

*He still looks weary.*

Mary could not stop the rising anxiety she felt as she looked to her husband once more, sitting across from her in their carriage. It was a little past 8 o'clock, and they were headed to Ford's Theatre to watch *Our American Cousin* on this Good Friday. This should be a time of celebration, and yet, her husband still seemed preoccupied with the burden of the office he is chained to. While the war was not officially declared to be at an end, the Confederate rogues had finally come to their senses and gave their long-awaited surrender to General Grant. However, that still could not stop Mary's thoughts from racing. She gripped her shawl tightly, as her pulse quickened. The tell-tale pricks on the back of her neck as her body began to tremble. She closed her eyes, trying to breathe deeply.

*Oh, please not here. Not right now.*

"Are you alright, Molly?" Abe asked, his deep voice pulling her from her thoughts, his brows furrowed deep over his gray eyes. "I hope you are not getting one of your headaches." His hands gently cupped her cheek.

Guilt washed over her. This was supposed to be a break for her husband, but once again, he was coddling his weak, anxious wife.

She shook her head, curls swinging. She couldn't meet his eyes though, feeling overwhelmed. Still frowning, he gave her an absentminded nod as he gave her hands a tight squeeze.

The sound of hooves hitting pavement brought them closer to their destination. The slow, almost rhythmic sounds, paired with the warmth flowing from Abe's hands, slowly soothed her erratic heartbeat.

The carriage eventually comes to a stop, the door opened by the driver. Abe struggles to step out, adjusting his giant frame as best he can out the cramped opening. With a slightly bemused expression, she climbs out after him, accepting his hand to help down. He gives his thanks to the driver, turning to her a gentle smile, before ushering her towards the entrance. The excited buzzing of the crowds of people hit her as they walk in, but it did nothing to drown out the anxious thoughts flying through her mind as she glanced around the theater.

*There are too many people. Too much noise. Something awful is in the air. What is this dreadful feeling?*

She couldn't breathe. She was suffocating. Panic began to unfurl in her chest.

Abraham's grip tensed, as if he felt the weight bearing down on his wife. He continued to walk them towards their box reserved for the evening, pulling Mary along despite her hesitant steps. She trailed behind his giant frame, feeling the comfort and safety that his aura wrapped around her. From the first days of their courtship, he was always steadfast and sturdy, like the mightiest oak, despite the twisted thoughts and feelings constantly plaguing her.

“I will always be right with you, Mary. You are not alone. We will chase the darkness away together.” He would smile warmly as he held out his hand, the same hand pulling her now.

As they walked into their box, they found their companions for the night, Miss Clara Harris and her fiancé, Major Henry Rathbone, chatting quietly. Mr. Rathbone, wearing the dress uniforms befitting his station, saluted Abe before nodding his head towards Mary in greeting. She got the impression he was not too fond of her, but at least he acknowledged her. She nodded politely in return while Abe pulled out her chair, only sitting after Mary took her seat. She rearranged the sea of green skirts around me, fidgeting with the soft fabric. Her husband laid his hands on hers, giving another reassuring squeeze.

“It’s a comedy, Molly.” He gives her a bemused look as he wraps an arm around her shoulders. “There is no need to be so worried.”

“Oh yes!” exclaimed Clara, beaming excitedly. “I’ve heard that the show was rightly funny, especially that eccentric fellow Lord Dundreary. I cannot wait for it to begin!” She claps her hands and smiles to her husband, who was giving her a look of adoration and amusement.

*They’re absolutely right, Mary*, she chided herself and adjusted her bonnet before sliding closer to Abe. The show was about to start, so she turned her attention to the stage, yet she did not really hear their words, too preoccupied with her thoughts. She snaked her arm through her husband’s, hoping to chase away the ever-constant anxiety.

