

1.

(Thud!)

(The sound of a horrible impact that shakes our world – a bird-body hitting glass.)

(Lights up on the parlor of an elegant, ancient mansion on the English moors. 1840-ish, to a degree.)

(AGATHA looms over HULDEY. She pulls at HULDEY's clothes, adjusts her hair. HULDEY stands like a doll and lets herself be manipulated.)

(The maid, MARJORY, stands to the side, waiting to be useful. MARJORY is wearing a parlor maid hat, but when she is the scullery maid, she will put on a different hat. There is only one maid in this household.)

(The dog, a giant MASTIFF, stares despondently out the window and thinks about how meaningless everything always seems to be.)

AGATHA. Something has to be done.

MARJORY. Yes ma'am.

AGATHA. Every time one sits in the parlor, one must endure a bird crashing into the window.

MARJORY. It's terrible, ma'am.

AGATHA. See that you do something about it.

MARJORY. What would you like me to do?

AGATHA. Fix it, of course. Why am I the only one around here who takes it upon myself to fix things?

(Tugging HULDEY's hair.)

AGATHA. Do you think this is acceptable?

HULDEY. ...No?

AGATHA. No, sister, it is not.

Do you know why your hair is not acceptable?

HULDEY. ...No?

AGATHA. It looks like the location a particularly mangy bird might choose to nest. Do you think this is the sort of hair one wishes to have on the day the governess arrives?

HULDEY. *(She knows the answer to this one!)* No!

AGATHA. No, it is not that sort of hair.

What on earth have you been doing all morning?

HULDEY. *(A flash of hope, she definitely knows the answer.)*
Oh! Well –

AGATHA. Don't answer that.

(HULDEY subsides. To MARJORY:)

Is the extra room made up for the governess?

MARJORY. Yes ma'am.

AGATHA. And is there Moor-Hen for tonight?

MARJORY. *(Isn't sure.)* Well...uh...

AGATHA. Why don't you ask the scullery maid.

MARJORY. Yes ma'am.

(She is gone. The MASTIFF raises his head.)

(He looks at AGATHA.)

AGATHA. *(Steely.)* Down.

(The MASTIFF lowers his head again.)

HULDEY. Agatha...?

AGATHA. What is it.

HULDEY. Why is there a governess coming?

(A strict beat.)

AGATHA. Huldey gard.

HULDEY. Yes?

AGATHA. How is it possible that you haven't washed your face?

(She spit-polishes HULDEY's face.)

HULDEY. Well, this morning –

AGATHA. Don't answer that.

(MARJORY returns.)

MARJORY. The cook is making Moor-Hen, and also there are potatoes, and also the scullery maid has the typhus again.

AGATHA. Ask her if she has any sisters.

MARJORY. Sisters?

AGATHA. If she dies, perhaps one of her sisters might replace her.

MARJORY. Yes ma'am.

(MARJORY leaves.)

HULDEY. *(Faintly, but with daring.)* You see, this morning I didn't have time to wash my face.

AGATHA. You might as well be a wild animal.

HULDEY. I was writing in my diary, you see.

AGATHA. You might as well live out on the moors with the tiny smudgy weasels.

HULDEY. And I'd reached a good part.

AGATHA. A "good part."

HULDEY. *(Fainter.)* ...Of my...uh...diary?

AGATHA. If one is not writing sums and lists and possibly strategies, then I do not know what one is writing.

HULDEY. *(Brightly, taking this as an invitation.)* Oh, well, I was just writing about –

AGATHA. Don't answer that.

(A beat.)

I've been nourishing the hope that, since father's death, you might turn your attention to more pressing

matters. You are used to having everything done for you. Father spoiled you, Branwell spoiled you, but I have no intention of spoiling you, sister.

(**MARJORY** *returns.*)

MARJORY. Pardon me, Miss.

AGATHA. Yes, Mallory?

MARJORY. The scullery maid has five sisters, two of whom are quite homely, two of whom are feverish, one of whom is bilious, and also there is a carriage in the driveway, it has just arrived.

AGATHA. Ah.

HULDEY. (*Overwhelmed with excitement.*) The governess!

AGATHA. Show her in.

MARJORY. Yes ma'am.

(**MARJORY** *leaves.* **HULDEY**, *somewhat downtrodden, is lifted by a new wave of excitement.*)