

Chapter 37

Evelyn drops to the floor as the entire congregation screams at the three shots fired in rapid succession. Lawrence seems to fall in slow motion as the bullets tear through his body. He falls to the floor by Evelyn's crouched figure. She scrambles back to avoid the scarlet rivers of blood that pour from fatal wounds, but she stops when cool metal is placed on the back of her neck. She lets out a tiny whimper.

"Stand up slowly," Edward Tremontane whispers in her ear, steady holding a pistol. Evelyn shakily starts to rise but she isn't quick enough for him and he grabs her hair and pulls her up forcibly. Tears appear in the corner of her eyes, but she bites her tongue to prevent any more sound from escaping her.

"Why did you kill him?" She whispers, refusing to look at the body still twitching on the floor.

"Shut up." Edward presses the pistol deeper into her neck while keeping a punishing grip on her hair.

"Edward, this is insane," Blackmoore says, inching forward, his hands raised, "I know you are angry but..."

Edward laughs, it's a cold and harsh sound. "Angry? I am not angry; I am fucking furious." He takes a step back towards the body and blood pool, pulling Evelyn with him. She lets out a tiny moan as Lawrence's blood begins to soak into her dress and cover her shoes, it soaks Edward's dress shoes, but he doesn't notice as he continues to yell.

"And I know what you are going to say, this is not the way to solve things, well you're wrong!" He shouts, "You are all wrong!" He turns to the crowd. "I see the judgment in your eyes as you sit upon your high horses, you thought Phillipa was nothing more than an actor slut, but you were wrong!"

He spits on the ground, "It's my turn to now, you all think yourselves so clever, so bloody smart but no one could work out Phillipa's death and the worst thing is no one cared about her, but I did, I cared so much!" He screams, "So much!" He glares at Blackmoore, "I loved her! I thought she loved me too but then she was seduced by your fucking lies!"

Evelyn slips her hand from her taut hair to the back of her head, her fingers fumble trying to free one of the ivory pins.

"I thought killing you would drive her into my arms." Edward says harshly to Blackmoore, "I planned it to look like a suicide, but when I saw you in the garden," He starts to pant, fury building, "I couldn't stand it! I shot and missed." For a moment he looks regretful, but it vanishes and is replaced by pure hatred. "With her dead, there was no point of you living either but then I heard about your new friend and everything became clear! She dies and you know how I feel." He pulls Evelyn's hair closer to him and she stumbles backwards.

"Edward I am sorry that all this has happened, I didn't know you loved her." Blackmoore says, "But killing anyone else isn't going to bring her back."

Edward scoffs, "I know that, this is about revenge on you, you have single-handedly ruined my life. You, who doesn't deserve anyone! You are nobody." He drops the hand holding the pistol to his side and Evelyn takes her chance. She plunges her pin into the hand holding her hair.

Edward cries out in pain and lets go of her. She stumbles forward and into Blackmoore's arms. She clings to him, hugging him tightly.

"YOU BITCH." Edward howls, cradling his injured hand. He raises the pistol in the other hand and shoots it directly at Evelyn's face. She closes her eyes and waits for the bullet to hit her. It never happens. She hears a thump as a body lands in front of her. All eyes fall on the person lying on the floor and Blackmoore takes advantage of this distraction to tackle Edward. Evelyn tears her eyes away from him flinging the pistol out of Edward's hand to see her brother lying in front of her, blood pouring from him.

"No," She whispers, her voice cracking, she falls to her knees, sobbing and cradles his face.

"I am sorry, so sorry, William." She cries. He opens his eyes and they travel around the ceiling until they land on her face.

"Luckyly he is such a poor shot." He groans, glancing at his right arm.

"What?" Evelyn looks at his arm to see a dark hole just below his shoulder. "He hit you here?"

"Yes," William says, wincing. "Evie?"

"Yes, I am here." Evelyn sobs, hugging his left shoulder.

"I don't want to be a lawyer."

She lets out a strangled laugh that could be a sob, she brushes his hair from his face, "You don't have to be a lawyer."

"Can I be your big brother again?" He asks, looking almost afraid of her answer, "Is that alright?"

