

Formal Events for the Lonesome.

Others would have branded themselves fools for even considering visiting the event at this time of night. But your soul simply couldn't resist the way the mist slept on the country, or the trees waltzed with the wind. The familiar ball that you went to every night, full of guests that had nothing left of themselves. The way the ringing in your ears resembled a striking violin and your thick velvet coat could easily make a gown. The guests all smiled at you, the misery melting away. You did the same.

And you danced.

You danced up the path. You danced in the lush grass. You let the biting air hug you as if your teeth weren't chattering. You let your hair dance wildly with you. The guests joined in - the spouses loved passionately, the children giggled, the layers of society's ideals peeled back and exhaled. The one environment overflowing with other souls, yet you weren't anxious. You were free. Some were decorated with roses and tulips and Christmas wreaths and Easter eggs. Some's accessories were next to nothing.

She dropped her bunch of roses.

"Sorry!" you say, genuinely guilty, picking them up and handing them back. She returned your apology with the clearest, most sincere blue eyes you'd ever seen. "Ma'am..." you stuttered.

She laughed. "A kind gentlemen, a worthy gentlemen! I don't see them these days - although I don't travel as much as I used to." She laughed, a twinkling laugh laced with despair, inviting you to copy.

"Me neither," you replied quietly. She sighed and looked over at the other busy guests, her large, flowing dress swaying as she changed position. Despite the wind, not a hair fell out of place. Her large blue eyes grew melancholy.

"You simply must," she complained. "A youthful man like you. A spring in your step. I look at my family and they're getting so old, too old to explore...then I realise, so am I." She looked down at her corset, brushing off a peace of Earth. You feel empathy, more than ever.

"Ageing is good, in a way..." you begin hesitantly, knowing she holds more wisdom than you ever will. "You may not have travelled, but you've had a lot of time to think...to ponder."

She smiled. Satisfying to watch.

“We all have. Thank you. I shall tell my family of what you said, that I met a kind gentlemen like you...I’ll tell of the words you told me.” She paused. “May we dance?”

You weren’t sure you had the ability to refuse, to be frank. She took your hand in her soft one, and held you in her chilly embrace as you danced, the tempo of your heart matching the music. You danced until the sun rudely began to climb up behind the hills, and the sky turned a delicious peach, and the guests began to depart, along with her. You said your goodbyes, and promised to visit again the next night, as you always did. She left, and you were alone again, but not before you realised you forgot to return the roses that were laid delicately against the fence. You picked them up, your body sluggish with exhaustion but buzzed with happiness as you laid them gently against her name carved artistically on her gravestone.

Short story by Tabby Evans Yr 11.