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WRIT 2701

Butler Imitation

I awoke to cacophony.

I was sleeping—soundly! —when the guitar riffs erupted. Seconds before, there was nothing but dreamless peace, no other sounds, no other distractions, no other disturbances.

I was lying on the softest mattress, and it cradled me. I was covered by the comforter, bundled in it. I sat up with snare drums in my ears, headache pulsing behind my eyes, pulled off my comforter, threw my legs off the side of the bed and shivered on top of the cool, smooth, hardwood floor.

I hated to move. I hated having to be awake. My headache built and swelled, and I rubbed the bridge of my nose, groaning. But my groan was drowned out by the sound of the throbbing base. The beat sharpened and throbbed and... seemed to grow even louder.

I was going to kill someone today.

The frustration was a sharp pricking near the top of my head. I curled my trembling, angry hands tightly, wanting to hit something, and gritted my teeth. I grabbed at the keys lying on my nightstand. They nearly slipped free, but I caught them, snatched them, and held them tight enough to *hurt*. I tried to remember my breathing exercises as I threw open my door. But my lungs would not hold breath, my fists did not uncurl, release, or loosen, and my mind refused to calm down. Stop being so stubborn, don't go to his door, refrain from stabbing your keys into his jugular. Slowly, I realized that this was my conscience speaking to me—giving me advice, telling me what I should do, trying to keep me out of prison.

And even though I knew it was right, no matter how hard it tried to chime in, it couldn't stop me from walking into the hall. It couldn't stop me from standing in front of his door. Was I so angry, then? Or was I just fed up with his antics? Wasn't my rage justified?

I hesitated in front of his door, thinking. What if I went too far?

I noticed someone walking toward me, someone tall and graceful, someone I wanted to see. He smelled... hm, like he'd gotten out of the shower recently. But as angry as I was, that really shouldn't have mattered. I was actually happy to see him before the riff of a double bass reminded me why I was there in the first place.

It seemed that there would be no reason for me to say a single word. The music, a noisy chaos rippling down the hallway, would overpower our voices anyway.

My silence made him fidget. He opened his mouth, closed it, stuffed his hands in his pockets, seemed to be unwilling to meet my eyes. He stood still, knowing I was mad, knowing he was in trouble. He withered under my gaze.

I waited. I knew how silences made him feel, and honestly, I liked making him sweat.

After what seemed like an hour, he lifted his head. He looked like a frightened puppy, and for a moment it almost took me off guard, eyes rounded and slightly moist, he really thought he could distract me with *that*? Then he was a fool for it. My eyes rolled from the wall, to the ceiling, to the opposite wall, exaggerating the attitude in my posture as I leaned against his door.

The displeasure on my face won over his puppy dog eyes. He stopped begging and looked like himself again. The music raised in tempo. It bounced me, shook me, rattled my brain, more intense now that I was closer. But I clung to the headache, rode it out, held my breath, waited for the pain to pass. I tapped my finger against the inside of my arm. Then, finally, the pain lessened, though the music had only returned to its former noise level.

And then the crash of a cymbal split the air in two and startled us both. Guilty, as he should have been, he rubbed the back of his neck and nodded.

It wasn't really his fault, but it was his responsibility to keep his roommate in check. When the music was loud like this, it meant he'd had a bad breakup. I have never liked his roommate, you can just tell that he likes to get into trouble. It had become so routine at this point, it was almost like clockwork. Heartache be damned. There was no excuse for the piercing pain that had built behind my eye.

I sighed, turning away from him and back toward my door, feeling so tired I could almost fall asleep anywhere. But before I'd gone too far, he caught my hand, pulled me close, kissed my forehead, and let me go again. I glared at him even as my cheeks reddened. He smiled, and I felt myself thaw as he disappeared into his room. I returned to my own room, shut the door behind me, and crawled into bed again. A second later, the music stopped. The ensuing silence gave way to the ringing in my ears. But that was tolerable. He has an annoying roommate, but I'm glad he looked out for me.

Finally, I could get back to sleep.