

Trapped in a birdcage.

That was what it felt like.

At least in her mind.

Esme had always been trapped in a glass cage, a cage in which the entire world could see into and yet she could only watch from longingly. Raised the daughter of the Prime Minister of France, Esme Lacroix was expected to become a well respected young lady while enduring the limelight that her mother's position shone onto her. Yet that didn't mean it was easy. A young lady in the prime of her youth, growing up in the glare of societies brightest, and yet she felt that she would never so much as compare to such socialites.

Perhaps that was why she had broken free.

A deep breath pushed into her lungs as she lifted her gaze to the sky. The gray sky was a classic of London and yet in her mind, it was the bluest sky she had seen yet. It was the first sky she had seen in which she had entire freedom. She was on her own and she didn't have to worry about Fleur Lacroix's daughter. She was just her. She grinned at the sky and let her hair fall into her eyes as she started down the sidewalk, heart pounding with adrenaline. It felt invigorating.

Getting to England had been a test for Esme. After two months of debate with her mother and father, Esme had finally convinced them that her studying in another country would be beneficial to the family. She knew it was a permanent solution, her parents would certainly get worried at some point. And yet she was not worried about that. She had over 3 months to study on her own without the prying eye of her mother or the concerned gaze of her father. Finally, she was free. She knew not what was yet to come, yet she was excited. Excited for all that laid ahead of her.

@SebXFries

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 10/12/2022 11:42

Jacob and James were the best of friends first and brothers second. Growing up, there was nowhere that James would go that Jacob wouldn't and being the elder brother, Jacob would always ensure to try and have his brother's back. It came naturally but also so easily since they never argued about toys and such when they would play and a lot of that was probably because Jacob knew how hard it had been for James to have been born in the first place..

Their mother was in the hospital for a long while before James was born and whilst his father nor his mother would ever tell him exactly why his mother was in the hospital, he could tell that it wasn't anything good.. But at the tender age of 5, there was hardly anything Jacob could do. But everything

worked out well for their family since he was blessed with his younger brother and his mother came out of the hospital and the whole family was happy..

But that hardly ever lasts, because soon enough before James could even speak, their father had been called to serve in the British army and the NATO forces that would go to Afghanistan.. And weeks later, the news came back, his mother was now a widow and the burly and tall bearded man that was a rock with them while their mother was in the hospital was now no more, having been killed by an IED blast..

The brothers grew closer and tried their best as they grew up to become responsible very early in life in the UK but just like the weather, this phase of their life was filled with dark clouds.. And whilst they tried their best to pick up whatever part-time jobs that they both could, running a house was not easy.. And whilst time would fly by, those months and years that they both had to live through seemed nothing short of hell, living in a small one-bedroom apartment with their mother working two jobs the details of which both the brothers did the best they could to avoid knowing but the smells of the cologne that accompanied their mother always made it hard..

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But as time would pass, Jacob needed to find a real career and whilst he was determined to follow his father, he gave it his best shot but soon found himself wanting more money to send James to college, something Jacob couldn't afford. And maybe that was what set things off the way that it did because Jacob became a mercenary and started making very comfortable money doing missions with other former military guys to assassinate politicians in South America or provide security.

And whilst he made a lot of money in the first two missions itself to support sending his brother to university, James was probably too drawn to the lifestyle and the promise of such money which made him get involved with the wrong kinds of people to become a mercenary for hire himself. And on his very first mission, James was sent to France to assassinate a politician but it led to James being caught and being placed in prison and as soon as Jacob got to know about it, he knew that he would do anything to get him out..

But this wasn't a backward, corrupt country, maybe corrupt to a certain degree but not enough to break out his brother from a highly public trial since his brother had tried to kill the president after all. And that's what had led him to this day, where he was waiting in his car in the capital, outside of a hotel where he knew the princess of France would soon arrive.. The monarchy didn't hold much power in the country anymore but clearly it would be a public shame if he was successful in kidnapping the princess and it seemed like the best way to get back his brother in that moment..

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And whilst he had planned it out in his mind, he knew that he would have to approach this with tact and without committing violence. Aged 27, he wouldn't be too off for the princess who was certainly a little younger, but his sights were set as he saw her set out of her car.. Just one look and no one would be able to tell about her regality, especially without a platoon of guards but he knew that it

wouldn't be like she wouldn't have anyone at all and so he walked out to try and speak to her hoping that if he could win her trust he might be able to take her away somewhere more remote where the cameras wouldn't follow him enough to know exactly where he would hide her..

And he would enter in after her, watching her go to the reception as he would settle into one of the lounge seats, he would wait for an opportunity to approach her waiting to see if she would get the room instantly or maybe she would like to go to the bar or cafe or someplace where he could approach her a little more casually..

Image

What he chose to wear

@ shae 3 3+°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 10/12/2022 12:22

Ordinary.

It was the one thing that she had always had wished for. It sounded silly, yet to Isla, all she wanted was to be ordinary. Perhaps it had been the fact that all through her life, she had been seen as anything but. It had made her feel othered in a way that she despised. Good enough to brag to your friends about yet too special to be friends with. Within school, the other students treated her like royalty. They would brag to people that they knew her, she was a celebrity in their eyes. Yet when she approached them for friendship, they acted as if they weren't good enough for her friendship. Due to such, Esme had always been a rather isolated young woman.

It didn't help that by the time she was 18, her parents had decided that she was going to go to online schooling instead of in person university. Lonely. It was Esme's biggest boon. Her only friend was her cat and while there was some comfort in her lovable pet, she couldn't help but wish that she had the opportunity to make friends out in the world. She hoped that one day she would be seen as something other than what she was, that someone would see her as herself and not as her title.

That had been why she had made it her goal to go to graduate school abroad. Only 23, Esme wanted to find an education that was similar to other youths. She wanted the experience where she could make mistakes and grow into her own independence. In France, she certainly hadn't had the chance to do so. The most independence she had was deciding what she wore, and even her mother made comments about that if it weren't correct.

And that was why this sky looked just so blue in her eyes. Her bags behind her, Esme took the first step forward on her own. She smiled back to the taxi driver and nodded, "Thank you much, Sir!" She nodded, giving a prompt wave as he drove off. Her gaze shifted towards the hotel, her lips tugging upwards as she noticed the slightly run down gloomy hotel in front of her. "It's perfect!"

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 10/12/2022 12:29

The Beremont Hotel was one that most would scoff at. Mildly dodgy with a half drunken self medicating elderly woman at the front desk and walls that looked as if they still had the same wall paper from the fifties on them. In all rights, it's design was quite hideous. Perhaps that was why they had open long stay rooms. It certainly didn't look like the place where a young lady such as she should be staying. Many would assume she would end up in the most fancy hotel, and quite frankly she did have one booked. She wouldn't be staying there though. Her parents had booked that after all and she certainly would allow them to keep her under their grips even in England.

She smiled as she stepped inside to the hotel, her green eyes lighting up with amusement as she gave a polite nod to the elderly lady. "Good Afternoon, my name is Esme Lacroix, I made a reservation for one of the rooms here." She noted in a sweet tone. Despite being relatively royal, Esme had a sweetness about her. A polite tone that she addressed people with no matter their status, a smile that she wore near constantly and a delicacy that was well fitting of her status. She seemed to be a tender optimist in the least, very excited for her new debut into the world and society.

Several moments she was handed a diamond shaped plastic keychain with a tiny key attached that looked like it had been slightly rusted. Her room wasn't to die for. A small twin sized cot and a tinier bathroom. Mildew in the corners of the bathroom ceiling if you looked hard enough. A lovely view that only showed the brick wall of the nextdoor building. She loved it. It wasn't a bird cage in the least. She fell onto the bed with a laugh, "So this is it!" She exclaimed, excited to be living what she assumed was an average lifestyle for a Londoner.

Resting was for the boring. That was what Esme decided after approximately 5 minutes of laying down. She wanted to explore. More importantly, she was slightly hungry. She had a snack in her purse but she wanted to get the unique experience of London, and that included tasting their food. After quickly changing into some fresh clothing, Esme peeked into the mirror. Did she look average? She paused, frowning at her own reflection as she wondered if she would fit in well enough. Perhaps she would have to go shopping for some new street clothes later on.

It was a cafe where Esme found herself. Walking down the street, Esme promptly turned into the first cafe that she saw. Pret. There seemed to be one on every other street. Little did she know that there were plenty in France as well. She grinned as she walked in and picked up an orange juice and a cardboard boxed sandwich, her eyes lighting up as she brought it to the register and paid. No one even paid her any mind. It was exhilarating. "Thank you so much!" She offered a kind smile to the young cashier as he offered her her change back. She popped it into her purse and found a seat outside, humming as she opened her sandwich and began her meal with eagerness.

@SebXFries

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 12/12/2022 11:16

He took a seat on the worn out single seat couch that faced the lobby desk of the hotel and buried his face behind a newspaper so that he wouldn't be clearly visible to her as he kept a close eye on her and what she was doing.. Although inside, he was feeling proud that he had been correct in coming to this hotel over the other one because he did feel that the fancier one was a smokescreen but he did assume that maybe that one may have been booked by the parents since the booking was made by her parent's office while this particular run down hotel was self booked..

