

The Macbeth Maiden

The flowers placed on my overbed table began to wilt. The sweet, satisfying smell of roses began to transform into a decaying scent of spoiled tea and porridge. The dying roses were carelessly placed on top of a high pile of medical forms. My eyes focused and I glanced carefully at the right hand corner of the page, 'Inverness Asylum, Scotland', 'Patient: Gruoch', 'Age: 23'. Beneath were listed notes that were to act as a warning to the nurses who checked in on me. 'Delusional', 'lunacy', 'perculior', 'wicked', 'violent'. That was all I was here. All that defined me. I had no strength, no power. But each night...each night I stayed here, in this thin, blatant bed, the ambition and longing for strength and freedom grew within me.

The grey, harsh walls felt as though they were growing smaller around each day I lay here in agony. The tiny window in the upper wall was covered in iron bars, providing nothing but a few slithers of promising light. The sun was starting to fall down, and the light dispersing through the window faded. I reached over to the wall situated behind me, I scratched another jagged line into the harsh stone wall. I counted the carved lines that had accumulated. I counted 63. 63 days I have been here. Lying here. Deprived of any kind of rest. Sharp pains of needles spiking my arm, cold, shallow baths, eyes prowling over me, scratched walls. It was all that consumed me. Guilt was written all over the walls, I could almost see it written in blood, and it was my hands that did it. Only I was to blame, Macbeth sat tall in his throne, while I stayed here, trapped in my guilt. The blood was on my hands, and my hands only.

My lonesome thoughts were interrupted when an elderly nurse walked into my solemn room. She held a thin, rag-like towel in her hands. She gestured to the bathroom that was connected to where I slept. I went about my strict nightly tasks as I always did. Wash my hands. Wash them again. The nurse ran the bath. I sat in the shallow water but left the soap on the side. There was no point, I would never be clean, the guilt lingered on me like dirt. My long, dark curls stuck to my back as I rested my face on my knees. I felt the nurse's eyes on me as the water invaded mine with a sting. When I left the bath, I washed my hands again. The nurse then left and I was alone once more. I washed my hands once more.

I lay under the pale sheet, once white but now had aged many years and lost its radiance. The coldness of the hospital invaded right through it, the sheet did not provide any warmth or comfort.

I couldn't stay here any longer, not while Macbeth was ruling with the power that I deserved. I looked at the flowers in front of me, and as I did a tired petal slowly fell through the air.

I had to escape.

I traipsed through the empty halls, feeling the cool wind of the hospital walls through my lengthy curls. The thin hospital gown I wore lightly rested on my shoulders. The dark and decrepit stone walls were lit up only from the old melting candle that I held in my right hand. As I wandered, I could hear the evil laughs of the witches, echoing through the walls, I could hear their spells being cast. I could hear their murmurs through the halls, "Double Double Toil and Trouble", they spoke wickedly. The murmurs grew to cries as they stayed within their trapped rooms. I muttered under my breath, a quick wish, "Unsex me here, And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full Of direst cruelty...set aside my feminine sentiments that could hinder bloody ambitions." I kept walking, the cool wind grew stronger as I reached the window that sat at the end of the hall. It was the only window that remained without iron bars guarding it. The thin curtain blew slowly over it, revealing only a slight piece of hopeful night sky each time it swayed. I used all the strength I could muster within me to hoist myself up into a sitting position on the windowsill. This was my only chance to be unconfined and free. I placed my cold feet sternly on the windowsill, my white gown blowing lightly in the wind.

The grass I saw below me wasn't too far away, I could make it if I tried. Before I leaped, I thought about what I would do when I found Macbeth, what I would say, how I would make him feel. I was eager to return and earn what is rightfully mine. I peered down at the grass and then back at the window where I sat. I took one foot off the brick ledge and it lightly swayed in the air, I then removed my other. I felt myself fall, quietly and slowly through the crisp night air. My long brown curls falling around me and my bedraggled gown flowing with the wind of my fall. As I fell through the air, everything moved slowly. I looked up at the sky and the stars that were in it. Each of them representing the last bits of hope I had. They lit up the sky as I fell through it, guiding me through the night. The stars seemed further away as I fell, and soon, the slow fall suddenly began to feel fast. I couldn't catch my breath as I fell swiftly and rapidly through the icy sky. My ragged and outgrown hair blew across my face, it concealed the night sky and I couldn't see the hopeful stars anymore. The bright lights faded. I felt myself sink.