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Editing the Editor

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Ouachita Baptist University

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

“Editing the Editor”

written by

Adeline M. Goodman

and submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for completion of
the Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

Dr. Amy Sonheim
Thesis Director

Sarah Smith
Second Reader

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Dr. Barbara Pemberton, Honors Program director

April 27, 2020

“Editing the Editor”
A Senior Thesis by Adeline Goodman

The story behind the work...

When I was in the fourth grade, sitting at a round wooden table at the end of our kitchen, I wrote the first story that made me proud. My mom, Karrie Goodman, had taught me how to turn the dinosaur of a laptop on, plugging in the dial-up and giving enough time for the machine to whirl to life. At the time, we had a CD player nestled onto a shelf nearby, which was where I began my first inklings of a writing process, a writing preference. At that malleable age of barely ten years old, I preferred a glass of water to my left, Michael Buble's *Crazy Love* album on low, and Microsoft Word set to Bookman Old Style font. I spent entire afternoons sitting criss-cross-apple-sauce in a kitchen chair, my index fingers flying across the chunky keyboard of an old PC.

That first story that made me proud was entitled *A Journey to Heaven* and it lasted all of about fifty computer pages, single spaced. It told the story of a brother, sister, and their cousin counterparts as they adventured through the traumatic unfolding of a house robbery and subsequent family upheaval. I printed the self-proclaimed book and took it to my Gifted and Talented (G/T) class at school, where I was given the opportunity to read it to my friends and classmates. I was hoping they would spew my praises. But while reading my work aloud, I began what was the first process of self-editing, stumbling over paragraphs that didn't fit in, sentences that didn't flow, words misspelled. When I finished reading, I stacked my papers to signal the end. I was aware that I, personally, had edits to make, yet I knew even then I would be hesitant to make them. But all I hoped was that my class liked it. Did they see its worth? Did they understand my characters? Did they think I was a good author?

Then my teacher leaned back and crossed her arms, asking the class to give any pointers. And I sat there, teeth clenched and hands cold, as my hard work was criticized. Unfortunately, every last one of them was blunt.

I hated it. If my writing was good, why didn't they like it?

As I have worked toward both a communications degree and an English writing minor, habitually, I have placed myself in roles requiring the written word: editor of the yearbook, staff writer and copy editor for the newspaper, casual yet hopeful blogger. I realized quickly on that it wasn't the writing that was hard for me. I had spent the majority of my childhood behind a computer screen or with a hand positioned over a journal. I had printed the "Oracle News," a monthly neighborhood newspaper. I had written short stories about my family, a sequel to my beloved *A Journey to Heaven* and opinion pieces on various community issues, intended only for the eyes of my mother. I had received a typewriter for my birthday in middle school, on which I burned through ink telling the stories of my friends and pretend lovers. I have stacks of dusty paper, all the first chapters to some ill-conceived and unfinished book, fluttering wisps of thought that sit in the corner of a closet now. Five inky journals are stacked on my childhood nightstand, full of heartbreaking secrets and lines followed by excited exclamation points.

Writing wasn't the problem.

As I neared the end of my senior year at Ouachita, I recognized that revision and editing of any sort on my writing, whether by myself or by others, was the problem. Through my studies here in college, I have been reaffirmed in the fact that I want to pursue editing for a publishing house. However, through the process of completing this directed study and thesis, I hoped I would become a better editor through self-criticism. If I could edit myself to the fullest extent, I would be a much better editor for it.

That leads me to the bulk of the thesis, the question of how this might work...how am I going to edit myself? I pulled from a 14-year-old-Addy project that inspired me to study communications and English in college, with hopes of one day working in publishing. This

project was one assigned through an English class in the eighth grade, right on the cusp of my beginning of serious writing. I was given the challenge of dreaming up a storyline and outlining it. I then spent the following semester writing and rewriting my story, allowing classmates, as well as my English teacher Ms. Phyllis Watts, to read and offer advice (a hard process for me.) We submitted first drafts, then second drafts, then April snuck up on our heels, and the final draft was due. Our books were sent to the press and returned to us in hard-back bound copies, absolutely beautiful gifts and an absolute inspiration to me. I loved the process...the mapping out of big picture ideas, the sitting down to write, developing writing behaviors and habits, the red pen edits, the final product.

However, this eighth grade book project, entitled *Then*, was completed at a young age, the age one might consider too “green” to write serious pieces. At the time, I wrote to save my life from teenage angst, to give myself a voice. And editing wasn’t as crucial of an aspect as it should have been. I lacked experience – in life and in writing. While I was taught the fundamentals of grammar in grade school, I wasn’t comfortable with writing sentences in any form other than the basic structure of subject-verb agreement. I over-wrote, I over-described, and I over-romanticized. Not knowing any better, I wasn’t willing to accept that there was any flaw in my work that truly needed rethinking other than the occasional adjustment of a comma. Much like my 10-year-old self in G/T class all those years before, I couldn’t stand my teacher’s red ink and pointers.

This past year, I revisited my Edwardian-era, Downton Abbey inspired novel *Then* with a fresh set of eyes. Now as a senior, I could bring more experience – both in life and in writing – to the table of rewriting. I’ve completed a degree in communications and minor in English writing, studying and learning the process of the wide spectrum of writing, whereas before I only knew

how to write my own stories. I've read class loads of children's literature, literary criticism in regard to short stories, textbooks on writing well, a survey of British novels, and the intimate creative writings of my classmates. I've stretched my writing purview to writing people profiles, feature stories, press releases, poems within the iambic pentameter, blogs, news broadcast scripts, speeches, essays over the electoral college, philosophical papers, and business plans.

The Addy Goodman who authored *Then*, self-published in 2013, is an entirely different writer than the one who will publish this senior thesis. That is what this project is about...diving back into the mind of 14-year-old aspiring writer and teaching her the hardest lesson that is assessing your own work, declaring it faulty, and shifting your mindset to match that of an efficient editor. Through the work I did with thesis director Dr. Amy Sonheim, I hope to have learned the process of self-criticism and the heavy value that has on a writer and editor.

When Dr. Sonheim and I met for the first time (August 20, 2019) during our weekly Tuesday afternoon slot, we spent the hour exchanging notes on how we might tackle a project as big as editing and revising, potentially and probably completely *rewriting*, a book. We originally structured the semester by attacking themes each week, such as addressing grammatical edits the first week, character development the second week, furthering dialogue the third week, etc. We then took two weeks to each read the book and come back ready to compare notes.

Then took eleven chapters and 143 pages to narrate the story of a young and confused daughter of a British earl in the early 1900s. As the British countryside catapults into the First World War, Lady Jane Dawson struggles through a relationship with her mother, relationships with potential suitors, and her first romantic relationship. While both Dr. Sonheim and I agreed that the framework to a story was there, my mindset as the author needed to shift. In order to obtain a story that reflected my growth as a reader, a writer, and an editor, I would need to take

the story from 2013 and rethink it. We then began the process of questioning eighth grade Addy's process: why is Jane's mother a friend in some scenes, but an enemy in others? Why is Jane so close to her father? Why does Jane lean so heavily on Phillip? What is Jane struggling with? Quite frankly, who even is Jane? While we appreciated the bones of the story, we knew immediately that a rewrite was necessary.

That week, we decided to restructure our original plan and schedule for the thesis. My having come into the Honor's Program late, we were using my semester of directed study as a semester to lay the framework and complete my thesis. The thesis then evolved into a much bigger picture of a process. Instead of focusing on grammatical, stylistic, nit-picky edits, the directed study became a process of widening the revising process to focus on what was wrong with the story itself. Dr. Sonheim pushed me to ask myself this question when working through my early writings: how might this better work? I agreed with Dr. Sonheim that in order to be a good editor, I would have to practice – starting from the first sentence. This was the only way to learn honesty from editing. From the beginning of the process, I learned that editing wasn't merely about using words well; it was about seeing to my character and my story candidly, which wasn't an ability I possessed seven years ago.

I began the process of writing a new chapter one of *Then* during the week leading up to September 17th. I had already read through the book and left torn scraps of Post-It notes in parts of the book I found to be untrue to how I wanted my main character, Jane, to feel. I remember sitting in my bed one night that week, the old book cracked open to page one. I couldn't figure out a way to begin writing. The older version had been one that had inhabited my written world since the fall of 2012, when I first dreamed up Jane and her wondrous life. When I initially proposed the idea of this thesis to Dr. Barbara Pemberton as an underclassman at Ouachita, I

believed it would be a somewhat easy assignment (if there ever could be such a thing as an easy senior thesis), as the writing had already been completed. All I thought I would have to do was edit it, which I previously conceived to be black-and-white work. There was no gray in editing, which was one reason I loved it so much. That thought has now been debunked.

However, that first night with the new Jane was hard. I struggled with how to even begin. I pulled out clean notebook paper and started writing out every thought regarding this rewrite, every note I would've given to young Addy. I wrote quickly and sloppily, noting things such as character development in general ("Differentiate between Jane and her sister Kate...they are unrecognizable!"), notes on Jane ("What's her purpose? What is Jane's inner turmoil? She's at a breaking point – nostalgic for her childhood, yet fearful of leaving. Why?"), confusion regarding conflicting relationships, and the unanswered questions of Dr. Sonheim's that I had taken note of ("Phillip should be at funeral. Chap 8 – she needs to be there...why didn't they ask her? As if she were irrelevant. Jane = Mother.")

And so I did what famous writers do when feeling overwhelmed and without direction: I slept on it.

By our next meeting on September 17th, I had written a two-and-a-quarter page start to a brand new chapter one. In this rewrite, I desired with all of my nostalgic being to stay true to the original book as much as possible, while still editing the big picture ideas I admitted needed to be changed. For example, here is the opener to the 2013 book:

*The house was silent, a faint hum of voices echoing from the green baize servant's door. The scent of lush rose blooms intoxicated the air, and the sweet smell created a light atmosphere that fitted rather nicely to the mood of the day.
A wedding day.*

And here is the first draft opener to the 2020 book:

I stood by the staircase, alone.

The air was still. The smell of day old roses permeated the familiar smell of the old house. The only sound to be heard was a faint and muffled laugh coming from below in the servant's quarters.

I wondered what they were laughing at. Perhaps the cook dropped something again. Or maybe the new footman flirted with Leah despite her obvious unattraction. There were so many reasons why they could have been laughing, yet I would never know.

Proud, I looked forward to showing Dr. Sonheim how I had so *masterfully* written the new opener to match the original, while adding the discussed character development and mature writing. I had spent the week writing and rewriting to get to this point, and I thought the first two pages symbolized a promising start to a successful second version.

When I brought the pages to Dr. Sonheim however, they didn't resonate as well as I had hoped. In retrospect, she called that meeting "a kick in the chin," as she recognized my valuable effort, yet also recognized that we could, and needed to, do better.

