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"How was your walk?"
Is the first question Lucile asks as soon as Evelyn walks through the
door, she doesn't even have time to pass her cloak to the butler
before her aunt swoops down upon her with a concerned expression.
"It was pleasant," Evelyn replies taking o her shoes and pushing
them against the wall.
"Where did you go?" Lucile asks, failing to appear nonplussed.
"Just into town and around," Evelyn says vaguely. "Nothing too
exciting.
"How lovely." Her aunt says, wringing her hands together, Evelyn
pauses and rests on her hands on her aunt's.
"Is everything well?" She asks. Lucile smiles weakly, she tucks a
strand of hair behind her ear.
"You were a long time, I was worried." She admits. Evelyn's confused
expression so ens.
"I can look a er myself, do not worry." She squeezes Lucile's hands.
"Where are my brother and cousin?"
Lucile doesn't look convinced but she nods and says, "Jackson came
round and picked up William, and Henrietta received an invite to tea
at Lady Edith's so she is getting ready," Lucile brightens up "You also
were asked to come if you arrived back in time."
"Me?" Evelyn frowns. "Are you sure?"
"Yes." Her aunt pats her cheek. "Go get ready."
"Thank you for telling me." Evelyn bows her head and hurries up the
stairs to her room. She walks through the open door to see Henrietta
lying on her bed with a book in her hands. Evelyn almost stops in
surprise at the sight of her cousin holding a book.
"I thought you'd be getting ready." She says taking hold of her
cousin's bedpost and tilting her head to read the title of the book.
"I can't." Henrietta shuts the book and looks miserable. "I realised
that although I excel in the beauty, grace department, I have no
knowledge of London society and how they function." She holds up
the book. "That's why I am reading this."
" How to be the perfect lady Evelyn reads the title and raises her
eyebrows.
"Every woman I met last night was spectacular and I don't know how
to compete," Henrietta says hopelessly, her voice growing steadily
higher.
"That's because they grew up here, this is their life. They were born
into this world, we are just visitors." Evelyn says as she walks to her
bed.
"I don't want to be a visitor!" Henrietta sits up and chucks the book
on the floor. Evelyn glances at the thrown away book before sitting
on her bed and looking out of the window.
"But we are, this isn't dress up when you were 9." She says heatedly,
"This is real life. Did it ever occur to you that this life you want, isn't
what you thought it was?"
Her cousin makes a disbelieving snort but the sits up and grins. "You
grew up here, you can teach me!" Henrietta cries. "You must
remember what it was like?"
"I am not teaching you anything," Evelyn says. She picks up her law
book and strides from the room. She tears down the stairs and to the
parlour, thankfully it is empty so she sinks into an armchair. She
opens the book and tries to force her mind to concentrate on the
words but they dance just out of reach. Sighing she places the book
to one side and closes her eyes. In her mind, she begins to sort
through the information in categories. She plays around with the
situation several times, covering every possible motive and suspect.
Being so involved in her own thoughts she doesn't realise how much
time has past until Henrietta appears in the doorway in a fancy gold
dress and tells her moodily that it is time to leave.
Evelyn has forgotten to change but she follows her cousin to the
carriage and prepares for an a ernoon of backhanded compliments
and plastic smiles. Without the presence of Lucile, the carriage holds
a toxic atmosphere ready to explode at the first spark.
"Why won't you teach me?" Henrietta sulks.
"I don't remember anything." Evelyn lies.
"Rubbish, you remember things no one remembers." Henrietta
accuses.
"Regardless if I do, I am not teaching you anything," Evelyn says with
finality.
"Why?" Henrietta pulls out her signature pout.
"Henrietta, you don't need to be like everyone else, you have plenty
of charm that...." She trails o as she glances out of the window and
catches sight of a group of men falling out of the front step of a pub.
"Stop the carriage!" She yells. The carriage jolts to a harsh stop.
"What on earth?" Henrietta protests, picking herself o the floor.
"Please give my apologies to Lady Edith," Evelyn says hastily opening
the door and climbing out into the street. She slams the door shut
and gives the signal to the driver to continue.
"Evelyn!" Henrietta's head sticks out the window and shrieks but
Evelyn walks away from her. She crosses the road and slowly pushes
through the throngs of people on the pavement. A group of drunk
men in expensive clothes are scrambling around on the floor outside
a dingy pub. They are all leaning on each other, none of them able to
properly stand without assistance. In the middle of the inebriated
group is another man who holds his face to the ground as he throws
up.
"Hello...you." One of them tries to stand as he notices her standing
over them but he staggers to the side and almost falls into the road. A
man with sweeping brown hair exits the pub just in time and
manages to grab the man before he ends up under a carriage. Evelyn
studies the man's face, to her surprise there is no indication that a
single drop of alcohol has passed his lips.
The man on the ground hiccups and then vomits again.
"For God sake William!" She cries as he almost vomits onto her shoes.
He wipes his mouth and looks up guiltily.
"You know her?" The sober man asks him.
"Sister," William mumbles climbing to his feet. The group look at her
with interest, made more evident by the whiskey.
"How do you do?" The man asks, stepping forward and bowing
slightly.
"Jackson?" She guesses, returning a small bob of the head.
"Indeed Miss." He bows his head, smiling. The men look shocked that
she knows his name.
"It's nice to meet you. My aunt speaks highly of you." Evelyn says.
"Your aunt is too kind." He says with a sweet smile. William glowers at
the exchange.
"Everyone listen up." He straightens up and places a finger at his
mouth. He backs away and bumps into his sister, he wraps an arm
around her waist and pulls her to his side.
"My sister....." He stops, forgetting what he is saying. Evelyn tries
to get away but he keeps her sticking to his side with surprising force.
"......Is o -limits," William says, remembering. "Do not touch her. She
needs to save the only thing we didn't lose when we lost our money."
"William!" Evelyn turns white with embarrassment, even though
most of his words were smashed together in a drunken speech, the
message is clear.
"Sush little sis." He puts his finger on her lips, he turns to his friends.
"Are we clear?"
"We can't even...." One of them looks longingly at her. She glares at
him and he recoils then chuckles.
"She's got bite." He tells the others. They chortle drunkenly. Evelyn
pushes her brother away from her and he staggers back to his
friends.
"Miss Wright, will you allow me to escort you home?" Jackson asks,
no amusement on his face.
"That's very kind of you, sir, but." Evelyn looks helplessly at her
brother.
"What did I just say, Jackson?" He yells, "Hands o her."
"I can't take him home to my aunt like this." She explains. William's
face turns green and he deposits the rest of his stomach onto the
pavement.
"You can put him in my carriage and stay with me till he sobers up,"
Jackson suggests. The other men gwaf and try to slap him on the
back but he moves out of their range.
"I can't ask you to do that for me." She says. Willam crawls on his
knees towards her and lies at her feet, tugging on her skirt.
"I am o ering," Jackson states.
"|..."
"Miss Evelyn." A voice calls from a familiar dark carriage, Duke
Blackmoore steps out, hat and cane. He strides towards them,
commanding their focus.
"Duke Blackmoore," Evelyn says slowly, her mind unable to
comprehend all that is happening.
"Who is this?" He asks, his cane pointing at Willaim's lowered head.
When she doesn't reply quick enough he sharply raps his cane on the
ground making her jump.
"My brother." She says breathlessly.
"I was just about to take them to my house," Jackson explains,
stepping to her side.
"You needn't bother." Blackmoore runs a finger over the top of his
cane, looking extremely bored. "I'll take them."
"Wait a minute." Jackson steps forward. "I cannot let a lady go with a
potential stranger and suspected murderer."
Blackmoore is silent, he then leans on his cane condescendingly.
"There you are, you've protected your pride, you've done your job,
now let the lady come with me."
Evelyn has to stifle a gasp at cold resided Duke, drastically dierent
from the cheekily rake she met this morning.
"I am sorry?" Jackson asks.
"I accept your apology," Blackmoore says, bored. "Come on Evelyn."
He turns to the carriage and clicks at his driver and points to William,
clearly intending for him to get the drunk.
"This is ridiculous." She says finally finding her voice, "My lord I thank
you for o ering your assistance however Sir Jackson's mother is
expecting us and I would hate to disappoint her."
Blackmoore's eye scrutinises her face. His hot glare makes her own
temperature rise but she keeps a calm pleasant expression on her
face.
"Fine." He says shortly, he spins on his heel and marches to his
carriage. The driver opens the door for him and he climbs inside. The
carriage pulls away and Evelyn can breathe properly again.
"My carriage is just down here," Jackson says, nodding down the
street. Evelyn smiles quickly and gratefully, she struggles to pull her
brother up as he has bent his knees and is fully leaning on her. She
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saw you coming out of that pub." She answers. "How do you know Duke Blackmoore?" He asks. She looks up in surprise. "I don't really." She says. "It seemed like he knew you." The accusation in his voice is evident. "It certainly seemed that way." She replies coldly. "I only mean, you must think of your reputation." He backtracks. "I don't have one." "Why not?" "Tell me you aren't dumber than you look." She says bluntly. Jackson clears his throat and looks away guiltily. "I know what happened to you, everyone does." "Then what's with all the questions?" "You're di erent than I expected." He says slowly. "You mean di erent than the rumours." Evelyn retorts. "Yes." "Everyone is, I have started a lot of rumours in my life so I should know." She replies grimly. "What do you mean?" "It doesn't matter," Evelyn looks distressed, this isn't the carriage ride she expected, "Please take me home." "But your aunt..." "I appreciate your kindness towards me and William but please, take me home." Jackson nods and the carriage pulls up at 104 fi een minutes later. Evelyn doesn't wait for the driver to climb down, she opens the door and shoves her brother out. He stumbles on the steps and smacks face-first onto the pavement. She jumps out of the carriage and steps over him. The driver shuts the door but Jackson leans out of the window.

