

THY WILL BE DONE

ROMI FENG

The letter had arrived at dawn.

No sender. No crest. No sign of origin. Just a single envelope with a flat wax seal resting neatly on the silver tray beside her breakfast—a jarring presence amidst the delicately sliced fruit and the perfectly soft-boiled egg. She hadn't noticed it at first. In fact, it had taken a slight breeze through the open terrace doors to ruffle its edges and draw her attention away from the tasteless orange slice she'd been chewing absentmindedly.

Even then, she regarded it warily. It was too thin to be a political document, too formal to be a servant's reminder, and far too plain to come from anyone who knew proper etiquette.

Which meant, of course, it was important.

Her fingers—pale and slender and trembling ever so slightly—lifted the letter from the tray.

Slowly, warily, her thumb slipped under the flap.

She braced herself.

The seal broke with a brittle snap, like the crack of a bone. She half expected the contents to bite—or combust.

And in a way, they did.

Her eyes scanned the first few lines, and at once, her spine straightened with such intensity the chair shuddered. She hadn't even reached the end before slamming it down on the table, her fine bone china teacup rattling against its saucer in protest. She didn't hear it. Nor did she hear the small sound of surprise from the maid standing patiently nearby or the soft rustle of her dressing gown as it slid off one shoulder. Everything had vanished, blurred, bleached—until only the ink and her were left.

Attempting a deep, steadying breath to compose herself and trying to ignore the maid, she picked it back up, ignoring her shaky hands.

This time, she read the entire thing.

Then she landed on the last line.



And froze.

Her eyes darted over the words again, desperately, frantically, hardly daring to breathe, should the brief exchange of carbon dioxide and oxygen somehow alters their meaning.

She knew she shouldn't, in theory, be reacting like this. She should be shrieking; shaking; crying; breaking down on her carpeted floors, her face contorted into this feral, abominable sight, rivers of tears carving ravines mercilessly down carefully powdered cheeks, serrated claws raking bloody ribbons down the interior walls of her throat as she screamed and screamed until her body expired and disintegrated until there was nothing remaining but a puddle of salt and silence and shadow and grief.

Instead, her throat was hoarse for a completely different reason. He's dead. Much more idiotic than she predicted, but no matter—it had been to her benefit. Her plan worked. It worked. And still, she could hardly believe it. For once, impossibly, she had done something right.

She rose abruptly, startling the maid again but choosing to block it out. There was just one last thing she had to confirm before she could fully revel in her success.

With a swish of her skirts, she left the room. Bare feet landed soundlessly against rosewood floors as she made her way towards the lord of the house's office. Her father's office.

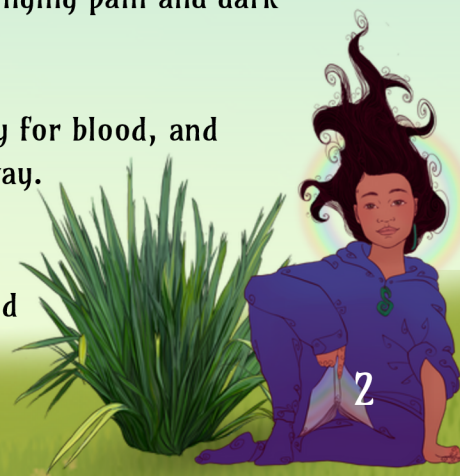
She had made this journey, retraced these tracks, far too many times previous, but finally—finally, this time was different.

Her chin was lifted in triumph instead of pretence. Her steps steady and purposeful in confidence instead of stubbornness. Her eyes—those clever, calculating eyes—glinting with a secret instead of that minuscule bit of fear that just wouldn't go away. Always there, always watching, always frustratingly persistent. Instead, instead, instead. The syllables were sweet on her tongue like honeyed poison though her thoughts had not been voiced.

Her hand slipped into her pocket. Fingers closed over a small, lustrous key that still glinted despite being fiddled with uncountable times. She rubbed her thumb over its knife-sharp teeth. They bit down gleefully, leaving little pinpricks of stinging pain and dark satisfaction.

Thirsty little things, these teeth. Like her. Like her family. Thirsty for blood, and always waiting. The thought comforted her in a twisted sort of way. It was the tradition in her veins.

As she reached the door, her grip loosened on the key and dropped



it down her sleeve. She hesitated for a fleeting second. Just a heartbeat's pause, but enough time for doubt to worm its way into her mind, hissing its ugly warnings.

She vanquished it immediately, as swiftly as it arrived, suddenly overcome by anger. Who did she think she was? A peasant? Oh, please.

Her hand reached up, curled in a fist. A few sharp raps sound against the polished wood, perhaps a bit more forcefully than really necessary.

The hinges slid smoothly against each other. The door opened.

“Why, hello, Miss Capulet.”

At last—for the first time in what had felt like lifetimes—a smile graced her crimson-painted lips the exact shade of late Romeo's blood.

