

The
Love

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HARPERTEEN

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It was the old New York way . . . the way of people who dreaded scandal more than disease, who placed decency above courage, and who considered that nothing was more ill-bred than “scenes,” except the behaviour of those who gave rise to them.

—Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*

Prologue

On the morning of October 4, 1899, Elizabeth Adora Holland—the eldest daughter of the late Mr. Edward Holland and his widow, Louisa Gansevoort Holland—passed into the kingdom of heaven. Services will be held tomorrow, Sunday the eighth, at 10 a.m., at the Grace Episcopal Church at No. 800 Broadway in Manhattan.

—FROM THE OBITUARY PAGE OF THE *NEW-YORK NEWS OF THE WORLD GAZETTE*, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1899

*I*N LIFE, ELIZABETH ADORA HOLLAND WAS KNOWN not only for her loveliness but also for her moral character, so it was fair to assume that in the afterlife she would occupy a lofty seat with an especially good view. If Elizabeth had looked down from that heavenly perch one particular October morning on the proceedings of her own funeral, she would have been honored to see that all of New York's best families had turned out to say good-bye.

They crowded Broadway with their black horse-drawn carriages, proceeding gravely toward the corner of East Tenth Street, where the Grace Church stood. Even though there was currently no sun or rain, their servants sheltered them with great black umbrellas, hiding their faces—etched with shock and sadness—from the public's prying eyes. Elizabeth would have approved of their somberness and also of their indifferent attitude to the curious workaday people pressed up to the police barricades. The crowds had come to wonder at the passing of that perfect eighteen-year-old girl whose

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glittering evenings had been recounted in the morning papers to brighten their days.

A cold snap had greeted all of New York that morning, rendering the sky above an unfathomable gray. It was, Reverend Needlehouse murmured as his carriage pulled up to the church, as if God could no longer imagine beauty now that Elizabeth Holland no longer walked his earth. The pallbearers nodded in agreement as they followed the reverend onto the street and into the shadow of the Gothic-style church.

They were Liz's peers, the young men she had danced quadrilles with at countless balls. They had disappeared to St. Paul's and Exeter at some point and then returned with grown-up ideas and a fierce will to flirt. And here they were now, in black frock coats and mourning bands, looking grave for perhaps the first time ever.

First was Teddy Cutting, who was known for being so lighthearted and who had proposed marriage to Elizabeth twice without anyone taking him seriously. He looked as elegant as always, although Liz would have noted the fair stubble on his chin—a telltale sign of deep sorrow, as Teddy was shaved by his valet every morning and was never seen in public without a smooth face. After him came the dashing James Hazen Hyde, who had just that May inherited a majority share of the Equitable Life Assurance Society. He'd once let his face linger near Elizabeth's gardenia-scented neck and

told her she smelled better than any of the mademoiselles in the Faubourg St-Germain. After James came Brody Parker Fish, whose family's town house neighbored the Hollands' on Gramercy Park, and then Nicholas Livingston and Amos Vreewold, who had often competed to be Elizabeth's partner on the dance floor.

They stood still with downcast eyes, waiting for Henry Schoonmaker, who emerged last. The refined mourners could not help a little gasp at the sight of him, and not only because he was usually so wickedly bright-eyed and so regularly with a drink in hand. The tragic irony of Henry appearing as a pallbearer on the very day when he was to have wed Elizabeth seemed deeply unfair.

The horses drawing the hearse were shiny black, but the coffin was decorated with an enormous white satin bow, for Elizabeth had died a virgin. What a shame, they all whispered, blowing ghostly gusts of air into one another's ears, that an early death was visited on such a very *good* girl.

Henry, his thin lips set in a hard line, moved toward the hearse with the other pallbearers close behind. They lifted the unusually light coffin and stepped toward the church door. A few audible sobs were muffled into handkerchiefs as all of New York realized they would never again look on Liz's beauty, on her porcelain skin or sincere smile. There was, in fact, no Liz, for her body had not yet been recovered from the

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Hudson River, despite two days of dragging it, and despite the handsome reward offered by Mayor Van Wyck.

The whole ceremony had come on rather quickly, in fact, although everyone seemed too shocked to consider this.

Next in the funeral cortege was Elizabeth's mother, wearing a dress and a veil in her favorite color. Mrs. Edward Holland, née Louisa Gansevoort, had always seemed fearsome and remote—even to her own children—and she had only become harder and more intractable since her husband's passing last winter. Edward Holland had been odd, and his oddness had only grown in the years before his death. He had, however, been the eldest son of an eldest son of a Holland—a family that had prospered on the little island of Manhattan since the days when it was called New Amsterdam—and so society had always forgiven him his quirks. But in the weeks before her own death, Elizabeth had noticed something new and pitiable in her mother as well. Louisa leaned a little to the left now, as though remembering her late husband's presence.

In her footsteps was Elizabeth's aunt Edith, the younger sister of her late father. Edith Holland was one of the first women to move prominently in society after a divorce; it was understood, though not very much discussed, that her early marriage to a titled Spaniard had exposed her to enough bad humor and drunken debauchery for a whole lifetime. She went by her maiden name now, and looked as

aggrieved by the loss of her niece as if Elizabeth had been her own child.

There followed an odd gap, which everyone was too polite to comment on, and then came Agnes Jones, who was sniffing loudly.

Agnes was not a tall girl, and though she appeared well-dressed enough to the mourners still pressing against the police line for a better look, the black dress she wore would have been sadly familiar to the deceased. Elizabeth had worn the dress only once—to her father's funeral—and then passed it down. It had since been let out at the waist and shortened at the hem. As Elizabeth knew too well, Agnes's father had met with financial ruin when she was only eleven and had subsequently thrown himself off the Brooklyn Bridge. Agnes liked to tell people that Elizabeth was the only person who had offered her friendship in those dark times. Elizabeth had been her *best* friend, Agnes had often said, and though Elizabeth would have been embarrassed by such exaggerated statements, she wouldn't have dreamed of correcting the poor girl.

After Agnes came Penelope Hayes, who was usually said to be Elizabeth's *true* best friend. Elizabeth would indeed have recognized the distinct look of impatience she wore now. Penelope never liked waiting, especially out of doors. One of the lesser Mrs. Vanderbilts standing nearby recognized that look as well, and made a virtually inaudible cluck. Penelope,

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with her gleaming black feathers, Egyptian profile, and wide, heavily lashed eyes, was much admired but not very generally trusted.

And then there was the fact—uncomfortable to all assembled—that Penelope had been with Elizabeth when her body disappeared into the cold waters of the Hudson. She had, everybody knew by now, been the last person to see Elizabeth alive. Not that they suspected her of anything, of course. But then, she did not look nearly haunted enough. She wore a cluster of diamonds at her throat, and on her arm, the formidable Isaac Phillips Buck.

Isaac was a distant relation of the old Buck clan—so distant that his lineage could never be proved or disproved—but he was still formidable in size, two heads taller than Penelope and robust at the middle. Liz had never cared for him; she had always harbored a secret preference for doing what was practical and right over what was clever and fine. Isaac had never seemed to her like anything more than a tastemonger, and indeed, the gold cap now on his left canine tooth matched the watch chain that extended from under his coat to his pants pocket. If that lesser Mrs. Vanderbilt standing nearby had said aloud what she was thinking—that he looked more flashy than aggrieved—he likely would have taken it as a compliment.

Once Penelope and Isaac passed, the rest of the crowd

followed them into the church, flooding the aisle with their black garb on the way to their familiar pews. Reverend Needlehouse stood quietly at the pulpit as the best families of New York—the Schermerhorns and Van Peysers, the Harrimans and Bucks, the McBreys and Astors—took their seats. Those who could no longer stop themselves, even under that lofty ceiling, began to whisper about the shocking absence.

Finally, Mrs. Holland gave the reverend a brusque nod.

“It is with heavy hearts—” Reverend Needlehouse began. It was all he managed to say before the arched door to the church went flying open, hitting the stone wall with a resounding bang. The ladies of New York’s polite class itched to turn and look, but of course decorum forbade it. They kept their elaborately coiffured heads facing forward and their eyes on Reverend Needlehouse, whose expression was not making that effort any easier.