"I hope we meet again Evelyn." He smiles but a nagging feeling in her

carriage pull away, William rolls over on the ground and rapidly blinks

"Jackson took us home." She explains as she helps him to stand. "You

"You look it." She replies, unsympathetically. They walk up the steps

onto his bed with a groan. She pulls the covers over his body and tries

"Thanks, Mother." He mumbles as she closes the curtains. She freezes

"You're welcome." She murmers before closing the door to his room.

at his voice. His head is turned into his pillow and his eyes are

and sneak into the house. She helps him to his room and he flops

stomach tells her not to trust the innocent grin. She watches the

looking up at her. He has busted his lip and a trickle of blood runs

from his nose.

need water."

"How are we here?" He croaks.

to get him comfortable.

completely shut. He is dreaming.

She walks over to his side and kisses his cheek.

"I feel awful." He says, shielding his eyes.

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takes a staggering step forward and he rolls o her and collapses

"Let me help," Jackson says stoping down and li ing Willaim up with

"Thank you," Evelyn says. He supports her brother the entire way to

the carriage and lowers him carefully inside. He helps her up and

"I can't tell you how grateful I am." She says as the carriage pulls

"By chance, I was on my way to a ernoon tea with my cousin when I

"How did you even know he was here?" Jackson questions.

onto the floor.

closes the door behind himself.

away from the pub.

ease.

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