

UNLOCKED

A Vignette from DREAMS FROM HOGBACK BRIDGE by Claudia Haas

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(It is late morning. It's hot and birds and bees are making their rounds. We hear the sound of sawing. Or trying-to-saw. It's not going well. Lights up on KRISTI. She is by one of the railings that contains a few "love locks." Hers is near the bottom and she is trying to saw it off.)

KRISTI

He loves me.... He loves me not. He loves me not He loves me NOT NOT NOT! Oh! It's hot HOT HOT! I hate him. (Beat.) Not. I love him. NOT! Come on lock, unlock! Ohhh! Where is a locksmith when you need one?

(AND just like that, MATLOCK SHERLOCK, locksmith extraordinaire appears.)

MATLOCK

At your service, Ma'am. Sorry I'm late. Matlock Sherlock, at your service.

KRISTI

What in tarnation/

MATLOCK

/You wished for a locksmith. You have a locksmith.

KRISTI

That's not how things work.

MATLOCK

This is Iowa. If you wish for it, it will come. I'm just a tad late. There was gridlock. Two tractors.

KRISTI

Ohh! A roadblock!

MATLOCK

Exactly. (Beat.) You're never going to be able to get that lock off. Your saw is way too large to get in between all the locks. And has anyone ever sharpened it?

KRISTI

That's why I called for a locksmith... only I didn't call...

MATLOCK

Wished.

KRISTI

I wonder what else I could wish for.

MATLOCK

Wishing only works with baseball fields and locksmiths. As I said, this is Iowa.

(Fiddles briefly with lock.)

Pretty flimsy lock. I wouldn't trust my love with it. Really, if you blow on it, it will fall apart. Watch.

(He blows on it. Nothing.)

Just need to catch my breath.

(He blows on it again. Nothing. Soon he is huffing and puffing like the Big Bad Wolf trying to get the lock to open.)

I see the problem. It's still held together by love.

KRISTI

You're delirious. Have some water. It's hot. The air. Not the water.

(She hands him a water bottle and he drinks.)

KRISTI (cont'd)

It's only my love that holds the lock together. His love is gone. Or so he says. Can you unlock this so my love is unlocked?

MATLOCK

Sure thing. As I said this is pretty flimsy. The nail file should do the trick.

(Maybe doing contortions by the railing, MATLOCK works on filing the lock so it breaks. Only it doesn't.)

You have to help me here.

KRISTI

Water?

(HE gulp some down.)

MATLOCK

Stop loving him.

KRISTI

I'm trying. That's why I want the lock destroyed.

MATLOCK

I'll try the pliers. These are really good at twisting small pieces of metal.

(More contortions as he tries to break the lock.)

This lock is being stubborn. Are you sure he doesn't love you?

KRISTI

Pretty sure. He said he never wanted to see me again under pain of death. I did mention that I could arrange that. (Beat.) Maybe I shouldn't have said that.

MATLOCK

No. That's good. That's the kind of thing I like to hear. Those are fighting words that unlock love locks. I'll just crack it with a hammer.

(He takes out a small hammer or something resembling one – can be silly –
And starts banging on the lock.)

You know what's wrong? You need to do it. You need to prove to the lock that there is no love left by smashing it to bits.

(KRISTI tries but the lock holds.)

MATLOCK (cont'd)

Are you sure he doesn't love you? Because this lock is saying something different.

(MATLOCK takes some more water and holds on to the water bottle.)

KRISTI

Pretty sure. He forgave me after I poisoned him. (Beat.) But he refused to forgive me the second time.

MATLOCK

(Handing her the water bottle.)

Poisoned?

KRISTI

Accidentally! I am not a murderer.

MATLOCK

I don't feel so good.

KRISTI

Maybe we should get you in the shade.

MATLOCK
Don't touch me!

KRISTI
Have some more water.

MATLOCK
What's in it?

KRISTI
Water.

MATLOCK
How much did I drink?

KRISTI
Just a few sips. Wait. Oh – you think – no, no, really it's just water. I don't poison people. Not on purpose anyway.

MATLOCK
Just those few times you poisoned your boyfriend?

KRISTI
Twice! Only twice! Jeez... some people just want to think the worst of everyone.

MATLOCK
I have to go.

(MATLOCK is a bit rocky on his feet.)

KRISTI
You're overheated. Maybe dehydrated. Just rest a minute. (Beat.) You have all these scenarios running through your head, don't you? Like I poisoned you? Relax. All you had was water and you could use a little more.

(Beat as KRISTI notices some graffiti above her in the wood.)

KRISTI
Oh no!

MATLOCK
What? I'm dying, aren't I?

KRISTI
The graffiti. Right above you. See? I carved this this one years ago.
"Kristi and Stanly were here." – I did that on our first date.

KRISTI (cont'd)

Look at this one: “She said yes!” – Stanley did that one after I said I’d go to prom with him.

“Kristi and Stanley Forever.” We both did that together. And then we put our lock on the railing, closed it shut and professed our undying love. And then – the love died. Or rather he thought he was dying and that killed the love.

MATLOCK

Stanley ... is he still alive?

KRISTI

Of course, he is. The poison wasn’t deadly enough to kill him. He just got nauseated and thought he was dying. Apparently, some wild mushrooms will do that to you. Stanley just loves mushrooms and I found some exotic ones in the woods out of town and thought I would surprise him. I surprised him all right.

MATLOCK

Did you get sick?

KRISTI

No. I hate mushrooms. (Beat.) I did get sick from the berry pie. Do you know some red berries are poisonous? Climbing bittersweet can make you very sick. Do avoid it. It did look very pretty in the pie though. Of course, I had just a sliver because I watch my weight and Stanley had three helpings so I just felt a little off and he well... had to go to the E.R. And that’s when he ended it. He said he’d rather live a long life than be married to me. He unlocked our wedlock and so here I am trying to unlock our love lock and quite frankly, you haven’t been very helpful.

MATLOCK

I’m like Stanley... I want to live.

(We hear a car door slam.)

MATLOCK

Someone’s here. I’m going to be rescued.

STANLEY (O.S.)

Kristi?

KRISTI

Stanley? OVER HERE!

STANLEY

I knew I’d find you here. (Beat.) Who’s this?

MATLOCK

I’m a locksmith. Or was. Before my demise.

KRISTI

You're fine! Our love lock won't unlock.

STANLEY

I know ... it's because ...

KRISTI

You still love me?

STANLEY

Yes. Till death do us part. But about that "death" thing – not for another fifty years, okay?

KRISTI

Okay! I guess my lock wasn't so flimsy after all.

MATLOCK

Since I'm not needed, I'm going to Urgent Care.

KRISTI

Drink some water.

(Offering him the water bottle.)

MATLOCK

Good advice. I shall. As soon as I find a gas station with water. In a bottle. That's been sealed.

(MATLOCK exits.)

STANLEY

Odd fellow. (Beat.) I love you, Kristi.

KRISTI

Enough to write it down in the Dream Journal?

STANLEY

Yes. But Kristi, from this day forward, for better or worse, you will not cook for me.

KRISTI

No problem. Have some water.

(STANLEY has a nice drink of water as the lights change. STANLEY may write in the Dream Journal and then exit with KRISTI.)

END OF PLAY