Hurrying down the aisle was Diana Holland, the dearly departed’s little sister, with her shining curls loose about her face and her cheeks pink from exertion. Only Elizabeth, if indeed she could look down from heaven, would have known what to make of the smile disappearing from Diana’s face as she took a seat in the first pew.

One

THE RICHMOND HAYES FAMILY
REQUESTS THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY
AT A BALL IN HONOR OF THE ARCHITECT
WEBSTER YOUNGHAM
ON THE EVENING OF SATURDAY
THE SIXTEENTH OF SEPTEMBER
AT NINE O'CLOCK AT THEIR NEW RESIDENCE
NO. 670 FIFTH AVENUE
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

COSTUMES ARE REQUIRED

“THEY HAVE ALL BEEN ASKING FOR YOU,” LOUISA Holland told Elizabeth, quietly but firmly.

Elizabeth had spent eighteen years being groomed as her mother’s prized asset and had become, among other things, an expert interpreter of her tones. This one meant Elizabeth was to return to the main ballroom and dance with a partner of her mother’s choosing at once, most likely a young man of enviable, if slightly inbred, lineage. Elizabeth smiled apologetically at the girls she had been sitting with—Annemarie D’Alembert and Eva Barbey, whom she had met that spring in France and who were both dressed as courtesans from the Louis XIV era. Elizabeth had just been telling them how very far away Paris seemed to her now, though she had only stepped off the transatlantic steamer and back onto New York soil early that morning. Elizabeth’s old friend Agnes Jones had been perched on the ivory-and-gold striped damask love seat as well, but her younger sister, Diana, was nowhere to be seen. Most likely because she

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suspected that her behavior was being monitored, which, of course, it was. Elizabeth's irritation at the persistent childishness of her younger sister flared up, but she quickly banished the feeling.

After all, Diana hadn't enjoyed the formal cotillion debut that Elizabeth had two years ago, just after her sixteenth birthday. For the elder Holland sister there had been a year with a finishing governess—she and Penelope Hayes had shared her, along with various tutors—and lessons in comportment, dance, and the modern languages. Diana had turned sixteen last April with no fanfare during Elizabeth's time abroad. The family had still been in mourning for their father, and a big to-do had not seemed appropriate. She had simply started attending balls with Aunt Edith in Saratoga during their summer stay there, so she could hardly be held responsible for seeming a little rough.

"I'm sure you are sorry to leave your friends," Mrs. Holland said, steering her daughter from the feminine hush of the parlor and into the main ballroom. Elizabeth, in her shepherdess's costume of white brocade, looked especially bright and especially tall next to her mother, who was still wearing her widow's black. Edward Holland had passed away at the beginning of that year, and her mother would be in formal mourning for another year at least. "But you seem to be the young lady most in demand for waltzes tonight."

Elizabeth had a heart-shaped face with delicate features and an alabaster complexion. As a boy who would not enter the Richmond Hayeses' ballroom that evening once told her, she had a mouth the size and shape of a plum. She tried to make that mouth smile appreciatively now, even though she was concerned by her mother's tone. There was a new, unsettling urgency in Mrs. Holland's famously steely presence that Elizabeth had noticed almost as soon as she'd departed from that great ship. She had been gone since her father's burial nine months ago, and had spent all of spring and summer learning wit in the salons and how to dress on the Rue de la Paix and allowing herself to be distracted from her grief.

"I've already danced so many dances tonight," Elizabeth offered her mother.

"Perhaps," she replied. "But you know how very happy it would make me if one of your partners were to propose marriage to you."

Elizabeth tried to laugh to disguise the despair that comment raised in her. "Well, you are lucky I'm still so young, and we have years before I even have to begin picking one of them."

"Oh, no." Mrs. Holland's eyes darted around the main ballroom. It was dizzying, with its frosted glass dome ceiling, frescoed walls, and gilt mirrors, situated as it was at the center of a warren of smaller but equally busy and decadent rooms.

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Great potted palm trees were set up in a ring close to the walls, shielding the ladies at the room's edge from the frenetic dancers gliding across the tessellated marble floor. There appeared to be four servants to every guest, which seemed ostentatious even to a girl who had spent the last two seasons learning to be a lady in the City of Light. "The one thing we do not have is time," Mrs. Holland finished.

Elizabeth felt a nerve tingle up her spine, but before she could prod her mother about what *that* meant, they were at the perimeter of the ballroom, close to where their friends and acquaintances waltzed, nodding hello to the lavishly outfitted couples gliding across the dance floor.

They were the Hollands' peers, only seventy or so families, only four hundred or so souls, dancing as though there would be no tomorrow. And indeed, tomorrow would probably pass them by while they slept under silken canopies, waking only to accept pitchers of ice water and shoo away the maid. There would be church, of course, but after an evening so glittering and epic, the worshipers would surely be few. They were a society whose chief vocations were to entertain and be entertained, punctuated occasionally by the reinvestment of their vast fortunes in new and ever more lucrative prospects.

"The last man to ask for you was Percival Coddington," Mrs. Holland told Elizabeth as she positioned her daughter

next to a gigantic rose-colored marble column. There were several such columns in the room, and Elizabeth felt sure that they were meant to impress as much as to support. The Hayes family, in building their new home, seemed to have seized on every little architectural feature as an opportunity for grandeur. “Mr. Coddington inherited his father’s entire estate this past summer,” her mother went on, “as you well know.”

Elizabeth sighed. The warm thought of the one boy she knew would not be at the Hayeses’ costume ball that evening could not have made the looming prospect of Percival Coddington any less appealing. She had known Percival since they were children, when he was the kind of boy who avoided human contact in favor of intentionally harming small animals. He had grown into a man of welling pores and frequent snorts and was known as an obsessive collector of anthropological artifacts, although he himself was too weak-stomached ever to travel on an explorer’s ship.

“Stop,” scolded her mother. Elizabeth blinked. She hadn’t thought she’d betrayed any emotion. “You would not be so complaining if your father were here.”

The mention of Mr. Holland caused Elizabeth’s eyes to well, and she felt herself softening to her mother’s cause.

“I’m sorry,” Elizabeth answered, trying to keep her voice level. She felt the dryness in her throat that always preceded tears and willed them away. “It’s just that I wonder if the

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accomplished Mr. Coddington will even remember me when I have been so long away.”

Mrs. Holland sniffed as the Misses Wetmore, who were one and three years older than Elizabeth, passed. “Of course he remembers you. Especially when the alternative is girls like *them*. They look as if they were dressed by the circus,” Mrs. Holland commented coldly.

Elizabeth was trying to think of something nice to say about Percival Coddington, and missed what her mother said next. Something about someone being vulgar. Just as her mother pronounced the word, Elizabeth noticed her friend Penelope Hayes on the second-floor mezzanine. Penelope was wearing a ruffled, poppy-colored gown with a low bodice, and Elizabeth couldn’t help but feel a little proud to see her friend looking so stunning.

“I shouldn’t even have dignified this ball with my presence,” Mrs. Holland went on. There was a time when she would not have so much as called on the upstart Hayes women, despite her husband’s having accepted a hunting invitation from Jackson Pelham Hayes once or twice, but society’s opinion had moved on without her and she had recently begun acknowledging them. “The papers will report that I condone this sort of tacky display, and you know what a headache that will give me.”

“But you know it would have been a bigger scandal if

we hadn't come." Elizabeth extended her long, slender neck and gave her friend up above a subtle, knowing smile. How she wished she were with her instead, laughing at the poor girl whose bad luck had forced her to dance with Percival Coddington. Penelope, gazing down, let one darkly made-up eyelid fall—her signature slow, smoldering wink—and Elizabeth knew that she was understood. "And anyway," Elizabeth added, turning back to her mother, "you know you never read the papers."

"Right," her mother agreed. "I don't." Then she jugged the one feature she shared with her daughter—a small, dimpled nub of a chin—as Elizabeth offered the subtlest shrug to her best friend on the mezzanine.

They had become friends during that period in her early teens when Elizabeth was most interested in what it meant to be a young lady of fashion. Penelope had shared that interest, though she was ignorant of the rules of the society she so deeply wished to be a part of. Elizabeth, who was only just beginning to care about all those rules, had cultivated her as a friend anyway. She had quickly discovered that she liked being around Penelope—everything seemed sharper and fizzier in the company of the young Miss Hayes. And soon enough Penelope had become a deft player of society's games; Elizabeth could think of no one better to have at her side during an evening's entertainment.

