

Bumping in my seat as the train jerked down the track, my mind stayed fixed on the colors of the ball my school hosted

music dancing and lovely people what more could you want

three days ago. My mind stayed fixed on the color mauve.

Mauve.

The dress I had gone to the ball in, flowers stretching around my chest and spilling onto the floor. The dress melted away into a puddle of flowers.

Mauve.

The sunset that night. I had only noticed it after I opened my eyes during a kiss

why are you kissing hadrian he's mine

but I did not regret it. The yellows and reds of the sun leaving the horizon contrasted with the purpling clouds, creating a beautiful mural of happiness.

Mauve.

The last color I had seen on Hadrian.

Other colors drifted into my mind occasionally, such as the champagne hair covering Hadrian's head. The shadows in Simone's eyes when she spotted us in the garden

hadrian what if simone finds us

she can't do anything we haven't seen in the past three months don't worry adaline

during the sunset. The ash grey of the gun used to destroy my life. But mauve stayed constant, and it terrified me.

The color I could not keep my mind fixed on, however, was crimson. The crimson of Simone's dress. Simone biting down on her crimson-colored lip as her arm shook. The color spotting Hadrian's tie.

hadrian what happened why are you bleeding oh god you're bleeding

I wished I had the ability to focus on the blood, but that was not possible. I could only see the color of the tie. My dress. The sunset as two metallic gunshots rang through the air.

The train took a sharp turn, shoving me over to the side of my seat. The old woman pushing the refreshment cart struggled to stay standing as the compartment door opened, but I did not rise to help her.

“Would you like any sweets, dearie?” The woman asked in English. *You must get used to speaking English now that you are leaving.* The French-accented voice of my mother, Cosette, filled my mind.

“No, thank you.”

“Are you sure? We have bagels, pies, tarts-”

“I’m positive. Thank you.”

The woman huffed and slid the compartment door shut. I returned to my lonely thoughts

i never want to live without you

once again. The thoughts I hated. I could hear Hadrian’s voice in my head:

Adaline, my dear, however will you live if you hate your own thoughts?

I didn’t know the answer to the question. It contradicted my personal motto but it wasn’t an issue at the moment.

The color mauve was an issue, however. The color Hadrian died in. Crimson resonated in my mind as well. The color of Simone. The color of blood. I couldn’t decide which hurt more: the blood or the owner of it.

One would think my mind would obey my wishes and focus more on crimson, blood, a jealous ex-lover’s dress, death. How crimson covered the cobblestone; how I raced to get help from inside; how no one believed me until it was too late.

As each person saw his lifeless body, they cried a different color as well: Hadrian’s best friend, yellow, for that was Hadrian’s favorite. When his mother found out her son would never come home, green, for that was the color of his heavenly eyes

i wish you kept your eyes open all the time mon chéri.

Mine, mauve, for shared memories. For a friendship—and romance—I believed would last. Simone did not cry, but instead fled from the ball, dropping the gun behind a bush in the garden. It wasn’t discovered until much later, when the police arrived and noticed Simone was gone.

The boom of the conductor's voice interrupted my thoughts, making me shake away the tears forming in my eyes. "Oxford! Oxford, first stop!" As the train pulled up beside the platform I stepped out of the compartment, clutching my trunk in one hand and my skirt in the other.

You must break some rules to fit in. Fitting in is the most important part. Now, hold your trunk tight, but not too tight. You do not want people to believe you to be suspicious but you do not want your items stolen.

Cosette understood the troubles of murder and heartbreak. My father did not, would not. He had refused to believe me when I cried for him, told him Simone would kill me next. He only laughed.

Silly girl.

"Merci," I muttered to the conductor. I had been so caught in my mind I slipped into my old language. The dead language.

Don't ever speak French again. She cannot find you if you do not speak her language.

Cursing myself, I stepped into Oxford. Cursing myself, I found an apartment. Cursing myself, I found a life.

Mauve—and Simone—haunted me throughout the rest of my years. I found a job as a secretary, and they soon changed the uniform to mauve dresses. An all-too-familiar woman with crimson lips purchased the building and painted it mauve after a decade of Adaline living there.

But, slowly, I convinced myself to focus on crimson. I convinced myself to focus on blood. I owned crimson clothing, pens, cars. If I could force myself to think about the blood instead of the owner of the blood

stay alive stay alive stay alive

my heart would mend.