For the next meeting on September 24th, I wrote more scribbled notes, trying to better understand this character I dreamt so many years ago. Dr. Sonheim gave me notes and advice on who she thought Jane was, stressing to me the importance of understanding the first-person narrator of the book. Without the author fully understanding the main character, the book would be driving nowhere. I wrote that week on a page, titled with Jane's name outlined in frustration, who I thought my character was: "At an age where she knows everything will have to change, she will have to take the steps in whichever direction she chooses – either making a name for herself or continuing the happy life she's been given at Highland...her entire life was made up of tiny choices others made for her, bringing her to this moment." I remember taking these notes back to Dr. Sonheim and admitting to her that rethinking Jane was much harder than I had expected. I hadn't expected to struggle so deeply with the gray area of editing (which didn't really exist to me before embarking upon this thesis journey): figuring out my characters first

and then writing honestly to them. Not to mention, I still hated to admit my creative liberty was faulty.

In addition to my more clarified thoughts on Jane, I edited for better syntax and flow.

Here is the opener of draft number two:

I stood on the landing of our red carpeted staircase. The rails were made of the deepest of dark woods, and the carpet seemed to silence every step that didn't want to be heard. I was alone, one hand on the wall, holding myself up, and the other dangling. It was time.

The air was still. The smell of day old red roses permeated the familiar smell of our old house. The only sound to be heard was a faint and muffled laugh coming from below, in the servants' quarters. I wondered what they were laughing at. Perhaps the cook dropped something again. Or maybe the new footman flirted with Leah, my lady's maid, despite her obvious disinterest.

This second draft at the end of September was eleven pages long and entered into various relationships between Jane and her family members, taking us as far as the infamous wedding scene from the original. I included tense dialogue between Jane and her future sister-in-law, memories from her childhood, frustration with her siblings, etc. Going into October, we felt more strongly that this edit was closer to our desired chapter one. It gave a more coherent, unified, and emotional picture of Jane and her life than the original did throughout the entire book. I felt confident that by the end of this process, Jane would be fully known to my reader.

As October approached, life outside of my authorship to Jane and her life took over, and we took a hiatus of sorts from our thesis writing. On October 8th, I proposed my thesis to the council with a new plan, altered now that we realized how deeply we would be editing and how long it had taken to rewrite and revise even the first eleven pages (and I wasn't even done with chapter one). The new plan was that Dr. Sonheim would help me work through writing a chapter per week. There were nine weeks left in the semester, and my original book had eleven chapters. I explained that this was possible due to the constant hard deadline of our weekly meeting time,

and by the end of the fall semester, my thesis would be almost entirely completed, ready for second readers.

Over the next two weeks, I shared my eleven pages with a fellow senior Honors student, Claire Seale. Claire was an English major who was also doing her thesis within the realm of creative writing and reading. She was passionate about young adult (YA) literature and had spent the majority of the previous year reading various YA novels in preparation for her thesis. She was very well-versed in the pool of readers my book was written for, as it was geared for YA; therefore, she proved to be a more ideal reader than Dr. Sonheim. Looking back, sharing the second draft of *Then* chapter one with Claire was a turning point.

Claire provided key points and edits, such as the crucial need for establishment within the first page. She pointed out that because I was so familiar with the story, I had failed to give the reader a chance to know exactly what was going on in the book. I didn't clarify when the story was taking place, where the main character was, or even the age of Jane. She reiterated what Dr. Sonheim had been telling me about needing more substance to Jane, leaving notes that questioned why Jane said the things she said. Claire gave simple edits, but each edit was one that I had looked past because of my familiarity. I needed her honest edits on overviews rather than just the occasional adjustment to the comma or apostrophe.

On October 22nd, I arrived to Dr. Sonheim's office with a longer chapter one. I had taken Claire's notes into consideration and once again felt strongly about draft number three. We were enthusiastic about the edits Claire made, seeing value in YA literature trained eyes. I left that meeting with a list of notes, including the following: "Change opener."

I was back at the drawing board. At this point, it became apparent that, contrary to what I assumed originally, there was so much more to creative work.

My creative work reminded me of my father's. My father, David Goodman, works as a florist. He is a creative for a living. Every morning, he drives to the flower shop and begins his day cutting hydrangea stems and de-thorning roses in order to create something beautiful. Even on days when a pink peony doesn't seem perfect, he still has to produce an inspired product. Even while his job is creating beauty, it is still work, which, like anything else, can become monotonous and exhausting. Much like Dad's flower arrangements, my writing and editing couldn't be just an act of creative inspiration, done on a whim of revelation. Instead, my writing had to be treated as work. I knew it wouldn't get done if it wasn't.

On October 29th, I brought Dr. Sonheim a new opener, the fourth draft, to chapter one. I had allowed myself to let go of the nostalgia of the original chapter one. The new version changed location, tone, and flow. Instead of introducing Jane at the literary symbolic staircase, it introduced her sitting at the breakfast table, uncomfortable. It introduced her tension within the first four words: "The tea was cold." It gave context clues to her age within three paragraphs. It gave a time and a better inclination of where they were by the bottom of the first page. The fifth draft that surfaced mid-November consisted of tinier edits and tying the rest of the chapter to the new opener. It was at this point, the fifth round, that Dr. Sonheim laid both hands on the desk and claimed we had done it. I had written the first chapter!

Although it took an entire semester to write one chapter, that semester was the most challenging for a young revisionist, as it pushed me out of my preconceived ideas of what it was like to creatively write and edit as a job. And while we only neared to the close of rewriting three chapters at the end of the process, my progress was in no way an accident. The purpose of this thesis and directed study was for me to find what it meant to edit truly, outside of the black and white. And I accomplished that fully.

When I was a eighth grade author, I merely just saw the beautifully whimsical side of writing my own story, drawing from my own imagination. Editing looked like tiny red ink lines and bubbles. And the first thing I wrote was the best thing. However, as I tackled the same assignment as a graduating college senior, I experienced the truth that writing was maddening. It was gritty work, and my hands got dirty. For once I had created Jane's world inside my head, I could not write with my own free will. I constantly argued with myself in order to remain true to my characters and their worlds. Jane herself changed mid-sentence for heaven's sake. Many nights I sat in my bed, my favorite place to read, write, and edit, feeling sick to my stomach knowing that I didn't have a next sentence for Jane. Writing was exhausting work, so much harder than I had anticipated. Editing was reworking entire concepts, not just the occasional misplaced comma. Writing and editing was a process of constant choices, training myself to follow where the story led rather than where I forced it to fit.

Through the completion of this thesis, I have been given the opportunity to end my academic career on a reflective note. I revisited stories that shaped me into the writer I am today. My main character Allison from *A Journey to Heaven* inspired so much of who I wrote Jane from *Then* to be in 2013. Both are still playing roles in new stories I write today. The meticulous grammatical editing I did to old copies of the town newspaper translated to my meticulous writing for campus publications over the past four years. My itch to pen the first chapters to non-existent books throughout my childhood molded me into a creative writer, which proved so important as I wracked my mind for yearbook themes and feature stories for our "Untold" Ouachitonian. When I scribbled messes of thought into old cloth journals throughout high school, telling stories of dramatic lunchbreaks and embarrassing encounters, I was training my mind to be vulnerable, which gave me a foundation when rewriting my Jane character.

My writing journey has changed an impressionable aspiring writer and editor into a published and award-winning one. And now, I am giddy to share even just a piece of the process in this portfolio, including the final draft of what is now titled *Jane*, in honor of all the characters, experiences, memories, and stories she has taken the shape of over the years.

This is for Jane, for she is a culmination in written form of all the things I've loved and lived in life.





DUE: 1/09/13

Concept Form

Author Aditya Goodman

Book Title Jane

Genre Historical Fiction

25
25

Brief Description

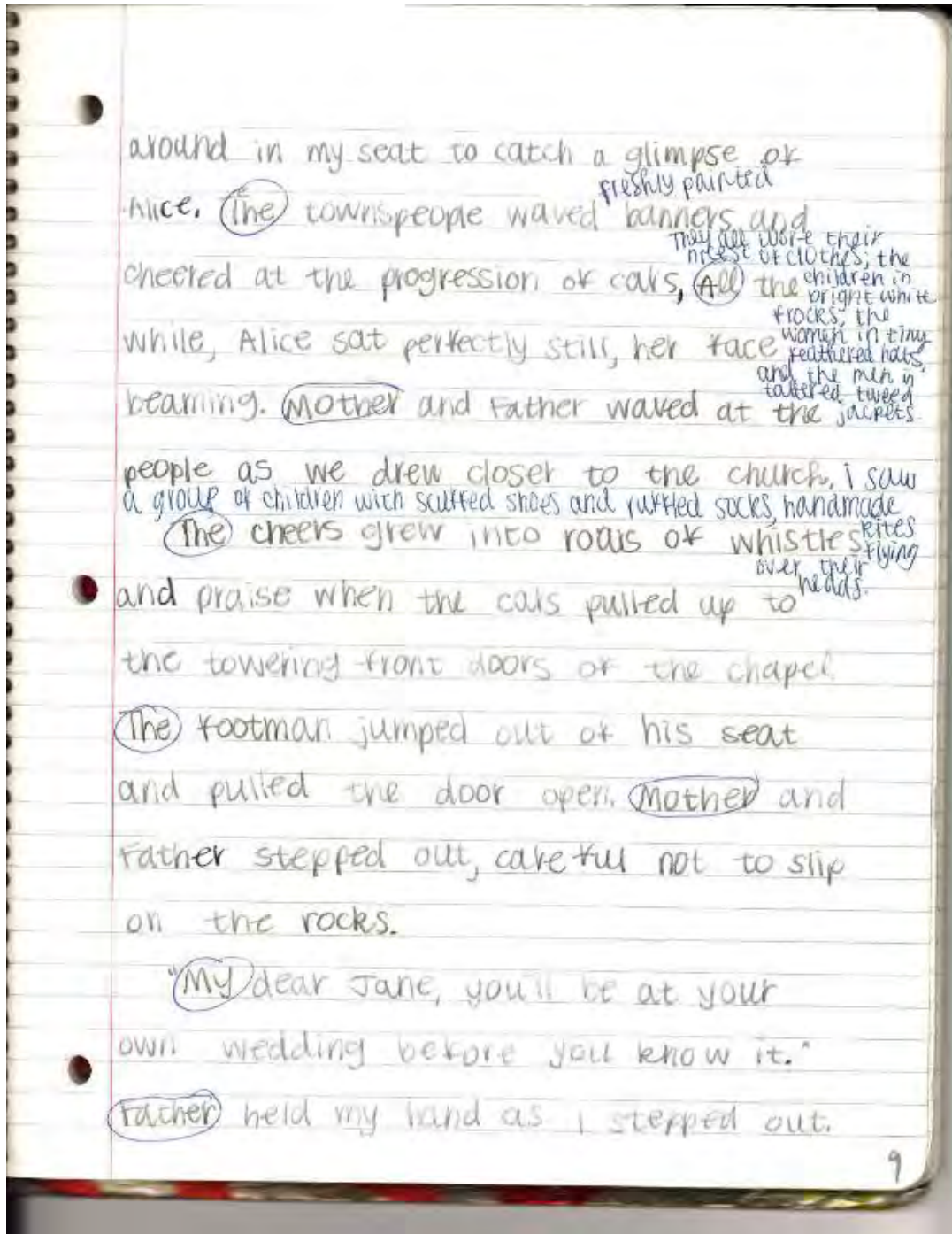
Set in 1911, Jane just came of age, now to be presented at court in order to be introduced to an eligible young man, preferably a future earl of an estate. Her sister, Katharine, is ten years old and desires to be older like Jane. Her brother Charlie, marries an American heiress from New York.

