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## Quince

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## Quince

“What?” The words came out of my mouth a few octaves higher than a whisper.

“Did you have your Confirmation?” The priest’s forehead furrowed with concern as he posed the question. My irritation grew as I discreetly panned the left-hand side of the church and saw everyone staring.

“Yes, I did.”

Our eyes meet as I answer and I wonder how much further he’ll take it. I glance at the golden ring on his finger wrapped around the embellished cross. The small token from my family ensured my church ceremony and most likely my place in hell. How can people say money can’t buy everything? As the ceremony wraps up, I can hear my father’s words echoing in my head.

“People that say money can’t buy happiness, are either rich or they’re poor.” My father, with a short temper but generous pocket for his youngest and only daughter, never fell short. He’d come home from a long day at the office just waiting to explode. So much as an unwanted cup on his nightstand would send him into a frenzy.

Somewhere around seven, I learned that if I cried, my father’s guilt was a direct line to his bank account. The following weekend I’d be reaping the benefits of his unstable temperament. Soon material items became emotional currency and crying became the argument of price. I was always told happiness was important, but failed to learn how to achieve it. Maybe that’s why I’m standing in the church, self-aware of my lack of morality and unfortunate mortality.

The priests said his last blessing and I accidentally make an illuminati sign on my face instead of a cross. A failed Catholic at its finest. *Fuck it. I still look great in my dress anyway.*

As I turn around, thunder blares into the church and the sounds ricochet off every corner of the building. Granted it is the middle of summer in Mexico, but I also just lied to a priest in a church full of people. Either way I'm escorted into a limousine and charted away to the reception. Inside it's clamoring with the sound of my immediate family speaking over another. As I weave in and out of dissociation, my mother's voice pulls me back up to the surface where the sounds of everyone speaking drown back in.

"Fix your makeup before we arrive!"

I pull out my Clinique compact and do a quick overview. My makeup looks fine to me, but I still grab the small circular sponge and mechanically reapply my powder. The longer I looked at my face the less it seemed to be mine. Every crevice, dimple, and mole suddenly seemed foreign. It never felt mine but more of an extension of my family's possessions. Something to be shown off, but never to be owned individually. The lack of familiarity had the same feel as repeating a word long enough that it no longer sounds real. To that degree, I don't feel real.

We pull up and some official looking bellhop opens the door. I give him my hand as I make my way out of vehicle, with a dress far larger than my small frame can withstand. All the guests have arrived and this is the moment I walk in, making my grand entrance. As everyone stands to welcome me with applause, I saunter the circumference of the dance floor with my parents trailing behind me. The event is meant to celebrate a girl becoming a woman, but what fifteen-year old is remotely close to adulthood. Nonetheless, I make my rounds with my corset restricting my full lung capacity. Thankfully, I was able to negotiate flats over heels for this portion of the night.

“We didn’t buy you heels from New York so you’d want to be comfortable with flats. Te aguantas!”

My mistake was believing any of tonight was actually about myself. This display is really about my parents’ success. Their ability to provide an opulent party on their own and to produce, in their eyes, a perfect offspring.

“Look over here!”

The photographers blind me with the flash of their cameras. My hand goes to my hip and my face fixes itself into a smile. The moment they turn around to take photos of my parents, my jaw relaxes. *I fucking hate smiling.* I sit at the main table and really glance around at the party. Pretty sure no one gives a fuck about me. They’re just here for the food and the open bar. I look over towards the entrance of the hall and wonder if anyone would notice if I just left, but I’m sure that this overwhelming huge dress would grab the security’s attention.

My stomach interrupts my train of thoughts. I haven’t eaten since breakfast and I’m just now starting to feel light headed. I had every intention of having a huge burger, but Mom protested claiming I’d look bloated in my dress. Mind you, I weigh 105 pounds and my metabolism works faster than the devil. I tilt my head back as my nose catches wind of the first course. Of course, I got served first. Chicken, mashed potatoes, and grilled veggies. I wanted birria, rice, and beans, but god forbid we abide by our culture in the motherland. My entire family scoffed when I requested the delicious meat to be the centerpiece of the first course.

“That’s what poor people eat. We’re from the city, not the country with the low class people.”

They could have just said they hated brown people instead of making such a fuss. Too hungry to be upset, I scarf down two bites before my mother comes over and tells me I need to go get ready for the first dance. I walk into a small room where my makeup bag awaits me in front of a mahogany vanity.

“Fix your makeup!”

The door slams behind me and I sit down on the velour seat. I let my back hunch over. My fists slam the vanity top repeatedly as my anger surges through me. I grab a delicate hand towel that was thoughtfully folded into a swan and shove it into my mouth, my screams muffled by the overly bleached towel. My stomach heaves in and out as I grab the bag and dump the contents on the counter. I rifle through the makeup and pull out a lipstick and carefully apply it. I asses the damage on my makeup. After some last touch ups, my makeup looks close to perfect. As I leave I give myself one last glance and put my face into a smile. It almost looks natural.

The dance floor is dim as I walk onto it. The DJ is waiting for my queue to begin the music for my first dance. My male dancers get into place and I slide my hand down my stomach to straighten my dress. As my arm goes up for the signal, I inhale and exhale one last time. My jaw tightens into a smile and I wait for the spotlight to be turned on.