

You Must Make Haste

by Ankusha Jain

'You must make haste, Ophelia. All the arrangements have been made, and I have spoken to Jacob; he will take you and Sebastian to Liverpool and from there you and Sebastian will cruise to America, miles and miles away from us.'

I hear Mary sharing all the details of my fast-paced wedding while moving to and fro in the room, lifting up my heavy wedding attire, which is embedded with white pearls and various French laces. She stopped for a second and took a deep sigh, adjusting her wedding ring and looking at the floor, continued saying, 'but you both will be safe.'

I hear various emotions in one simple tense while looking at myself in the giant golden mirror of the rusty black attic. This wasn't the kind of wedding I ever dreamt of as a young girl. The presence of my family and loved ones would have definitely made my day merrier. If this is what's written in my fate, I shall choose not to fight. I struggled to find the right words for Mary, so I settled on a smile and a slight nod, hoping they would be enough—especially as my heart raced and my legs threatened to give way beneath me. I looked outside the window and felt that iron-coloured clouds were spread as a blanket all over the sky. I feel the biting, sudden gale of winds entering my room, making the door and windows tremble and some creaky sounds. The violent blow flipped the pages of the bible, lying next to me on the red couch, 'Call on Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, and you will honour me,' it says.

'I'll see you downstairs,' Mary said and left the room.

I felt the edges of my Rose Quartz necklace, given to me by my brother, Edmund, and looked at myself in the mirror, adjusted my gown, and got ready to walk down the aisle. Amid the roar of rain, I heard the grief of water parting from clouds. The clouds could not hold the burden anymore. Though separation hurts and is painful, letting go seemed right and only a fair choice.

'O... Ophelia...' I heard Sebastian's voice calling my name, and my feet started making their way towards the door. In his dark tuxedo, his skin shone like moonlight.

His eyes were purer than ever. Everything went blurry for a moment—what I saw, heard, and felt was only Sebastian. The howling wind collided with the trees outside, but suddenly he crumpled in front of me, his face twisted with pain and despair.

‘Sebastian, Sebastian...Sebastian,’ I cried.

Making an attempt to hold him, my hands explored the knife stabbed in his chest. In a split second, my wedding gown turned into a blood-stained mourning dress. I collapsed to the cold floor, clutching him, my hands slick with his blood, as Sebastian took his last breath in my arms. I could just make out Edmund slipping away from the church.

My Sebastian was on the ground, in my arms, and my mind drifted to the day when, under the presence of dull twilight, I mistook Sebastian for my brother, Edmund.

‘Brother, I don’t think Mr Victor is an appropriate match for me. He might be the man of honour, and would have been a perfect match for any other woman in the town, but I have heard quite inappropriate things about him.’

Sebastian turned his back, stared at me in a dumbstruck silence.

‘Apologies, I mistook you for my brother,’ Ophelia said.

He laughed. His laugh was raspy, passionate and prideful. His presence was uncomfortably comfortable. Edmund warned Ophelia to stay away from him, as he had heard that Sebastian was involved in illegal activities, and it was not appropriate for women like Ophelia to meet him. Ophelia found it strange that, somehow, whenever she stepped outside the house, their fates would make them meet. Frequent interactions made them friends. Ophelia heard stories about his unethical activities and how others have perceived him as a free-spirited animal who would use a woman for his own benefit. Ophelia never felt uncomfortable, and he did nothing that could harm her, both intentionally and unintentionally. But how could Ophelia even say this, as whenever they spoke, he never shared anything about himself. He would just listen to her stories. While sitting next to the river during the twilight, he asked, ‘Will you marry me, Ophelia?’ Ophelia’s heart instantly wanted to say yes, but she knew that was not possible.

‘I know nothing about you. I heard rumours about you. I don't know if they are true. If they are, my brother would never allow me to get married to you.’

‘Are just the rumours stopping you from coming with me?’

‘...But I know nothing about you.’

After a long pause and silence. He said, ‘the rumours you have heard about me are true. I am a selfish man who was racing and running away from the world until the time I met. You have changed me so much, Ophelia. I have never felt like this before. I think and act differently when you are around me... I love you, my dearest Ophelia.’

The conversation continued for hours. Sebastian spoke about how he was raised by an abusive father, who was always under the influence of drugs and alcohol. His father’s aggression led him to severely beat his mother, who eventually died when he was five. He used to call different women at home and never really took care of anything. To prove to him that he is worthy of love and his care, he decided to take over the business at a young age, but Ophelia’s love started to transform him. He stopped being involved in batteries, illegal business, drinking and using drugs. He was planning to restart a life with Ophelia.

But soon Edmund found out about Ophelia’s love affairs with Sebastian. Ophelia tried to explain their love to Edmund, but Edmund was proud of the family reputation.

He fixed Ophelia's marriage affairs with Mr Victor and warned her about the consequences of her actions of meeting Sebastian again. Scared of Sebastian's life, Ophelia decided never to see Sebastian again, but how do you stop love when it howls at your door all the time? Love has completely consumed both of them. They both decided to marry each other at that very moment and leave the country forever. Sebastian went to urgently pack some of the stuff they would need to start a fresh life ahead, and Ophelia was getting ready to be dressed for their wedding.

Her sobs disappeared into the wind. Lying on the floor, Ophelia drew the knife from Sebastian's heart, held his hand one last time, and let the same blade guide her to their new home.