What will be or cause the "tension?"

Concept Form, 2013.

This was one of the final preliminary assignments required before I could start writing on *Then*.

The concept form provided my teacher, Ms. Phyllis Watts of Arkadelphia, with the basic information behind my story, allowing her to point out any big idea changes I would need to make. It was interesting looking back to see that she, too, saw that I struggled with finding the "tension" within the novel, the very problem that proved most challenging during the thesis rewrite process. I also found it a precious coincidence that I originally named the book *Jane*, and when I went to rename the rewritten version, I named it the same before noticing the coincidence.



Editing process, 2013.

Then was written in spiral notebooks. The first round of edits were done on the handwritten copy. This is an example of how I did my editing in the eighth grade.

pg. 116 — I said Andrew

Major Things

Character Development

* Differentiate between Jane and Kate... they are unrecognizable.

→ servant interest

what's her purpose?

* DIVE INTO JANE

- Why does Philip think she's interesting? She literally has done nothing

- What is Jane's inner turmoil? So many things don't match... she wants to stay at Highland, but she doesn't enjoy the customs of it. (like complaining about the dresses, yet admiring hers?)

↳ she's at a breaking point - nostalgic for her childhood, yet fearful of leaving. Why?

* Give Philip depth. Why does Jane immediately feel drawn to him. There has to be something about him that draws her to him.

- CAN'T IMMEDIATELY be romantic. They don't know each other yet for heaven's sake!
- We need to see more of their relationship so it's believable

* Confused by Mather. So many conflicting scenes, varying attitudes toward her.

↳ Mather could shift to extreme and then that would give way for more opportunity for

Ms. Broughton to have purpose

* More contemplative + developing scenes — give the readers insight!

* Does the narrator need always be Jane?

* Her relationship w Charlie. Doesn't make sense now. (pg. 103)

* pg. 114 — what does that even mean?

Cut the cheesiness. Ending chapters on clichés. omg

→ maybe she knows more to life, but doesn't know how to value her

could be a reason she's like this

Also why does she love Charlie so much?

1st Chapter Notes

Jane

• At an age where she knows everything will have to change. She will have to take the steps in whichever direction she chooses—either making a name for herself or continuing the happy life she's been given at Highland.

→ This causes her to be frustrated at Charlie (who has always been 1/3 of the built-in triad of best friends) when he announced he was marrying Alice. Because this was something they, as the eldest, were struggling with together. And she feels as if he was rash and because he left her in the dark, felt as if he had chosen another life over knowing her. This hurt because the life she loved was changing w/o her say, regardless of the choices she made.

↳ maybe Leah was a new maid because her last maid moved away got a secretary job. Then Mr. Hamilton had announced his retirement (he was a grandfather figure to her) her mother picked out her clothes for her and her sniters... while Jane found home in this life, she was grasping at straws to make it stay the same so she could properly and independently decide how she wanted her life to go.

* Her entire life was made up of tiny choices others made for her, bringing her to this moment.

↳ Doesn't want to become her mother—her parents set her up with Robert, and Jane knows that while her parents love each other, her mother always struggles in the life she'd been given. That's why she's so controlling—she likes calling the shots, no matter how small. Also why she loved Charlie so much; he was the first thing that was hers. But when the girls came, she felt disconnected out of fear... she didn't want to mess them up like she was. But in this life... she couldn't help it.

Preliminary big picture editing, September 2019.

These were the scribbled notes I made while assessing how to begin the rewrite of chapter one. I was attempting to decipher the bigger themes and concepts that needed to be edited, rather than the nit-picky edits: who Jane was, how she connected to the relationships in the story, how the storyline might better convey her inner turmoil.

① Addit,
 In Freudian criticism, there is a stair motif: if a character is standing in the middle of a staircase, then she shows indecision. For example, in the 1st season, last episode of Maddlen, the wife leaves, she leaves with her husband sitting in the middle of the staircase. That's the final shot.

① stood by the staircase, alone.
 The air was still. The smell of day old red roses permeated the familiar smell of the old house. The only sound to be heard was a faint and muffled laugh coming from below in the servant's quarters.

I wondered what they were laughing at. Perhaps the cook dropped something again. Or maybe the new footman flirted with Leah despite her obvious unattraction. There were so many reasons why they could have been laughing, yet I knew I would never know:

I shifted my weight to the other foot, eyeing the red velvet couch sitting so welcomingly against the wall. I subconsciously felt myself begin to make my way over to the cushioned rest, but I heard clicks from the top of the stairs, making me stop mid-footstep. I immediately straightened my back and smoothed my skirt down.

"Jane?" whispered a soft voice, ~~that~~ I knew only to belong to Kate. My shoulders dropped, and I sighed.

Oh, Kate. My sister, my playmate, my friend. She was younger in age, but older in wisdom, or at least that was what I always told her. I was five years her senior, but I never noticed any age difference. I never really noticed any difference between any of us Kensington children... Charlie, Kate, and myself.

We were one and the same.
 And yet, this day still arrived.

→ The day one of us abandoned the others. *So much better than announcing the wedding at once!*

"Yes, Kate?" I began to walk up the stairs. Kate, despite her nagging desire to be a proper lady at the age of thirteen, was always finding a way to snag her ladyship. Once, she had ripped an entire dress straight down the middle, exposing her shin in front of over twenty houseguests one snowy Christmas Eve. She also had nearly caught her hair ribbons on fire with a candle as she tried a dramatic head flip (over dinner to prove a point.)

"I believe I've made a problem."

I reached her at the top of the stairs and took in what seemed to be a flower crown of a catastrophe.

"Come now, let's get you fixed up before Mother sees," I said with a smile, guiding her down the hall and into my room. My bed was made, my windows drawn, and my dresser straightened. My maid Leah wouldn't be back up to the living quarters until after the ~~service~~ ^{wedding}, so I knew we wouldn't be interrupted.

Kate sat down on my dressing stool in front of the tall mirror standing in the corner of the room. She folded the green fluffy pleats of her dress onto her lap and sighed. "I thought the floral tiara didn't match everything else. It made me look like a child."

"You are a child, though." I pulled the pristine white gloves off my hands, one finger at a time, attempting to maintain the smooth fabric Leah worked so hard on steaming this morning. I paused and glanced at Kate's reflection in the mirror, studying her eyes for a reaction.

She was still. Pouting. Her eyes were fixed on the pearls sewed to the hem of her dress.

I went back to work. Her hair was soft to my touch, curly and the color of creamy cocoa ^{during the holidays?} Pieces of stray leaves and tips of petals were woven deep into her mane, almost as if she had been born that way. A sort of garden fairy child.

"Kate, I do agree. No thirteen-year-old lady should have to attend her brother's wedding with a garden on her head." I wanted to extend my empathy, let her know I was on her side. I

② Go through your manuscript to cross out adjectives and adverbs. Build emotion from ACTIONS.

Excellent actions to show tone!

③ You could postpone wedding. We could have it was a funeral?

Nice!

First draft and first round of edits, September 17, 2019.

This was the first attempt at a new chapter one. The notes are from Dr. Sonheim, addressing both small edits and also bigger idea edits. This draft was a little over two pages.

Jane has. I'm literally thinking maybe just add like a word or two. She's also at the bottom of the staircase so maybe you could mention that)

The air was still. The smell of day old red roses permeated the familiar smell of the (my or our) old house. The only sound to be heard was a faint and muffled laugh coming from below, in the servant's quarters. (I love the tempo of this part. Its short and choppy. It explains how she is feeling at the moment—anticipatory and kind of annoyed.)

I wondered what they were laughing at. Perhaps the cook dropped something again. Or maybe the new footman flirted with Leah (Maybe go ahead and say just say "my maid") despite her obvious unattraction. (After reading the first chapter, I come back to this part where Jane discusses Leah as unattractive. It just doesn't seem like Jane! Maybe I'm wrong.) There were so many reasons why they could have been laughing, yet I knew I would never know. (But does she really care to know?)

I shifted my weight to the other foot, eyeing the red velvet couch sitting so welcomingly against the wall. (What room is this... the living room? Parlor? I love the red inference. The day is full of passion (wedding) and frustration about the wedding. Lovely color psychology) I subconsciously (I think maybe you could say naturally or something; if it's in the subconscious you don't feel it) felt myself begin to make my way over to the cushioned rest, but I heard clicks (of high heels maybe? Maybe here you can begin to research what people wore in the 1920's. What kind of shoes?) from the top of the stairs, making me stop mid-footstep. I immediately straightened my back and smoothed my skirt down. (What Kind of Skirt) Give me those fashion deets i.e. "My red leather skirt" lol but you get what I mean

Excerpt from edits by Claire Seale, October 2019.

Claire Seale, a fellow English and honors writer, was willing to offer honest critique, serving as a fresh pair of eyes and an expert on young adult literature. She guided me in the direction of being more upfront with my reader and expanding on who Jane is, again reiterating how important understanding that character fully would be to a successful rewrite.

↓ last editings

The tea was cold. It was a murky brown, which struck me as odd against the white fine china it rested in. I had always enjoyed morning tea...but it was the warmth I found comfort in. It never had arrived so lukewarm, so I suppose I'd never really tasted tea for teas sake until this morning.

This dreadful morning. I closed my eyes.

My plate was decorated with jam slathered crumpets, a cup of steamy oatmeal, and poached eggs. All things my older brother Charlie had always swooned over. My younger sister Kate and I followed suit, claiming to enjoy all that he claimed first. Therefore, the cooks downstairs would have probably assumed this was the Dawson children's favorite breakfast meal.

As soon as I opened my eyes and glanced at the cold tea and the plate of unwanted food before me, I felt a tinge of queasiness. Charlie had already eaten apparently...that must have been the reason for the cold tea. The maids must have brought it up earlier than normal. I wasn't upset by any means; the problem was that only hot tea sounded appetizing at the moment. I picked up my fork and cut lines in the egg until it was completely burst.

"Jane."

I looked up and carefully slid my fork onto the plate. My father peered at me over his newspaper. The paper was inky, and I could see where Mr. Hamilton, our butler, had left the iron a moment too long. Dark letters spelled out the date of yesterday's paper, April 25, 1914. The words were terribly small, so Father's spectacles edging on the end of his nose was entirely fitting.

↑ children to notice
Add a detail from paper (an ad perhaps) ?
could use it for her to see childish (cloudy, gum, etc)

"You do know that if your mother sees her eighteen year old daughter making light of her breakfast, she will not be amused," he said. He folded the paper and set it beside him. "At least drink your cup of tea."

"It's cold."

He glanced up at me and shook his head. "Jane, you mustn't let this day get to you. Everybody is feeling what you're feeling. It's no excuse to act like a child."

