

Diverging courses. 1, Jack

by athens7

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I leave him.

Or maybe it is he who leaves me.

I think for their separate reasons both versions are true.

There is no explanation, no triggering cause. It just happens, unavoidably, as if our subconsciousness were guided by a superior impulse, an intrinsic imperative neither of us is able to acknowledge at a rational level.

I go visit him two days before my departure for London.

Somehow I need to make the farewell official, to just not leave without observing the proper etiquette.

But it feels all wrong just the same. And instead of thinking about it, of trying to make it right, I answer by putting as much distance between us as I can.

I find him in what I've always privately called the 'music room': he is sitting at the piano, but not playing, just staring at the black and white keys.

Impossibly, the house feels even emptier than the last time I was really here. (and no, I am not thinking about the scars pulsing under my shirt or the touch of his hand on me or the tang of his blood, not now, not ever again.)

The Professor is dead, Lady Eve Bracknell is gradually following his beloved's path in some asylum nearby Dublin, the Colonel is consuming his insanity in a bloody chase around the globe against the Detective, and finally - *finally* - my Patrick is going away. An era is coming to its end.

How could I ever dare to stop him in the name of my perverted longing to be with him always, when I know so well that this is all he ever needs to become the great man he is, to get *free* at last?

This is my final truth: I am not reason enough for him to stay and worse, I do not want to be. I cannot.

Our conversation consists of few words, awkward and stilted and subtly desperate.

"So... you are leaving" I start with an affected impassivity that numbs all my inner turmoil.

"So are you" he replies quietly, so quietly, and God help me, why is there no accusation in his limpid voice? Is it not for the best, at least for him? Then why does it hurt so much, this resigned acceptance of ours?

"What are you going to do?" I ask in a murmur, and I feel like I've just torn my heart in tatters to prevent my tone from trembling.

He doesn't answer at first.

Please, let me know this at least.

"I do not know" he sighs at last. "The usual iter of every young heir, most probably. You can imagine."

"I suppose so."

Silence. Hush, mad heart of mine.

Then he stands with his usual brand of elegance that I'm so going to miss, together with everything else, and turns towards me.

The sky is grey, the curtains are drawn. I can't see his eyes.

"And you? Medicine it is, then?"

"Yes" I manage past the lump suddenly obstructing my throat.

Why can't I see them?

"Good luck" he says offering his hand.

Please, let me see them. It would be too cruel, even for you.

I can't answer. I accept the handshake, paralysed in a moment of unbelieving stupor.

"So, it's a farewell."

This is it. A simple, grim certainty burning the wires in my blood, killing whatever remained of my dreams with clear-cut infallibility.

And in this final moment, feeling that the end is near, my body reaches out in its extreme attempt at self-preservation.

Because there is no reason for me to be in a world without Patrick.

I embrace him, because by now there is no tomorrow, and I stroke his cheek and say the only words I need so desperately to believe in, because they are the only ones that could ever spare my sanity.

"Take care of yourself."

And somehow he must have felt all this, because he looks at me, half-shocked half-broken, and grants my plea.

"I will try."

I smile, for the last time.

It's enough, it's enough. I'll make it be enough.

This is our end. Or at least, it is mine.

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