

Chapter 3

The sun rises high in the sky and bathes the carriage in a warm fresh light. Juliet hands the serving boys the trunks and they strap them onto the back of the carriage. The clock in the hall chimes nine o'clock as Evelyn walks down the stairs in her travelling cloak draped over a rose patterned dress, a small beaded bag hangs o her wrist and a matching white bonnet is tied under her chin.

"Always on time," William says, leaning against the door frame with a cigar in his hand. His blonde hair is swept across his forehead and sticks up at the back. Evelyn tuts as she steps in front of him and looks pointedly at the smoking cigar.

"Father won't like that." She says, folding her arms.

"He won't catch me." He says cheekily, stubbing it out on the floor and kicking it onto the gravel. She sighs disapprovingly and watches the final suitcase be strapped onto the back.

"Have you seen Henrietta this morning?" She asks.

"No." William says "She wasn't at breakfast."

Evelyn frowns. "I thought she would be dying to leave,"

William clears his throat and stands up straight, looking at something over her head. She turns around and sees their father heading towards them.

"Children, good morning." He says. "I am disappointed that I shall not be joining you in London however I hope you enjoy your time there."

William purses his lips but doesn't say anything.

"Evelyn if you could give this to your aunt?" Her father takes a letter out of his breast pocket and hands it to her.

"Of course." She slips it into her small bag. There is a sound of banging upstairs and the patter of quick feet, they glance up to the top of the stairs where Henrietta appears, she races down the stairs and skids to a halt in front of the party.

"I can't believe I overslept." She cries breathlessly. Evelyn would normally contradict her but the atrocity on the top of her cousin's chestnut locks has astounded her into silence. Hot pink feathers over twenty centimetres stick out of a crumpled white hat with pink sequins. As she turns her head the feathers turn her hat. ↻

"Shall we go then?" She asks, she flounces towards the door, her feathers swing wildly, "Goodbye Uncle."

Evelyn doesn't speak until the horrific feathers have vanished from sight. William snorts behind his hand, even her father smiles, amused.

"Goodbye, father," William says with a grin, he heads out the door. Evelyn turns to Mr Wright and she smiles sadly.

"I'll see you soon." She says, kissing his cheek. He pats the top of her head comfortingly. She walks out of the house and across the gravel to the carriage where a serving boy helps her inside. She steps up and settles herself next to her brother with Henrietta and Juliet opposite. The door shuts, she pushes back the curtain that covers her window and waves to her father as the horses trot on, pulling the carriage down the lane. Evelyn leans into the leather seat and closes her eyes when her home becomes out of site. ↻

"Is this exciting?" Henrietta says, Evelyn opens her eyes to see her pulling power and rouge out of her bag. She begins to pamper face in a small compact mirror. William bites his cheek as the feathers in her hair wobble and flutter in the air as the carriage is pulled over rocks and holes. ↻

"Where did you find those feathers?" Evelyn asks, eyeing the pink accessory. Henrietta glances at her and then raises her hand to touch it.

"They're beautiful, aren't they?" She says running a finger along the length. "Juliet found them for me and dyed it pink on my request."

"Do you know what kind of birds they're from?" William asks, "Because it looks like they come from a pigeon."

Henrietta gasps and drops her mirror into her lap. "Never, I would never wear pigeon in my hair!"

Juliet keeps a placid expression on her face but the corners of her mouth begin to twitch as she pulls out her sewing. Evelyn smiles to herself and turns to watch the fields and trees roll past. She watches the hills of Darlington disappear behind them and a dull feeling settles in her stomach. She opens her bag and pulls out a small book. She runs a finger down the cracked spine and opens it to the first page. Before she can begin to read the first chapter it is snatched out of her hands.

"What is this?" Henrietta asks closing the book and reading the title. "The history of.....international...?" ↻

"The history of international criminal law in the British empire."

Evelyn snaps grabbing the book back. William looks over her shoulder as she reopens the book.

"I don't know why you read those dull books, I don't even find them interesting when I am studying." He says, biting his fingernails.

Evelyn ignores them both and starts reading chapter one. Henrietta sighs loudly and taps her foot on the carriage floor, her fingers drum on her lap and she clicks her tongue.

"How long is it to London?" Henrietta asks the carriage. William shrugs and Juliet continues to sew a detailed rose.