I knew he didn't mean to sound the way he did...overbearing, apathetic, and cold. I knew I was hard to understand, as I myself couldn't even understand much of what I thought. I also knew that this morning reminded me sadly of the morning we first said goodbye to Charlie. The morning he boarded the ship to America for university. The same breakfast. The same discomfort. The same fear of what would happen next. At that point in my life, I hadn't realized that growing up and moving on meant experiencing unwanted change. I believed that everything would remain in the same state I'd always known it to be in: Mother, Father, and us children, moving through life together. Of course, the goodbye two years ago didn't seem as final as today's would. Today felt like the final sentence in a book I'd been reading forever.

morning

final

I lifted the china cup to my mouth and started to tip it back, preparing myself for the cold.

May I please... - finishing each other sentences

Out of nowhere, I heard the painful sound of metal falling upon metal, landing with a clang on the hardwood floor. My hand jerked, and the tea spilled down the entire front of my dress. My chest was left cold and stained with the sweet smell of leaves.

"Milady, please forgive me! I am ever so sorry! Let me get that for you!" The new maid scurried over to me, leaving the fallen tea tray and pot seeping onto the floor. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Father leave to get Mr. Hamilton, most likely to clean up the mess. "I am ever so sorry, Lady Jane. I do not know what happened." She lifted the corner of her apron up and

shilled?
stained?

began patting my dress. I could feel her hands shaking and beads of sweat forming on her forehead and upper lip.

"What is your name?" I asked, motioning her back.

She threw her hands behind her back and jumped back. "I...I...my name is Rose, milady. I started here at the start of the month. I've only served three times. I still am working on my balancing."

I pushed my chair back and stepped toward her. "Rose, there is no reason to be all up in a tizzy. Mr. Hamilton will tend to this. For now, I'm going to go freshen up. You just begin picking up the dishes from breakfast. I'll be sure nothing happens on your behalf." I touched her elbow, trying to comfort her.

She avoided eye contact and nodded quickly. "Yes ma'am." She broke the conversation by hurrying to my place setting and gathering the silverware.

As I left the dining room, I tried to think of how I could fix the issue at hand.

→ go into exploring her relationship w Charlie.
A memory perhaps.
"when she had been here..."
"feeling chilled by the spill by the top of stairs" brings us back

→ trying to be useful

→ Alice needs to "yuck" more
"American child"

Fourth draft and round of edits, October 29, 2019.

This was the beginning of the end of chapter one. The addition of the cold tea, which eventually would be spilled onto Jane, added immediate tension. The conversations with herself, with her father, and with her servant within the first two pages provided necessary insight for the reader to understand where they were. This draft introduced Jane in a more personal and interesting light than the entirety of the original *Then* ever had.

Original Chapter One – “Then”

The house was silent, a faint hum of voices echoing from the green baize servant’s door. The scent of lush rose blooms intoxicated the air, and the sweet smell created a light atmosphere that fitted rather nicely to the mood of the day.

A wedding day.

“Charlie looked quite ill at breakfast, wouldn’t you agree?” Kate whispered into my ear as she slowly walked down the grand staircase, afraid to break the silence. She was walking very carefully; her hair had been maneuvered into perfect, delicate curls, the floral tiara placed in the exact center of her head, and she did not want to risk messing it up before the wedding.

When we reached the bottom of the staircase, one of the housemaids appeared from behind the curtain, sweeping Kate into her arm and rushing her out the door.

“We’re nearly late, Lady Katherine,” I heard the maid say as she ushered Kate into the spotless car waiting for her in front of the doors. Her apron’s linen belt was loose in the back and she kept one hand on the tie, keeping it from falling open.

Kate waved a quick goodbye before she gathered the pale cornflower blue tulle of her dress into her tiny hands and climbed into the car. I stood, alone, in the quiet parlor and watched the chauffeur drive Kate away; headed to the church where my brother was to be married in just a few minutes.

“Jane,” a voice said from behind, startling me and causing me to clutch the fabric of my dress into my tight fists.

“You look ravishing.”

I swiveled around, realizing who it was, and folded my hands in front of my body. I looked into my father’s dark chocolate brown eyes and smiled. “I knew you would like it.”

Father took his hands out of his black tailcoat pockets and motioned for a hug. My heels clicked on the hardwood floor; the hem of my new dress barely brushing the ground as I made my way to him.

“This is a proud day, Jane. A happy and glorious day.”

“Quite right,” I said. And we *are* proud of Charlie.

When Charlie was a young boy, he never quite matured; he was always rather childish and wild. Then last year, he came home from his studies in America, he had always enjoyed traveling, and had surprisingly changed his ways. Charlie was a *scholar!* A well read, educated young man!

A few months after he came home, Miss Alice Wineman joined the picture. She’s from America; tall and thin with hair as black as coal, the general American school girl. Charlie had apparently met her while studying in New York and had proposed before he left. Alice and I got along quite well, but I believe that she’s a little too fast for my taste. And considering she’ll be taking over the role of Lady Kensington when Father dies, I have a right to judge who the best candidate for the job is and who’s not.

“Where is Alice? I do hope I didn’t miss her,” Mother said as she entered the room. She rolled her satin gloves onto her hands and readjusted her hat. “Do I look alright?” she asked, angling herself in front of Father.

“Beautiful, my darling.” Father tucked a flyaway hair into her hat. “Alice is still upstairs. You haven’t missed her just yet.”

“Oh dear, isn’t it about time to be making our way to the church? We mustn’t keep my Charlie waiting. The poor boy, he’s a nervous wreck!” Mother pursed her lips together and

shook her head, glancing at the big grandfather clock by the door. “I’m trusting Katharine looked presentable?”

I sighed. “Of course, Mother. I wouldn’t send her off not looking her best. Do you doubt my motives?”

“Heavens no, my dear. Never do I doubt you, I was just assuring myself that she won’t walk down that aisle with knotted hair or a stained dress.”

We heard a little cough from above, and Mother jerked her head to the direction of the sound. It had come from the landing on the stairs, one flight up, made by the long awaited bride herself.

“Here I am! Do you like me?” Alice asked while she delicately stepped down the lush carpeted stairs. Her dress was intricately beaded and draped in the finest of Egyptian lace and satin; her mother’s veil trailed behind her with every tiny movement she made. I smiled to myself, knowing that my brother wouldn’t be able to contain his happiness. She is the most beautiful bride I’ve ever seen.

“Did my mother already go to the church?”

I clapped my hands together. “You look just *marvelous*.”

Alice laughed. “I’m sure I don’t look that good.”

I smiled. “Your mother thought it would be best for her to make sure everything was running smoothly at the church, so she left about twenty minutes ago.” I paused and glanced at Father.

“But we should be getting along; I’m sure Charlie’s anxious to see you!” I said, slipping my white-gloved hands around her arm and walked her toward the door. Alice giggled and leaned her head on my shoulder. I could feel the tips of her diamond tiara poke my neck.

“Oh Jane, I’ve never been any happier in my entire life,” Alice said, picking up the front of her dress to climb into the car. I rubbed the area on my neck where her tiara had scratched me.

“I’m sure you are,” I said, lifting her train and settling it beside her on the black leather seat.

“There you go. I’ll see you there!” She squeezed my hand and then blew a kiss to Mother and Father.

“Thank you so very much!” The footman shut her door, and she took one last glance at us through the tinted window before settling herself back in the seat.

Mother, Father, and I walked across the gravel driveway to our car in front of Alice’s. “It’s such a tragedy that Alice’s father died before he even had the chance to walk her down the aisle,” Mother said.

“Yes, such a tragedy,” Father said, climbing in beside Mother. “But she still has Ms. Wineman.”

“Aren’t we glad for sweet Ms. Wineman.” I smiled and settled myself in the seat in front of Father. The door was shut by one of the younger footman and then the car’s motor rumbled to life.

We were on our way.

We passed through the front of our country estate, Highland Manor, winding through the dense gardens and tress on a narrow dirt and gravel road. The gardeners waved as we drove by their little houses or the gardens they were hard at work in. I thought it was such a shame that they weren’t allowed to attend the wedding of the future Earl of Kensington.

I made a mental note to be sure to let them take a break from their work and attend my wedding, if there is ever to be one.

I'm to have my nineteenth birthday in just a few months. Since I was presented to the society when I was seventeen, right after I finished my schooling, Mother says it is expected of me to marry soon. She tries to help the process move along more quickly by introducing me to eligible gentlemen every other weekend or so, but I just find no interest. Mother says I'm too picky; I feel like I would just rather remain a lonely spinster my whole life than marry someone I don't very much care for.

As we slowly crept upon the Kensington village, I turned around in my seat to catch a glimpse of Alice. Through the side windows, I saw the townspeople waving freshly painted banners, the letters still glistening wet in the afternoon sun. They cheered at our progression of cars. The people all wore their nicest of clothes; the little girls in bright white frocks and pig tails, the women in tattered feather hats, the men in faded tweed jackets, their sons in smudged overalls and shiny black shoes. All the while Alice sat perfectly still, her face beaming with excitement. Mother and Father waved at the people as we drew closer to the church. I saw a group of children with scuffed shoes and ruffled socks, handmade kites flying over their heads.

The cheers grew into roars of whistles and shouts when our cars pulled up to the towering front doors of the chapel. I caught a glimpse of the guests seated in the church, the final wave of people making their way down the center aisle to find their seats. Charlie must be a puddle of nerves.

The footman jumped out of the car and pulled our door open. Mother and Father stepped out, careful not to slip on the tiny pebbles that lined the steps up to the church.

“My dear Jane, you'll be at your own wedding before you know it.” Father held my hand as I stepped out.

I smiled at a line of older couples and waved to the children who flew the kites. “Father, let us focus on poor Alice today. We wouldn’t want to steal her thunder planning a wedding without even a groom,” I said, kissing him on the cheek and straightening the skirt of my pale pink dress.

“Come along; let’s let Alice have her moment of glory.”

Father winked and grabbed Mother’s hand, leading us into the church, down the now vacant aisle, and to our designated seats on the third row, allowing Mother to kiss Charlie’s cheek one last time before filing down the pew.

“Good luck, Charlie boy! She looks beautiful,” I whispered into his ear. Charlie flashed a forced smile and then went back to anxiously staring at the priest. His nerves were rather obvious, and I felt bad for a quick moment.

I walked to the seat by Father and smoothed my dress down as I sat on the hard wooden pew. The music started; the wedding had begun.

Jane
by Adeline Goodman

Chapter One

The tea was cold, which struck me as odd. I had always enjoyed morning tea in our fine china...but it was the warmth I found comfort in. The teacup always arrived steaming; the cooks never allowing anything to cool. I supposed I'd never really tasted tea for teas sake until this morning.

This dreadful morning. I closed my eyes.

My plate was decorated with two jam slathered crumpets, one bowl of buttery oatmeal, and a poached egg. All things my older brother Charlie had always swooned over. My younger sister Kate and I followed suit, claiming to enjoy all that he claimed first. Therefore, the cooks downstairs would have assumed this was the Dawson children's favorite breakfast meal.