And that was the reason he had chosen to come to this one instead and he wasn't disappointed once he did find her here.. He would watch her take her keys and move up the staircase to presumably her room.. And whilst her voice didn't really carry a strong regality about it, it did carry a faint accent that if someone had been around French people enough, would be able to tell by the way she had just pronounced her family name.. But she did have a sweet voice indeed and that did irk him a little to know that he would have to do whatever it took to get his brother back but right now, he could do nothing else but wait and see when she would return..

And he was ready to wait for a while but it didn't take too long for her to return after about 5-10 minutes which made him pull up the newspaper back to his face. But thankfully, she seemed to be busy or preoccupied with other thoughts in her mind as she would walk out of the hotel and giving her a few seconds head start, he would do the same, casually walking behind her with enough of a distance that was occupied by a couple of more people so that she wouldn't get suspicious if she were to turn around.. But soon she turned into a cafe and he would stop, waiting to see from the corner of the shop window, facing his back to the window, using his phone camera to try and make out what she was doing..

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And noticing that she was getting something to eat at the cafe itself, he would walk in, just as she walked out to take a seat on the outside tables and ordered himself a coffee and a sandwich as well before turning to find a place to sit. The cafe was quite busy and there were hardly any seats inside but his true intentions were outside and just as she would start to take a bite out of her sandwich, he would walk outside and thankfully with the other tables occupied he would walk over to her and ask,

"Hi gorgeous, is this seat taken?"

He would smile and wait to see if she would let him sit, knowing that he would have to be sweet to her if he had to win her trust, but in all of his research he hadn't found out much about her likes and dislikes itself but if things went well, they might strike up a conversation and he could find out more about her. He asked and waited with a sandwich and coffee in hand, clearly wanting to eat on the same table that the undeniably beautiful blonde princess sat on.. Question was, was she up for company?

@ shae 3.°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 12/12/2022 13:45

Sheltered.

While freedom tasted ever so sweet to the young French noble, it appeared that she was an easy target. Her naivety seemed to seep through every single motion, through her eagerness to meet others, through her bright eyes and her easily earned smiles. Even just a chuckle from the cashier seemed to brighten her day a little. It didn't seem to take much to make her happy at the moment, after all, in her mind this was her moment. Nothing could dim her shine.

Perhaps that was why she hadn't noticed the fact that she was being followed. Or perhaps it was the fact that in her eyes, no one had a clue about who she was. She had been working on her accent for months now and truly hoped she had covered any traces of the French accent her family thought was so beautiful. She wondered if she would even be able to pick up an English accent should she stay here long enough. If she was lucky enough, she could truly make anew in this lovely country.

Lifting her drink to her lips, she smiled at the sweet taste of orange juice that had been freshly squeezed. The flavor sprinkled her tongue with a sweet burst of citrus, her lips tugging upwards as she let her gaze shift once more towards the darkening sky. While the outdoor seating was covered, she recognized that it might get a little chilly should it rain and wondered if she should perhaps step in.

Her attention shifted when she first heard his voice.

His.

Esme's gaze shifted upwards and she felt her heart begin to skip a little.

Esme had never had the chance to spend much time with men. Her parents claimed that should she get into a dating scandal it would be bad for their families reputation. Therefore she had been sent to an only girl's academy for the early years of her elementary and junior high days. When drama began to circulate between the girls, they claimed that perhaps online schooling would be a better fit. Due to such decisions, Esme had rarely had the opportunity to so much as look at a boy.

Her heart seemed to flutter when she heard his voice, smooth and kind as he questioned her suavely. Her green eyes anxiously lifted from the sandwich, her cheeks reddening in color as she finished chewing. She hesitantly swallowed, nearly choking on her bite as she gave a nod, clearly flustered and yet excited in a girlish and naive way. Lifting her drink to her mouth to stifle a cough, she grew even more embarrassed at her own silly response. "Y-yes of course." She nodded, her eyes focused on him.

Gorgeous.

He had called her gorgeous. She nearly smiled at the mere thought that she was being hit on. She smiled and looked at him, her gaze taking in the chiseled expression of the quite handsome young man. Had someone as attractive as he just hit on her? She would have to write about it in her diary. She looked down at her hands and then back towards the young man, "Sorry, I suppose I'm a bit nervous. Today is my first day in England... I was hoping I wouldn't stand out." She admitted, her voice quiet yet not so quiet as to not be able to hear her.

@SebXFries

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 12/12/2022 21:26

He had a light smirk on him since he already knew that today was her first day as he heard her words and took the seat across from her on the small table outside and replied to her before starting his own meal by saying,

"Blimey! Well, first of all, welcome to England, miss. And trust me, I don't think your English was bad, in any way. It was actually really very good for someone who isn't a native English speaker and there wasn't much of an accent that I caught at all. And... if it helps, you don't have to be nervous, my name is Jacob, Jacob Carter and I can be your friend while you're here.. Where are you from though, gorgeous?"

He did his very best to sound natural even indulging in a light tone of superiority that the locals always felt when it came to speaking the English language and tried to ensure that he wouldn't seem too pushy by simply suggesting that he could be a friend for her, if she would want him and lastly, implying that he felt she was a tourist by saying, while she was here..

He hoped that the last bit would land properly as he intended as he smiled at her, having said his bit, and just opening up his own sandwich with access for himself as he waited for her reply. Where she studied was somehow a big secret and he assumed that it must have been because of her security which didn't really provide much information apart from her age. And even if he was a good 6 years older to her, he was blessed with decent genetics wherein it wouldn't be very obvious just how much older he was.

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And so, having announced his real name to her, assuming that she wouldn't really know much about the other Carter in her country's prison or his relation to the Carter jailed in France. He was simply

hoping today to get her comfortable to be around him as he sipped his coffee, having taken a small bite from his sandwich, waiting to see exactly how friendly she was, which would help to guide him, exactly what he would do next, but it was truly undeniable that in that moment of playacting, he did think back to the last time, he had been on a date..

If it hadn't been for this mission to bring back his brother, he probably wouldn't have even been here with her, but now that he was, two things were undeniable, one, was that the sandwich was bang average and second, it was nice to be normal and just talk to a pretty girl and having all of her attention on you.. He waited to see how she would respond to him and also if she would try and ask him something as well, she certainly didn't seem like a very reserved type, a little shy maybe, but not reserved or closed..

@ shae 3 3+°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 12/12/2022 21:59

Welcome to England.

Her eyes lit up at his welcome, her eyes seeming to shine as she beamed with happiness. While nervous, it was obvious that Esme was beyond excited to be in England and even a simple welcome had made her feel ecstatic. Hearing someone welcome her felt very much different from the airline attendants or the little sign that she read as she left the airport pickup. It felt real, she was finally being welcomed to the place that she had dreamt of for so long and she couldn't help but feel overly filled with an abundance of gratitude.

"Really?" She asked, her eyes widening in surprise as he said her English accent was rather good. While she had been learning English for near all of her life, she couldn't help but wonder if she sounded strange to a native English speaker. It certainly wasn't french and the language itself had a multitude of rules that differed from her native tongue. "I'm so glad." She admitted, rubbing the back of her neck as she smiled sheepishly at him. "I've been practicing for the last week... blimey, bloody hell, cheeky, knackered... it truly is a strange language, isn't it?" She giggled at the phrases, always finding them rather silly.

While he seemed concerned and maybe potentially paranoid that she was going to catch on, it was blatantly obvious that Esme wasn't catching on at all. Instead, she was beaming from head to toe, seeming extremely happy that he had offered her friendship. It was her first friend, not only in England at that. She had attempted to make friends in her elementary school but many of the students thought she too famous for friendship with lowly commoners like themselves. Many had even mocked her for her well mannered and even tempered personality.



She smiled and nodded, "Oh I would love that. It's lovely to meet you Carter." She exclaimed in excitement, offering him her hand politely. "My name is Esme Lacroix, not like the drink though." She giggled, hoping that potentially it had been a funny joke.

She had been practicing that one for some time and was beyond excited to have the chance to be able to say it out loud and in front of another person.

She took a bite of her sandwich and looked at him, her smile widening as he called her gorgeous once more, her gaze shifting to the side. "I'm from France." She said softly, hesitant to reveal such information should they find out her identity. It wasn't that she didn't want people to know who she was, yet she feared that should they know they may treat her differently and that was certainly unwanted. "And you? Are you native of London?" She questioned, knowing that London was often a mixing pot as many cities were.

@SebXFries

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 13/12/2022 12:05

And even while he ate his sandwich or sipped on his coffee, there was one fact that was clear as day, this girl had really big, beautiful eyes and she seemed so full of life, it almost seemed as though she was compensating for the whole town in her spirit in just how happy she looked. But her eyes would grow even wider and he would hear her reply in shock to him but he just smiled back at her but the way she continued actually made him laugh out with her..

