## Chapter 14

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"Eliza Turner?" Blackmoore frowns. "Why her?" "Becuase you refuse to see the Duke of She ield," Evelyn says as they both walk to the door. Claude has made himself scarce and the two strangers stand facing each other, distrust floating between them. Blackmoore sighs and rolls his eyes at her insistence. "Fine, the carriage is outside." He says opening the door. "But you should know." He calls a er her as she leaves the warmth of the house. "She married now." Evelyn stops on the bottom step and whirls around, confusion all over her face. "Married to whom?" "Jasper Harrington." The duke joins her on the bottom step and o ers her a wonky smile. "Really? Wow." Evelyn tilts her head. The carriage in front of her is wider than any she has ever seen. The gleaming black doors are painted with the family crest and a small man sits at the front holding onto the reins of two gorgeous white mares. Blackmoore opens the door and steps aside to allow her up but he doesn't o er his hand so she climbs inside and takes a seat. The carriage has red leather seats and is very spacious, no doubt you could fit five or six people inside. "She's moved then? Out of Ryddan Manor?" She asks as he sits opposite and slams the door. "Yes, they are at Chester Valley now, I think." He says. "Then that is where we shall go." She says, comfortably leaning back into the seat. The Duke nods and hits the roof with his stick. "Chester Valley." He barks and the carriage rolls into moving. He crosses his legs and places both hands on the top of his cane. He surveys her intensely, his dark eyes seem to peer into her soul. She feels a slight blush creep around the tops of her ears, she lowers her eyes and regrets not bringing a book along. "I am curious, how do you know all this law and legal jargon?" He asks. "My brother is studying to be a lawyer." She explains, "I o en help him learn things and I do find the way the law works interesting." "It a very odd thing to like, law. I know several lawyers that hate it and it's their job." He comments. "There's a certain...inticing integrity in law." She says, "It's a complex system with many loopholes and catches that make it interesting though I'll admit, it has many flaws." She notices he is staring at her with wonder and confusion. "Well, what do you like?" "Whiskey and women, the best combination." He says cheekily. Evelyn doesn't conceal her disgust and he leans forward. "And you are a very beautiful woman." She glowers and also leans forward so that their faces are a few inches away from each other. "Duke Blackmoore, if I am going to help you, you need to be aware that I am not one of your lady friends, this is a partnership, not a relationship." "A partnership is a relationship." He points out. "A business one." She counters. He smiles at her, his eyes smouldering. "I cannot help it when I see a gorgeous woman I have to say so." "For the sake of your neck, hold your tongue." She bites back and sits up promptly. He holds his hands up in mock surrender as he also rights his posture. "I beg your pardon." He smirks. Evelyn ignores him and turns to look out of the window. The duke taps his stick on the floor to capture her attention but she doesn't even flinch. He sighs dramatically and tuts. Still nothing. For fi een long minutes, he tries to gain her focus or at least receive a glance but she remains like a statue. "Your silence's are deadly." He finally says and eventually she turns her head to look at him, her eyes mock his presence. He smiles at her but it's cynical and patronising. "Do you want to know why you compliment women the way you do?" She says. "Because I am honest?" He says. "Becuase you don't know how to talk to women." She says, "You shower them in predictable compliments and they lap it up. Just like that, you have made a friend through a few meaningless words." She folds her hands in her lap, "But I am not like that so please don't assume that if you call me beautiful, it will make me like you. I am not helping you because I like you." Blackmoore's cheeky smile has been replaced by a poker glare but he then leans back. "No more compliments then." He agrees. The remaining miles of the journey are done in silence and neither party tries to break it. The carriage rolls down a drive and stops in front of a big house. Blackmoore climbs out and o ers his hand to Evelyn but she ignores it and steps out on her own. He runs up the steps and bangs loudly on the oak door. He turns to her with a daring smile, mischief alight in his eyes. "You should know Harrington dislikes me too." He says as she joins him on the top step. She opens her mouth to ask but the door is quickly opened by a man in a casual shirt and pants. His ice blue eyes narrow as he sees the man who is standing on the doorstep. "Jasper!" Blackmoore o ers his hand but the other duke just looks at his hand as though it is something that has been dead for a few days. "What do you want Blackmoore?" He asks. "It's not me," Blackmoore says defensively, nodding at Evelyn. Jasper turns his head in her direction. "Duke Harrington, we'd like to see your wife." She says earnestly. "Why?" He says, folding his arms. "We just want to ask her a few things." She says. "Jasper?" A so voice calls from inside and a woman with vibrant green eyes and pitch black hair comes into sight. She looks at Blackmoore with a pleasant expression that turns to intrigue when her eyes fall on Evelyn. "Eliza." Evelyn smiles at seeing the eccentric girl she has grown up knowing. "Evelyn." Eliza's lip curls. "They want to ask you a few things," Jasper says, wrapping an arm around his wife's waist. "Really?" She half frowns, "Whatever regarding?" "It rather delicate, can we discuss it inside?" Evelyn proposes. Eliza looks at her husband and then nods. The Duchess gives in to her curiosity. "Of course." She steps back and takes her husband's hand. They allow the guests to enter the hall. "This way." She says and she takes them into a sitting room that opens out into the garden. She gestures to a sofa as she and Jasper sit down on the one opposite. Blackmoore crosses his legs and leans into one of the corners as Evelyn speaks first. "I know we were never friends Eliza." "No." Eliza agrees. "But there was a certain amount of mutual respect between us." "You mean you were the only person who was careful about what they said around me." "And you were smart enough not to cross me." "We both knew the other had the power to ruin us," Eliza concludes. "What is your point?" "Duke Blackmoore has recently become the main suspect in a murder enquiry," Evelyn says. "I heard." Eliza's eyes flick to Blackmoore's and back. He shu les. "For some undisclosed and insane reason we are trying to prove his innocence but we can't without certain information." Evelyn crosses her hands in her lap and meets the bright green gaze with steady grey confidence. Eliza raises her eyebrows. "What type of information?" "What was she like? Her life? Any scandals?" Evelyn leans forward. "Anything to kill over?" "What makes you think I know anything?" Eliza says slowly. "Don't insult my intelligence and I won't insult yours, I know you hear everything." Evelyn cocks her head. "So?" "Why should I help you? You said yourself we aren't friends." Eliza narrows her eyes when Evelyn doesn't immediately reply. Blackmoore looks from both women and then to Jasper's dark expression before falling to his knees in front of Eliza. "Duchess Harrington, I don't want to be hanged." He pleads. "I promise you I didn't kill her." She narrows her eyes at his desperate face but then she turns to his companion. "I will tell you all I know, not because I believe your story but because despite the vicious things I am hearing about you are still here and either insanely clever to be helping him or idiotically stupid." She leans back in her chair. "Lady Tremomtane has been married to the Duke of She ield for seven years, they don't have any children but she has had many a airs over those years. He has two sons from his first marriage." "What happened to the first wife?" Evelyn asks. "She died in childbirth." "What about before Lady Tramontane's marriage?" "She had many suitors, one, in particular, Lord Mathew was partially disappointed when she married the old duke. She did create quite a scandal and her parents did not cope well." "Does she have any siblings?" "One sister but there's no point looking at her for a murder suspect, she's in Paris." "Who would you suggest we look at?" "Lord Mathew, her husband, his first son, Edward." "Any vile friends?" Evelyn asks. "A woman is not a murderer." Blackmoore laughs. "Women are capable of many things, more than any man," Eliza says. "We cannot rule anyone out based on gender alone." Evelyn agrees. "There have been many murderous women in history." Everyone looks at her. "I don't know any." She says defensively. "I think you should into Lady Tremontane's past," Jasper says, speaking for the first time. "How far back?" Evelyn asks. "Her childhood. No one really knows much about how her family rose in society but there were rumours of gambling money and brothels." Evelyn nods and rises to her feet, Blackmoore reluctantly copies. "Thank you for helping us." She says. Eliza stands and smiles. "Women with brains do well to stick together." She says, "I hope you find your killer." "I am most gratefully." Blackmoore takes her hand and kisses it. Jasper glowers and snatches his wife's hand back. "That will do." He growls. Blackmoore smiles and bows mockingly. Evelyn stares a er him in disgust as he walks to the door. "Evelyn wait." Eliza touches her arm. "I have never expressed my sympathy for your situation, you did not deserve such a thing."