As soon as I opened my eyes and glanced down at the cold tea and gelatinous egg, I felt a tinge of queasiness. Charlie had already eaten apparently...that must have been the reason for the frigid cup of tea. The maids must have brought it up earlier than normal. I wasn't upset at *them* by any means; the problem was that only hot tea sounded appetizing at the moment. This was all so frustrating for some odd reason. I picked up my fork and cut lines in the egg until it completely burst.

"Jane."

I looked up and carefully slid the utensil onto the plate. My father peered at me over his ironed copy of the *London Times*. The paper was inky, and I could see where Mr. Hamilton, our butler, had left the iron a moment too long. Dark letters spelled out the date of yesterday's paper, April 25, 1914. The words were terribly small, so Father's spectacles edging on the end of his nose was entirely fitting. I noticed an advertisement on the back page for a new dress shop, stuck

between two stories on Parliament. The dress was frilly and lined with thick lace I was quite certain was scratchy. I glanced down at my chest.

The dress of the advertisement was quite like the one I was wearing.

“You do know that if your mother sees her eighteen-year-old daughter making light of her breakfast, she will not be amused,” he said. He folded the paper, setting it beside his plate. “At least drink your cup of tea.”

I leaned back. “It’s cold.”

He glanced up at me and shook his head, lifting his own cup to take a swig. He swallowed, and I heard the gulp in his throat. I winced. I couldn’t stand to hear that. It was boorish to say the least.

“Jane, you mustn’t let this day rile you. Everybody is feeling what you’re feeling. It’s no excuse to act like a child.”

I felt my shoulders stiffen, and I sat up straighter against my seat back. I knew he didn’t mean to sound the way he did...overbearing, patronizing, and cold. At least, I hoped he didn’t. I knew I was hard to understand, as I myself couldn’t even fathom much of what I thought. I also knew that this morning reminded me sadly of the morning we first said goodbye to Charlie. The morning he boarded the ship to America for university. It was the same breakfast. The same discomfort. The same fear of what would happen next. At that point in my life, I hadn’t realized that growing up and moving on meant experiencing *unwanted* change. Change, yes. But I never thought I’d resist it. I had always believed that everything would remain somewhat in the same state I’d always known it to be in: Mother, Father, and we children, moving through life together. Of course, the goodbye two years ago didn’t seem as final as today’s would. Today felt like the final sentence in a book I’d been reading forever.

I lifted the china cup to my lip, starting to tip it back, preparing myself for the tepid tea, and trying to hold my tongue from any unladylike response.

Out of nowhere, I heard the painful sound of metal falling upon metal, clanging on the hardwood floor. My hand jerked, and the tea spilled down the entire front of my dress. My chest was left clammy and stained with the sweet smell of rotten old leaves.

“Oh dear –”

“Milad –”

“It’s fine –”

“Please forgive me! I am ever so sorry miss! Please let me get that for you!” The new maid scurried over to me, leaving the fallen tea tray and pot seeping onto the floor. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Father leave to get Mr. Hamilton, most likely to clean up the mess. “I am ever so sorry, Lady Jane. I do not know what happened.” She lifted the corner of her apron up and began patting my dress. I could feel her hands shaking and beads of sweat forming on her forehead and upper lip. Her eyes were damp.

I watched her, struggling to find something acceptable to say. It was entirely her fault. I knew that. I knew that the proper thing to do was to let her take full ownership, inform Mr. Hamilton of the mistake. But I also knew she couldn’t be more than one year older than I was...and how could I reprimand an equal?

“What is your name?” I asked, motioning her back.

She threw her hands behind her back, quick stepping away from the table. “I...I...my name is Rose, milady. I started here at the start of the month. I’ve only served three times. I’m...I’m still working on my balancing.”

I pushed my chair back to stand near her. “Rose, there is no reason to be all up in a tizzy. Mr. Hamilton will tend to this. For now, I’m going to go freshen up. You just begin picking up the dishes from breakfast. I’ll be sure nothing happens on your behalf.” I touched her elbow, trying to comfort her.

She avoided eye contact, bobbing her head. “Yes ma’am.” She broke the conversation by hurrying to my place setting and gathering the silverware.

I thought about turning to Rose and requesting she tell downstairs that tomorrow morning I’d like my tea piping. Instead, I left the room, too startled by the eerie familiarity of this morning to so many others. It brought me back to the busy morn of my presentation to society just a few months earlier...oh, how catastrophic. How dreadful it was to wake up in a bed not my own...our house in London always left me sleepless and rather uncomfortable. We did not spend enough time there to feel welcomed. But presentation was the “most valuable event of my life,” after my wedding of course, according to Mother, and we needed to be at our best. Meaning, we had to stay in our London home for the time being. I ate breakfast with Father that morning, just as today, but that time it was me who so recklessly knocked the plate into my lap. I was restless and not paying enough mind to my surroundings. The maid there also hurried to my aid, just as Rose did, insisting it was entirely her fault despite the obvious fact she had been standing ten feet away. I had avoided Father’s concerned gaze and rushed out of the room before anyone else saw the mess I had made. I hadn’t wanted to give him the chance to ask what was wrong.

But now here I was, standing at the top of the stairs in our magnificent manor in the countryside, the skin on my chest damp from murky tea, my new dress soiled, and my spirits dwindled. How could one moment feel so much like another?

Oh, Jane. What ever is the matter with you?

“Jane, move aside!”

I took a sharp breath as I was pushed to the wall, yanked back to the present, hitting my hip on the stair banister. Kate ran past me, her hair billowing out behind her shoulders. I missed that. The freedom to wear my hair down instead of the tight knot I was expected to sport now. Mother said the bun made me look mature, more ladylike.

I thought it made me look like Mother.

“Slow down, Kate!” Mother stuck her head out of her door. She was fiddling with her earrings. Her face looked pained, forced almost. I was familiar with that face, the face of frustration. Perhaps the face of disappointment?

“*Kate!*” The shrill voice I knew only to belong to Alice Wineman, my brother’s so-called lover, cut through the hallway.

Kate abruptly turned, barging into the door to my room. This is where Mother thought Alice would be suited best, where she would feel most comfortable. I listened to the high whine of Alice giving Kate her last minute marching orders. I started to make out specific words as I gathered the energy to find something else to wear. Just as I began my walk to my room, Mother snapped her head back outside her door.

“What did you do to your dress? It looks like your father took you shooting in the rain.” Her eyes were narrow and sharp.

“I –”

“Jane, do you believe you are a child?” She threw her flippant hands in the air. “Truly. You act like a child. Come.” Her fingernails dug into my arm as she pulled me into her room. Her maid was standing over her dressing table, most likely straightening up for that night.

“Would you fetch my new dress from London?” Mother waved her hand in the direction of her wardrobe. Her maid dropped the hair pins she had been collecting and scurried to the closet. “Jane, do you care to speak on the matter? That dress is new. Tailored, even.”

“It’s cold tea, Mother. That is all.” I watched her hand fly up to her ear again. I noticed that the earring was missing. *Oh, no.* “It’ll wash out.”

She frantically ran her hands along the top of her dress. “Where is that blood –”

“Mother!” Kate yelled from across the hall. “Alice needs you!”

Mother pursed her lips and took one long glance at herself in the mirror, ripping the other earring out. “I can only hope that girl’s mother is making herself useful at the church, leaving us here like this on not a moment’s notice.” Her voice was low but purposeful.

“We have to be ki –”

“Jane, get rid of that dress. It smells atrocious.” She walked out, her heels clicking in a perfect cadence. *Click, clack, click, clack.*

Her maid gently touched my shoulder, the very same frilly dress from the *London Times* advertisement resting across her arm. “Do you need my assistance with the dress?”

I shook my head, took a deep breath. Of course Mother had bought that horrid dress. “No, thank you. I’ll change in my room.” She handed me the dress and nodded her head, resting her hand on my shoulder. She was kind. She always had been. In fact, I think the maid knew how hard my and Mother’s relationship had gotten to maintain.

I think every servant did.

Back in the safety of Kate and my childhood nursery, I began to yank the soiled dress over my head. The room was cluttered with pencils and crumpled paper, remnants of Kate’s artistic frenzy from last night. I had moved out of the nursery at the beginning of the year. I had

at first been rather expectant of the change...excited for my own room and my own maid. I was at the age where I became exhausted of my sister's nagging very quickly. However, that first night in the new room with the large bed and dark windows made me regret allowing myself to succumb to the inevitable process of growing up. How'd I let it get that far, sleeping alone in some room covered in wallpaper that matched the library?

The door swung open and slammed into the wall. My hands went to my breasts. "Uh –"

"It's just me, Jane," Kate said in one fast exhale. She closed the door and proceeded to drop to her knees, searching the floor.

"You can't just barge into here like that."

"Jane, you seem to forget that this is *my* room now. I'm just letting you use it."

I pulled up the sleeve of my slip, wiggling my hips to be better settled in the dreadful corset I was expected to wear through my womanhood now. "It was not up to you, Kate. Mother required it."

Kate looked up from the floor. She had flowers in her hair. I cocked my head and leaned in closer. "Do you like those flowers?" I stifled a laugh.

She fingered a petal and sighed. The leaves were stuck in her ringlets. She looked as if she had been running through the garden before trimming season. "Alice had it prepared for me."

"Well, that's preposterous."

Kate's eyes whipped to meet mine. "And what do you look like? All stuffed into that wire-y mess. *That's* preposterous." She did know how to be quite rude.

I turned back to the terrible dress and finished dressing myself to the best of my capabilities. These dresses weren't meant to be fixed on their own. I knew I needed help. But from whom? Certainly not Mother. Certainly not Kate.

I slipped my shoes back on. “Come now, let’s get your hair fixed before Mother sees. She can’t afford another mishap this morning I’m afraid,” I said with a weary smile, opening the door and waiting for her to follow suit.

“I can’t find my earrings, Jane.” She continued to angrily run her hands along the floorboards, working herself up much as Mother did only a few moments before.

“You know Mother won’t let you wear earrings at your age. Now, come.”

She stood and slumped out of the room. We made our way to Mother’s room. I prayed she wouldn’t be in there. I heard Alice’s whine and Mother’s sharp response from down the hall, and I knew we were in the clear. She had someone else to nag for the time being.

Kate sat down on the dressing stool in front of the tall mirror standing in the corner of the room. She folded the green fluffy pleats of her dress onto her lap and sighed. “I will admit that I thought the floral tiara didn’t match everything else. It made me look like a child.”

“You are a child, though. You just turned thirteen.” I pulled the white gloves off my hands, one finger at a time, attempting to maintain the smooth fabric Leah worked so hard on steaming that morning. I paused and glanced at Kate’s reflection in the mirror, studying her eyes for the reaction I knew would come.

She was still. Pouting. Her eyes were fixed on the pearls sewed to the hem of her dress. “You aren’t much older, Jane. You only just were presented to society. Remember that?”

“Yes, Kate. I remember.”