The conversation felt light-hearted and it truly made him question the same thing he had done when he had seen her picture for the very first time.. At that time she simply seemed like a sweet and innocent girl, but now having spoken to her, he could tell that she was beyond just that, she could make him laugh as well. It would probably make things hard for him but it took him reminding himself that she was the only way he could get his brother back.. And for him, he would take his brother's smile over any girl's..

And he returned his focus back onto her as she continued and whilst he wasn't really a big fan of the sandwich, he found himself trying to stay in the act by continuing to eat that sandwich as he smiled at her name, and then upon hearing her question. He didn't really want to give her everything about who he was since eventually, if he was successful, she would know things and that was not going to be helpful, if she told others about those things.. One of those things was his heritage. And so, he would reply with a small curled smile on his lips to say,

"Yup, you've definitely caught on to some of the slang but there's a whole lot more banter and slang that the Bri'ish use, like the omission of the random, 'T' from words. I think the most

over-demonstrated one being, a bottle of water.. Have you heard of that one? What about Chewsday?"

He would joke and laugh while trying to divert from answering her question a little before continuing to say,

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"And yeah, I'm a native of London but I have worked in a lot of countries, so my very British accent has faded away.."

He assumed that it was probably for the best if he didn't try to simply not answer her question and as yet, none of it had been a lie, just not the whole truth so there was no discomfort from his side or a stutter when he replied. But now as he could notice her sandwich coming to an end, he wanted to ensure that they would have a reason to meet again and set up something concretely before she would just get up and leave, and he already had a few ideas of how he would approach it..

One of the paths could be where he would just persuade her as though nothing would have happened while he called up the French Embassy to make his demands or the other one would be where it would be very clear to her that she was being abducted but both of those methods would need him to find a way of getting away from the insane amount of cameras that exist inside the city of London and take her away to a small city where there wouldn't be any trace for the Interpol to find him with and so he would continue by asking,

"So, Ms. Esme Lacroix, I've really enjoyed your company over lunch but if I may ask, how would you like to take a trip with me to my farms? There are not too far away from London but they are a little way away and you can actually see the Stonehedge on the way there.. It doesn't have to be now, but if you have the time, I would love to show it to you.."

He only said the last bit to not seem like he was imposing it onto her and whilst he knew very clearly that she was staying for her studies from his report, he was still trying to play it as though he thought of her as only a tourist, the question was, would she take the bait?

@ shae 3 3+°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 14/12/2022 11:25

Adventure was out there.

Miss Lana Marino was the Lacroix family maid. A well travelled old lady with a warm smile who smelled of cinnamon and chive. She had never married and spent her youth travelling the world so that she could properly say that she had taken in the most wondrous sights. She cared not for love,

though she had her fair share of stories of the most handsome men that she had spent her days with. She had once said that she would stay on random people's couches or penny pinch by working at a random restaurant for a night to pay for her keep. She had been a free soul and even as an old woman had told the most wondrous stories of her adventures.

Esme had always loved Miss Lana's stories. Stories of the strange men that blew smoke into her face in India and the henna decorated women who read her palm for the truth of her fate, stories of the temples in Asia that she had visited and the religions she had learned well to respect. Perhaps Esme had hoped she could have a youth similar, a youth in which she could escape the cage that her parents had created for her and learn to explore the world. If it weren't for Lana, she was sure that she would have been the loneliest child in the world, yet to Esme, Miss Lana Marino was practically her best friend and perhaps grandmother.

It was due to Miss Lana's beliefs that had been passed onto her that Esme believed she could smile so large, and why she could take her new home with a bright footstep. She wanted to take the adventure in her hand and fully see everything she possibly could, even if it was a bit scary.

"Ah! Yes, I most certainly have. Though... Chewsday?" She questioned, her eyebrows furrowing ever so slightly as she thought for a moment. "What is that--" She started to say when it hit her. "Tuesday! Wait-- is that really how you pronounce it?" She looked at him with curious eyes, wondering if her tutor had taught her poorly. Perhaps he had been wrong all along. She never had quite liked the stuck

up English tutor her parents had hired for her.

"That is wonderful... having the opportunity to travel, that is." She smiled and looked down at her hands. "This is my first adventure." Esme admitted, her gaze lifting to him. "I have butterflies in my stomach and I'm beyond excited to explore England... I surely will not get to see everything but I surely hope I can see as much as possible during my time here." She chuckled, finishing the rather dry sandwich and her drink.

At his last question, Esme paused, folding her napkin into a tiny square as she looked at him. "Your farms?" She questioned, her gaze falling as she began to clean up her garbage. "I...." She hesitated, unsure of how much time they had in the day. Yet then Miss Lana's voice seemed to remind her that light shouldn't stop her and that she should go on the adventures that were out there. Perhaps it wasn't couch searching or spending nights working odd jobs to make money, but this was an adventure. "I would love that." She smiled, glad that the young man had offered her such a kind gesture.

@SebXFries

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 15/12/2022 12:00

He loved the way that her face lit up at the joke and he needed to remind himself about his own brother to not lose himself in that moment as he stayed with her trying to contain his excitement since it was going to be very helpful if she would just come along with him willingly as he sipped on his coffee.. And normally the London breeze would freeze most, today that breeze was being nice as barely any breeze blew over the city, but it was still only afternoon and that would surely come in during the evening..

But then as she spoke, he would learn that this royal princess was very well protected and guarded all of her life until now as she mentioned that this would be her first adventure, being here in the country. And whilst he himself felt a sense of regret about what he had planned for her, he would note that light hesitation from her side but he was certain that this must happen, to get his brother, he felt a sense of relief once she agreed to his invitation..

And whilst she seemed happy to go with him, he had to do his best to mask the excitement he felt inside of him as he thought about how the plan could actually turn out to be successful. But now was not the time to stand on ceremony as he smiled and rose out of the seat with his half-full cup of coffee in his right hand as he would extend out his left hand towards her to say,

"Splendid! Let's go, beautiful, I would have more than enough place for you to stay overnight, since coming back would be almost impossible within the same day, do you need to take anything for the night?"

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He would not really ask for her consent about the sleepover at all, worrying that if he did, she might even say no, and it was essential that she didn't, and so, he stood there, waiting for her to take his hand so that they could walk back towards the hotel since his car was parked outside of it still, that might made her question him why it was, but if she did, he had already worked out a reason for that. What was more important though, was that, he hoped that she had spoken to her parents since he needed them to think that she was safe for a few more hours until they could escape all the CCTV cameras in the city limits..

Because once they were out of the city, he knew that he could make them disappear just long enough to make the ransom call and let her parents know of his demands.. But also, he wondered how long he could keep up the facade and not let her know what he had actually planned for her since it would become known to her eventually, but exactly when, even he didn't know.. And more importantly, he wasn't sure how she would react, but right now, he was enjoying her company as he waited for her to take his hand..

Adventure had always been nothing more than a story to Esme.

Stories that danced in her dreams at night and painted her day dreams in water colored fantasies.

She had always wondered what her own adventure would be, whether it be falling in love in another nation or perhaps making a band of misfit friends who would drag her to see the loveliest of things. Miss Lana had seen it all and had made friends where ever she had set foot. It was like that, that Esme hoped she could be.

Yet Esme hadn't recognized that her journey might truly start today. Her first opportunity to travel and even her first friend. Or perhaps would this handsomely chiseled man perhaps be interested in her romantically? She wasn't sure, yet he was calling her beautiful, his words alighting a flutter of butterflies within her stomach each time he repeated the phrase. She had never been called beautiful by a man before after all and for the first time she understood how the heroines in her stories felt.

As he stood, Esme paused, her eyes lifting to watch him. Perhaps he had noticed that she was done with the sandwich, her lips tugging upwards as she noticed his withheld hand. "Overnight? Really--?" She questioned, a little embarrassed that her first night wouldn't even be at the hotel she was paying for. She shook it from her mind and nodded, "Would you mind if I go and grab a small bag from my hotel? Just things to clean up with and extra clothing." She asked, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

After a moment, Esme took his hand politely, standing and looking towards him as he began to lead her towards the hotel. She didn't seem to take recognition of the fact that he seemed to know where he was going, blindly walking behind him as he lead the way. "Jacob?" She asked, humming to herself as she walked. "Thank you for offering to take me. I was trying to schedule a trip to see Stonehenge anyway, but... I think it'll be much more fun alongside my first friend." She smiled, stopping in front of the hotel before letting her hand slip from his.

"I'll be right back, okay?" She smiled, running to the door before spinning on one foot to look back at him. "You just wait here, I'll only be a few minutes I promise." She grinned and ran up the stairs, heading inside. As promised, about 7 minutes later, Esme was back with a small backpack in which she had packed her diary, a pen, a clean pair of pjs and 2 sets of clean clothing just in case and her toiletries. She had attempted to pack light with the hope that she wouldn't take too long. Once down the stairs once more, she waved to Jacob. "Shall we be off then?"

