

## VISITOR FROM MARTELL

By M Randolph Mason



As soon as her father was a-canter down the gravel drive, she rushed to his smoking room to pour fully... and sloppily... half of his VS Martell into her own cut crystal decanter. With such violence did her hands shake that she could hardly replace the cork in his bottle... much less fit the stopper to her decanter.

The voluminous hallway... though being quite dark and unpopulated... loudly echoed her slippers feet... that even in the distant foyer, the necessity of her scurry must surely be evident.

She made her room undiscovered and... though her breast heaved... quietly settled the great, massive, oaken door. Should her handmaid come to investigate the source of any disturbance in the hallway, she would dismiss the naïve little waif with a nod and a wave of her hand.

For an hour... maybe not quite... she sat prim and upright in her crimson upholstered empress chair... waiting for twilight's dimness to conceal her intent. That arriving, she fetched a petite, stemmed, crystal glass from the inside pocket of her over gown... and the decanter from under the great chair. The trembling returned... involuntary and annoying. Of necessity she had to place the wafer-thin glass on a pedestal side table to make her pour. She poured it not quite full... and then... impulsively... drained it into her mouth and down her throat.

She went choking to her knees... pitching forward to spew the golden liquor onto the old dark Persian... rather than her snowy satin gown. The decanter of Martell, still clutched in her right hand, slammed bottom first on the thick rug... mercifully thick. With tears running down her cheek... she discerned that the liquor had not been lost from the decanter. Miraculously, the crystal glass stood like a soldier in the center of the small round table top.

***I am a fool!***

The second glass was decanted slowly... and consumed with careful measure. An amazing calm accompanied the next two.

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The massive dapple grey stood in the cross ties. She had drawn the wagon of coal over miles of ruts and some patches of cobble. Froth had outlined every strip of tack and harness wherever it had grasped her musculature. She seemed to live just to lean in her harness and strain against a load.

The muscular, naked to the waist, young man poured yet another bucket of cool water over its great body. The draft animal being 19.2, Blayne's shoulders, despite his hard-as-iron development, ached from the refreshing... for the animal... repetitions. Maria twitched her withers and imperceptibly nodded her soft muzzle.

"Old girl, this has t' be th' last... I kin na more."

Whether Maria understood or not, she clopped her right rear hoof in the sloppy puddle beneath her. Then she resumed her stock still stance.

The little waif in a simple, black and white frock and apron, stood quietly... aback at the aspect of the two awesome creatures before her. She spoke not... lest she intrude at an inopportune moment. Blayne dropped the bucket and sagged of his weariness. He felt her eyes on his back. Brushing his sweat streamed bangs from his forehead, he turned to face her.

She stepped back.

“Missy?”

“I ‘ave this fer ye.” She proffered the small, white sealed envelope.

“Wot is it, lass?”

“I’m sure I din na know.”

“Ye know I kin na read. Ye open it for me!”

“Ooo! Na, Sir... ‘tis from ma Mistress.”

“Then wot good is it?”

“Sir, I beg ye take it. She will be hard an me if’n ya don’t. An’ please, Sir tell na one I brought it to ya.” Her eyes became wide and fearful.

He accepted the envelope from the girl. She fled into the darkness outside the stable. He turned the envelope over in his horse wet hands. It had a small wax seal of no imprint. On further examination, it was but skillfully folded paper with a tiny crimson droplet of glistening wax to hold it tight. The huge dapple grey did not move. The stable froze along with his confusion.

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“Sir, kin y’ read this for me?” He pushed the sodden, but still sealed paper to the old man.

“‘ow ‘ave y’, boy, come upon a writin’?”

“I din know. An’ I kin’ not tell y’... a promise t’ keep.”

The old man, pulled the candle to himself, broke the seal, and smoothed the paper beneath his eyes. It was written in cursive... delicate cursive.

“‘tis written from a lady!”

Blayne did not comprehend.

“Th’ Lordship’s daughter bids y’ come t’ her chamber. Y’ shill tell na one.”

Blayne did not comprehend.

“Man, y’ ere na stupid. Gow an’ find oot wot she will. An’ take this w’ y’!” The old man pressed the note and broken wax into the young man’s hand. “Y’ sh’d keep y’ mind to y’ self an this!”

Blayne fled to the yard and clasped the rumpled note to his chest.

At long last the waif stepped into his sight. “Sir, come w’ me.” And, she led him quickly and silently through the halls.

The handmaid tapped lightly on the ornate door. There was a woman sound from within. She pressed the handle and placing her tiny hand upon the small of his back... urged him inside. The latch clicked behind him.

His eyes not adjusted to the dimness, he could see nothing but the empress chair partially in the light of a single candle. But, within that circle was the most beautiful face he had ever seen. It was His Lordship's daughter... the beautiful young lady of the manor house. He did not... could not... speak.

"Speak!" she commanded.

"M' Lady! I din na know why im here."

"WHY, do you think you are here?" she managed to whisper through the sherry.

"M' Lady... I kin na... kin na..." He was mesmerized by her delicate beauty.

"Come here"

Oh, M'Lady, I kin na come near y'."

"Then, I shall have you whipped for coming into my bed chamber!"

He stepped forward. She passed the rim of her crystal of brandy around her parted lips. She took a sip... and extended it toward him. "Drink this! All of it! NOW!"

She shifted as if to stand. He stumbled the few steps forward... and avoiding her slender fingers... took the tiny fragile stemmed glass. Her eyes pierced him. But, he paused not long and drank the potion in one swallow. More in one drink than he earned in a day!

"Kneel here!" She pointed to a spot on the hem of her gown. "Now!"

"M'Lady, I'v na had a time t' make m'self clean."

"Quiet!" ...then she repeated in a whisper, "quiet."

She swept away her hem as he knelt before her.

The fragrance of a sea of spring flowers flowed over him. His chest tightened... and of courage... he had none.

He was a gnat in a web.

"Blayne... give me the note!" Blayne quickly plucked the note from his waist and extended it to her. She snatched it out of his hand... crumpled it into a ball and tossed it into the darkness in the back corner of the bed chamber.

Blayne rocked back on his knees.

She poured yet another brandy and then without hesitation pulled the hem of her robe, dress, and petticoats upon her thighs. Beyond that, she had made sure no barrier remained. He could be hanged for seeing her this way.

Another glass... the last of the decanter... she passed her tongue around the rim... and then handed it to him. No choice. He consumed it.

"This night, you will take me. You will take me as you would my handmaid if you could. You will spare nothing... as if you were galloping your chosen mare. Bind my mouth with the

belt of my robe lest I cry out. You will bruise me and break me open. And whatever you do... remember, I have counted the days of my month as I have counted the days since I first realized you riding the hunt.

“When you are finished with whatever you *will* press upon me... then you shall dress... and tap upon the door. My handmaid will lead you to your country. Do not look her into her eyes...and she will not look into yours. If you do as I have directed... she is yours... and that only by my permission and her expression.”

With that she laid her hands upon his long brown locks... and pulled his face into her brandy clouded chastity.

On the morning... the handmaid... was his.