I went back to work. I knew I needed to think through what to say. I had to be careful around Kate. Her hair was soft to my hurried touch, curly and the color of creamy cocoa during the holidays. Pieces of stray leaves and tips of ripped petals were woven deep into her mane,

almost as if she had been born that way. A sort of garden fairy child. A sharp one at that, but a fairy child all the same.

“Kate, I do agree with you, regardless. No thirteen-year-old lady should have to attend a service of this stature with a garden on her head.” I wanted to extend my empathy, let her know I was on her side even though I didn’t understand completely. I opened my mouth to explain further but abruptly shut it, struggling to find the right words once more. I settled on silence, as I continued carefully combing through her hair, dropping a pile of greenery onto her lap as I went.

“I guess I wouldn’t have attempted to remove it if you had worn a flower crown to match, Jane,” she said, raising her eyes to meet mine in the mirror. She was timid in her remarks, yet forward in her intentions. Even though she didn’t put a voice to it, I knew Kate hated how time was stealing our childhood, just as I did.

I dropped the final primrose into her lap. “You can leave these on the nightstand. Mother’s maid will tend to them tonight.”

I rummaged through the velvet box that sat on the dresser. A diamond brooch nicked the tip of my pinky finger, a ball of blood immediately appearing on the tip of my white glove. I pulled the glove off and stuck my finger under my tongue, using the other hand to pull out a ball of white ribbon. I tossed it onto Kate’s lap and hurried to the sink to rinse the slick blood off.

I didn’t understand the shimmer of and desire to grow up faster than God intended us to. It was all Kate ever talked about, although I knew she had her reservations. I wished she would rest in her gift of childhood...and let me figure out mine on my own. I wiped my finger on the soft towel laid across the corner of the porcelain sink. It left a trace of pink.

Not a single ounce of my being enjoyed the process of growing up. Learning to leave the life you knew, deciphering how the Jane of tomorrow would appear...it seemed to be an

impossible and incredibly unfortunate deal to live through. I did not see a purpose to it whatsoever.

When I stepped out of the bathroom, fingering the little red dot of my glove, Kate was no longer sitting in front of the mirror. I ran to the door and stopped in the middle of the hallway.

She had left.

And for some odd reason, the simple act of Kate leaving without a trace left me feeling so fragile. Like it was an insult of some kind. And feeling fragile because of something so miniscule felt so embarrassing. At the bottom of my throat, I felt the annoying urge to cry. Then the all-too-familiar pump of muted pain arrived in my temples. I didn't understand why Kate refused to acknowledge the sadness behind change or why she refused to acknowledge I was feeling sad, especially today. I closed my eyes and laughed to the empty hallway, pushing my fingers hard onto the side of my head.

You do not make sense, Jane. Kate is thirteen. She left. That's all. Stop crying.

I looked at my pinky again. The red of my blood was bold against the white. However, the more I peered at it, the more it seemed somewhat intriguing. I liked the difference of it...I liked how it made my glove interesting.

It reminded me of a moment I lived as a child. I was running across the brown pebble path lined with thick white hydrangeas. The path winded through the back grounds of Highland, our majestic yet homey home. It had rained the night before, and Mother had dressed me in all white. We were welcoming members of Father's shooting party later that afternoon. They were to be here for the entire weekend, and she expected Charlie and me to tend to ourselves for the most part, trusting that Charlie would responsibly act his age.

I remember the feeling of running alone that day, churning my arms and legs as I tried to catch up to my older brother. Frankly, it was impossible...he was five years older with longer legs and more capable lungs. Father even let him run more often than I ever stole the chance to. He was *trained*. Yet, I still believed in the notion that one day I would finally experience the rush of passing Charlie, leaving him to catch up to me for once.

In the memory, I remember slowing down. I saw a bird standing beneath a bush of tiny bright flowers, and I remember thinking how beautiful that bird was and wondering why it chose to live here at Highland, of all places. Or perhaps it was simply visiting? There was no way to find out. I began to inch toward the bird, irrationally hoping she would let me get close enough to see her details, the spots on her feathers. The bird flapped her wings, catching me by surprise and causing my decline into a mud puddle. When I stood up, the entire back of my white lace dress with puffy crisp sleeves was brown.

I stood for a good while with my neck craned to see the dirt on my clothes. I thought about Mother and what she would say. I thought about Charlie and how far ahead he must have been by that point. I thought about the bird and where she might have flown to. And then I just sat down, eventually laying my head down on the grass that lined the pathway. I felt the warm rain water seep into my dress and along the knobs of my spine. I tugged the white ribbon out from my hair and pulled it out of its knot. The tips of my hair became damp.

A few childhood minutes passed and my supposedly responsible brother eventually realized his baby sister wasn't at full speed behind him, and he came back for me. At first, he started yelling, probably fearful that something dreadful had happened to me. But after I laughed and sat up, he said a word Mother had told me never to repeat and extended a hand.

Mother didn't allow me my fig pudding that night.

I had liked the difference of those moments as a girl. That day in the mud, I felt something different than I did every other day of my life. I didn't know exactly what about it appealed to me, but I knew I loved that feeling. And yet, here I was present day. Eighteen and refusing to accept any nod to change or difference.

However much I appreciated the symbolism of the now pink, bloody dot on the tip of my gloves, I knew Mother wouldn't entertain me for one second. I held my pinky in my fist and gathered myself, taking purposeful steps toward the staircase. I would just have to be careful.

As I made the turn onto the stair's velvet landing, I heard those familiar high-pitched, obnoxiously American giggles, and I was thankful nobody was there to see my eyes and hear my sigh. Alice quickly came into view, and I felt a twisted ball of dread and discomfort land in the bottom of my stomach.

I hated this day. But I also hated that I hated it, and that frustrated me more than the day itself. *Again Jane...you don't make a single lick of sense.*

Alice did claim to love Charlie. Almost daily, actually. Which I supposed should have been comforting to me. I think she told us every day since he first brought her home to Highland. He had decided at a young age that as soon as Mother would allow, he would travel to America to attend school in New York. Charlie always was the bravely curious one, and so while it tore our family apart to be separated, I was happy for him when he boarded that ship. Really. I never had honestly expected him to stay here forever, and so I accepted his departure pretty quickly. However, this Alice woman was not part of my understanding when he left. With hair as black as coal and a figure slim enough to be tucked into your front pocket, Alice Wineman struck me as downright untrustworthy. Which I supposed could have been an ill assumption on my part, but I

hadn't been allowed to see Charlie like old times since he left. Alice was always there. Charlie and Jane and Kate...and Alice. Absolutely dreadful. Repulsive, even.

Of course, I could and would never tell Charlie that. I respected him and his intelligence more than to stoop so low to expose such strong, opposing feelings of mine for no apparent reason. It would only hurt our relationship. I would have to leave my opinions to myself.

Unfortunately though, Kate didn't see the situation in the same light, leaving me truly on my lonesome. Not only could I not tell Charlie, I didn't know if anyone one else would listen anyways.

"Oh, Alice, you are a vision!" Kate swooned. I watched her as I stood at the bottom of the staircase. She stood uncomfortably close to Alice, her smile a little too cheeky. I wondered if Alice realized how much my baby sister admired her. And for whatever reason? I could not put my finger on it. Maybe Kate assumed Americans were more sophisticated? Or maybe Kate yearned for something and someone different, like I did? But Alice wasn't a *good* different, so I would never understand that if it were the case. But then again, that was my opinion.

I tucked a flyaway curl behind my ear and leaned against the wall. My back made a thud when it hit the floral wallpaper, and Alice's tiny face darted in my direction.

"Why, hello Jane. I haven't seen you all morning."

I gave her a smile and a nod. "Good morning, Alice."

She touched Kate's shoulder, willing her to move to the side, and began her way to my wall. "How are you today? You look rather *tired*."

I narrowed my eyes, opening my mouth to respond.

“Girls, the time has come. It’s time to leave.” Mother’s voice interrupted at just the right time. I closed my eyes and breathed deep, relieved I had been stopped before spitting out something I would have wished stayed in my own head. “Mr. Hamilton has the cars waiting.”

In the car, I sat by the window with my hands folded in my lap, my pinky tucked out of sight. The line of our black cars trailed from the front of Highland through the front gardens and into the English countryside. As we made our way to the village, I watched the wildflowers on the edge of the dusty road. They grew in the unlikeliest of places...so detailed, so different.

Mother sat beside me, her knuckles white from clutching her hands so tightly. She took short, rapid breaths with her eyes closed. I knew she had dreaded this day. That is one explanation for her behavior this morning, I supposed...the other being that she just wasn’t a pleasant person to begin with. However, Mother did despise when life changed. I supposed that is where I adopted these terrible tendencies. Change *was* such a nuisance. I reached my hand over and laid it on her ball of fists. Regardless, I loved her. Her eyes remained closed, but I felt her release her clench for a second. I knew I didn’t truly comfort her, but I was all she had for the time being.

As we rode in silence, the tendrils of sleep became stronger and stronger. The sound of the motor and the warmth of the cloudy sun coming through my window made it hard to sit up straight. I tried my childhood trick of holding my eyelids open with my fingers. Charlie and I had always tried to convince Kate you could keep yourself awake for hours if you just held your eyes open. We’d catch her asleep on the sofa after dinner, the fireplace crackling remnants from the party, with her hands on her eyes.

She used to be such a precious child. Of course, she still was...just in another way. I hadn’t gotten around to asking Charlie about his thoughts on growing up, asking if he thought

Kate was getting ahead of herself. If I thought it was the right timing, I would've asked if he thought he himself was running ahead of time. But as I said, there were no moments without Alice there. She liked to curl her thin arm around his whenever we were all together, her piercing blue eyes wide open and somewhat distracting. She never broke eye contact. Father said that was an admirable trait, but I thought it was rather intimidating and uncalled for. There needed to be moments of rest in everything. Even conversation.

As we neared the village, I began to see pudgy toddlers waving fresh British flags with shiny paint and tattered ones with our village crest. If the windows were down, I would have heard their wet giggles as their mothers chased them out of flower gardens.

I had always wondered what it would be like to know my family from their perspective. What did they see that I couldn't? Did they respect my father as I expected and hoped they did? Did they see tension between Mother and the rest of us, or did they see the façade we so often worked to maintain? I talked on a weekly basis to Ms. Broughton, an old widow who lived in a cottage right off of the turn to Highland. But she didn't ever offer much insight as to what a townspeople would say about the Dawson family reputation without us present. She didn't hold back from speaking her own mind, though...that's why I enjoyed her so much. However, I always found myself leaving her table wanting. Wanting more insight into what life looks like outside my walls. If I was living a life deemed pointless...or if my life was in fact valued.

I know she had more to say on the matter. Surely.

Mother, however, didn't say a single word the entire drive.

"Your ladyships, we have arrived," said the driver as the chapel came into view. He positioned the car behind Alice's, hopped out, and immediately opened Mother's door, his hand already extended and waiting to grasp hers as she descended.

“Thank you, Parker. I expect to see you afterward,” said Mother. She never looked him in the eye, rather she had her eyes locked on the church doors. One was inched open, revealing the last row of pews. I wondered what was going through her mind, a mother about to give her son away.