*Click.*

She flinched and took a quick look around, but there doesn’t seem to be anything out of the ordinary. *What was that sound, though?* She moved away from Abe and turned her eyes away from the stage. Her eyes flicked wildly, trying to make shape of the darkness filling around her. *Nothing.* She shook herself forcefully. *That’s enough, Mary. There’s nothing there. Stop letting your thoughts take hold.*

The delighted laughter of the audience continued around her, bringing her back to the moment. She relaxed her shoulders and her eyes returned to the stage. Her eyes follow the spotlight to center stage, shining brightly on the star of tonight’s show, Mr. Harry Hawk, his back in view.

“Not accustomed to the manners of good society, eh?” Hawk exclaims. “Well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old woman; you damned old sockdologizing man-trap!”

Abe roared with laughter, leaning forward to grip the rail with his free hand. Mary smiled shyly, watching him being so carefree. Finally. He is finally--

**BANG.**

The sound of the gunshot interrupted her brief second of happiness. Everyone is looking around confusedly, but Mary felt as if she had been paralyzed, unable to move. It was as if time

completely stopped. Her husband's hand had gone slack, dropping with a thud from the railing. *Strange.* He wasn't checking in with Mary, as he normally would in these types of moments. No commotion or crowds would distract him from Molly; he would always hold her as his main priority, knowing how frail and easily frightened she was. But yet, he was not paying her attention. In fact, he wasn't even moving. No reaction at all. Before Mary could take a breath to call to him, Clara's screams from behind drew her attention. She turned to see blood flying from Rathbone's shoulder as a flash of silver quickly darted out the door. Clara ran quickly to her husband, still screaming, pulling at his coat to try and find the source of the bleeding.

Pandemonium ensued. Screams rang out all around them. Clara's sobs could be heard over Rathborn's gruff curses as he nursed his shoulder. Yet, Mary was eerily calm. She sat completely still. The chaos around her quietly faded, replaced by a deafening silence. A deathly silence.

Mary felt like she was fighting quicksand as she slowly turned to look at her husband's slumped body. "Abe." No response. "Abraham." She gently reached out to shake him. Her hands met something warm, something sticky. She pulls back, shocked to see them covered in blood.

"ABRAHAM!" She repeatedly screamed, getting more and more hysterical. His body only moves further down, slumping out of his seat, saying nothing.

She tumbled out of her seat, landing next to his body, using all her strength to shake him. Nothing.

Her thoughts spiral, panicking. *So much blood! But why? Why is there blood? Where is this blood coming from?*

Hands try pulling Mary away from her husband, but she threw herself back down. She needed him to say something, anything. This man was her rock, her savior. She couldn't leave him, not when he was just lying there.

Voices rang out. "Someone quickly! We need help! We have to get him to a doctor!" More hands tried reaching out, prying her off him.

Joining in the mayhem, Mary screamed and fought like a wild banshee, pushing away anyone, crawling her way back towards Abe. Her bonnet was close to falling off, her curls flying wild around her, her dress a complete disarray. She could care less about her appearance. All she could focus on was Abe, still lying motionless amid the commotion.

She couldn't stand his silence any longer. "Abraham Lincoln, you stop it this instant!" She screamed as if it was her last breath, waiting to hear his deep voice grumble his reassurances to her. She stood, waiting as his seemingly endless silenced stretched on.

But there was no reply. No apologies for keeping her waiting and making her worry. No sheepish grin as he peeked at her to avoid her annoyance. There was nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Tears slid down her face as her body began violently shaking. Her dirty, blood-soaked hands covered her face. Her breaths came out in short, quick gasps. She couldn't breathe. She couldn't think.

“THE PRESIDENT! THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN SHOT!” Everyone around her screamed and shouted, voices raising higher and higher to be heard over each other.

After a moment, comprehension finally dawned on her. *Oh, of course. The president.*

But it wasn't the president that Mary saw laying there. The pale, lifeless body lying in a pool of blood. It wasn't the leader of her fellow countrymen she looked at. No. It was Abe. Her Abraham. Her protector. The honest, loving husband that always patiently held her hand. The man who fought and kept her demons back. Her one and only. Abraham had been shot, and she could only stare, ghostly pale and silent, as she watched the bodies swarm in, taking him away from her.