@SebXFries

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 22/12/2022 10:24

Normally, he wouldn't have been so hurried in his decision making but obviously, he hadn't known how the princess would be. And she seemed excited to take the trip.. He would normally be prudent

enough to scan for guards even if he hadn't seen any at first glance, but if he was blending in, certainly so would have been her royal guards.. Perhaps they would be, but maybe it was the memory of his brother or maybe it was just the way that she seemed to be willing to take the trip that dropped his guard down, almost too eager to get his plan into motion that made him suggest the trip to the farm for an overnight trip..

But once he mentioned it, he was happy to see that she agreed to go with him and finally took his hand. The walk back to the hotel was finally a chance to scan for anybody who may look like a royal guard under cover as he led the way but hearing her call him her first friend, did drop his guard all over again.. This was going to be hard, he had taken life before but those instances were reactionary and passed by in an instant, this job, even if it didn't involve him taking her life, would still be hard none the less, since she was just more than an assignment, she was a young woman and he had understood that his presence meant a lot to her as well..

He sighed as he tried to smile and looked back to her, forgetting to keep scanning his surroundings as he would just acknowledge what she had said but unable to say anything in response knowing that he was happy to take her around if this was under different circumstances since she was a nice woman and she seemed to be very trusting of him.. But soon enough they were already at the hotel as she would move inside and if he hadn't been looking at her, he might have noticed the man who had been following them from a distance away, who hid as soon as they had reached the hotel front..

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Jacob would watch Esme enter the property with a nod to her request and a smile on his face, trying to ensure that she wouldn't sense him planning anything but once she was out of sight, he would scan the area once again but by now, the man who had been trailing them had already stepped inside a store a little way away from where he could sit and oversee what would happen next but far enough from the window that even the trained eye of a former soldier wouldn't catch him as the man would dial a number on his mobile to place a call and say,

"Bonjour, j'ai des yeux sur la princesse et elle est avec un homme. Elle a décidé de rester dans un autre hôtel et je vous envoie l'emplacement en ce moment. S'il vous plaît, envoyez plus d'hommes pour surveiller."

The man would hum and nod but keep his eyes frozen onto the entry of the small hotel as he would watch Jacob and his suspicion would grow that this man wasn't just an ordinary man and the way he was scanning the roads, left to right, meant that he was clearly on the lookout for something, but at this time, he was just one man and he knew that he couldn't hear anything and would need to just maintain his distance and keep a watch..

Over on the other side of the window, Jacob had scanned the entire street and couldn't find a single soul except for people walking past at the end of the road at a crossing without anyone really paying attention to this side of the street.. And so, he would begin the next phase of his plan, he needed a

route, he needed to know where the cameras were and he would pull out his mobile phone to open two apps, one was his navigation app and the other one, was a backdoor to the government surveillance network as he would start to delete recordings from earlier on when he had met the princess at the cafe..

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The app was something he had made a long time ago and he barely used it but it was useful when he needed to corrupt data from the street cameras of his face, but of course, there were more than government cameras and those would still have his face, but at this time, he needed to get rid of all the ones that he could and those in the cafe and the cameras of this street itself had to have its recordings corrupted and had to be taken offline which would take the authorities at least an hour or two to get back online, that would be enough time for him to disappear and without them actually knowing which car him and the princess would sit in, this getaway should be the minimum of fuss..

And whilst that process didn't take long, he was almost surprised when he heard her steps coming back down as he would shut down that app and simply have the navigation app open on his phone now, showing the route that they were going to take as he would turn around to face Esme and say,

"I'm impressed, you didn't take long at all, beautiful.. Your chariot awaits, princess.. Allow me to carry that for you."

He had just spoken out her true title but he did so in a way that would seem befitting to a man trying to impress a girl as he pointed to the black Mustang on the other side of the street with a slight grin on his face.. The car belonged to his brother and he found it rather befitting that it would be the one helping Jacob to get his brother back as he would wait for Esme to reach him so that he could take the bag from her on his right hand her hand in his left and guide her to the car, before opening the passenger side door of the coupe car and wait for her to get in before placing the bag into the boot and getting into the driver's seat himself..

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Jacob Carter

BOT

— 22/12/2022 10:39

Once again, if he had been paying he would notice the man exiting the cafe behind them but he was more interested in her reaction to him calling her, princess instead and he would turn on the ignition of the car and smile as he would continue, by saying,

"Well, my navigation says the trip will be taking us about three hours, so in order to not bore you out, what about we play a little game? I'll say a word, and you tell me the first thing that comes to mind, and after you answer my word, it's your turn.."

It was a simple enough tool to distract someone and whilst he didn't know her well enough, he certainly hoped that it would help to keep her mind off of things as he would start driving away, but one glance into the rearview, finally revealed something he had missed all along.. He tried not to react but he could clearly make out the man on his mobile to his ear and he knew this wouldn't be as clean as he had hoped for it to be.. But hopefully, he could distract Esme with that game of word, to ensure she wouldn't know what was going on behind them..

And the French agent behind them, was surely animated as he cursed into the mobile and tried to dash towards his own vehicle, but the agent could see the black American car, moving quickly to the end of the street before he was even in the car, but he would prudently inform into the mobile that the princess was driving away with the man in a black American Ford Mustang and the French secret service needed to inform the British MI6 and police that they needed to find out more about this mystery man.. If only they knew that the mysterious man had already ensured that eyes and cameras wouldn't be able to find him, and the only chance was the French agent who had turned on his car now and his driving skills, would they catch up? Pour le bien de la France, l'agent, doit..

@ shae 3+°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 23/12/2022 11:59

His name was Pierre.

Pierre Saint Clair.

In his late 20s or early 30s. Esme had met him several times as he was often tasked with guarding her when she went out in France. He was a somber man who in her opinion had absolutely no personality. It was a shame but the honest truth. Despite being a rather attractive man, his lack of personality truly made him utterly boring in her opinion.

Pierre had been a part of the secret service for only a few years now, having gone through a long intensive training to even so much as debute. As mysterious as he might be to Jacob, Esme knew plenty about the man and should she have recognized they were being followed, would have recognized him. Of course, it was clear the Esme was still under the belief that they were entirely alone. After all, her parents had promised her that she could explore the world without guards or such and she truly wanted to believe that her parents wouldn't break that promise.

As she ran upstairs, Esme could feel her heart pounding.

Adventure.

It was finally a chance to explore and while she was nervous because this was... well... in all honesty the closest she had ever been to a man who seemed slightly interested in her, she didn't want her nerves to stop her. As she stepped into the room, she stared in her mirror for all of 5 seconds, squeezing her flushed cheeks together and letting out a little squeal of excitement. She bounced up and down girlishly and giggled happily before shaking her head and beginning to scramble around



the room for a bag. "Pack pack pack..." She muttered to herself, grabbing a small backpack and beginning to place her clothing into it.

Yet ever so quickly she had finished packing.

Of course, after her squealing session and maybe a little celebration of dancing.

She paused as she looked around her room for any last minute additions before pausing and grabbing her jewelry box and shoving it in. It wasn't much, but it was sentimental to her as it reminded her of her grandmother, who she had been close with.

She bounced down to the stairwell once more and smiled as she saw Jacob standing there once more, certainly having not given him much time to take in the surrounding area or come up with much of a plan. Her eyes lit up as she happily walked down the steps and started out the building, giving an eager nod to the older lady at the counter who seemed positively schmookered - drunk, and at this time of the day too.

"Have a wonderful night!" She waved politely to the woman, attempting to put on an accent though it was hardly believable.

She smiled and turned back towards him, pushing the doors of the hotel open and looking at him. "I didn't want to make you wait." She admitted shyly, "Plus it's only a night...I pack light." She chuckled, walking towards him and blushing ever so slightly as he called her princess. Esme was clearly enamored with him, her cheeks retaining a soft blush to them as he reached for her back and sweetly took her hand. Her heart felt like it was fluttering, her gaze softening as she sat down into the car and buckled her seatbelt.

Of course, as bland of a person as Pierre was, it was clear that he wasn't going to allow Esme to slip from his sights. While no personality, Pierre had topped at his class in school and was a talented young member of the secret service and his skills were rewarded with such an important job. Furthermore, he had backup on the way and the team that they sent wouldn't be thin.

Esme blushed and bit her lip as he spoke, still flustered by him calling her Princess. It was silly, she was called such all the time and yet it was the very first time in which the word had sent a plethora of butterflies rampant in her stomach, fluttering around furiously as she grew more and more nervous by the man who was by her side. She swallowed as she heard him speak and nodded, "A game?" She asked, shifting her attention to him with a smile. "Mmmmm..... I do suppose that sounds quite fun." She smiled at him, wondering what his first word would be.

Esme had always seen children on the school trips play games like this. Of course, their games were slightly different and sometimes included eye spy and the ABC game where you locate different

letters of the alphabet on signs you pass on the highways. Yet this was the first time that Esme had been included in such. To her, this truly felt like her first friend and she couldn't help but feel excited

. "Alright then... You begin." She smiled, tucking a loose strand of hair behind her ear.

