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Chapter 32
A er the events of last night Duke Blackmoore finds he has little
energy to get dressed, however thoughts of Evelyn spur him on and
he eventually stumbles downstairs fully dressed. He grabs a slice of
buttered toast from the breakfast laid out in his study and sits in his
chair, chewing his food. He spends the next half an hour slowly going
through the documents he has accumulated but his frustration
begins to get the better of him and he lying on the floor when Claude
enters with fresh tea.
"Feeing down sir?" He asks his master, placing the tray on the desk.
"I am feeling hopeless." Blackmoore admits, "I am no closer to
finding the killer." He sits up and rests his head on his hands. "I want
feel like I am doing something worthwhile."
"Saving Evelyn is worthwhile, and you will find the person, you are
just in a rut." Claude assures, "Maybe take a walk to clear your
head?"
The duke springs to his feet, "That is an excellent idea." He pulls on
his shoes and laces them up. "I know just where to go to."
"Sir?" Claude retrieves a charcoal jacket and holds it up for him to
shrug on.
"I am going to see Evelyn's family." Blackmoore explains, fastening
his cu links and tidying his hair.
"But she didn't ask you to," Claude says, looking concerned.
Blackmoore walks around to his desk and starts rummaging in the
draws ."I know but I feel as though I owe her family some sort of
vaguely truthful explanation." He pulls out a small envelope and slips
it into his pocket. "I'll be back before lunch and then I want to go see
Harrington."
"I'll send a card immediately and prepare your horse." Claude bows
and leaves the study with e iciency. Once content with his
appearance Blackmoore hurridly strides from his study to the front
door, only stopping to pick up his top hat and cane from the coat
stand. Chilly air greets him as he hops down the steps, drawing his
jacket closer to him. He accepts a horse from a stable hand and
swings his long legs over the dapple grey mare. A pang enters his
heart as he clicks the horse onwards thinking of Neptune and Everlyn
so far away from him.
The short journey is uneventful but people seem to give him a wide
berth when they recognise him on approach. When he climbs down
having reached 104 he feels a deep sensation of dread and guilt. He
knows that the family have every right to react negatively to what he
wants to say and this thought encourages the overwhelming flood of
guilt.
He ties his horse to the fence outside the house and knocks on the
door twice. He hears some commotion from inside and then a girl
opens the door, an apron tied around her waist and flour on her face.
She frowns for a moment when she sees him but makes no comment.
"Can I help you sir?" She asks cordially.
"I was hoping to see Evelyn's.....guardian?" He says polietly, "I wish
to...."
"Juliet, who is it?" Henrietta appears on the maid's right. She does a
double-take when she sees the duke and lets out a little gasp. She
quickly recovers and schools her face into a neutral expression.
"Duke Blackmoore, what a surprise, how can I be of assistance?"
"I was hoping to speak to your aunt." He replies, recognising Evelyn's
cousin, "Is she in?"
Henrietta struggles to contain her curiosity but she does her best to
appear una ected by the request. "We are all in, my lord." She says,
"My uncle has just returned from his business travels."
"Your uncle? Evelyn's father?" Blackmoore says quickly. "Can I see
him?"
"Of course," Henrietta and Juliet step back and allow him into the
house, he shuts the door behind him and removes his hat. The three
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of them stand awkwardly in the hall for a moment until Henrietta speaks. "Juliet please fetch more tea, Duke Blackmoore if you would follow me." She leads him down the right corridor and opens the door to the parlour. "We have a visitor." She announces as she steps aside allowing him into the room. Lucile and William immediately recognise him and both grow wide-eyed and pale whereas Mr Wright doesn't react. "How can we help you, sir?" He asks, standing and moving to shake the duke's hand. "I am Mr Wright." Blackmoore shakes his hand smartly. "Nathaniel Blackmoore sir, I've come about your daughter." Upon hearing the mention of his daughter Mr Wright loses his straight posture and backs away. He slumps back into his chair and turns his head away. William stands up and squares o with the duke, glaring angrily. "I don't think we can help you." He says, "I think it's best you leave, we don't want your kind around here." He takes a menacing step forward.

"Why has she le?" William asks, "And why do you know?" The hard edge still present in his voice.

Blackmoore grimaces at the harsh tone. "As you know my mistress was murdered recently and I have been the main suspect. Well, Evelyn was helping me to overthrow this accusation and to find the real killer."

"Why would she do that?" William asks, "She doesn't like people like you."

