

## Chapter 2

It is the afternoon before they are to leave for Town and Evelyn and William have both packed and made the necessary arrangements for travelling. Mr Wright hasn't been seen since breakfast as the chaos that the house has come to is too much for him to tolerate. Upstairs, Juliet stands in the corner of Henrietta's room holding out different dresses for the girl to consider as Evelyn enters. She watches as Henrietta throws the suggested peach dress against the wall of her room. It flutters down to join the growing pile of silk and velvet.

"I can't possibly attend London in these drags," Henrietta cries, tossing a pale rose dress that lies on her bed, over her shoulder towards the door. "I need new ones immediately!"

Evelyn catches the frock before it hits her. Ever since she had given her the news, her cousin has been in an unbearably excited mood that is unquenchable, however, she appears to have reached a wall in the packing process. Even her brand new ice blue dress with the frilly sleeves is lying in the discarded pile.

"You are going to have to," Evelyn says picking up the dresses in her way and laying them on the bed, "We have no money for new clothes."

"Just because we are as poor as mice does not mean we have to look like them!" Henrietta retorts furiously, throwing herself onto some pillows dramatically.

"That doesn't even make any sense," Evelyn kicks open one of the empty trunks and begins to fold the dresses up and place them inside. Juliet hurries over and helps her to fold up dresses, nightwear and underwear.

Henrietta rolls onto her side and begins to slide off her bright red blanket, she slumps onto the floor in a defeated flop.

"How am I to find a husband in last seasons rejects?" She hushes watching her dresses be packed away with a depressed pout.

"Perhaps they shall see past a pretty ball gown and like your personality," Evelyn suggests, closing the trunk with a snap and straightening up. Juliet closes the other and lies it on top of the other one. Henrietta looks up from her seat on the floor.

"You're right." She says in a bright voice.

"I am?" Evelyn says taken aback, she crosses her arms in apprehension.

"I am pretty enough that I don't need a new dress to make every man fall in love with me." Henrietta says with a bright smile as she scrambles to her feet. "They will be entranced by my stunning natural beauty and ask to marry me at once." She leans against a bed pillar and a dreamy expression crosses her face.

"That's not what I said," Evelyn says with a raised eyebrow and shares an exasperated look with Juliet. Her cousin pays her no heed and begins to imagine dancing the night away with a handsome lord of 10,000 pounds a year. Evelyn walks over to the wardrobe and begins to pass pairs of shoes to Juliet who places them in their boxes. Evelyn knows that after four years of living with her cousin, Henrietta is the most unorganised and lazy girl ever to cross the northern border.

"...maybe he shall have a younger brother for you," Henrietta says waltzing around her room. Evelyn shuts the wardrobe and turns to see her spiteful expression. She plasters a fake smile on face.

"If you are to find a husband amongst the London social elites then I will congratulate you and return to Darlington after your wedding, I would like no part in your match making schemes." She says, walking to the door.

"That's if I invite you," Henrietta says snidely with an upturned smirk. Juliet gasps but Evelyn just turns the knob and opens the door.

"Dinner is in an hour if you wish to grace us with your presence." She says before shutting the door behind her. She leans against the door and tightens her fists. Evelyn has heard many spiteful comments since her family lost its money and she can forget them easily but every time her cousin speaks it chips away at her fraying control. She relaxes after a moment and clears her head. She walks along the corridor and hurries down the stairs to find her father. Before she can arrive at his study she bumps into her brother coming out of the parlour with a mischievous grin. He smiles when he sees his sister, the gleam in his eye makes her stop and sigh.

"What have you done?" She asks tiredly.

"Nothing." He replies innocently. "But I do think I lost a certain set of butterfly earrings in here, it's a dreadful shame."

Evelyn cracks a rare smile, "I am sure they will turn up." She says before continuing to walk down the corridor.

"Wait." William cries after her, "Aren't you going to reprimand my teasing of our dear cousin?"

"Our dear cousin can fight her own battles, brother." She calls back before raising her hand to knock on the study door. It swings open before her fist connects with the wood and Mr Wright stares in surprise at his daughter.

"Is everything alright Evelyn?" He asks, adjusting the books under his arm.

"Yes father, I was wondering if you were joining us for dinner? Joan has made a delightful feast." She asks.

"I cannot tonight, I am afraid I have work to be getting on with." He replies, pushing his greying hair out of his eyes.

"You are busy," Evelyn says nodding, "I won't stall you." She moves out of his way.

"I actually wanted to talk to you both." Mr Wright extends an arm into his study. The siblings share a confused look and walk in together nervously. The door shuts with a click and Mr Wright addresses his children with a stern look.

"I thought I would be able to join you in London however I will not be able to take time out as our situation is tighter than I thought." His tired face, creases in shame. Evelyn fights the pooling bitterness in her stomach, she won't let her father see her disappointment, it would only hurt him more.

"Don't worry," Evelyn says, "We understand."

"No we don't! This is ridiculous." William cries, "If we are struggling that much then I should put a hold on my legal career."

