

Chapter 4

Evelyn walks into the entrance hall and the smell of sweet cakes and scones swirls under her nose. The hallway of the house is small but stylish, well looked after and bright. There are no portraits on the walls, only painting of wildlife and places. A few stuttering candles light all around and lead up to the small set steps that curves upwards. Evelyn looks around and grimaces, the decadent design is a lot different than her own home. Where in Darlington there are vases of freshly picked flowers, in this house, there are small statues made of gold and precious metals. The snap of the door makes her turn around and the butler appears behind her and helps her to remove her coat and hat. Once the garments have been hung up with her cousin's, her aunt directs her to the right.

The soft carpets muffle their feet as they walk down the main hallway to the parlour. The door is ajar as they approach and Evelyn sees that her cousin and brother have made themselves more than at home and are tucking into the delicious spread that has been laid out on a coffee table. She enters the room after her aunt and takes the seat next to her cousin on the tulip patterned sofa. The room is bright and airy, decorated with pastel pink wallpaper and different coloured flowers. A small writing desk sits by the large window that looks into the street. There are no bookshelves in this room, only small tables that hold ornaments and decorated glass creatures. The sofa she is sat on matches every other seat in the room, including the small footstool in front of the largest armchair.

A young girl with a pink face pours her and her mistress a cup of strong sweet tea, she offers them both milk but she is waved away.

"How was your journey?" Lucile asks as she spreads jam and cream on a scone. Evelyn studies the copious amount of food in front of her, cream cakes, sticky buns, scones and vanilla slices are piled in numerous amounts. She takes a bite of a vanilla slice and the thick creamy rich cake has her closing her eyes in satisfaction.

"It was horrific, I don't think that man was a qualified driver," Henrietta tosses her head back and sips her tea. "I couldn't sit still for the potholes he ran over, a dreadful business." She tells Lucile fervently while sipping her tea with her pinky sticking out. Lucile's eyes widen at her story.

"Robson is a perfectly good driver, you normally have no complaint when he drives you to all your social meetings," William says, leaning back in his chair and chewing on a pink macaroon.

Henrietta purses her lips and opens her mouth to retaliate but Lucile cuts in quickly and sets down her cup.

"Well, you are all here safe, now." She says smiling. William smirks his victory and helps himself to another macaroon. Evelyn finishes her slice and notices that the cup she is drinking out of is made of the finest china and has pink roses swirling on the lip, very different from the chipped teacups she has at home.

"I am hoping to go dress shopping tomorrow." Henrietta says, "I am in need of new dresses immediately."

"The nearest shop is on the outskirts of town, we can have the driver take us tomorrow morning." Lucile says brightly sitting forward, "I do love a good outing."

Henrietta smiles brattily, "I don't want the nearest, I want the best, wherever that may be."

Lucile falters but returns a smile and thinks for a minute. "Madame Olive's is the best place in the whole of London."

"Excellent," Henrietta says. "We shall go there."

"I will not be coming to an outing of such nature," William says.

"I suspected as much," Lucile says, "What do you have in mind instead?"

He shrugs and folds his arms behind his neck "I might go for walk."

Evelyn raises her eyebrows and considers his relaxed figure since when did her brother enjoy walks?

"Well, you are more than welcome to," Lucile says. "However I do have a friend who's son lives in the middle of town, we could drop you off on our way, Richard loves visitors."

William's eyes light up. "That would be very agreeable." He says.

"Excellent, then we all have plans for tomorrow," Lucile says, Henrietta yawns and sighs, the yawn sets off a reaction and Evelyn too has to stifle a yawn behind her hand. Lucile looks at her guest's tired faces and claps her hands. "I'll show you to your rooms."

Evelyn puts down her empty teacup and rises to her feet to follow her aunt from the room. Henrietta lightly bumps past her and promptly trapeses from the room. William is the last to leave the room not before filling his pockets macaroons. Lucile leads them up the small staircase to the only corridor which is lit by solitary candles between the doors. They walk past two doors before stopping.

"William, this is your room. You should find that Withers has taken your trunks up." His aunt opens the door and steps aside so he can enter.

"Thanks." He says as he looks around his room. He bids them goodnight and shuts the door. Lucile leads the two girls to the very end of the corridor and stops by the door.