"Oh, look!" Mrs. Holland's voice rang out sharply,

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bringing Elizabeth's focus back to the ballroom floor. "Here is Mr. Coddington!"

Elizabeth put on a smile and turned to the inevitable fact of Percival Coddington. He attempted a bowlike gesture, his glance darting across the low-cut square of her bodice. Her heart sank as she realized that he was dressed as a shepherd, in green jodhpurs, rustic boots, and colorful suspenders. They *matched*. His hair was slicked back and long at the neck, and he breathed audibly through his mouth as Elizabeth waited for him to ask her to dance.

A moment passed, and then her mother singsonged, "Well, Mr. Coddington, I have brought her to you."

"Thank you," he coughed out. Elizabeth could feel his eyes lingering on her uncomfortably, but she kept herself upright and smiling. She was, by training, a lady. "Miss Holland, will you dance?"

"Of course, Mr. Coddington." She raised her hand so that he could take it. As his damp palm pulled her through the crowd of costumed dancers, she looked back to smile reassuringly at her mother. She could at least have the gratification of seeing her pleased.

Instead, she saw her mother greeting two men. Elizabeth recognized the slender figure of Stanley Brennan first, who had been her father's accountant, and then the imposing figure of William Sackhouse Schoonmaker, patriarch of the

old Schoonmaker clan, who had made a second fortune in railroads. His only son, Henry, had dropped out of Harvard back in the spring, and since then the daughters of New York's elite families had talked of nothing else. At least, the letters Elizabeth received from Agnes while she was in Paris were full of his name, and how all the girls were aching for him. He had a younger sister, Prudie, who was a year or two younger than Diana, though she wore only black and was rarely seen because she disliked crowds. Elizabeth's impression of Henry Schoonmaker was still vague, though she had seen him and heard his name spoken often enough in their younger years, usually attached to some prank or other.

Elizabeth's partner must have sensed her thoughts going elsewhere, because he brought her attention back with a pointed comment. "Maybe you *wanted* to stay in the drawing room with the ladies," Percival said, bitterness surfacing in his voice.

Elizabeth tried not to stumble on her partner's poor footwork. "No, Mr. Coddington, I am just a little tired is all," she told him, not entirely falsely. Her ship had missed its arrival date by three days; she had been home for less than twenty-four hours. She barely had her land legs yet, and here she was dancing. Her mother had insisted by letter that she not retain the services of her French maid, so she had been left to do her own hair and care for her clothing all by herself during

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the entire journey. Penelope had stopped by in the afternoon to teach her the new dance steps and to tell her how furious she would have been had the ship been any later and caused her best friend to be a no-show on one of the most important nights of her life. Then she'd gone on about some new secret beau, whose identity she would reveal to Elizabeth later, as soon as they had a moment alone. There were simply too many servants hovering during those pre-ball hours for the naming of names to be prudent. Penelope had seemed even more competitive about her looks and dress than usual—because of the boy and because the ball was the debut of her family's new home, Elizabeth assumed. Also adding to Elizabeth's strain, of course, was her mother's odd behavior.

Plus there had already been quadrilles, and dinner, and polite talk with several of her aunts and uncles. She had had to give the same account of her rocky transatlantic passage several times already. And just when Elizabeth had finally sat down with friends for a glass of champagne and a little talk about how absolutely stunning everything was, she had been forced back into the center of activity. To dance with Percival Coddington, of all people. But she kept smiling, of course. It was her habit.

"Well, what are you thinking about, then?" Percival frowned and pressed his hand into her lower back. Elizabeth couldn't think of anyone she would trust less to move her backward across a floor of exuberant, slightly tipsy people.

“Uh . . .” Elizabeth started, realizing that she had been thinking that even the drawing room was not a total respite. Truthfully, she had been just a little bit relieved to leave Agnes, even though Agnes was such a loyal friend, because the leather-fringed dress she wore was ill-fitting and unflatteringly tight. Elizabeth had been distracted with pity during their entire conversation. Agnes seemed, especially next to her new glamorous Parisian friends, like an embarrassing remnant of childhood.

She focused again on Percival’s animated, ugly face and tried to keep her feet going *one, two, three* across the floor. She thought about the evening thus far—all the hours of mindless chatter and carefully accepted compliments, all the studious attention to appearances. She recalled the calculated luxury of her time in Paris. What had she been doing, *really doing*, all this time? What had *he*—that boy she had been trying so hard to forget, indeed believed she *had* forgotten—been doing all that time she was away? She wondered if he had stopped caring for her. Already she could feel the stunning weight of a lifetime of regret for letting him go, and she knew that it was enough to bury her alive.

All at once the room turned mute and violently bright. She closed her eyes and felt Percival Coddington’s hot breath on her ear asking if she felt all right. Her corset, which her maid, Lina, had practically sewed her into hours earlier, felt

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suddenly, horribly constricting. Her life, she realized, had all the charm of a steel trap.

Then, as quickly as the panic had come, it went. Elizabeth opened her eyes. The sounds of joy and giddy indulgence came rushing back. She glanced up at the great domed ceiling glowing above them and reassured herself that it had not fallen.

“Yes, Mr. Coddington, thank you for asking,” Elizabeth finally responded. “I’m not sure what came over me.”

Two

Cloak room, one o'clock.

Bring ciggies.

—DH

*D*IANA HOLLAND SAW HER MOTHER ASCEND THE twisting marble staircase on the far side of the ballroom, supported by some big older fellow whom she felt sure she knew. Their family friend and accountant, Stanley Brennan, trailed behind. Just before they moved out of view and toward some surely lavish second-story smoking room, Mrs. Holland looked back, caught Diana's eye, and gave her an admonishing glance. Diana cursed herself for being spotted and then briefly considered staying in the great central ballroom to wait patiently for one of her cousins to ask her to dance. But patience was not in Diana Holland's nature.

Besides, she had been so proud of her cunning in writing the little invitation during a freshening-up in the ladies' dressing room earlier in the evening. She'd then slipped it to the architect Webster Youngham's assistant, who was stationed near the arched entryway in order to explain the many architectural references that had been incorporated into the Hayes family's new home. She had pushed her way through the

crowd, curtsied, clasped his hand, and palmed him the note. “You truly are an artist, Mr. Youngham,” she’d said, knowing full well that Mr. Youngham was already drunk on Madeira and lounging in one of the card rooms upstairs.

“But I’m not Mr. Youngham,” he told her, looking adorably confused. As soon as she saw that look, Diana knew she’d hooked him. “I’m James Haverton, his assistant.”

“Nevertheless.” She winked before disappearing back into the crowd. Haverton had broad shoulders and dreamy gray eyes, and even if he was just an assistant, he seemed like somebody who had gone places and done things. She hadn’t seen anyone nearly so nice looking in the intervening hour.

So Diana picked up her skirt and moved quickly between the enormous planters and the wall. She looked behind her once before leaving the ballroom to make sure no one was watching and then slipped into the cloakroom. It was massive and overly ornamented, Diana thought, especially for a room that was chiefly occupied by coats. It didn’t matter to *them* that the room was Moorish-themed, with a colorful mosaic floor and antiquities displayed in the turret-shaped alcoves carved from the walls.

Diana looked around her, trying to locate her French lieutenant’s coat. She had come dressed as the heroine of her favorite novel, *Trilby*, who appears for the first time on a break from her job as an artist’s model in a petticoat and slippers and

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a soldier's coat. Diana had not been allowed to wear a petticoat without a skirt, but she felt the thrill of having gotten away with something just wearing the rest of the costume at all. Her mother had even had a shepherdess costume made for her so that she would match her older sister, Elizabeth, which would have been hideous in addition to humiliating. Instead, here she was in a satisfyingly bohemian red-and-white striped skirt and a simple cotton bodice that she had ripped in a few places on the sly. No one got it, of course—all the other girls Diana's age were conformists at heart and seemed to have dressed up as themselves, only with more powder and artificially narrowed waists.