@SebXFries

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 28/12/2022 20:19

He would glance into the sideview mirror of the car to look if they were being chased but even if they were, the chaser must have been damn slow because he had cleared almost 15 seconds without noticing another car behind them. He would keep a close eye later on, but once he felt confident enough he would turn his attention back to her to return her smile with one of his own as he heard notion for him to begin. He wasn't really thinking too much about the words he was going to ask her since this was only to keep her mind off anything going on behind them and so he would say with that smile,

"Okay then, first word, home.. Tell me what's the first thing that comes to mind."

He would then turn his attention back to the rear view, and then back onto the road, knowing the freeway wasn't too far away and hopefully his hack would remain for them and give him just enough time to drive away without drawing any attention from the police.. But news probably should be calculated at the speed of light, because the man behind them, Pierre Saint Claire, had already called in French Royal Family and the French embassy and a flurry of calls were taking place unbeknownst to the passengers of the black Ford Mustang that was approaching the freeway, the M4, the road that would have cameras on it but the authorities didn't know that was the road he was going to take..

And Pierre was trying his best to catch up to the catch in his silver Toyota, a rather bland car, one that wouldn't raise many eyebrows or draw any attention to him and even if he was driving very far behind them, he would at least hopefully be able to tell which side they would go. But hot on the trail of catching up to the Ford Mustang, is when he would get the call. The sound was unmistakeable, it was the King, and whilst Pierre had had the fortune of meeting the King once before, he knew the way his King sounded wasn't how anyone in France would have wanted to hear him, as the king spoke to him..

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Pierre had to console and assure the King that he would get his daughter back and he wasn't going to let the Ford Mustang slip out of his sights, but somewhere along the way, he would find it hard to speak out, but as the Mustang in the distance had turned right, and by the time he had done the same, the street was empty and the car was no where to be seen and he was stuck trying to convince the King of a car that he could not see anymore and so he would need to utter the words,

"Mon roi, je.. je.. je ne peux plus voir la voiture.. Je dois te rappeler!"

"Quelle? Comment ça tu ne le vois plus?" A reply would arrive..

But unable to say anything more he would hang up the line to try and speak to the embassy who connected him with the local police who were trying to figure out why their cameras were not functioning. And it would take someone in the police station a whole 5 minutes to figure out that the blackout was leading to the M4 freeway and that had to be the most likely route that the captor would have taken the princess.

Pierre wasted no time following the path onto the M4 but there was now no Ford Mustang to be seen as he kept driving in frustration, slapping at his steering wheel innumerable times, grinding his teeth and cursing the captor, just wishing that he could find the car once more as he drove like a madman, disregarding speed limits, after all, no law could keep him from doing his job now.. Pierre was a man possessed, he knew this moment would define or ruin him, he couldn't be the one who would have lost the princess of France.. He just couldn't..

But back in the Mustang, those five minutes passed very differently, as the game continued..

@ shae 3 3+°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 28/12/2022 20:50

Home.

Esme's eyes softened as she looked towards her new friend, pausing for a moment before quietly saying the word "family." While Esme's family certainly had it's issues, she loved them nonetheless. After all, you only get one family and while she found hers to be a pain in the butt, she knew they cared about her and would do anything they could to protect her. Of course, she believed they often took protecting her to a level a little unbearable but she knew that it came out a place of love. At least for the most part.

She paused and looked at him, her gaze lingering on the soft smile on his face. It was a nice smile. It made her feel safe, safe enough to let down her guard and wonder what kind of word she should be asking. After several moments of pondering, her gaze shifted out the window before she said "How about family...?" She noted, her lips tugging into a smile. "Tell me what the first thing that comes to mind when you think of family." Esme questioned, her voice soft as she mused about what he might answer. Everyone's family was different. Her maid, Miss Lana had always hated her family and had been left with little to nothing after her parents had passed away. That was why she became a house keeper in the first place. Esme's family on it's own was rather strange as well yet it had shaped her into the person she was today.

After a second, Esme paused and looked at him, her eyebrows furrowing ever so slightly before she let her lips part to speak. "Jacob, is everything alright?" She questioned, having noticed that he kept looking into the rear view mirror as if something was going on. "You seem a little... uneasy." Esme paused, wondering if he was anxious to be in the car with a stranger. "I--If it's my fault, I promise there is nothing to be nervous about. I won't judge you or anything." She admitted, hoping to ease whatever was concerning him.

Of course, she was unaware that they were being tailed. That they weren't as alone as she had thought the

y would be and that he wasn't just worrying about conversing with her openly but much deeper problems. The two of them were in completely different mindsets, Esme focused on the journey and conversation whereas his attention was entirely divided as he hoped he could escape with her in his grasps.

@SebXFries sorry it's a shorter one))

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 30/12/2022 13:00

He was pretty focused on the road ahead as well as the road behind them but he could see the entry to the M4 expressway barely a few feet away and he knew once they would get onto it, things would be much easier and that gave him comfort, especially since he couldn't see the car of the Frenchman behind them.. And whilst he had only been playing that game as a passive distraction, her reply stunned him and it was hard not to think about it..

Family

He had barely known his parents but he had surely known love of a brother and that was something that made his heart sink as she asked him what came to mind as she asked about family. He was trying his best now to distract himself with the rear view but didn't really drive any faster but he took a deep breath, allowing for himself to try and gather some composure but clearly he hadn't done it well enough because he would hear her words and he knew that he didn't want to alarm her..

And so, assured that they were not being followed, with the expressway pretty straight line and without any traffic, he would turn to her and smile to say, "Regret.. That's the word that comes to mind, Esme. It's not your fault, I was practically raised an orphan and whilst I think I knew my parents for a few years until my brother was born, I just don't remember what it's like to have a family.."

And he needed to exhale once again, now composing himself much more firmly and assuredly before he would continue to say,

"But you know, that was a heavy topic and I apologize, please don't feel bad. Let's talk about something else, do you love your parents? Aren't you going to miss them?"

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He would ask her with an assured smile on his face which would hopefully tell her that he was okay, and he would place his large right palm on her hand, pressing and cupping it gently to ensure she knew that he was okay, before turning his focus back onto the road, the drive itself would be a little long and this was still a good chance for him to learn more about her especially what kind of a person she was..

And he waited to see her reaction and reply, if she wanted to talk about her parents or not.. He hadn't been lying to her outright but he hadn't been truthful to her either, the question was, would she tell him who her parents were, or maybe she would hide her truth as well..

@ shae 3 4°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 30/12/2022 18:41

Something twisted in her stomach as she heard his word.

Regret.

She paused and shifted her attention from the window back to the man who was driving. Had she brought up the wrong topic? She bit her lip and wondered whether she had pushed too far. "I..." She paused, her voice soft as she worried that she had stepped on his toes in a way that had hurt him. She had wanted to get to know him, yet she had pushed too far.

"I...I'm really sorry about that." She stumbled over her words, her eyes softening as she wondered what it would be like. How many things did she take for granted without ever thinking about it. To be raised without a family, without parents to annoy or to depend on you even if it often felt like a little too much. She had never so much as thought of what it would be like without them.

She paused, "I shouldn't have asked... I--" She started, only to be cut off by his apology about the topic. She shifted uncomfortably and shrugged a little. "I... have a strange relationship with them to be honest." She leaned against the arm rest and let out a soft sigh, "I know it sounds awful... but I've always felt a lot of strain between my parents and I." She noted, "I shouldn't take them for granted, but... I guess our relationship has always felt like work."

Esme paused, her attention shifting to his hand as he placed his hand on top of her own. "My parents care a lot about reputation... sometimes it feels like they care about it more than they even care for me." She said softly, "So growing up... they made very strict rules and... I felt very isolated and trapped. For a long time I resented them, resented the way they smothered me and isolated me from experiencing the world myself. I guess that's why I left so quickly..." She laughed softly and looked down, hair slipping in her eyes. "So they couldn't change their mind..." She chuckled, "I just hope... that my being gone will show them that I can be trusted. They don't have to worry about my each and every a

ction and the mistakes I might make and... all of that. They can trust that I can handle myself just fine."

@SebXFries

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 02/01/2023 12:34

The game had been meant to distract her and keep her mind preoccupied but when it got so heavy with feelings about his own situation and then sensing how maybe the game that gotten very heavy for her as well, he would turn his attention to her and to the road in equal measure. He heard every word she spoke and whilst he wanted to disagree when she said, "I shouldn't have said that.." he wouldn't however interrupt her and he would listen to what she had to say before he would place his right hand over her left thigh, rubbing her gently, trying to console her as he replied to her,

"Hey, that's fine Esme. Look, sometimes conversations can get heavy, but I am not one to run away from my emotions, in fact, I think it is one of the best ways to grow stronger and get out of dark places.. if both people can talk through things. Now you know something about me and I know something about you. But.. if you ask me, don't worry about making mistakes, we make them in order to learn from them. I think your parents are just being protective and it's good that you understand their thoughts come from a good place, but I don't think it's wrong about how you think as well. I think you're very capable to handle yourself. Besides, I will be sure to try and give you some lessons on how to tie some knots around the farm and take care of the animals and you wouldn't be able to find that without visiting the farm, you know.."