"I am sorry but you will have to share a room as the fourth floor is mainly used for storage and the servants quarters and the third floor is my private floor." She says. Evelyn feels her heart sink and her brain rolls its eyes at her fortune. Henrietta, however, doesn't manage to conceal her feelings quite as well as he mouth drops open in horror and her eyes seem to bulge out of her head. Lucile doesn't appear phased.

Lucile says, "Goodnight." She smiles and walks to the nearest door, she opens it and it reveals a set of stairs. She disappears up them and the door swings shut leaving the cousins alone in the corridor.

"This is ridiculous!" Henrietta stamps her foot. "Why does she need a whole floor to herself?"

Evelyn ignores her and turns the handle of the door. She steps inside and looks around the large room. Several candles are dotted around the space, illuminating the furniture inside. There are two single beds; one stands in the middle of the room with two bedside tables and the other is on the far side of the room, on a raised platform by a large window. Both beds have matching cream sheets with pink pillows. The wooden floor creaks as Henrietta stalks forwards and inspects under the first bed.

There is one vanity table opposite the first bed and two oak wardrobes on either side. In the corner by the door, there is a matching sofa and two swishy looking armchairs with a low table. The room is fairly light and smells of lavender and rose.

Their trunks have been brought up as Lucile suggested and they sit against the wall. Evelyn picks up her trunks and carries/drops them over to the bed by the window, she slips off her shoes and they tumble onto the floor. She kneels on the soft blanket of the fourposter bed and looks outside. Their room is on the back side of the house and looks down onto a small cobbled courtyard. She lifts the latch on the window frame and opens the window. The chilly night air bursts in, it makes her shiver and but she doesn't pull the window closed. It air cools her flushed cheeks and the smell of the city calms her racing heart. The bed squeaks as she adjusts her position to lie down. It looks old, the paint on the frame is missing in places and the mattress is hard around the edges however it is comfy enough despite Henrietta's complaint as she tries out her own bed.

Evelyn never imagined coming back to London and now that she is here, it feels too real. It seems cruel to her that the life she had is going to be dangled in front of her eyes for the next few weeks. The life she loved, the life with her happy family, the life with her mother.

"I hope your aunt has another wardrobe because I shan't be able to fit all my new dresses into this tiny thing," Henrietta says as she opens the wardrobes to peer inside. Evelyn turns her head to watch her open her trunk and pulls out a pale pink nightgown.

"Ask her in the morning," She replies, moving from her bed and hunting for her own nightclothes in her luggage. Once the white nightdress is found she slips into it and undoes her hair so it swishes around her lower back. She settles into her bed and tries to warm her toes up by wriggling them under the blankets.

The candle next to her stutters and the warm light it emits dies. She turns her head and makes out her cousin in the light glowing from beside her bed. The girl has pulled on her nightgown and is struggling with her hair. In the half-light, Henrietta looks comical as she tugs at the pins holding her hair up.

"I can't..." Both her hands are on her head as she pulls at the pins. She looks around at the other bed but Evelyn quickly shuts her eyes and pretends to be asleep. She evens out her breathing and hopes that her cousin believes her attempt at a deep stupor. She hears the sound of quick footsteps and then her shoulders are being roughly shaken.

"What the...?" Evelyn's eyes whip open and she sits up and Henrietta leans over her with folded arms.

"I knew you were pretending, you are a terrible actress." She states. "I need you to take out my hair, I don't know where Juliet has vanished too."

Evelyn doesn't even speak but gestures with her hand for Henrietta to turn around and kneel. She does and Evelyn begins to take out every pin that Juliet had put in this morning. A few hundred pins later and Henrietta's hair is flowing around her shoulders.

"There," Evelyn says dropping the final pin onto the pyramid pile.

"Now brush it," Henrietta says holding up an amber brush. Evelyn scoops and takes the brush out of her hand, she rolls it between her fingers before throwing it across the room. It lands on the middle of Henrietta's bed with a small thump as intended.

"That's my hairbrush." Henrietta protests, standing up and looking incredibly insulted.

"Shall I start with the pins?" Evelyn asks picking up the top pin and lifting her arm in preparation. Henrietta hastily gathers the pins onto her bed and carries them to the vanity table. Evelyn flops back onto her mattress and pulls the covers up to her chin. Henrietta blows her candle out so the room is plunged into subtle darkness. Soon Evelyn can hear the rhythmic breathing from the other bed. She closes her eyes and a single tear leaks out the corner and slips down her cheek to fall onto the sharp line of her chin. She turns over to face the window and as the cool air kisses her face she begins to drift into sleep.