She was just beginning to wonder if one of the servants hadn't mistaken her perfectly shabby gray coat for her own, when she was startled by one single clang from the clock in the corner. She gasped, surprised, and stepped backward—a little unsteadily after all the champagne she'd been sneaking—and when she did, she felt the chest of a man and a pair of hands on her hips. Her whole body flushed with adrenaline.

"Oh, hello." She tried to make her voice flat and indifferent, even though this was by far the most exciting thing that had happened to her all evening.

"Hello." Haverton's mouth was very close to her ear.

Diana turned slowly and met his eyes. "I hope you brought cigarettes," she said, trying not to smile too much.

Haverton had short, straight eyebrows set far apart, which made his eyes look open and earnest. “I didn’t think ladies of your class were allowed to smoke.”

Diana affected a pout. “So you didn’t bring ciggies?”

He paused, his eyes lingering on her in a way that made her feel not at all like a lady. “Oh no, I brought them. It’s just that I’m not sure whether I should give you one or not. . . .” Diana noticed a little mischief shining in his eye, and concluded that it must be the glimmer of a kindred spirit.

“What do I have to do to convince you?” she asked, turning her head jauntily.

“This is serious, what you are asking me to do,” he replied with an air of put-on gravity. Then he laughed. Diana liked the sound of it. “You’re pretty,” he told her, smiling unabashedly now.

Diana and her sister could not have shared more physical characteristics and looked less alike. Like Elizabeth, she had the small features and round mouth of the Holland women, although she still had the softness of her baby fat. She liked to think that her dark hair added a certain mystery, although it was in truth a sort of medium brown, and untamable. Her eyes were always being described as *vivid*. And of course she and her sister had the same chin—their mother’s. She hated her chin. “Oh, I’m all right,” she answered him, glowing with false modesty.

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“Much better than all right.” He continued to observe her as he pulled a cigarette case out of his breast pocket. He lit one and handed it to her.

Diana took a drag and tried not to cough. She loved smoking—or at least the idea of smoking—but it was hard to practice doing it right with her mother and the staff always watching her. She was pulling it off, though—at least she thought she was—exhaling little puffs into the air. It felt right, especially with all the metallic and turquoise detail in the room suggesting some hazy, far-off locale. She raised an eyebrow, wondering how Haverton was going to make his move. “So, if you’re an architect, does that make you an artist?”

“Depends whom you ask,” he replied lightly. “Some of us like to think that we make the most monumental and lasting kind of art.”

“That’s very nice,” Diana said blithely. “Because you see, I have been trying to find a real artist all night.”

“Whatever for?” he asked, leaning into the coats and putting his cigarette to his mouth.

“Well, to kiss, of course.” Diana drew her breath in after she spoke. Even she was occasionally surprised by the audacious things that came out of her mouth.

Haverton exhaled thoughtfully, the smoky sweet smell of tobacco surrounding them. For a moment, Diana felt like she could have been a million miles off in a tent hidden away

in some souk in Tunis or Marrakech, arranging for secret deals in magic powders.

“It occurs to me,” Haverton started, the hard edges of his American voice reminding her that she was still in New York, on a street as familiar as Fifth Avenue, no less, “that you are being a very naughty girl.”

“You think so?” Diana asked, dragging on her cigarette amusedly. She, too, sank into the soft wall of coats, moving a little closer to Haverton.

“Well, how often do young ladies of your class meet strange older men in oversize closets, with all of society a few heartbeats away?”

“What makes you think there is any comparison between me and the girls of *my class*?” Diana pronounced the last two words in disgust. The girls of her class were slaves to rules, going about life—if you could call it that—like bloodless mannequins. “I told you I was looking for an artist,” she went on impatiently. “So if you’re going to go on thinking conventionally and just like everybody else, I may as well leave.”

Haverton smiled and dropped his cigarette onto the black-and-white marble-tiled floor. He stepped on it before shooing it to the corner with his toe. He looked very old to Diana all of a sudden, even though he couldn’t have been more than twenty. Then he was moving toward her fast. As soon as their lips touched, she knew there wasn’t going to be

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any magic. This was not the heart-stopping touch that she had been waiting for all evening, and it didn't help especially that his style of kissing was akin to mashing one face against another. Her whole body went slack with the disappointment.

Diana kissed him back, just to make sure her instinct was correct, but she had been kissed before, and she knew what it felt like when it was good. Haverton ranked far below Amos Vreewold, whom she had kissed several times in Saratoga over the summer, and only slightly better than her first kiss, at age thirteen, which had been so acrid an affair that she had banished the boy's identity from even her own memory. Diana was finally accepting the fact that James Haverton, architect's assistant, was not the kind of artist she was looking for when the door creaked and a foot sounded at the threshold.

"Miss Diana—?" said a male voice, more hurt than shocked.

Diana felt Haverton's grip tighten momentarily as they turned toward the door. Diana recognized Stanley Brennan's long, tired face immediately. He was only twenty-six—he had taken over from his father as Mr. Holland's accountant—but his constant anxiety gave him a prematurely aged appearance.

"Your mother. She sent me to check on you . . ." he said haltingly. "To make sure you weren't getting into trouble."

Haverton let go of Diana's waist and stepped back. He didn't look especially pleased by Brennan's entrance, but he kept quiet. Diana felt freer almost instantly, rejoicing as she was in having Haverton's rough chin off her face.

"Thank you, Brennan," she said. "Would you like to accompany me back to the ballroom?"

Brennan stepped forward cautiously, reaching toward the rips that Diana had put in her costume. They had widened during the poor excuse for a tryst.

"Oh, stop, it's fine." She lifted her arm for him to take. Then she turned to Haverton. "Thank you for explaining the Islamic references in the Richmond Hayeses' coatroom to me. I will remember it always."

She looked back once, and imagined that the grimace on Haverton's face was the beginning of his life as a lonely man broken by disappointments. It was her fate to leave such casualties in her wake, she thought as she and Brennan exited and walked in the direction of the main ballroom.

"I won't tell your mother," Brennan whispered as their shoes shuffled along the gleaming marble corridor. "Though I feel, as your late father's friend, that I should remind you that that kind of behavior could be your ruin."

"I'm not afraid," Diana said gaily.

"You're like my little sister almost, and it is my responsibility to look after you. Your mother thinks so, anyway." He

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stopped walking, as if to convey his seriousness. “If she found out what you had been up to and that I knew about it, that would be the end of both of us.”

“Well, that is very true.” Diana paused next to him. They could already hear the shouting and music from the ballroom, and in a moment they would be swept back under the bright lights. Diana turned the corners of her mouth down in a fake pout, even while her eyes shone with flirtation. “But would that really be so bad?”

Then she laughed, grabbed Brennan’s hand, and pulled him back into the center of things. She was searching for an inexpressible *something*, and she wasn’t about to let one sour little kiss slow her down.

Three

*Not sure if I can make it
to your party tonight.
My apologies, if this is the case.
—HS*

“*L*ITTLE BO PEEP. THAT’S TOO PERFECT FOR LIZ,” Penelope Hayes said, as she said nearly everything, with a quarter ounce of venom.

“Well, at least she didn’t forget her humble American origins while she was swanning about with the Frenchies,” her friend Isaac Phillips Buck replied. “And at least she didn’t go bland *marquis et marquise* like everybody else,” he added with a sniff.

Penelope gave a careless shrug. If he wanted to praise Elizabeth Holland, whom she had long ago singled out as her principal rival and thus her only possible best friend, and who was now circling the polo-field-size dance floor with that toad Percival Coddington, it was fine with her. She was feeling entirely better now that she had seen how very impressed everyone was by her family’s new house and hosting style. And, of course, by her.

There had been a dark moment earlier, when the messenger arrived with the note. She had just returned from the

Hollands', where she had gone to welcome Elizabeth back and chastise her for nearly missing the party. Her heart had clenched, reading the careless missive, and then she had flown into a rage that—she could admit this now—had not been especially fair to the maids attending to her before the party. It was not so much that she feared the writer of the note would not come to love her—how long could any boy hold out, really?—but that this particular boy might miss this particular party. After all, what better place for him to realize she was truly the center of the universe, and that keeping their relationship secret was a colossal waste?