"William, you are going to become a brilliant lawyer and if in order to get you there I have to work more than I shall with pleasure." Mr Wright says firmly. William crosses his arms and shakes his head, he turns to Evelyn.

"You cannot agree that this fair." He says.

She tilts her head to the side and glancing between him and her father, "I agree that supporting your law career is essential."

Her brother scoffs and moodily kicks the nearby chair. "Father wouldn't have to work so hard if you married four years ago."

"William." Mr Wright says sharply. William rolls his eyes and storms out of the room. Evelyn watches his retreating back with a sick feeling. A hand rests on her shoulder.

"He doesn't know what he is saying." Mr Wright says, "He still holds his resentment close to his heart."

"So do I." Evelyn murmurs but she smiles and nods. Mr Wright nods to himself and leaves her standing in the study alone. She swings her arms by her sides as she turns in a circle, looking at all the books. The book collection has grown over the years, many second-hand law books have been bought for William, books on every type of law, books on past legal injustifications and records of significant cases.

A dusty volume with a dull royal blue cover catches her eyes. She slowly pulls the bound book from the shelf and blows away the faint layer of dust that conceals the golden words.

Propriety Law, an introduction Richard Harrods.

She replaces the book immediately and takes down the next one.

A comprehensive guide to criminal law by Alfred Tuck

"I don't think you understood the meaning of comprehensive Mr Tuck." Evelyn says as she struggles to open the thick book. The pages stick together as she turns them. She reads the contents and then shuts it with a snap. She carries it out of the study and into the hall where her trunks lie, ready. She places the book on the floor and unbuckles the clasps on one of the suitcases, she places the book on top her clothes. Since her brother decided on a career in law she has found the books he has been studying most interesting as there is no money for new fiction novels.

"Evelyn." William's voice behind her makes her start as she stands up. She turns around regretfully. He approaches with a wary expression, he twists his hands together and looks her in the eye.

"I didn't mean what I said." He says, "It's not your fault we lost our money and if you had accepted one of those offers it wouldn't have prevented the future."

Evelyn says nothing but her stormy eyes don't blink once, he looks down at the floor.

"Plus some of them were real suck ups." He cracks half a smile but her face remains stony cold. He runs a hand through his messy blonde hair and scratches his chin.

"Evie....." He begins but shout cuts him off.

"EVELYN!" Henrietta flies down the stairs brandishing a letter in her hand. "I cannot believe it."

Evelyn frowns when her cousin pushes past William and stops in front of her. Henrietta thrusts the letter into her hand. The postmark reads from the north Atlantic sea.

"Read it." Henrietta demands with vigour. Evelyn begins to read the letter but she looks up with shocked eyes when she reads half of it.

"That's surprising news to receive." She says with a perplexed look, she places a hand on Henrietta's shoulder. "I don't know what say."

William looks as lost as Henrietta who stares at her blankly

"What are you talking about?" She says irritated.

"Your father is to remain at sea for another 3 years," Evelyn replies, confused. "You aren't going to see him until your 21." She drops her arm and points to the end of the third paragraph.

Henrietta waves her hand like she is swatting a fly. "Oh pish posh, no read further down."

"But..." Evelyn frowns deeply at her cousin's dismissive attitude.

"Oh never mind, I'll just tell you." Henrietta snatches the letter back. She grins widely, "I am to receive an inheritance to spend before I receive my inheritance on my 21st birthday!" She dances in a small circle. "This means I can finally afford new dresses. Is this the most wonderful news?"

Evelyn glances at the disgust written on her brother's face before she replies carefully, "I am glad you are feeling better."

"I haven't felt this way in years!" Henrietta agrees, "I have reason to live."

William scoffs in distaste but she doesn't notice.

"As soon as we get to London I need to order new dresses." She says to Evelyn. "You must come with me and your aunt."

Evelyn grimaces but doesn't argue. She tucks a strand of hair behind her ear and nods.

"This is going to be a fabulous trip!" Henrietta cries before skipping up the stairs back to her room. The siblings watch her go with similar feelings of annoyance and frustration.

"You are still frowning," William tells his sister as he studies her face, her eyes have grown darker and her skin, paler. "Are you feeling unwell?"

"Quite." Evelyn turns her frown into a pleasant neutral expression. A serving boy passes them in the hallway carrying a basket of bread rolls to the dining room. William watches his sister as she crouches down and shuts her trunk. She stands back up after she locks it again. William takes her hand and tries again.

"What I was saying before is that I don't blame you for not accepting one of those marriage proposals." He winces when her face freezes and she steals her hand back. "I...."

"Will, it's fine, I know you blame me for not becoming a rich possession of an entitled arrogant man who would later take a mistress while I was raising the children that he doesn't care about, I just wish you would admit it." Evelyn's silver eyes turn blacker as she speaks, "We had no one to blame for the loss of our money so naturally we find someone close and you have so kindly chosen your sister, and it's fine but chasing after what could have happened in the past is worse."

"I am sorry Evie, I just think that if you had....."

"That if I had married we would be in a different situation? We would but I didn't and I cannot change that." She holds her head up. She looks around the dimly lit hallway and gestures outside to where a gale howls. "Why can this not be enough for you?"