

Chapter 27

It has been half an hour since Detective Rawson left the house and yet Blackmoore hasn't moved a muscle. Evelyn tried to convince him to open the door and then when that failed, simply tried talking to him but he made no sign that he was aware she was even speaking.

As it approaches midnight Evelyn becomes restless and she begins walking around the room in a continuous loop.

"What are you doing?"

She slows to a stop on her umpteenth circle. Blackmoore has raised his head from his hands and is watching her with annoyance. Taking advantage of his attention she comes over and falls to her knees in front of him.

"I am going to go insane in this room, we need to leave." She pleads, grabbing both of his hands in hers.

"He's going to hang you." He says gravely. "We are safe here."

"No," Evelyn cups his face, forcing his wild eyes to hers. "He's gone, we need to get out before he comes back."

Blackmoore closes his eyes and leans into her hold. "I can't lose you." He whispers. "I can't be the reason you die."

Evelyn's heart constricts. "No one is doing to die." She says firmly. "But you need to get out of your head." For a moment she thinks she has gotten through to him but when his expression darkens, her heart sinks.

He forces her hands away and she falls back on her legs. He doesn't register her profanities as she storms away, kicking at his desk. She tries to remain angry for her sake, she keeps her back to him but before long her eyes begin to droop. The exhaustion she feels is enough to outway any emotion. She clears o a chaise lounge and drags over the fur from by the fireplace, she settles into the cushions and closes her eyes.

The duke watches her sleep, she looks so peaceful, her blonde hair sprayed over her face as she breathes. All he sees in her face is innocence, he can't look at her, not for long, the guilt is overpowering. What he wouldn't give to tell her when she wakes that it is all going to be alright, that they are going to be alright. Sadness unfurls in his stomach, it mixes with the guilt and pain, he rises to his feet and unlocks the door.

Sunlight streams through the only window and dances over her face in her sleep. She blinks slowly, stretching and sitting up, the fur slips o her. Immediately she notices that the door is wide open and that the duke is not around. She jumps o the lounge and cautiously approaches the door. She half expects to find Rawson with a group of men, ready to take her away but there is no one around. She creeps down the hallway, listening intently for any sound. As she walks into the main hall she starts to frown, what on earth is going on?

"What are you doing?"

Evelyn shrieks and jumps around. Blackmoore and Claude both stand behind her, they look at her with confusion as she places a hand to her racing heart.

"Bloody hell." She cries, "You scared me."

"Evidently." The duke says, looking unimpressed, "I was just about to come and wake you. We are leaving London today."

She shoots him a perplexed look.

"We are going away until this mess is sorted," He says.

"I don't think...." She begins but he cuts across her.

"It's final, I've already decided." He says with derision. She takes a step back at his audacity and frowns.

"It's not up for discussion." He says when she opens her mouth. "We will pack a few things and then leave as soon as possible."

"Quickest way to leave is on horseback," Claude says. "Get to the countryside."

"I can't ride." Evelyn says automatically, the men look at her, "Well I can but not well."

"That is not the issue right now," Blackmoore says, annoyed. Evelyn has to agree, the issue is that he is overreacting to their situation and therefore not thinking logically.

"This is madness." She mutters to herself but not quietly enough.

"What's madness is that you are currently being hunted for murder and yet for some reason are resisting to leave." He says sharply, he turns to Claude. "Please prepare us some provisions, we leave within the hour."

"No we aren't," Evelyn says firmly, having had enough of this, both men look at her. "I am going to leave but you need to stay here, you aren't under suspicion anymore, you can find out who actually did this and then come find me."

"This is ridiculous." Blackmoore says, "I am coming with you."

"No, you are not." She says, adamant, "Find out who did this and then I'll come back and neither of us will be held responsible."

The duke glares at her, she looks to Claude to help.

"You know this is the best thing to do." She pleads, "Please."

The manservant reluctantly nods. "I will get you some things." He walks away, a sadness in his step. Evelyn turns to Blackmoore and she shrinks a little in his death stare. He says nothing so she walks to back to his study to pull her shoes and coat on. She walks around to his desk and finds some paper and ink in one of the drawers. She scribbles a name and address on the paper, she writes a few words on another piece of paper and blows on them to quickly dry the ink.