Now, observing her family's ballroom from the mezzanine, her torso cinched beneath her flamenco dancer's red flounces to a perfect eighteen inches, she felt supremely confident that he would come. It was the evening of the Richmond Hayeses' ball, the evening when they reached their apotheosis as a top-drawer family—there was simply no place else to be. She was certain he would arrive shortly. Well, almost certain. Penelope rested a confident hand on her hip even as she clenched and unclenched her fist around the note in her other hand.

"Would you look at Elizabeth, holding herself so high and mighty," Penelope said. The dozens of delicate yellow-gold bangles lining her forearms jangled.

Isaac drew himself up to his full height and rested his

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hands on his rotund belly, which went undisguised by his jester outfit. “I think she is trying to keep out of the way of Percival’s breath.”

Then they laughed, as they always laughed: mouths closed and through their noses. Penelope and Elizabeth hadn’t really become friends until they shared a French tutor in their early teens. (Later Penelope had overheard that this arrangement had been thought up by Mr. Holland to perturb Mrs. Holland, and had never forgotten the slight.) He had been an adorable and lanky fellow whom Elizabeth used to enjoy making blush by asking him, for instance, to explain the difference between *décolletage* and *décolleté*. It was comical what lengths Elizabeth seemed to go to these days to prove what a proper little miss she was. Penelope never worried so much over anything, especially not whether she was perceived as a lady.

Which was all well and good, since Penelope *was* something less than a lady, at least from the point of view of members of the old Dutch families like Elizabeth’s mother, who nonetheless had been enjoying the lavishness of the Hayeses’ ballroom all evening. A ballroom, Penelope couldn’t help but thinking, far more vast and sparkling than the Holland ballroom. The Hollands lived in an old and really rather plain sort of mansion in Gramercy Park with a staid brown face and the rooms all in neat rows. And that wasn’t even a fashionable part of town anymore.

Penelope might have felt bad for Liz that she still lived in such a backwater while the Hayes family had moved on to Fifth Avenue uptown, with its strip of grand new residences, except that she knew very well Liz's mother was always talking about the Hayeses and how they were a made-up family. Which was a rather harsh way of looking at it. It was true that the Hayes fortune had begun when Penelope's grandfather, Ogden Hazmat Jr., gave up his modest tailoring business in Maryland and began selling cotton blankets to the Union army for the price of wool. But ever since Granddad had moved to New York, changed his name, and bought a Washington Square town house from a bankrupt branch of the Rhinelander family, the Hayes clan had been entrenched in New York society.

Now they'd left Washington Square behind forever, and resituated themselves in the only private home in New York with three elevator banks and a basement swimming pool. They had arrived, and they had the mansion to prove it. Or a *palazzo*, as her mother consistently and irritatingly referred to it.

"Good work tonight, Buck," Penelope said, her full lips breaking into a smile of enormous pride. In parlor chatter, Penelope's beauty was occasionally derided as being all lips, but the jabbering hens who said so were certainly in error: Penelope's lips were no more striking than her eyes, which

were wide and blue and capable of welling with innocence or scorn in equal measure.

“Only for you,” he replied in his nasally faux-British accent. Isaac had something of a case of Anglomania, and it had lately spread to his diction.

Since Isaac was only half-acknowledged by the Buck clan as one of their own, he was obliged to work for a living, and had made himself indispensable to hostesses like Mrs. Hayes. He always knew where to get the freshest flowers, and where to find handsome young men who were willing to dance and fun to dance with, even if they weren’t exactly marriageable. He knew how to shriek at the cooks so that the meats would come out just done enough. Isaac’s shriek was not pretty, but his parties always were.

“I have to say,” Isaac went on drolly, “everyone does look their best this evening. It wasn’t *all* in vain. I mean, the jewels alone. You could buy Manhattan with those jewels.”

“Yes,” Penelope agreed. “Though it never fails to shock me how people can dump a trainload of baubles over some piece of hide.”

“Oh, that’s just Agnes you’re talking about, and she barely has any baubles. Anyway, I think she’s supposed to be Annie Oakley, and I believe if you queried her dressmaker, he would say the getup was *suede*.”

“Hah. You know very well that Agnes doesn’t have a

dressmaker, Buckie.” Penelope smirked. “And Amos Vree-wold as a matador? Please.” She turned to her friend, one dark eyebrow high.

“Now, now. It’s not every man who can look dignified in tights.”

“Oh, look—there’s Teddy Cutting!” Penelope interrupted the survey of costumes. Teddy, with his blond hair and sparkly blue eyes and inherited shipping fortune, was just the sort of boy Penelope had been flirting with at balls since she’d come into society two years ago. Teddy had a crush on Elizabeth Holland, which was the real reason Penelope always made a point of dancing with him. She watched as the young women, with their great starched skirts and puffed sleeves, flocked to Teddy, who bowed gallantly and went about kissing each of their gloved hands.

“Teddy looks yummy.” Isaac let one hand float up to his chin. “He chose French courtier like everybody else, but he did do it well.”

“Well enough,” Penelope replied nonchalantly, for wherever Teddy went, there was usually a certain someone even better just behind. She snapped her fingers at one of the passing waiters, balled up the note she had received earlier in the day, and dropped it into her empty champagne glass. She placed her glass on his tray without meeting his eyes and then helped herself to two more flutes.

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That was when Henry Schoonmaker strode through the arched entryway at the far end of the ballroom and the whole world seemed to faint just a little bit. Penelope kept herself upright, even as her heart began to beat triumphantly and her face tingle in anticipation. Even among the dashing and rich, Henry Schoonmaker stood out for being so beautiful and so slippery at once. He came to his friend Teddy's side, and Penelope rolled her eyes as he began kissing the flurry of gloved hands as well.

Henry always looked in good humor and good health—which was due in part to his penchant for outdoor sports and in part to the drink that was his constant accessory—and even from across the largest private ballroom in New York City, the tanned perfection of his skin was evident. He had the shoulders of a general and the cheekbones of a born aristocrat, and his mouth was most often fixed in an expression of mild mockery. Like Elizabeth Holland, Henry was the descendant of one of New York's great families, but he was much, much less concerned with being *good*.

"Those girls are embarrassing themselves," Penelope remarked of her cousins and friends below. She ran her fingers over her slick dark hair, which was parted sharply along the middle of her scalp and drawn down to the nape of her neck, framing the perfect oval of her face. Intricate silver filigreed combs fanned out behind her head. "I think I'm going to go

save our friend,” she added, as though the thought had just occurred to her.

Then she gathered up the yards of red crepe de chine covering her legs and began to glide toward the curving marble staircase.

“Buckie,” she called, a few steps down the stairway. She turned to meet his eyes with a look of particular intensity. “That’s the man I’m going to marry.”

Isaac raised his champagne flute, and Penelope beamed with her declaration. How could she fail when she had somebody as wily as IPB on her side? Penelope turned back down the stairs and in a few moments she was standing on the main floor of her ballroom. A reverential hush settled on the room as the faces in the crowd turned toward her in a wave. Amongst all the white satin and powdered wigs, her red dress made her stand out even more than usual. She cut through the group of girls she had just pronounced fools and reached Henry Schoonmaker in a few breathless moments.

“Who let you in?” She greeted him without a smile. She placed her fist on her hip, causing the gold, gypsy-style bracelets to clatter down her wrist. “*You’re* not wearing a costume. And it said very clearly on your invitation that this was to be a costume ball.”

Henry turned to her with a face of casual amusement, not even bothering with a faux self-conscious examination of

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his black tails and trousers. “Have I done wrong, Miss Hayes? See, I don’t have time to read my mail anymore, but a little bird told me you would be having a party tonight. . . .”

It was whispered among the women of New York that Henry always had the band paid off in advance, because they frequently struck up a waltz just precisely when he needed to end a conversation. The band began playing now, and Henry gave a gentle nod in Penelope’s direction. She could not stop the corner of her mouth from twitching, smile-like, for a moment. He kept his intense gaze fixed on her as he began walking her backward into the room until they were waltzing.

For a moment the crowd just watched, dazzled by the lightness of the couple moving across the floor. But Penelope was very good at arousing jealousy, and her cousins and friends were not very good at standing still when they were jealous. Soon other, less bright couples began dancing, too, so that the gleaming pattern of the marble floor was blotted out by the bright swinging skirts of the girls and the nimble black feet of their partners.