He would say hoping to make her feel better and once he turned his attention to the road once again, he would notice the marker for Stonehenge and turn to ask with excitement,

"And what do you know, that's the market for Stonehenge right there, do you want to visit it today? Or would you like for me to take us to the farm instead so that we can make it there during daylight? It would be the same road back so I could show the Stonehenge on the way back, but I want to know what you would want more.."

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He would ask and smile at her, and that's when he realized that his hand had never left her thigh, and it was rather easy to do since the expressway didn't really need him using both hands but the way his fingers were almost to her inner thighs, he could feel the warmth of her body, and he wondered if she was uncomfortable with that touch as just as he thought so, he would slowly withdraw away his hand, even if he hadn't wanted to, since he didn't want to make her uncomfortable..

He did so, without saying a word about that touch, but would she talk about it? He would know soon, as he turn his eyes back into hers and wait to see what her response would be..

@ shae 3 4 .

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 02/01/2023 13:57

Jacob had a way of talking that was very different from the french.

She had been told it in the past, but many french people were quite direct. That meant that when it came to hard subjects, they didn't often shy away. Some may call them a brutal nation because of this, being rather harsh with their words and often not holding back to protect other's feelings. Esme believed her parents to be the same way. They didn't hesitate to be harsh with their words and she had learned that very many times from being called inadequate. Esme knew she would never be perfect in their eyes and perhaps that was another layer as to why she had wanted an escape.

She smiled softly as his hand placed on her thigh, the soft rubbing comforting in a way that no one had ever offered her before. "I know... I think that's important." She noted softly, "I was raised in France... where people don't hesitate to hold their tongues pretty much... ever." She laughed a little before continuing, "So talking about things that you don't want to is normal... but the way that you're doing it is a lot more comfortable. Not forcing it but... allowing it to ebb and flow in a natural way." She offered a soft smile and let her gaze shift out the window.

Esme had always wanted to make mistakes, yet due to her lifestyle she had hardly had the chances to make them. She wanted to learn on her own outside of the controlled setting that her parents had presented to her. Her eyes lit up as he said he would teach her things around the farm, even allowing her to take care of some of the animals and things. "Really?" She exclaimed, her gaze shifting back to him. "My parents never allowed me to see farm animals before. They said it was too dirty." She explained, seeming more excited about the farm than stonehenge which was right in front of them.

"Let's do the farm first." She admitted, making a rather silly decision in most people's terms. See the historical landmark or a bunch of dirty pigs and chickens. Chicke

ns it is. She seemed to light up at the idea, her lips now tugged into a warm smile. "I want to see everything. Do you have horse too?" She questioned, that being one of the few animals that she was

allowed to be around as she grew up. She quite liked them too, having grown rather adept at horseback riding and spent many of her hours around the horses for some sort of enjoyment.

The feeling of his hand on her thigh was strangely a comfort, a reminder that he was trying his best to reassure her. He was friendly and wasn't going to hurt her in any way. Or at least that was how she assumed it. Yet as it shifted even closer to her inner thigh, she felt her heart begin to flutter just ever so slightly. She didn't know why but it felt different, the sensation on her thigh just slightly teasing her in a way that she wasn't used to until he removed it, her gaze shifting when he lifted it back to the wheel. As their gaze connected briefly, Esme's cheeks turned red and she quickly looked away, not saying a word about the touch.

@SebXFries

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 13/01/2023 13:20

@SebXFries hope the house hunt is going well and that it's not treating you too poorly!)

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 13/01/2023 19:20

@SebXFries hope the house hunt is going well and that it's not treating you too poorly!)

@Esme Lacroix (@? shae ? ?+.°.) - jump

Hi Shae, it has been tiring but hopefully by this weekend I can close something. Had to job hunt in the middle too 😊 but that worked out well atleast. I should be back writing this coming week. Hope you're doing well. Thank you for checking ^ ^ appreciate you

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 19/01/2023 11:16

Her response to him, made him smile as he would speed past the marker and make their way further into the highway until he would finally turn the car into a small, unmarked road, and whilst, they traveled, the conversation would continue with him talking about the farm, since the road view wasn't really anything fancy, which he couldn't afford it to be, the farm itself had to be bland normal for it to be uninteresting for the eyes of the police or any agency that would try and find her. And so he would reply saying, as they continued,

"Your wish is my command, princess. I do happen to have a horse to ride around but there are generally more animals that are rather more commercial, is the right word perhaps. Chickens for the eggs and the meat, pigs, because the locals do love a good roast once in a while. Cows, for the milk



and of course the meat, a small pond of farm-raised salmon and lastly some sheep for the wool. There isn't really too much that's required in the farm, it's actually very self-sustaining, since I've got plants for human food and animal feed as well. I can literally stay in the farm for weeks without ever needing to step out, just only for gas, but my farm hand is going back home for a few days and I need to be around to take care of things, while he's away.. Ah, and there it is.. Welcome to the farm!"

The dust road had led them into a large wooden gate, with some barbed wire fencing, mainly meant for any predators of the animals in the farm itself, but the fencing itself was tall enough to keep any human being as well. It wasn't going to be a fortress for him to keep her in, but if no one had been able to track them down, then it would be a good hideout right out in the open, without anyone knowing any better.

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And maybe her country would have anticipated for some rather elaborate technical scheme to kidnap her, but all he had done was gotten rid of the cameras, just long enough for them to slip out of view, and some strategically placed jammers which he had turned on, that would have gotten rid of any traces of mobile network from the point of time they had noticed the marker of the Stonehenge, and the heist was now complete without her really realized, she had been kidnapped, as he would point to the horse she had been asking about as the car would come to a stop, having passed the pens of the chicken, cows, sheep and now finally reaching the decently sized wooden cabin, that would be their residence, single floored, with a large door facing them, and the windows of the living room, and a single window of the kitchen visible from the car.

He would bring the vehicle to a slow and comfortable stop, and unclasp his seat belt as he would smile and say, "Don't worry you could go touch, Pegasus. I know it's kind of corny the name. He doesn't fly, really, but that was the first horse I had read about and he's the first horse, I've owned, so it seemed.. right. Anyway, I'll just take our bags in, are you hungry?"

He would ask so that he could plan, if he would need to start focusing on food or maybe giving her a tour of the place first. Or maybe she would want to see the inside of the cabin first.. He had already told her that there was only going to be one room, and that hadn't seemed to deter her, but now he would let her decide what they would do, just studying her reactions to see what would catch her fancy..

Image

The front side of the cabin

The back side

Image

@ shae 3+.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 19/01/2023 13:00

For someone who had felt like she were always trapped in a bird cage, a farm like this was a haven.

Growing up, Esme had seldom even been allowed to get dirty, her parents preferring a rather immaculate lifestyle that Esme had always found to be stifling for a young child. Stifling. In reality, most of her life had been rather stifling. Trapped and isolated to a place where she hardly was given the chance to truly be herself, Esme had never had a space here she could just exist and be herself.

As they drove up to the large farm, Esme's eyes lit up, seeming to sparkle as she leaned towards the window to get a better look at it. A beautiful farm with plenty of land and rolling hills that seemed to be filled with luscious green grass that blew in the wind, a warm and cozy cabin that seemed to glow from within and animals surrounding the area that seemed ever so peaceful. In reality, it was all Esme had ever wanted. While she may have been kidnapped, she surely didn't seem aware of it yet, her gaze in awe of it.

"It's wonderful." She said softly, her gaze turning towards him as he spoke. "Oh I love it Jacob! It's perfect!" She explained as they drove up to the house, the car shaking ever so slightly from the path not being smoothed. She shook her head and looked at him, "I know I may look like a Princess... but... this is wonderful.... it's truly a dream." She smiled, climbing out of the car without hesitation as he began to pull the car to the cabin and pulled it to a stop.

She giggled and paused in the open door as he mentioned the horse's name. "Really? Pegasus... that's very cute." She grinned, finding it mildly cute that he had a childish side to him. She hadn't imagined him to have a pet named such a thing, yet something was oddly endearing about it and she couldn't help but find it made her like him more. She smiled and nodded, "No thank you, the food from the cafe was certainly enough." She noted, though the sandwich had been rather lackluster in taste. "

Maybe... we could look around?" She asked, swaying back and forth on her feet as he noted he would take the bags in. "I can carry mine. It isn't much anyway. Not heavy at all." She explained, walking over to him as she looked up to him rather excitedly.

Esme easily wore her emotions on her face. It was incredibly clear that she was entirely sincere in her excitement. She was beyond in love with the small cabin lifestyle and while perhaps romanticized in her head, she was excited to spend a little time on the farm and to get to know a lifestyle so different from her own.

He would smile at her responses, but at the time, he decided against taking the bags in, they would have time, but the sunset that was fast approaching. And so, with a slight smirking smile on his face, he would reach for her hand, but stop just short of simply claiming it, not wanting to seem too imposing as he would say,

"I think the bags could wait, but I think the sunset won't, let me show you around, Esme. Come.."