"With all due respect, she doesn't like most people." Blackmoore

replies, "She's helping me because she has the purest heart I have

"We heard that she was on the run." Mr Wright says. "I hoped it was

"She was." Blackmoore agrees, "I overturned that a few days ago

"Oh thank the lord." Lucile breathes, Henrietta hurries over and hugs

the woman, pure joy upon her face. William seems to deflate in his

"Sir, "Blackmoore says to Mr Wright, "I am sorry for all the chaos I

have created within your family, I have no other way to repay but I

would be grateful if you could accept this as some small apology." He

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ever encountered but unfortunately, she got too involved and

"I understand your indi erence to me but I come on Evelyn's behalf,"

"William." Lucile berates sharply before turning to the duke. "Evelyn

has been missing for five to six days, whatever you have to say I'd be

"Where?" Henrietta speaks for the first time upon entering the room.

"She's not missing, I know where she is," Blackmoore says.

Blackmoore says firmly, holding his ground.

William slinks back to his chair regretfully.

glad to hear it."

He faces her.

"She is safe, I know she is."

became a suspect too."

however, she is no longer a suspect."

seat, he slumps and runs a hand across his chin.

something but it was you bringing her to life."

daughter,"

"We all are." William murmers.

I can shoot straight."

Henrietta blushes and looks away and he continues.

just a rumour."

"It's not indi erence." William hisses, "It's repulsion."

pulls out the envelope and holds it out.

Time seems to slow down as all eyes fall on the envelope. Eventually, Mr Wright stands.

"I appreciate the gesture but we cannot accept."

"But father..." William protests but he falls silent when his father raises his hand. Mr Wright steps forward and meets the duke's eyes.

"It is I who should be thanking you, my daughter is a wonder and she

has been stifled too long. Henrietta thought she had a secret lover or

"I am glad she didn't and that it was you who relit the spark in her."

"Thank you, sir," Blackmoore says so ly. "I am a better man for your

The duke smiles sadly, "When the time is right I hope so." He glances

at the clock on the wall. "If you'll forgive me I need to go to town."

"Yes." Henrietta nods. "Will she come back do you think?"

William gets to his feet, "I'll show you out."

Blackmoore bows to them all. "Goodbye."

They murmer replies as William ushers him into the corridor and down the hall. Blackmoore opens the front door but William clears his throat and he stops.

William looks odd as he fixes him with an unreadable stare.

"A lesser man wouldn't come to us so I am thankful that you aren't as much of a waster as I." He says, "But I know my sister well and I don't

want to belive it but she loves you." He grimaces as he says the

words. "It's not even fascination at this point, she loves you and

Evelyn Wright does not love easily." He o ers out his hand, "Don't

break her, because I might be a terrible brother and pathetic man but

The day before Evelyn had waved goodbye to Lawrance as he set o

on his journey to Richmond with a promise he would return as soon

as he concluded his business. Today she sits in the garden upon the swing, an apple in her hand and a light feeling in her heart. She had thoroughly enjoyed the time spent with him and is eagerly awaiting his return.

"Still pining for your gentleman friend?" Lucy asks approaching the tree with a glass of lemonade. Evelyn jumps o the swing and takes the lemonade.

"It's a bit early for lemonade, no?" She comments, "And I am not pining, he said he'd return when he finished his business, he didn't say when that would be." She runs a finger over the rim of the glass, "He's a good friend."

"You don't make friends," Lucy says. Evelyn turns around swily.

"He's certainly charming and handsome enough to entice even you

"I know what you are trying to do and I want no part of it." She says,

"I don't know what you are trying to say but may I suggest you attend

Evelyn snorts a little, "Now you have gone mad, I can't attend a dance

"He might not return in time," Evelyn says as she throws her apple

her head held high. Lucy holds up her hands and tries to look

"You won't be unaccompanied when your friend returns."

into friendship," Lucy replies slyly. Evelyn shoots her an annoyed

"I do." She insists, "I am just picky."

the dance at the town hall tonight?"

unaccompanied, not even a local dance."

core into the bush and sits back on the swing.

glare.

innocent.

Lawrance.

starting to fidget.

back and I am dressed for nothing?"

reassures. "Now stop stressing."

servants. "Do I look nice?"

compliments your skin tone."

women jumping in surprise.

appearance.

that you don't look lovely."

sleep a er it finishes."

him.

heights."

now, I am not a great dancer."

gorgeous grin breaks across his face.

"He will," Lucy promises, "You might think of him as a friend but he has other ideas."

Evelyn narrows her eyes and swings gently, her feet grazing the ground. "Do you think he will return in time?" She asks, ignoring the other comment.