There were plenty of eyes still on the flamenco dancer and the dandy in tails; Penelope knew how much she was watched, so she spoke quietly as they moved. “Why did you send me that note?” she asked, tilting her head slightly as they turned.

“I like teasing you,” he answered. “This way, I knew you’d be especially grateful to see me.”

Penelope considered this for a moment, but there was something in his lively, deep brown eyes that told her he was lying, just a little bit. “You were someplace else before you came here, weren’t you?”

“Now, what would make you think a thing like that?” he replied with unwavering amusement. “I’ve been looking forward to this precise moment all day.”

“You lie very well,” she told him. “But I knew you wouldn’t stay away.”

Henry stared at her carelessly and did not answer. He just pressed his hand into her skirt, somewhat lower than the small of her back, and kept moving her through the crowd. She felt in that moment as though they were a known item, and that all those lesser girls were already crying into their hankies at the thought of Henry William Schoonmaker being married. The music seemed to be playing triumphantly and just for her. She could have gone on like this forever. She might have, too, had not the large, whiskery figure of Henry’s father appeared over his shoulder and pulled him out of the dance.

“Pardon me, Miss Hayes,” the elder Mr. Schoonmaker said in a voice that was level but devoid of apology. The rest of the dancers kept moving, but Penelope found herself horribly stalled in the center of everything, her great performance

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curtailed by this large, odious parental presence. She felt a fit coming on but somehow managed to contain it. The other dancers were pretending not to notice what was going on, but they were all terrible fakers. Penelope wondered if Elizabeth was out there watching. She had wanted to reveal her secret relationship to her friend with maximum drama, and this exchange wasn't helping anything. "I am going to have to borrow Henry for the rest of the night. It's quite urgent, and we must leave immediately, I'm afraid."

Instinct made Penelope smile even through her misery, and she tipped her head. "Of course," she answered. Then she watched, alone, from the middle of that epic room, as her future husband disappeared amongst all those ordinary bodies. Penelope knew, despite the still-dancing masses, that for her the party was over.

Four

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT I,
WILLIAM SACKHOUSE SCHOONMAKER,
DO LEAVE ALL MY WORLDLY POSSESSIONS,
AS ITEMIZED BELOW, INCLUDING ALL
HOLDINGS RELATING TO BUSINESS,
REAL ESTATE, AND PERSONAL PROPERTY,
TO _____.

*H*ENRY SCHOONMAKER PRETENDED TO STUDY THE piece of paper for another moment, and then he did what he always did when he found something too serious or too boring to bother trying to comprehend. He spread his long thin lips back from his perfectly white teeth and laughed.

“Awful morbid, Dad,” he said. “We left a party for this?”

His father stared back at him, large and unsmiling in his black suit and thick, dark muttonchops. William Schoonmaker had small eyes skilled in intimidation and dyed his hair an inky black out of vanity. Because of his frequent turns to rage, his skin was a patchy red, and his mustache curled down around his pink chin. But one could see, under all that, the fine, aristocratic features that he had bequeathed to his son.

“*Everything* is a party to you,” his father finally said in reply. Henry saw the father he knew best emerge now—the full, unpleasant personality Mr. Schoonmaker reserved for when he was in his own home or office. Henry had been

raised by his governesses, and so his father had always seemed a distant and awesome figure, charging about the house while a fleet of underlings made awkward, obsequious gestures in the vain attempt to please him.

Henry pushed the sheet of paper back across the polished walnut pedestal table toward his father and stepmother, Isabelle, and hoped he wouldn't be bothered about it again for the rest of the evening. Isabelle smiled apologetically at him and gave a surreptitious little roll of her eyes. She was twenty-five—only five years older than Henry himself, and they had often been dance partners before her marriage last year to the richest and most powerful of the Schoonmaker men. It was almost strange to see her in his own house; she still looked like Isabelle De Ford, who was always good for a flirt and a laugh. It might have been all about money, but Henry still felt secret respect toward the old man for winning her.

“You shouldn't be so hard on Henry,” she said in a high, girlish voice, and brushed a golden curl away from her face.

“Shut up,” his father replied in his deep rasp, without so much as turning to look at her. Isabelle made a frowning face and continued playing with her hair. “Get those silly looks off your faces, both of you. Henry, pour yourself a drink.”

Henry did not like to appear overly obedient to his father, and they avoided each other enough that indeed he

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rarely had the opportunity. But there was about his father the rangy, discriminating air of all extraordinarily powerful men, and there was a part of Henry that craved his attention, that longed for the man to notice his actions and approve. At this particular moment, however, he chose to listen to his father because what he most wanted in all the world was a drink. He crossed the room and poured himself a Scotch from one of the cut-glass decanters on the side table.

The room was dark and heavy with the cigar smoke that attended all his father's dealings. The walls and ceilings were of ornate carved wood—the virtuoso Italian craftsmanship so familiar to Henry that he barely noticed it anymore. So this was the sort of place where business got done, Henry mused with a touch of wonder. His life was so absolutely crammed with play that the serious mood of this room felt like a foreign territory. Earlier, he had dined at Delmonico's on Forty-fourth Street, and then there had been an interlude at one of those downtown saloons where one could hear rags and dance with working girls, and then off to Penelope's grand fete. He got a little perverse thrill from being slightly tipsy in the midst of his father's serious decor.

The elder Schoonmaker shifted in his seat. His young bride yawned. "So tell me about you and Miss Hayes," Henry's father said abruptly.

Henry sniffed his drink and studied himself in the mirror

over the bar. He had the smooth chin and slender features of a man of leisure, and his dark hair was pomaded to the right. “Penelope?” he repeated thoughtfully. Though he had little or no desire to discuss his romantic entanglements with his father, it was a subject mildly preferable to family wills.

“Yes,” his father urged him on.

“Everyone thinks she is one of the great beauties of her generation.” Henry thought of Penelope, with her gigantic eyes and dramatic red dress, which seemed calculated to frighten people as much as to seduce them. He knew from personal experience that Penelope was not frightening—but then, he knew how to enjoy her. He wished he were back at the party, moving her exquisite body across the dance floor.

“And you?” his father went on. “What do you think?”

“I very much enjoy her company.” Henry took a sip of Scotch and savored the burning tingle against his lips.

“So you want to . . . marry her?” his father asked, leadingly.

Henry couldn’t help a little snort at that. He caught Isabelle staring at him, and he knew that she was now thinking not like a stepmother, but like all the other girls of New York, obsessing over how and when Henry Schoonmaker would marry. He lit a cigarette and shook his head. “I haven’t met a girl I could think about so seriously, sir. As you have often pointed out, I am not serious about much.”

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“Then Penelope is not someone you could see as your wife,” his father confirmed, leveling his fierce eyes at Henry.

Henry shrugged, remembering last April when Penelope had been staying in the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Her family had left their old house on Washington Square, and the new one wasn't yet completed. Even though he hardly knew her, she'd invited him up to the suite she'd had all to herself and welcomed him in nothing more than stockings and a shirtwaist. “No, Dad. I don't think so.”

“But the way you were dancing . . .” He paused. “Never mind. If you don't want to marry her, that's good. Very good.” He clapped, stood, and came around the table to tower over Henry. “Now, who do you think would make a good wife?”

“For me?” Henry asked, managing to keep his face straight.

“Yes, you good-for-nothing boulevardier,” his father spat out, his momentary good humor quickly evaporating. The famous Schoonmaker rage was one parental touch that Henry had not been deprived of in his childhood, and it had arisen at everything from broken toys to bad manners. William Schoonmaker sat down noisily in the baby-soft leather club chair next to Henry. “You don't think I'm just idly curious about your paramours, do you?”

“No, sir,” Henry replied, blinking his dark lashes at his father. “I do not.”

“Then you’re smarter than I give you credit for.”

“Thank you, sir,” Henry said, meaning it. He wished his voice wouldn’t get so small at times like these.

“Henry, I find your louche lifestyle personally offensive.” His father stood again, pushing the club chair backward across the parquet floor, and began circling the table. “And I am not the only one.”