I gathered my dress and pushed myself over to the door, smiling at Parker and taking his hand. “Lovely drive, as always.”

“Well, I’m driving a lovely lady...I mustn’t disappoint.” He winked and squeezed my hand as I let go. “Give Mr. Charlie my regards.”

The church looked solemn. The doors were pointed at the top, outlined by a garland of ivy and primrose. I knew that everyone beyond those doors would be expectant. Their demeanor would probably be more fitting than mine, much more hospitable to the day than I was allowing myself to be. I’d have to be careful to not allow anyone to notice my hesitations until the day was over. Mother always told me my face gave me away, whether I was trying to or not.

I watched as Alice swung her legs over the side of her seat and gingerly stepped onto the cobblestone. She must have arranged her veil over her face, tickling the fallen tendrils of black hair, while she was in the car, contemplating the day ahead of her as the rest of us sat in solitude. However, I could still see her striking eyes even through the lacey gauze.

Sometimes I felt as if I could actually feel her looking at me, even from behind.

“Jane! Did you see all the people cheering for us?” squealed Kate as she grasped my hand, tearing my gaze away from Alice. “I think I even saw Ms. Broughton. And those two baby twins Father talked about last week. They were all waving at me through the window!”

“I think their joy was reserved for Alice, Kate. It’s not our turn quite yet.”

Kate slumped away, obviously frustrated once more that I wasn't appreciative of her excitement. She always was quick to forget a grudge, which was a good quality since it was so easy to frustrate her yet again.

As I was ushered into the church, I searched for Charlie. The guests weren't all seated yet, and the aisle was thick with old friends of Father's and cousins of Mother's, but I knew he'd be standing at the end, waiting. I began the polite nodding and smiling, the occasional hello and touch of my fingers to elbows as I tiptoed around. When I found myself at the front, Charlie was surrounded. He had the priest on one side, the town doctor on the other; their conversation looked lively, and I couldn't catch his eye. I knew better than to interrupt. Instead, I slumped into my front pew, allowing myself to slip once more into the depths of pitiful feelings and wandering questions. Ones I couldn't bear to share with anyone else, despite my desire to.

Soon, the rumbling of meaningless conversation would come to a halt, the doors to the church would open, and Alice would be standing at the end, wrapped in tasteful white. She would meander down the aisle and somehow solidify the end of my childhood with two of the tiniest words. Then she would turn, and those eyes would dart in my direction. Which was probably a detail of my own excessively dramatic imaginings. But whatever the sorts, they would smile and leave. And the chapter of childhood that included the three of us Dawson children together would float away, as if it never meant anything in the first place.

Chapter Two

Alice's mother Mrs. Wineman, who never actually told me her first name, had insisted the moment she first stepped foot into Highland that for the wedding reception, we must have the rug rolled up and stowed away to make room for dancing. She brought a gramophone about a month before the wedding and directed Mr. Hamilton to place it in the front entryway. I had no idea how she even managed to get that monstrosity of an invention here, however I still caught myself gravitating toward the mysterious golden bell these past few weeks, running my fingers over the lines of the record I hoped would play sounds of cellos or runs of piano. I never listened to music...at least, not more than probably five songs in my lifetime. I just listened to the musical experiences of our house guests, the men who came for shooting weekends or the women who came for tea. They all seemed to be well versed in the outside world, while all I knew was what went on at Highland. Which wasn't the worst thing I didn't think; I just knew there had to be more.

I stood in the corner of the room. Other than the few children frolicking back and forth across the bare hardwoods, the wedding reception was rather tired. I itched the back of my bun, which was barely holding in the frustrating brown curls I inherited from my grandmother. For such a supposedly happy celebration, it sure seemed to me that everybody was edging toward the door, hopeful that Charlie and Alice would decide themselves to leave. Once they made the call to hurry out of Highland to catch their late night train into the city, the rest of us were relieved to say goodnight.

As I continued to study the people around me, watching their interactions and admiring their willingness to create small talk this late into the night, Father made his way to my corner.

He held a snifter of Belle of Marion in his hand, swirling it around like he always did during dinner parties with Mother's tea friends. Impatient. Tired. Bored.

"I haven't seen much of you today," I said when he turned to stand beside me. He set the nearly full glass on the bookshelf and folded his hands behind his back. "How do you suppose it went?"

He chuckled. "Jane, to heavens if I know. I suppose it went well...Alice and her mother didn't say anything different. Your mother even declared it a success. What more could we ask for?" He shifted his arm to nudge mine. "I'm hoping you agree."

"I think it was just as expected."

"And what do you mean by that?"

I closed my eyes. I knew how I felt...I just never knew how to put it into words. "I...just thought it was everything Alice and Charlie could've dreamed for and more." I hoped that sounded acceptable.

If I were to attempt to share any of the complexity that was my headache during this grown-up form of childhood, during this specific day and why I was feeling things so heavily, I would share it with Father. He was the one I knew would at least attempt to understand best. But something stopped me every time. I found myself often laying the framework in our conversation, preparing myself to just unravel my confusing thoughts. But then I would look him in the eyes and imagine his disappointment in my discontent. The fear of that was too overwhelming. I always left those almost-conversations abruptly, singing some excuse a fly could see through.

I could see the confusion on his face. He wasn't looking at me though; he was intently watching the guests by the door. He was being respectful, allowing me to come to him. I was

thankful he understood what I needed, yet I struggled to find what to say next. What could I say? *Oh yes, Father, I'm heartbroken at the fact we're saying goodbye to Charlie tonight because it means we're watching our childhood just float away, which means I have to experience finding a new Jane, but I don't know what kind of change that entails because I love my life but yet I feel confused and discontent. And oh yes, I've been crying rather a lot recently. Aren't I just hilarious?* I don't even know what that means for me. Why would I ever expect someone else would?

My temples inched toward throbbing again. I winced and leaned my head onto my hand.

I decided to bid him farewell, avoiding any inquiry on my sudden loss of health, with a touch on the elbow. I wanted to find Kate. She hadn't talked to me since outside the church. She sat on the opposite side of Mother during the service, and I hadn't gotten to ride with her in my car. By this point, I was sure she'd have forgotten to be upset with me. At least, I hoped so.

As I made my way through the crowd into the drawing room, where I knew Kate to be sitting on the couch in front of the fire, I heard snatches of tired conversations and questions, begging answers of a promised and approaching end to the night. My heart ached a tad for Alice and Charlie. I would hate for my wedding guests to be wishing my night to end. But then again, weren't weddings just of this sort? An entirely too formal attire that, while brought lovely bliss, faded into exhaustion and impatience near the close? I figured that weddings really are bliss for the bride and groom alone, rather than the entire guest list.

I still hoped my theoretical, surely approaching wedding would end with guests dreading the end, as they felt so warm and loved while in our presence, the presence of two in love.

A girl was allowed to dream. Even if Mother didn't seem to leave any life up to be dreamt in that regard.

I rounded the corner and saw my little sister, slumped against the corner of our dusty velvet couch. She still had her shoes buckled on, the ends of her dress riding up to show her ruffled socks. Wisps of hair laid still across her right eye, moving softly up and down as she breathed the soft breaths of sleep. She looked herself. In sleep, one cannot try to be another.

Smoothing my dress out from under me, I sat a few inches from Kate. The drawing room was empty at this point, as everyone was anticipating Alice and Charlie to come down the stairs at any moment now. What was left of the fire popped, and I watched as a tendril of smoke winded into the air. Leaning back, I leaned over and laid my head on Kate's shoulder and closed my eyes.

Growing up, Mother would threaten to lock me into the nursery if she caught me asleep in the drawing room. She thought it was the rudest of things to do when the family was hosting guests. But as a child, there was never really any draw for adults to discuss any matters with me. My opinions were of no help to their dilemmas or inquiries. So, I would always find my way back into the drawing room after being filled with plum jelly and cream, resting in the very nook Kate was nestled in, asleep by the time the fire crackled the last time. Mr. Hamilton was who ended up carrying me up the stairs before Mother caught a glimpse of me. The servants always caught on. He'd softly pad up the carpeted staircase and down the hall, where our nurse maid would be waiting to help get me ready for bed. Mother always just assumed that I had taken it upon myself to turn in early, a sign of maturity.

"Kate," I whispered, my eyes still shut. If I wasn't careful, I knew I would fall into that childlike sleep...the kind that pulls your eyelids down like weights, begging you to stay just a moment more. "We have to go say our goodbyes."

She shifted, wrapping her arm around mine, as if I was her nighttime blanket. She wouldn't admit it, but I knew she still slept with the raggedy thing. The pink collection of thread stayed folded under her pillow, waiting for the black night to come so she can pull it out and retreat back to the comfort of childhood necessity. By dawn however, Kate had it stuffed back under the pillow, out of sight.

I watched the clock on the mantle tick by. While time occasionally seemed to move so achingly slow, that one hand was always moving so quickly.

A cheer erupted in the entryway. I heard whistles and hearty laughs. "Kate! Wake up!"

As if on cue, my sister's eyes flew open and her arm whipped away from mine. She turned to look at me, her eyes wide and hair frizzy. Without a word, she jumped to her feet and rushed out of the room, not giving even a second for me to catch up.

Rubbing my eyes, I followed suit at a much slower pace. I knew with Mother needing to bid her personal farewell at Charlie's side, I wouldn't miss their departure even if I finished my nap. And besides, I knew Charlie wouldn't leave without a proper goodbye to his oldest sister. Or...at least I hoped so. It was true that he hadn't made a moment of time for me the entire day, so while it hurt to imagine, I wouldn't be surprised if I didn't cross his mind at the end either.

For a second, the awful idea that Alice forbid Charlie from spending time with his family today crossed my mind, but I quickly swatted it away. Obviously, while I don't entirely enjoy knowing her, she was not evil.

Unless...

Absolutely not.

I politely pushed my way through the crowd of tired wedding guests. The music had been cut off, and the party had spilled out onto the driveway, the front doors wide open. I continued to

touch the shoulders of people I hardly knew, smiling and nodding, moving on the balls of my feet to try to see the bride and groom over the tops of heads. At last, I caught his eye. Charlie was doing the same.

“Jane!”

I smiled and lifted my hand. “Coming, Charlie!”

When I finally reached his side, I couldn’t help but thank our Lord that Alice was occupied with saying her goodbyes to her mother and father. For at least this moment, brother and sister were reunited at last.

“How do you feel, Charlie?” I asked, searching his face for any remorse for what he’s just done, hoping he might have changed his mind and decided to stay at Highland instead of continuing on the track of growing older and more proper. Hopeful thinking, I supposed.

He smiled and shook his head, running his hands through his curly hair. We looked the same. Both inherited Grandmother’s curly curse, both had button noses like Father, and we both had a smile with the smallest line between our front two teeth. Strangers had always assumed we were twins.

“Jane, I just am floating. I feel as if I’m watching this day from above. Remember that birthday of yours when Mother let us jump into the pond? You wore your dress and shoes and everything?” He was giddy.

“I do.”