"That's alright." Evelyn nods, wiping her eyes. Her father moves forward and pulls her away so that a few men can bind William's wound and keep him alive and conscious till they reach the doctor. Four men hoist him into the air, keeping him level.

"Do you want to come with your son?" One of them asks Mr Wright. Evelyn squeezes her father tighter, not wanting him to leave her.

"They'll take him to a doctor." Mr Wright whispers to his daughter, "He will make a full recovery I am sure, but I should go." He removes her arms from around him, "Be strong."

Evelyn's arms drop limply at her side. Henrietta is immediately next to her; she leads her cousin away from the crowd and sits her at the side of the room. Evelyn leans her head against her cousin and stares solemnly ahead. Henrietta hugs her closer and rubs her back comfortingly. They sit like this for a few minutes under the crowd, still gathered around the stage, splits in two and takes major steps back.

Evelyn twists her head just in time to see Blackmoore leave the room with Jasper and three other men, Edward in their midst, his hands bound and a red lump on his head. She makes eye contact and his emotionless stare causes her stomach to flip.

"Don't look at him." Henrietta orders moving into Evelyn's sightline.

"Tea miss?" Maids flood into the ballroom; many cups of tea being handed out.

"Whiskey?" Evelyn asks, a half-smile on her face.

The maid looks momentarily unsure but she says, "Of course miss."

"Make that two," Henrietta says. The maid nods and walks away.

"Can you handle your drink?" Evelyn says to her cousin. Henrietta sighs and shrugs.

"I feel as though I can handle anything after that."

Evelyn makes a sound in agreement. They lapse into silence. The guests pan out into the room, some immediately make their way to the exit while others hang around to talk.

"I am sorry about your party," Evelyn says, looking at the chunks of ceiling, dead body and pool of blood.

"Don't be silly." Henrietta replies wryly, "It'll go down in history."

"And that's a good thing?"

"I am trying to be positive!" Henrietta defends, chuckling lightly. She looks at her cousin. "Do you think it's all over now?"

"I don't know." Evelyn admits, "I hope so, there isn't much else I feel I can survive."

The maid returns with two large whiskeys, the cousin take them, thanking her. Evelyn throws hers back. The burn of the alcohol warms her body and clears her foggy mind. Henrietta has a tentative sip of hers, but she spits it out instantly. She wipes her mouth, gagging at the taste.

"No, that's more than I can handle." She says, grimacing. Evelyn steals her glass and downs it. She relishes the fire and closes her eyes as it travels down her throat. A small cough has her opening her eyes to see Detective Rawson standing in front of her, a notepad in his hand.

"Detective." She drops the two glasses onto a free chair and stands up. An irrational voice in her mind is saying he is here for her but the apologetic expression on his face suggests otherwise. He clears his throat.

"First of I'd like to apologise for our last meeting. I was just following orders, but I did not act correctly." He says grudgingly, not meeting her eyes.

"I understand sir, I bear no grudge," Evelyn replies. He nods and continues.

"My men have detained Tremontane and he will be processed accordingly. As for Mr Jordan...."

They all glance towards the body being cleaned up.

"He will be handled with consideration and care...what do you know of his family?" Rawson looks expectantly at Evelyn and Henrietta. Evelyn frowns and looks uncomfortable.

"Not much, I do believe he has family in America, but I don't know who or where."

The detective scribbles some notes down, "I don't want to press you further, I have already spoken to Duke Blackmoore who was very insistent that I don't bother you, but I have to ask, do you think Jordan was mentally ill?"

Evelyn's hands twitch and she glances down at her blood-stained shoes, "I think.... uh...he was grieving and that affected his judgement. He didn't deserve to die like that."

Rawson nods, writing. He finishes his sentence and looks up. "No, well thank you for your time." He nods to both women and heads towards a group of bystanders.

"I think I am going to have to step outside," Evelyn says to Henrietta. "I feel quite faint. Will you find our Aunt?"

Henrietta stands, "Of course, we will join you when I find her."

Evelyn smiles her thanks and leaves the ballroom.