“I’m sorry for that, Dad, but it’s my lifestyle, not yours,” Henry replied. He had regained his voice and was forcing himself to keep his gaze steady in his father’s direction. “Or anybody else’s.”

“Possible, but doubtful,” his father went on, “since it is my money—inherited, yes, but multiplied many times over by my hard work—that has allowed your lifestyle.”

“Are you threatening me with poverty?” Henry asked, glancing at the will as he lit a new cigarette with the old one. He tried to look careless as he exhaled, but even saying the word *poverty* gave him an unpleasant feeling in his stomach. The word had a sick lilt to it, he had always thought. His first semester at Harvard he had shared a suite with a scholarship boy named Timothy Marfield—his father’s idea of character-building, Henry later discovered. Timothy’s father clerked twelve-hour days at a Boston bank to pay his son’s tuition, and Henry liked Tim, who knew all the best watering holes in Cambridge. But it was the first time Henry had ever really

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thought about someone doing that soul-crushing thing called working, and the realization still haunted him.

“Not exactly. Poverty does not become a Schoonmaker,” his father finally answered. “I am here to suggest an alternative course. One I think you will find far more palatable than an empty bank account,” he went on, lowering his head and staring into his son’s eyes. “Marriage.”

“You want me to *marry*?” Henry asked, fighting back a laugh. There was no one less marriageable in all of New York, and even those sycophantic, underpaid society columnists knew *that*. He tried to picture a girl with whom he would actually want to trip across the lawns of Newport or the decks of European luxury liners forever—but his powers of imagination failed him. “You can’t be serious.”

“I certainly am.” His father glowered at him.

“Oh.” Henry shook his head slowly, hoping to appear to be considering his father’s proposal. “There would have to be a long search, of course, to find a girl worthy of becoming a Mrs. Schoonmaker . . .” he offered.

“Shut up, Henry.” His father wheeled back around the room and put his large hands on his young wife’s shoulders. She smiled uncomfortably. “You see, I already have someone in mind.”

“*What?*” Henry said, his cool beginning to evaporate.

“Someone with class and sophistication and good family

breeding. Someone whom the press likes and will embrace as your bride. As a *Mrs. Schoonmaker*, Henry. Someone who will come across as a conduit of civility and culture. I am thinking of—”

“Why do you care?” Henry interrupted. He was fully mad now and standing. Isabelle made a little gasping noise when she saw the two Schoonmaker men facing each other down.

“Why do I care?” his father roared, pacing around the table. “Why do I care? Because I have ambitions, Henry, unlike you. You don’t seem to understand that every move you make is reported in the society pages. And the people I care about read those pages—however silly they are—and they talk. You make us all look ridiculous, Henry. With your dropping out of college and running around town . . . Every time you open your mouth, you tarnish the family name.”

“Doesn’t answer my question,” Henry shot back. His father, with his explosive temper and famous love of money, would seem to have satisfied quite a few ambitions already. He had built a railroad company from scratch and made it hugely profitable, had treated the tenements built on his family’s ancestral lands like his own personal mint, and had married two society beauties and buried one. “I really don’t get it, Dad,” Henry said. “What do you *want*?”

Isabelle’s small, pointed elbows came excitedly to the table. “William wants to run for office!” she blurted.

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“What?” Henry’s face puckered. He was unable to disguise his incredulity. “What office?”

His father looked almost embarrassed by the revelation, and it quieted the tension in the room. “I’ve been talking to my friend from Albany, and he wagered me that . . .” Mr. Schoonmaker trailed off and then shrugged his shoulders. Henry knew that his father was a longtime friend and rival of Governor Roosevelt’s, and he nodded at him to continue. “I admire the man’s call to public service,” William enunciated, his voice growing warm and stately. “Who says the noble class should not be involved in politics? It is our noblesse oblige. Man is nothing if he cannot rule his world in his time and leave it better off when he departs for—”

“You don’t have to give *me* the speech,” Henry interrupted, rolling his eyes. He was infuriated by this stroke of bad luck. “What office do you want, anyway?”

“Mayor first, and then—” his father started.

“And then who knows!” Isabelle broke in. “If he becomes president, *I* will be the first lady.”

“Well, congratulations, sir.” Henry sat back down dejectedly.

“So there will be no embarrassing me anymore. No more tales of your wildness in the papers. No more bad publicity,” the elder Schoonmaker pronounced. “Now you see why you must marry a lady. Not a Penelope. A girl with morals, whom the voters like. A girl who will make you look respectable.

A girl . . .” Henry watched as his father leaned a hip against the table and pretended to have an idea. He raised his eyebrows at Isabelle. “A girl like Elizabeth Holland, say.”

“What?” Henry snapped. He knew the older Holland girl, of course, although he hadn’t had a conversation with her since before he went to Harvard, and she had been very young and gangly then. She was impeccably beautiful, it was true, with her ash blond hair and small, rounded mouth, but she was so obviously one of *them*. She was a rule-follower, a tea-sipper, a sender of embossed thank-you cards. “Elizabeth Holland is all manners.”

“Exactly.” His father pounded his fist on the table, which caused the golden liquid in Henry’s snifter to slosh back and forth.

Henry couldn’t speak, but he knew his face was twisted with outrage and disbelief. His father could not have suggested a poorer match. What he had prescribed for his son was nothing short of a prison sentence. He could feel the life of quiet gentility already rolling out before him, like the endless manicured lawns on which so many narcoleptic garden parties had been held by the matrons of his class, in Tuxedo Park and Newport, Rhode Island, and all those other places.

“Henry,” his father said warningly. He snatched up the piece of paper and waved it in the air. “I know what you’re thinking, and you should stop it. Now. I want you married

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and respectable. You will have to do away with Penelope. I am giving you an opportunity here, Henry.” He paused. “But God help me, if you cross me, I’ll see that every damn picture frame goes to Isabelle. I will throw you out and it will be very swift, and very, *very* public.”

The thought of a brown future of threadbare clothing and rotting teeth made Henry feel suddenly, horribly sober, and his eyes drifted to the bottles crowded together on the sideboard. For a moment, he wished he could go back to Harvard—all the readings and lectures had seemed so pointless when he was there, but he saw now how college might have been a way for him to carve his own path, to guard against these threats of pennilessness. It was too late for that now.

His bad behavior and pathetic marks ensured that, without his father’s intervention, he would never have a place there again. Henry stared into the silent amber bottles and knew that the only route to independence left to him was through the quiet, deathlike boredom of a life with Elizabeth Holland.

Five

The ideal ladies' maid will be awake before her mistress, with warm water for washing the face, and will not go to sleep until she has undressed her mistress for bed. She may require a nap during the day, when her mistress does not need her.

—VAN KAMP'S GUIDE TO HOUSEKEEPING FOR
LADIES OF HIGH SOCIETY, 1899 EDITION

LINA BROUD REARRANGED HER ELBOWS ON THE SILL and stared out into the tranquil darkness surrounding Gramercy Park. She had been sitting this way for many hours, in the bedroom where she had dressed the elder of the Misses Holland in layers of chemise, poplin, whalebone, and steel earlier that evening. Miss Holland—no longer Lizzie, as she had been called in childhood, or Liz, as she let her sister call her, but Miss Holland, the junior lady of the house. Lina was not looking forward to her return. Elizabeth had been away for so many months that her personal maid had almost forgotten what it felt like to serve. But from the very moment that morning when Elizabeth had reentered the house, she had gone about reminding Lina precisely what was expected of her.

She scrunched up her shoulders and sighed as she dropped them. She was not like her older sister, Claire, an altogether softer person, content to read the latest *Cité Chatter* column in the narrow attic bedroom that they shared, gazing

at drawings of the Worth gowns she herself would never wear. Claire was twenty-one, only four years older than her sister, but acted as though she were Lina's mother. Since their real mother had been dead for years, in many ways she was. But Claire was also childlike in her gratitude for every little trinket the Hollands bestowed upon her. Lina could not bring herself to feel the same way.

