibility of anything at all that could reverse the spell, let the wave break, and end this moment forever. If there were a God it could surely tear me away from these silent halls, the clouded brass, and the decrepit books. It could fill the absences, the black holes all over this house that were screaming at me through the teeth marks gnawed into the furniture, the blade marks on the cutting boards, and the rows and rows of abandoned jackets and leather shoes. It could assure me that this was not the ending to all stories, where all joy and sublimity and progress eventually lead. God could help me escape.

As I looked out the window I saw how the gray of the outside shrouded the entire house, closing in on the living room and

trapping me within. It occurred to me that this twilight might be the kind of truth that would never leave me alone no matter how far I ran or how I distracted myself. It was even possible that I would wait eternally for my grandmother to cross the threshold, poised in suspense like the animal designs on her little boxes before me. The blue shadows were slow, passive beasts, and the more I observed them the deeper and darker they became—colossal enough, I realized, to swallow me whole. They wouldn't do it yet, but each day, each moment, I would watch as they approached, ever so gradually.

Just then there came a click and a creak from the entrance hall. I heard a soft pronunciation of my name and one or two footsteps. And then at last there came the light that, in an instant, transformed everything.