“And remember how we couldn’t believe she had said yes?”

I nodded, picturing that clear sunny day, the feeling of soggy socks as we walked back on the dock. I couldn’t help but smile.

“That’s what this day feels like. I can’t believe it happened.”

I reached for his hand. “That’s...wonderful.” I struggled for words. He squeezed my fingers tight just as I saw Alice turn to him once more. “Char –”

“Come along, Charlie! The honeymoon awaits!” Her voice was abrupt and painful. “See you when we get home, Jane. Thank you for all your help today. You were such a doll.”

I nodded. “Right.”

Charlie smiled at Alice, and then squinted his eyes at me and cocked his head to the side, almost as if to ask a question. He was still for a few moments. My head beat against my temples, my eyes burning with the fast-approaching goodbye. Silent, he pulled me into a hug, his arms wrapping my head against his chest. I was limp, biting my tongue and mentally willing myself to gather myself. The dull pain of tears was building in my throat again though, too strong to subside and wet against his jacket. “Jane?” Charlie whispered, still holding my head to him. “Best friends for always, yes?”

More hot tears escaped. He used to say that to me as a child every night before bed. Even in fights, childhood Charlie needed me to know where we stood. Which I supposed was the gift of siblings...they were your God-given friends, regardless.

I opened my mouth to say it back, but all I could manage was a quiet and simple, “Yes.” We stood like that for a minute, my arms crossed in front of my body, and his wrapped around me. I felt like a child again. When I finally pulled away, I saw that his cheeks were glistening, his eyes wet. He nodded to me and wiped his face, turning to face the car.

Did he know?

Somehow, as the car pulled away, Mother, Father, Kate, and I all ended up standing in a lonesome huddle, the rest of the guests behind us. Naturally and without thought, we stood close enough for our arms to touch, yet still without words. Kate was the only one waving, big and

exhausting motions and shrills of repeated goodbyes. Everyone else stood silent. I wondered why. I knew my reasoning...but the others? I wished I could ask.

It felt like so much time had passed before the lights of the car disappeared into the dark. Already, the guests had begun their retreat into Highland, gathering their belongings and paying their final respects to the family. Turning, I caught Mrs. Wineman stifle a yawn. I turned back to the empty sky. It was the perfect night...the kind of night where one could count each star and gaze at her reflection in the moon. I wanted to lie down and sleep. I could just imagine how the cool, dewy grass would tickle the back of my neck with cold, the nighttime breeze against my legs...

“Jane, there’s no more fooling around to be done,” Mother snapped, her heels kicking up pebbles from the driveway. Her voice was low, for only me to hear. She turned her face ever so slightly so that I could see only her shadowed profile. She waited.

“I’m not aware of any fooling around, Mother.” I watched Kate through the front door. She was laughing at something Father was saying, his voice bellowing across the lawn.

“You are the oldest in this house now. It’s time you acted like it.” She waited, as if to see a response. I refused to please her with one, so I held my face still as stone, my hands crossed in front of my awfully ugly dress. Mother gave up and walked inside.

I was left in the dark as the heavy front door shuddered into place, a wall between me and their world...my world. I touched the pads of my pointer and middle fingers to my temple. The muted pain pulsed beneath my curls. I wanted to lie down...perhaps sleeping would prove to be my cure.

If only.

I mustered up the willpower to step back inside of our now hustle-bustle of a home. Mother, Father, and Kate were lined by the stairs, accepting farewells and congratulations. I watched as Kate hugged every guest by the neck, endeared by their coos and remarks of how darling of a girl she was becoming. Mother's lips were pursed in that awful almond shape, the wrinkles of her top lip protruding over every potentially beautiful feature her face had to offer. I imagined she thought that expression was her attempt at being polite...a respectful attempt. However, I wished she would just frown. It would be far more fitting.

I caught Father's eye, and he twitched his head, signaling me to come stand by him as the guests paid their parting respects. I stood, still and focused, listening to their goodbyes and exclamations over my life.

"Beautiful wedding, wasn't it?"

"Jane, I'll be looking forward to celebrating your marriage soon I hope."

"I'm sure you have prospects scheduled, Lady Jane."

"Best wishes to your new sister."

"Aren't you getting about that age?"

By the time the last guests, an old couple, their highnesses the Frilly Lace and Top Hat, disappeared into the night, the throbbing in my temples felt visible, as if the sides of my head were vibrating and my hair was moving alongside them.

"I am afraid I need to retire to bed," I began as I ascended the staircase. "My head seems to be –"

"Jane, I've corresponded with Lord Langston on bringing his son Harrison next weekend."

I turned around. Mother stood in the middle of the room, her hands clasped in two white fists. She looked dreadful.

“Excuse me?”

She nodded. “I said that Lord Langston is bringing his son next weekend. I’ll have the tailor visit and prepare your dresses for you.” She paused. “It’s time.”

Chapter Three

I woke on my own time, rather than by the screeching of velvet curtains hung on thin rings and rod and the pitter-patter of Leah scrounging for my daily jewelry and hair pins. When I was a little girl, sleeping in the airy nursery, the old nurse maid would rouse me. Softly and without a word. She'd sit on the edge of the bed and touch her cold wrinkly fingers to my cheek. Mother never much enjoyed the presence of Miss Wellington, or Miss Welly for short. I did not understand why when I was young. Of course as a child I never vocally questioned it, but as I grew older, I realized Mother must have felt slightly threatened. Which was understandable. But then raised the question of why she didn't just step in? She could have allowed herself, the mother, to be the nurse maid? Surely, some families were raised by their actual life-givers.

Miss Welly left when I was seven years old. Kate never really even knew her; she was exclusively Charlie's and mine to remember. Sometimes, I liked that.

However, I spent the rest of my childhood being awakened by young maids, knocking at the door. "*Lady Jane, it's time for breakfast. May I come in?*" So polite. So thoughtful. When I moved down the hall into the stuffy room I slept in now, I was surprised by how involved and proactive my current lady's maid was in my morning routine. Granted, I should have expected it. I was raised aware that Mother was cared for by her maid every single morning, afternoon, and night. Practically waited on hand and foot. Absolutely preposterous if you asked me. What would happen if I left Highland? What would happen if I were left to my own devices? Mother would surely die immediately. I would survive a few weeks at best...I hoped.

But at last, this morning I was allowed unrequested and gifted solitude.

The first thing I saw when I opened my eyes from sleepy bliss was the most literarily beautiful scene I'd ever been a character in...the coos of doves so close I was sure they were

perched on my windowsill, sunlight creeping through the thin cracks of dusty velvet, illuminating the pieces of silver and glass throughout my room. I was warm under my blanket, but the tip of my nose was rosy pink with the cold of a large home. I had remained in bed for what felt like hours, wondering how long I could live in my storybook morning.

“Lady Jane, I dearly apologize, but I’m afraid Leah has fallen ill this morning. I would have been here earlier if we had known.” Mother’s maid flew into the room without a knock. Her face was flushed and her hands fidgety. It always made me uncomfortable that grown women were somewhat intimidated by me just because they dressed me in the mornings. “Your mother told me to tell you she was off to London to arrange for some gowns to be delivered.”

I sat up slowly and curtly nodded, waiting for further instruction.

“I’ll go run you a bath.”

As the morning expired into afternoon, I found myself balanced on the wheeled ladder of Father’s library. He was sitting at his desk, flicking through papers and letters. I assumed they were of village business, or perhaps something regarding the government and country. He always had been so interested in the political nature of things. I thought politics were interesting. Yet, I knew too little to claim *true* interest. I also felt overwhelmed by my lack of mastery...how would I even begin to understand just the fundamentals? I’d have to teach myself books upon books upon books of information, which sometimes appealed to me I’d admit, in waves of dreadful academic desire and drive. But more often than not, my thirst for academia was quenched by a beautifully bound book of fiction, a book of somebody else’s romanticized story.

My mother loved reading, too...at one point. I supposed this was one of my few pieces of evidence that she was in fact my blood. Father told me once that when he first met her, she was oblivious to the world around her, as her nose was stuck so tightly in a Radcliffe, she couldn’t

smell anything else. He laughed when he told the story. Father always said he saw the same in me...the fervent desire to experience sublime adventure, even if through the leaves of a novel. He thought my mother and I were more similar than I believed to be true. One day, he would see. If we really were retellings of the same soul, what ever changed? I hadn't seen a book in Mother's hands since I was a toddler. Of course, she had nothing against them, but she did always make it known that she had better things to do than sit and bask in some *meaningless tale*. Heavens knows what she considered more meaningful in her day...tea time? Dress fittings? Or God forbid...inviting young men to meet her eldest daughter against her wishes?

I begged that my days wouldn't become as meaningless as hers.

I had finished Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets From the Portuguese* before Charlie's wedding, and while soaking in the bathtub, I decided to spend this Mother-less day hidden behind the pages of a new work. The book of poetry had taken me most of spring to read. I thought each of the 44 sonnets deserved so much more than a glance and turned page. Rather, I decided each poem deserved to be read aloud, so that each of Elizabeth's words were properly respected and admired for their beauty and thought. I often viewed writing as a form of friendship...imagining us sitting in pillows of grass under the sunlight, a journal and quill in hand. She probably sounded out every word, every sentence, thinking about all the times she'd loved before, and what words would pay homage to those stories best. I liked to imagine that she was writing with her reader in mind, writing so that I could feel the things she felt.

During this spring, I had felt as if Elizabeth Barrett Browning was my closest friend.

But today, I was on the neck-craning and arm-stretching search for another dear friend, the next author I would share worlds with for a time. My neck cramped, and I stood straight, my left hand gripping the ladder and my right resting on the shelf.

“You ought to read something of value, darling,” piped Father. He shifted in his seat and rested his chin in his hand. “All those stories of fairytale and love don’t do much good in my opinion.”

“Right. And stories of government and death would. I’ll consider it, Father.”

He laughed. “Ms. Broughton dropped by some books a few weeks ago. I don’t believe you’ve read any of them yet. I believe Mr. Hamilton settled them into the shelf right below you.”

I continued on my search, eventually finding myself at the stack of thin books our lovely villager had gifted us. They were fairly new; I could tell they had been read due to the crack in the spine. Otherwise, the color was bright and the pages white. I picked one up, tucked it beneath my arm, and descended the rickety ladder. Once on ground, I nestled myself into the chair by the window and ran my hand over the bright red cover. The title was gold, embossed onto the hardback. *A Room With a View* by E.M. Foster.

“I’m out to the gardens, Father.” I was out of the room before I got a response.

Highland in all of its ornate and old glory was settled between two groves of magnolia trees, gates to the outer grounds where my hydrangea pathways and lily pad ponds were resting. Since the first days I could remember, we had a family of gardeners who lived in a cottage off the back of the property beside the lake dock almost. They managed the flower beds, the rock roads, the weekly trimmed grass; their thumbs were the closest to the color of spring weeds I had ever laid eyes on. The grounds of Highland were my very own *Secret Garden*, filled with magical shade and dewy petals where I believed my fairies to have lived.

To be finished...one day.

- A