"I do." Lucy says, "Now come on inside and help me with this apple tart and we can discuss what you should wear."

"It's a local dance," Evelyn grumbles following Lucy back to the house. She spends the rest of the day helping Lucy in the kitchen until Lucy decided that it was time to get ready for the arrival of

The clock chimes five to seven and Evelyn paces around the front

"Please calm down," Lucy says waiting by the stairs with Lydia.

"I can't." Evelyn says, shaking her hands, "What he doesn't come

companion, you'll enjoy the night and he will be forgotten," Lucy

"You're right." Evelyn says, "Of course you are." She turns to the two

"Thank you," Evelyn says with a smile, "And thank you for pinning my

hair. I've never had it completely down before." She shakes her head

and her silver-blonde curls swish around her shoulders, they gleam in

"What do we do?" Lydia whispers as Lucy steps forward to answer the

door. Eveyln creeps up to the front door and catches Lucy's hand

the flickering light. A sudden knock on the front door has the three

"Then you can go to the dance anyway and take Lydia as a

"You look positively angelic." Lydia pipes up, "The purple

entrance hall nervously. The dance starts in thirty-five minutes and

Lawrence is nowhere in sight. She has been ready since half six and is

before she can undo the latch, she looks nervous.

"I'll answer the door, you two wait in the dining room." She whispers.

Lucy and Lydia scamper o into the room and Evelyn checks her bare face in a small mirror. There is another knock on the door and she undoes the lock and opens it to reveal Lawrence standing on the front step.

"Hello." He greets, removing his hat and bowing his head.

"Good evening," Evelyn says, stepping aside and allowing him inside.

He enters the hall and in the dim light gets a full view of her

"I suddenly feel very underdressed." He comments, removing his coat

and hanging them on the nearest clothes stand. "That is not to say

"Why thank you. It's not new or anything but there is a dance in the

town hall tonight and I was thinking if you weren't too tired we could

"It's a country dance." She says quickly, noticing his reluctance. "A lot

less formal, everyone is invited, it's just a bit of fun. You can stay the

night here too so you don't have to worry about finding a place to

He scratches the back of his neck and looks thoughtful. "I warn you

"I can teach you. So is that a yes?" She asks hopefully. He sighs and a

"How can I say no?" He says. Evelyn claps her hands in delight, she

grabs his coat and throws it back to him, grabbing her own and

go?" She says, fingers crossed behind her back.

"A dance?" Lawrence repeats. "Like a ball?"

"Lucy." She calls and the cook enters the hall, curtsying to the guest.

"Mr Jordan will be staying the night, please prepare the guest room for him and tend to his horse," Evelyn informs her despite the fact Lucy had only been around the corner, listening to every word.

"Of course miss." She says curtseying and vanishing through the servant's entrance.

"Shall we?" Evelyn opens the door. Lawrence brushes past her and

waits at the bottom step for her to close the door and catch up to

"It's not a far walk." She says, wrapping her wool coat tightly around

her body as the chilly air nips at her ears. The light of the moon

allows them to see just ahead of themselves as they stroll in an

"Quite well, I thank you." He replies, "The investors were polite and

"It is not really, I am going to go with a London investor, Wilfred

Blackmoore, he has the potential to expand my business to new

"How did your business go?" She asks, breaking the quiet.

friendly but they don't have the capital I am a er."

amicable silence down the country lanes.

"Oh, that's a shame." She says.

politely, asking the odd question.

parked outside several public houses.

"Yes, there's not much." She says.

hers in reply.

Upon hearing the name Blackmoore, Evelyn's blood freezes in her veins and she stumbles on a rough patch of ground but catches herself before she falls.

"That's good." She says, scathing over the pause. "Is it a new port you want?"

"A direct port between New York and Bristol, the centre of trading between England and America." He explains.

"That would be fortunate for both countries." She says. He talks

about the advantages, potential profit and risks and she listens

"So this is Darlington?" Lawrence says as they enter the outskirts of

the town. All around them are quaint cottages and cute townhouses

with bright light flooding from the windows. Carriages and horses are

"It's very English." He comments, looking at the closed butchers and bakery. Evelyn laughs.

"What does that even mean?" She giggles, directing them towards the town hall where peels of music flow from and excited chattering can be heard.

"It's just English." He insists, chuckling himself. Evelyn steps in front of him. She puts on a snobby expression and holds out her hand.

"Do you, Mr Lawrence Jordan accept this invitation to a very English country dance?" She asks in her poshest voice. He slips his hand into

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