suspicious." She insists.

out of the door.

as possible."

bashfully.

staying?"

He frowns.

his unasked question.

way."

"Some might say it is a form of karma." Evelyn winces but tries to

smile. She inclines her head to the couple and follows her companion

Outside the house, she climbs into the carriage. Blackmoore lounges

"What?" He sits up straight, "But we need to find this person as soon

"I understand that but I cannot be away too long or my family will be

"But...." He sighs when she shoots him a decisive glare. "Fine."

"I hate to ask but could you drop o near my house?" She asks

"I haven't got anything better to do." He sulks. "Where are you

"If you take me to the top of Kingston Street, I'll walk the rest of the

"I can't be seen with you, it would be highly suspicious." She answers

He hits the roof of the carriage and yells. "Kingston Street."

"Lady Tremontane obviously." Blackmoore rolls his eyes.

intended victim and you got lucky?" She frowns.

He freezes and his face darkens. "It's irrelevant."

trundle away with heavily mixed emotions.

"You aren't dead." She points out.

"Why do have that stick?"

"Yet."

"But was it because of her or to hurt you or were you actually the

"I would hardly call my situation lucky." He crosses his arms.

Evelyn rolls her eyes and they drop to the stick at his side.

Evelyn opens her mouth to press the subject but he shoots her a hard

The carriage stops at the top of Kingston Street twenty minutes later.

The atmosphere in the carriage had been unbearable for Evelyn, the

glare she closes it slowly. Another mystery to add to the pile.

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The driver receives the message and the carriage starts rolling

but in her eyes is a concentrating stare. She seems oblivious to everything else. She breaks out of her trance with a small groan and puts a hand to her head.

"I can't figure it out." She mutters to herself.

"What?" He asks.

"I can't figure out who is the intended victim." She says mystified.

forward. Blackmoore watches her for a few minutes. Her face is blank

duke had not lost the tension in his body and he hadn't uttered a single word since.

"Thank you." She murmers to him as the door opens. His stick flies out and stops her from leaving the carriage.

"I'll pick you up here tomorrow at 11'oclock." He says emotionlessly, "Don't be late."

She nods and he lets her climb down. She watches the carriage

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