She shifted in her simple black linen dress, with its boat neck and low, dowdy waist, taking in the luxury of Elizabeth's bedroom: the robin's-egg-blue wallpaper, the wide mahogany sleigh bed, the shiny silver bathtub with heated water piped through the walls, the perfume of peonies erupting from porcelain pitchers. Since Elizabeth had come out, she had begun to fancy herself an expert on the decoration of interiors, and if asked, she likely would have said that the Holland rooms were really rather modest. Well, compared with the ridiculous mansions of Fifth Avenue millionaires, perhaps they were. It seemed to Lina, sitting under the small Dutch painting of the quaint domestic scene in the big gold frame, that Elizabeth had become blind to her own extraordinary privilege.

But Lina did not hate Elizabeth. Could not hate her, no matter how much she distanced herself with elaborate clothing and fine manners. Elizabeth had always been Lina's model for how to act and be, a glimmer of hope that she would not always live a life so simple and plain. And it was Elizabeth

who had convinced her, one night ten years ago, that they must go downstairs—all the way to the carriage house—to find out who was wailing in the middle of the night. Lina had been scared, but Elizabeth had insisted. That was when Lina had first come to love Will Keller, who was beautiful even then.

Will had been orphaned at the age of eight by one of those fires that blew through the tenements like they were kindling, trapping men and babies in dark closets. Will, who had been taken in by his father's former employers with the understanding that he would serve, even at that tender age, had wailed when he dreamed of fires. Though it didn't matter very long after that, because he stopped dreaming of those things when Lina and Elizabeth became his friends.

There was a difference between them even then, of course, but they were all children and as such equally banned from the Hollands' grown-up world of dinner parties and card games. During the day they were all under the care of Lina's mother, Marie Broud, who had been the Holland girls' nurse, and she never made any distinction among her charges. She had often scolded Will and Elizabeth equally for their many schemes. Claire was too timid to join in these pranks, and Diana too young. But Lina had always hurried along with them, desperate to play a part. At night they would crawl about the darkened house, giggling at those great portraits of Elizabeth's forefathers, sneaking sugar from the kitchen and silver

buttons from the morning room. They stole old Mr. Holland's playing cards with the pictures of ladies in undergarments on the backs and wrinkled their noses at them. They really were friends back then, before Elizabeth's sense of self-importance swelled and she stopped having time for her old playmates.

Lina wasn't sure when things changed. Maybe around the time that her mother died and Elizabeth began her lessons with Mrs. Bertrand, the finishing governess. Lina had been almost eleven then, awkward of body and eager to find fault in everything. She didn't often like to think back on those years. Elizabeth, a little less than a year older than she, had become suddenly absorbed in her lessons in civility, in how to hold a teacup and when the proper time to return a call from a married female acquaintance was. Her every gesture seemed intended to convey to Lina that they were not of the same cloth, that they were no longer friends. And now Elizabeth was the sort of girl Claire read about in her magazines.

For years Lina had existed quietly, and practically alone, despite attending to Elizabeth all day and night and sharing sleeping quarters with her sister and the other young women on the Holland staff. She'd been too shy to maintain her childhood friendship with Will without the buffer of Elizabeth. So she had watched him grow taller and finer looking from afar. There had been dark years for him, too—she had heard stories of his drinking and fighting from the housekeeper,

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Mrs. Faber, and had wondered what dissatisfaction lived in his heart. It was only that summer—when, with Elizabeth gone, she was temporarily and gloriously freed from her regular duties—that she and Will had become friends again. They shared cigarettes after his long days were done and jokes at the expense of Mrs. Faber. They imagined aloud what their lives would be like if they were free to do as they wished. Before, she always wondered where he used to disappear to. Now she knew that he wasn't dangerous at all, that he spent nearly every moment he wasn't working with a book. Books about the excesses of the leisure class, and the theory of democracy, about politics and literature, but most of all about the West and how anybody with drive could make his way there. Now the summer was almost over, and she still hadn't found a way to tell him that she wanted to go out West, too. With him. That she was in love with him.

Lina was brought back from her thoughts of Will by the actual sight of him. One of the Hollands' broughams came to a stop in front of the house, and Will leaped down from his perch to hush the horses and open the door for the ladies. She looked at his back, wide at the shoulders and long at the torso, with the poignant *X* of black suspenders across it. Elizabeth came first, holding up her arm for Diana, who, for all her big talk, was looking rather fatigued. And then Will put his arm up for Mrs. Holland, whose small black figure came quickly

to the ground. Then the women walked one after the other through the still night and up to the door. Lina could hear Claire welcoming them as Will walked the horses around to the carriage house.

She knew Elizabeth would soon be advancing up the main stairs, and she felt a rebellious instinct rise up in her. Once she arrived, Lina would have to undress her young mistress, and wouldn't be in bed herself until after morning's light. Just imagining the very task she had performed thousands of times, but escaped for months, caused her body to flush with resentment. She pushed herself up from the sill and shuffled hurriedly out of Elizabeth's room and down the long carpeted hall. She reached the back servants' stairs in a few moments, and then hustled down two steps at a time.

As Lina moved toward the kitchen, she could hear the Holland women on the main stairs, going up. She paused and considered whether she would be punished, and how, for abandoning her duties on Miss Holland's first night back in New York. But she wanted to tell Will about all the French airs her mistress had acquired. She wanted to see him laugh and know she had caused it. And maybe . . . maybe she would find a way to tell him how she felt. So she gave herself a little nod and dashed through the kitchen and out the rear pantry door, which Elizabeth had installed last fall to facilitate deliveries from the grocer.

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Then she stepped lightly onto the hay-covered ground of the carriage house. Will had been removing the equipment from the horses. It lay there on the ground in neat rows so that he could clean it before putting it away. The threadbare cotton of his blue collared shirt clung to his skin from working with those gleaming black animals. His sleeves were rolled above his elbows, and his hair was damp where it hung beneath his ears.

He took a step forward and met her eyes, then stopped as though he had realized something.

“Hey,” he greeted her quietly. He looked over her shoulder, toward the door, and then smiled tightly as he refocused his eyes on her. “Shouldn’t you be upstairs, helping the Misses Holland?”

Lina stood still near the door and smiled uncontrollably. She hugged herself and waited for him to invite her in like usual, but then he turned his gaze away and spoke in a very different tone from the one she had grown used to over the summer. “You know you’re testing your luck, sneaking around at night. Now that Miss Liz . . . I mean, Miss Elizabeth is back. You shouldn’t. You . . . can’t.”

Lina’s heart was startled in her chest, and time stretched slowly in front of her. She was so confused by the way he was acting. It was as though all the closeness that had grown between them over the summer had disappeared in an instant,

or had only ever existed in her imagination. She blinked, wishing that he would just look at her for a moment.

Then he did finally bring his gaze to meet hers. His face was frozen and his mouth was set and his eyes were blank. The horse nearest him shifted, prancing in place and shaking its head. A moment passed, and then Will reached up and quieted the large animal.

“Will,” she said, her voice rising with an unpleasant pleading quality that she could not control. She desperately wanted him to say something familiar and encouraging, to make some joke that would eclipse the awkwardness she was feeling now. “Why can’t I visit with you like usual? The ladies do it during the day, with tea, but because we’re who we are, we have to do it at odd hours and in—”

“Lina,” Will interrupted. She was jarred by the name, which he rarely used. Over the summer he had always used her childhood nickname, Liney, to address her. He looked to the ground and sighed. Then, without meeting her eyes, he moved toward her. He gently took both of her hands, and for a second Lina thought her heart might stop. But then he pushed her back toward the kitchen. “I’m sorry, Lina,” he said softly as he moved her up those four wooden steps and into the house. “Not tonight. You can’t be here tonight.”

“But why not?” she whispered.

Will stared at her. His brow was tensed and his eyes

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seemed very blue and very serious. He just shook his head, like whatever he was thinking was something she wouldn't understand. "Just not tonight, all right?"

And then she was in the kitchen and the door had closed in her face. Lina reached out for a wall in the darkness. She slid down to the floor, which smelled of cooked onions and dirt, and there she remained. She sat like that for a long time, feeling lonelier than perhaps ever. Outside, the sky began to turn from black to the darkest purple.

She was still there when the door to the servants' stairs opened, and a figure in a white silk wrap hurried across the floor. The girl was as darting and iridescent as a ghost, and she kept her head down as she moved.

She had already pushed through the door to the carriage house when Lina realized that the girl was Miss Elizabeth Holland.

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