

...t he Elv e s' Co r rido rs

Three miles from the wedding grounds, Lilly rested beside tree stumps in order to recoup her energy. The sky bled with murky crimson clouds, further tormenting Lilly's injured spirit. Her unforgiving pop, Hugo, ordered her to wed the future king of Sweden, the young, exquisite Oliver. Hugo preferred this proposition, considering how it entered the Lindgren title into high society. Unluckily for Hugo, one issue lived within his scheme; Oliver exhibited monstrous impulses. He pretended to be gentle in front of the public, but in truth, he tended to be cruel. Lilly first experienced one of his unforgiving moods just nights prior to the wedding when he violently struck her left cheek, resulting in deep, intense cuts. Lilly informed everyone she simply cut herself while tending to the outdoor nursery. Even though she thought otherwise, she convinced herself such occurrences must be uncommon, permitting herself to continue with the wedding. But just prior to the ceremony, one voice spoke to her. It told her to listen to her logic. So, she fled.

Twenty minutes went by deep in the lonely woods. Lilly only possessed the definitiveness of the forest's solitude, something unfit to impose misery upon her. She immersed herself in the midnight silence; her conscience pounded on her skull,

disturbing her brief moment of serenity with thoughts of Hugo's extreme discontent.

"Lilly! We know you're hiding in here!"

It seemed her thoughts projected him into existence. With the help of tens of Swedish townsmen, Hugo hunted for Lilly in every corner of the gloomy forest. The youthful ex-bride felt the desire to quit her desertion by disclosing her position to everyone, but then she thought once more. She envisioned the remorse she would encounter from Oliver, including his vicious repercussions. So, Lilly swiftly slipped deeper into the never-ending woods.

Succeeding slightly one more mile, Lilly's legs grew overwhelming tiresome. Then, just before she willingly let her legs drop under her, she fortuitously entered even more of the forest's pronounced dimness; she spilled into the sunken portion of the forest. The unkind plummet introduced round bruises to Lilly's knees. Just ten feet below the roof of the soil, Lilly could still detect the sounds of the striding horses over her.

"Lilly! Get over here! You're not going to hide forever, you know!" cried Hugo, frightened his future of luxury might not turn out for him.

Nervously, Lilly quickly slid up beside the enormous hole's side. The composition of this mysterious grotto included uprooted shrubs, plus infinite puny rocks flooding the floor of the hole. The lightless tunnel reeked of pungent, grimy soil.

"My delightful summer Lilly, tell me where you're hiding. I wish to comfort you, but I'm rendered helpless without your presence, my sweet love!"

Lilly could distinguish Oliver's deceitful voice. The clucks of his horse grew louder with the sound of his intensifying words. She scooted further to her right, hoping the sound of her worn slippers shuffling the pebbles wouldn't expose her. The monotonous sound of the horses' steps hit its high point; the horses stopped moving. The only prominent noise belonged to the crows, mimicking the townsmen's loss of Oliver's betrothed. Six minutes of this expired, followed by six more minutes of Lilly quietly crying. The horses trotted off, their steps declining in volume by the second.

Lilly's soft crying turned to sobbing once she concluded no one else surrounded her. Her worked fingers fiercely clenched collections of dirt to relieve some of the stress built up in her overwhelmed mind. Then, just when Lilly thought she recouped her secrecy, sounds of the tiny rocks being kicked filled the corridor. Lilly's dusty fingers promptly hid her eyes, supposing Oliver or Hugo found her. Thinking to herself, Lilly contested if either of them did stumble upon her, they would undoubtedly be scolding her for running off. The sounds were timid. Roughly thirty seconds of this went by; the curious footsteps were not distinct enough to be deemed closer from where they were rumbling before. Suddenly, the noises were supported by dim surges of golden-yellow flickers. Consciously welcoming the risky position Lilly found herself in, the determined version of her emerged into the forefront. She decided to rise up in order to reduce the room cushioning her from this dubious entity.

Her eyes met with those of likewise horror. This feeble, pencil-thin being squinted through Lilly's line of sight. Its flimsy wrists held two torches, oddly producing some sort of enticing environment. For one split second, Lilly thought of Oliver; his soothing voice comforting her so he could insist his control. However, Lilly forced herself to move on from the foul

notion of him. So, she greeted the sickly figure. Curiously, he slowly bowed.

"Girl. Girl is you."

"Yes. Girl is me." Lilly humorously responded, resisting to question his linguistics.

"Follow me. We will protect you, girl."

Somehow the tiny person could recognize Lilly experienced terrible troubles.

The little fellow escorted Lilly to endless, wider rooms with dozens of other short beings; not one looked feminine in the slightest.

"Here, you is holy."