And he would wait to see if she would give him her hand, feeling a lot more at ease now that they were in the farm, away from eyes as he knew there would be a lot of time for him. And he could take his time to cover up his car, after taking out the luggage as he would walk her towards the horse shed first as he would open the small wooden shed door for her, gesturing for her to step in. The horse itself would be housed in a large open area for it to roam freely in and a small section of the area, covered by a straw-roofed shed where the horse feed and water tank was placed.

He would take her further towards the horse, moving in front of her, in case the horse would scare her or least the horse itself should get scared. But he smiled as the horse would neigh at the sight of him, bowing his head gently as the horse would rise up, galloping slowly towards him, certain that Pegasus knew him, since he had taken care of him for a lot of years and he did have a close bond with the horse itself.. He would place his brushing palm onto the muzzle of the horse, brushing him gently as he would turn to Esme and say,

"There's a great sight from the cliffs facing the water front, in case you want the best sunset in the area. I could take you there and you could get to ride Pegasus as well. Are you game?"

-

He would ask, wanting to be sure that she was comfortable getting on a horse. the horse himself would rub his muzzle into his chest, letting him know that the horse was glad that he was back, especially since he hadn't been around much trying to find out everything he could about the woman he had brought along with him, to get his ultimate goal, his brother.. Someone who loved the horse, just as much as Jacob did and he would gently rub the horse's ears and say,

"Hey bud, I've missed you too. Do you want to go see a sunset, Pegasus? I bet you're dying to go for a run, aren't you?"

He would smile and turn around to see his companion, as he waited to see if he would have to get her up to the bare back of the horse or if she would need a saddle as he asked,

"Do you want the saddle seat? Oh god, I haven't even asked, have you ever ridden a horse before?"

@ shae ʘ ʘ+°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 22/01/2023 12:46

A hand.

Esme's gaze first shifted down to the hand that extended towards her.

It was such a simple gesture and yet it alone made her heart feel like it was beginning to flutter with that same anxious girlish feeling that she had felt earlier in the day. Jacob seemingly had a way of causing that feeling in her. She had never felt that way before. Her gaze shifted up as he spoke, her lips tugging upwards into a surprised smile as he mentioned going to enjoy the sunset together. Her chest fluttered again, butterflies seeming to go on a rampage within her. She swallowed and nodded, biting her lip as she let her hand find his once more.

Her gaze fell onto their hands as she began to walk, wondering if this would be like one of Miss Lana's stories. It already seemed like it was becoming one. The kind that she told about mysterious lovers that came and go like the wind. Of course, Esme felt that she was a bit more of a romantic than that. A part of her hoped that if she were to find a lover as Miss Lana had, that hers would never go. Forever did she hope she could remain in the arms of whomever came to hold her dear.

As they walked over to the horse, Esme's eyes lit up, her gaze falling on the small shed with excitement. "Oh my... Is this where Pegasus lives?" She questioned, biting her lip as she struggled to hold her excitement in. Esme had always gotten along with horses. It was the one animal other than dogs and cats that her parents allowed her exposure to. Equestrians were highly sought after in France after all. It was a sport that was much befitting of a royal and therefore they had often allowed her to ride. It was with her horse Buttercup that she spent many of her days and wondered of the journeys they would go on if they only had the chance.

Yet now she was on a journey all by herself. She paused and stepped deeper into the shed, her eyes seemingly shimmering with excitement as she watched as the beautiful horse stood up and galloped towards them. Esme

didn't seem even a bit afraid of the creature despite its size, her gaze lifting politely to it as she introduced herself to the animal in the way that she had always been taught, giving the animal a little space to approach, her hand outstretched.

"Would that be alright?" She asked, her lips tugging into a smile that gave away just how excited she was about the prospect of taking a ride with him. "I would love that." She nodded, giggling as she stepped up to the horse ever so slightly and it nuzzled into her palm. "It's a pleasure to meet you, Pegasus." She said in a soft tone, one that you might use to an animal. "I do hope we can be wonderful friends." She whispered to the animal, stroking it sweetly before looking back to Jacob.

"I can ride bare back... just-- don't tell my mom." She laughed, "It's not proper for a lady to ride bare back after all." She winked, blonde hair slipping in her eyes as she looked at him. "Shall we then?" She questioned, looking at the horse and running her hand down its neck sweetly.

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Jacob Carter

BOT

— 25/01/2023 22:53

Six months ago

It was a nice day to wake up at the farm and Jacob woke up feeling really good having gotten out of Russia with some war plans that the British paid good money for and the payout was good enough for him to be able to retire both himself and his brother for a good year or two. But as he came out to the stable shed, he could see his brother James and knew that James had one last mission to do in the next few days and this break would be all that they would have..

He would observe James trying to get onto Pegasus's bare back and the effort of his brother made him chuckle since he knew very well that just as much as his brother was good on a bike, he was equally terrible on horseback and the effort he was putting up trying to mount Pegasus. With a coffee mug in his hand, Jacob would whistle out three short bursts which would make Pegasus hunch his limbs and sit down on the ground making it easier to mount and that would capture his brother's attention who turned around to face him.. And Jacob would recall wearing a proud smirk on his face, observing the shock on his brother's face..

Present day

He had noticed the look of excitement on her face and the small details that made her totally adorable even if that wasn't what he had been expecting.. The fact that he was thinking about anything but using her to free his brother reminded him of that exchange he had shared with his brother and Pegasus, those months ago. But her words broke him out of any other thought as he chuckled and replied,

"I doubt that your mother would scold you about riding a horse bare back, if she knew that you were with a guy, alone on his farm.. Well, not technically alone, Pegasus is with us too.. But does she know where you are, Esme?"

-

Jacob Carter

BOT

— 25/01/2023 23:01

And his right hand had already gone to grab onto her hand as his left arm would wrap around her waist, which he would use to hoist up her body, gently enough to make her body lift off the ground so that she could hoist her leg over the horse's back before his right hand would gently grip onto the other side of her waist, to balance her weight but his hand did gently graze along her ass.. And he

tried not to respond to that or linger, taking his grip to her back, until she did wrap her leg over Pegasus's back..

And once she on the horse, he would smile at her, and just let her grip onto the horse's mane as he would allow her to enjoy the moment before he would slowly burst out those three short whistles making Pegasus slowly descend as he watched her reaction with a smirk on her face. It would be obvious that he could have done that at the first instance itself, but then again, it would have deprived him of her reaction to suddenly being on the horse that would do that. And so he would wear that same smirk as he had all those months ago, and that's when the memory of his brother struck him.

He exhaled, trying to remind himself that he was getting closer to his goal and he would get onto the horse, behind her and rest his chin on her shoulder and say,

"I thought Pegasus how to do that, he's really a very good boy. Now, make sure you hold onto his mane, tight. He won't run too fast without a horse seat, he knows that. We just gotta do this slowly.."

He would finish and wait for the horse to start trotting. The viewpoint wasn't going to be far enough, but the question was, what was to be said between them? He was battling some thoughts inside of him, feeling certain that Esme didn't doubt a thing that she was being kidnapped to try and make a barter but the fact was her parents needed to know his demands as well, and so he started to think how he would do it..

@ shae 3 3+°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 26/01/2023 13:19

As a child, Esme's parents had warned her to conceal her emotions better.

They claimed it was a poor trait for a royal.

Yet no matter how she worked at it, Esme had always found it rather hard to hide her emotions. She couldn't tuck them away like she watched her parents did. She didn't like that after all. She could never read them. Never knew what they were thinking.

To a child, concealing emotions felt like putting up a wall between yourself and the rest of the world.

That included family.

Miss Lana had always loved how Esme was easy to read. She said it was a virtue that she hoped she would never lose. Miss Lana was the one who taught Esme to dance like no one was watching, to romanticize even the dreary moments of her like they were being displayed in a movie. She liked that

way of thinking. It brought life to color, let her emotions spark and fly like they were cracks of rainbow colored lightning. Esme's imagination had always flourished, her gaze dewy eyed and bright despite her parent's wishes.

Perhaps that was why she always felt out of place in that house.

That cage.

Esme felt her lips curl into a smile at his words. "I suppose you're right. She's would have me walking coals should she know that I was with a man!" She exclaimed with a surprised gasp. Her gasp shifted into laughter as she imagined the look on her mother's face. "I suppose we'll have to keep this our secret. Okay?" She bit at her lip as her lips curled into a sweet and energetic smile. She held her pinky out towards him, blue eyes seeming to glimmer with that hint of mischief.

She softly taken his hand, her cheeks growing rosy as his arm wrapped around her waist and he helped hoist her onto the horse. She wasn't used to being so close to a man. She could feel the way that her heart began to race simply at his touch, her gaze softening as she looked down, her cheeks somehow growing darker as she felt his hand accidentally graze along her rearend. She swallowed and looked at him, pus

hing her leg over the horse's body before sitting properly, feeling rather tall on the horse's back. She took a deep breath and let her fingers run through the horse's mane before gripping it with her left hand, her free hand running down it's neck softly. She seemed quite used to being around animals, her gaze soft as she let her hand comfort the animal sweetly.