"If they catch you they will kill you," Blackmoore says leaning against the door frame.

"They won't catch me." She vows, walking up to him and holding the pieces of paper in the air. She hands him one. "This is the name and address of a lawyer who can help you." She gives him the other one. "This is the location of the pistol."

He tucks both notes into his shirt. "No messages for your family?"

"I don't think an "I didn't kill the person they are saying I did" is going to do much help." She says honestly.

"How can you be so calm right now?" He asks, looking her up and down.

"Calm?" She sco s, "I am terrified out of my wits, I can barely think straight." She shivers and wraps her arms around herself. "But crying and panicking is not going to change or help my position."

He jerks his head in what could be classed as a nod but he continues to stare at her.

"I am going to need a horse." She says pointedly. His expression doesn't change but he turns and strides back to the hall, she hurries after him. He takes her through a serving entrance and down a tiny staircase, they walk through a maze of corridors. He doesn't speak to her as he leads her through the servants quarters but she hears words such as "stubborn" and "infuriating.". She ignores them and hurries to catch up with his pace. He opens a back door and they step out into the bitter morning air. She winces as it pinches at her face, she follows him through a small side garden towards the stables.

"Wait here." He says, gesturing to shelter under a tree. She watches his retreating back, he disappears into the stable and she hugs her coat to her body. Why is he making this so difficult?

When Blackmoore returns a massive palomino stallion follows him, the horse walks elegantly behind his master. Evelyn slowly backs away as the horse comes closer, it's impressive stature towers over her, the coat shiny and sleek.

"We haven't got time for you to get over your childhood embedded fear of horses," Blackmore says as he changes the length of the stirrups. "This is Neptune."

"I am not scared of them, I just find them intimidating." She says, stepping forward to stroke the horse's long neck.

"Well, we haven't got time for that." He says harshly, checking the saddle. She rolls her eyes, he checks the rest of the horse in silence, looking at the hooves and threading the reins.

"You know it's better for you to stay here." She says to the back of his head, "I'll be fine on my own, no one is going to look twice at me, I am so insignificant I'll slip by."

"Why do you say that?" He growls and stands from adjusting the girth.

"Say what?" She yells over the wind. He rounds on her.

"When are you going to get it through your head that someone like you could never be insignificant." He cries, looking lost and angry. She stares at him, shocked by his outburst.

"Miss." Claude appears with his hands full. He looks between the angry duke who returns to securing the saddle and the peeved woman. "Everything alright?"

"Yes." She says rather roughly, she turns to him.

"They'll be a bit big for you but you'll be kept warm," Claude says kindly, he passes her a matching scarf, hat and gloves. She gratefully pulls them on. Claude attaches two bags to the saddle and straps them to the side.

"Are you ready?" The duke asks, not looking at her.

"As I'll ever be." She replies. She rounds to the left side of Neptune and looks up at the saddle. It seems to be too high to pull herself up on her own. Blackmoore lets out a frustrated sigh, he passes the reins to Claude. She places her foot in the stirrup, she wobbles a bit but manages with the help of Blackmoore to pull herself up into the seat. Having mostly ridden sidesaddle, it takes her a moment to adjust to having her legs around the horse.

Neptune snorts and takes a nervous step forward.

"You need to relax." Blackmoore says, "Neptune can feel your apprehension."

"Uh-huh." Evelyn tries to relax, but her knuckles have turned white as she gripping the front of the saddle. She takes a breath and sits back in the seat, keeping her back straight. Claude passes her the reins and she corrects her hands on them. Blackmoore fusses around the horse, checking every buckle and strap until he can't see anything to correct. He looks up at her.

"I can't let you go on your own." He says furiously. She knows that he would have put up more of a fight but he knows that this is the right thing to do and consequently he is angry at himself and her.

She leans down and drops a kiss onto his cheek. No words could explain her feelings to him at this moment, no words would be enough to tell him everything.

Evelyn looks at Claude. "Please." The man nods regretfully and takes hold of his master's arm as she clicks the horse into a trot. As Neptune bounces forward she wobbles and falls forward onto the horse's neck but she manages to sit back up and when she looks back Claude and Blackmoore are disappearing into the distance. She hears shouts but they are indistinguishable against the rush of wind in her ears.