"About six hours," Evelyn replies not looking up from her book. Henrietta groans and crosses her arms moodily. She looks outside her window and exhales dramatically, she tosses her head back and sighs again.

"Would you like your embroidery Miss?" Juliet asks reaching for her bag and opening her the canvas.

"No I would not." Henrietta snarls, hitting her hand away. Juliet lowers her eyes but Evelyn meets her eyes and gives her a reassuring look.

"The first thing we have to do tomorrow is to find the nearest dressmakers and have as many dresses as I can a ord made on an urgent request," Henrietta says. Evelyn mentally sighs and shuts her book.

"Ought you to save some of your allowance for the future?" She suggests.

Henrietta snots and her feathers shake. "I don't need it for the future, I will receive my inheritance when I marry." She smirks, "And that will be this year I am sure of it." ↻

"But what if you don't? Three years is a long time to wait." Evelyn says.

"What if this? What if that?" Henrietta mocks, "Honestly Evelyn you think too much." ↻

Evelyn doesn't retort but she leans her head against the window and tries to doze o to her cousin discussing with Juliet whether silk or velvet will look better with her skin tone. Their mindless chattering lulls her mind into a deep stupor and before long she has dried o into a light sleep.

"Evelyn." A light tap on her shoulder causes her to swat the o ending finger away. "Evelyn!" She opens her eyes to see her brother's face directly in front of her. She looks around the carriage to find that Henrietta and Juliet are both absent.

"What's happening?" She asks, stretching her arms out and tilting her neck to alleviate the ache.

"We are here." He says taking a step down, out of the carriage, he holds his hand out and assists her in climbing down onto the pavement. The sky has clouded over and the London street is dim and dark in the fading light. The street is a curved line of identical white stone terrace houses with two tall pillars that line the steps up to the heavy black doors with golden knockers that sit below the number of each house. Every house has four stories with wide windows that sit equally above each other, there is a small balcony on the second story window that creates the roof for the extended porch that shelters the steps and door. The house they have stopped in front is number 104, the butler and serving sta have already scurried out of the house and are helping to move the copious amount of luggage inside. The move in an e cient line, like ants transporting food.

Henrietta sni s into a small handkerchief as she looks up and down the street, she can hardly hide the disgust on her face.

"It's rather small." She comments looking at 104 with a disappointed pout. Evelyn doesn't even spare a glance at her cousin as an older woman in a pale lavender dress appears on the top step.

"Aunt Lucile!" William cries and he rushes to meet her as she hops o the last step. She laughs as he engulfs her in a bear hug, she pats his cheek fondly when he lets her go, her brilliant silver eyes flash warmly.

"Oh Willaim, how you have grown so!" She says incredulously as he towers at least half a foot over her petite frame. "It is lovely to see you."

She turns to face Henrietta and her smile falters slightly at the obvious look of fake politeness on Henrietta's face.

"You must be Henrietta," She says waltzing forward.

"Yes," Henrietta says shortly, looking the woman up and down, her lip curls. ↻

"It's a delight to have you," Lucile says finally a er a moment. She glances around the company.

"You must all be very tired, do come inside for some tea, it is prepared for you in the front parlour." She extends her arm to the door and Henrietta flounces past, followed by William and then Juliet. Evelyn turns in front of the carriage, reluctant to go inside. Lucile returns to her once they others have le them with the butler holding the door open. The two women look at each other, silence fills the street. ↻

"Father wanted to come but he is too busy with work," Evelyn says eventually though she looks to the sky as she speaks.

"It's a pity, I would have like to have seen him," Lucile replies, fiddling with the folds of her dress. Evelyn nudges a rock with her foot but then reaches into her bag as she remembers the letter.

"This is from father," She says handing the letter over. Lucile takes in and looks at her niece properly for the first time.

"How are you, Evelyn?" She asks, "You look thin, tired." ↻

Evelyn grimaces and looks at her aunt's face, she too looks thinner than normal and tired.

"It's just the travelling taking its e ect." She says. "I am well."

"I've missed you and William, and your father," Lucile says quietly. "It's been very lonely."

"Aunt, this isn't a conversation for now," Evelyn says pointedly, glancing towards the impassive face of the butler.

"No, of course not." The haunted look vanishes from her aunt's face. "Would you like some tea?"

"I'd love some," Evelyn says and she follows her aunt into the house.