She paused as he whistled, her eyes widened as she nearly fell forward as the horse lowered itself. "Woooahhh boy--" She exclaimed in surprise, clinging onto the horse as it descended to the ground for Jacob. She stared in bewilderment as it remained on the ground so that he could get on, her gaze focused on him. "Why didn't you tell me that he could do that?!" She gasped, her lips tugging into a smile as laughter threatened to escape her lips. At least she was a good sport about it, laughter escaping her lips. "Making a fool of me, Jacob Carter!" She giggled as he climbed onto the horse, her gaze tilting slight as he move to sit behind her on the horse.

They were close. She wondered if he could hear or feel her heart racing.

She hoped not.

That surely wouldn't be a good impression. She didn't want him to realize she was simply nervous to be this close to a man. She swallowed as he rested his chin on her shoulder and smirked. "You sure are cheeky." She teased, grabbing onto his mane and nodding, "Okay... off we go, Pegasus." She noted softly, letting the horse raise before beginning to trot out of the barn.

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Jacob Carter

BOT

— 27/01/2023 13:52

Her earlier statement had made him smile but her reaction to Pegasus getting on his knees was outright hilarious and he had to do his best to not burst out laughing as he would get settled in behind her. It however didn't escape his attention once his chest was slightly pressed to her back that she was rather warm to the touch and he was certain that he could feel or almost hear her heartbeat through their touch. And that moment would have been and remained tense had it not been for her remark as she called him cheeky.. It was comical further because it was such a British remark to make as he simply replied to her saying,

"Oh, you have no idea, miss. But may I just say, the whole stereotype of the French being uptight, is that true? Are the French snobby and uptight?"

He said it in a way that would almost seem like a challenge to her but before he could even get a reply from her, she was already commanding for Pegasus to make a move and that made him grab onto his mane, around her body with his right hand and his left grip would reach for her hip, a sure grip, which he was sure that she felt it but it was required after all due to the sudden motion of the horse. He wouldn't think much of it, but just by the touching of his chest to her back, he was almost certain that he could feel her heartbeat get louder, and faster..

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Thinking back to her age, whilst he hadn't found any romantic ties during his research, he would be lying if he wasn't curious and so he would ask her, as they moved in a steady but easy pace towards the clearing on Pegasus who seemed much more in control just by himself, knowing probably exactly where Jacob would have wanted to do at this time, but since the horse was being double ridden, did his best to move at an easy pace, ensuring that neither of them would fall over which was also helped by the fact that neither of them pulled hard on its mane to demand any more pace.. And so, just as they made their way to the view point, Jacob would ask,

"By the way, I never got to ask you, how old are you? And, no boyfriend right now? Is he back at home?"

She hadn't told him much about where she was in France or her age, atleast he knew her age, but it would be best if he were to just ask it instead of getting caught later on.. But the part about her past relationships, barely anything at all. It hadn't mattered to him when she was just a name on a sheet, but in person, he couldn't deny that he was actually enjoying being with her, and he knew that it was going to be hard to do what he would have to do. In that moment though, they could just be as he waited to hear her reply with the movement of Pegasus, rocking her body back towards him and his body towards her, this was surely going to be trouble as he felt her ass press into his crotch once again..

@ shae 3 3+.



Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 27/01/2023 18:58

Secrets.

The number of secrets that Esme had began to keep from her parents was adding up. Miss Lana used to say that secrets were the spices of life. Secrets of love were like the salt and pepper, essential spices that couldn't be forgotten. They added something special to any meal they were added to. You could not do without them. Perhaps that was why Esme didn't mind exploring this secret just a little more. After all, she wasn't sure if there was anyone who she could tell about this pounding in her chest. She had never felt this way about anyone before, at least not anyone that she actually had a chance with.

Esme's first crush had been the mail boy.

His name was Théo. They exchanged smiles when he brought packages to their door. His dark hair and coffee toned skin made the butterflies in her stomach flutter. His smiles became her little secret. After all, she was sure her parents didn't want her to be interacting with anyone of a lower class. They had always been weird about things like that. They said it was improper and it would lower her already quite low standing in the eye of the public.

Jacob made the butterflies in her stomach do much more than flutter.

Her heart was racing, no racing didn't quite get the speed correct. She knew no words to describe the pace at which her heart felt as if it were about to charge right out of her chest. She wondered if the butterflies in her stomach had transformed into bees, buzzing rampantly without any ease.

His words tugged her back to reality, her eyes softening. "It is. The french are a very uptight people... especially my parents. They would have a tizzy should they know that I was here... that is why this must be a secret." She smiled, her gaze falling down, "I hope that is alright? I would hate to have them take their angers out on you... they have quite a knack at being rather unreasonable." She frowned, her eyebrows furrowing as she spoke of the people who seemingly rather frustrated her.

She took a de

ep breath and smiled, "They hardly allowed me to travel here in the first place... though i am beyond glad that I've been given this wonderful opportunity." She smiled, her gaze lifting forwards as the horse began to move, his chest pressing to her back as the horse strode forward and an easy pace. She swallowed, biting her lip ever so slightly. "I'm 23." She noted softly, her cheeks reddening as he questioned her about a boyfriend. "N-No... I'm single..." She bit her lip, gaze shifting away slightly, "It might come as a little surprising... but I've never been in a relationship at all..." She admitted softly, her hair slipping in her eyes. "D-Do you have a girlfriend?" She questioned, "I'm quite sure someone

as attractive as you does... it would be a shame for you not to." She bit her lip, gasping a little as she felt her rear press against his crotch, her cheeks growing ever so clearly hot.

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Jacob Carter

BOT

— 06/02/2023 11:16

Their shared proximity had her hair flying back to brush his face and the scent of whatever perfume she had used filling his sense of smell and he couldn't deny that the touch their bodies shared, grinding against each other wasn't arousing him slightly and he could almost feel the way his manhood was having the blood being pumped to it and he had even wrapped his arm around her waist to ensure that he wouldn't slip off the horse but he couldn't help but wonder if she could feel him..

And it also made him think about the last time he had been with a woman.. This mission had seemed so straightforward when it had begun but as he heard her speak and hearing her question, made him realize just how difficult it could potentially become if wasn't going to be careful around her. He normally had no trouble showing restraint but this was a little different.. She was his target but also she was no longer a name on a piece of paper anymore. And holding her from the back, he wouldn't be able to see her face but he would respond saying, with a slight chuckle,

"Well, I'm normally just busy on my farm and I haven't really had time to date anyone, in case you didn't notice, the farm is pretty far removed from society and that means I barely meet people let alone a woman my age that I would date. But, I think it's great that you're taking control of your life and living, after all, we do only live once. Ah, look, there's the clearing.."

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And in a way he was glad that he could see it coming up on the horizon because he was a little worried if he would spook her with the way he was developing a bit of his boner since he could feel the curve of her ass with his manhood that he was almost certain that she wouldn't miss it. But he did his best to avoid bringing that up just yet and instead allowing for them to reach the spot just in time to catch the sunset. He knew that he would need to capture some pictures of her and he was already thinking of where he could take them so that when he sent it to the French they wouldn't be able to figure out where she was geographically..

@shae 3 3+°.

Esme Lacroix

BOT

— 10/02/2023 12:57

Closeness.

Esme had never experienced this kind of closeness with another, her heart fluttering each time she felt his body brush up against hers, her chest tightening and her stomach feeling as if it were filled with butterflies. Perhaps it was because of a sense of naivety, but Esme couldn't help but control these emotions, her cheeks stained red as she rode further, unable to hide how flustered she was at feeling his touch on hers, his body up against hers.

Growing up, Esme had never been close with men. Of course, by her parents design, she had attended all girls schools for all of her life and when that began to go south due to political troubles, they further isolated her by homeschooling her and having her attend online university. It had been awfully hard for Esme to truly grow any organic relationships and thus she began to feel caged. The closest thing she had to a relationship with a man was the mail boy who had smiled at her when he dropped their packages off. It wasn't exactly all that romantic but to Esme it was all she had known.

The feeling of his arms around her waist were warm, a reminder that he wasn't going to let her fall or get hurt. Or at least that was how she portrayed it. She had a feeling that Jacob wouldn't do a thing to hurt her. She felt safe. Safer than she probably should seeing as he technically was kidnapping her. "I guess so... well... I think that it's lovely. As are you." She smiled, her voice soft, "Perhaps we both have a lot of learning to do..." She giggled, her giggles cutting off as she felt his body slide closer to her, his aroused member pressing up against her rear. A blush spread over her face as she looked forwards, even her ears slightly tipped with the blush as she grew more and more flustered.

As the horse pulled into the clearing, Esme's eyes widened, attention temporarily pulled from her pounding heart as she looked at the beautiful view. "Oh my..." She whispered in amazement. It was stunning, the sky painted

d in dappled oranges and pinks as the sun began to set slowly. The sun painted the world in golden swatches, gold liquid seemingly spreading over all of the trees and world around them. She paused and turned to look at him, "It's lovely!" She exclaimed, hopping off of the horse and running towards the clearing and staring at the view with a bright grin.

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