But my efforts were in vain, for I went mad. Crimson and mauve were the only two colors I ever saw; crimson being my favorite, mauve being my least. The owner of the building did not help, creeping around halls at night and coming to my room at odd hours.

Mauve.

I continued thinking, continued screaming inside the mind I would never escape.

hush it'll be okay i'll be okay you have to stop screaming adaline go get help

I picked the large cigar I had been smoking out of the ashtray, still smoldering. It had been years. How could a color still haunt me? How did Simone find me? How did Simone manage to purchase the building? These questions stuck in the back of my mind as the tip, the tiniest tip, of the cigar fell onto the balcony. I rose, my crimson gloves trembling.

Mauve.

The clicks of my stilettos didn't register in my mind as I traveled down the hallway to my bedroom. My dark bed sat in the very center of the room, not touching the walls. It made up for the lack of decoration or personality in the room. I lay on the crimson comforter, staring at the cigar.

Mauve.

I took a deep breath. Hadrian would never speak

i love the sound of your voice

to me again if he knew what I was about to do. I did not care. Hadrian would never speak to me again no matter what I did. He had died long ago.

Mauve.

I stuck my cigar into the comforter, causing a small ashen hole to appear. I continued slowly, spots filling the comforter. I didn't worry; I knew I would never sleep in this bed again, and that thought shot adrenaline through my veins.

I dropped my cigar onto the crimson bed sheets, watching as a small flame began on the comforter. The flame spread across the comforter, reaching my crimson gloves, my onyx hair. I forced myself to sit silently through the pain as the fire and smoke slowly filled the building. And I burned the mauve

the crimson

the love

the murder

to

the

ground.

a mauve girl. an ashy train. a crimson seat.

Music, dancing, and lovely people. What more could you want?

a smoky ball. a mauve gown. a chiffon puddle of flowers.

Why are you kissing Hadrian? He's mine.

a ginger sun. a mauve cloud. a midnight garden.

What if Simone finds us?

a grey gun. a crimson lip. a gleaming bullet.

Hadrian, what happened? Oh God, you're bleeding.

an azure turn. a mauve treat. an ivory cart.

I won't live without you.

a mauve thought. a coffee window. a pair of basil eyes.

Keep your eyes open, mon cheri.

a silver tear. a beige voice. a crimson memory.

You must leave. She will come for you next.

a porcelain mère. a mauve fille. an iron père.

Silly girl.

a mauve language. a cloudy country. a caramel thank-you.

Don't speak French. Don't speak French. Don't speak French.

a crimson lip. a crimson comforter. a crimson girl.

Do you hate me, Hadrian? Do you hate what I've become?

a mauve lip. a mauve dress. a mauve girl.

I still love you. Don't hate me.

an ashy comforter. a fiery building. a mauve mind.

I'm coming, Hadrian.

a mauve wish. a crimson fear. a grey girl.

i bump back and forth in my seat as the train jerks down the track and the colors of the ball my school hosted

Music, dancing, and lovely people. What more could you want, my dear?

flick through my head and fix on the color mauve mauve mauve the mauve dress melting into chiffon flowers

mauve was the sunset as gold and pink rays contrast against purpling clouds creating a mauve mural of happiness

Why are you kissing Hadrian? He's mine.

mauve was the last color I saw around hadrian's neck and his champagne hair folded around his brow shadows in the midnight garden

Hadrian, what if Simone finds us?

She can't do anything we haven't seen in the past three months, my dear. Don't worry.

mauve was not the color of the ash grey gun and the crimson lips of the woman who ended hadrian's life and the crimson specks against hadrian's mauve

Hadrian, what happened? Why are you bleeding? Oh God, you're bleeding.

focus focus focus on the crimson blood and not the mauve owner mauve dress and metallic gunshots not how my body is slamming against the side of the train as a sharp turn approaches and the door slides open

"Would you like any sweets, dearie?"

"No, thank you."

"Are you sure? We have bagels, pies, tarts--"

"I'm positive. Thank you, though."

"Any time, my darling."

my darling my darling i'm hadrian's darling not hers hadrian come home please you aren't dead you aren't crimson flickers in my mind and i do not know which hurts more the blood or the owner of it

Adaline, my dear, however will you live if you hate your own thoughts?

I do not know, Hadrian.

hadrian oh how his name rolls off of my tongue i was never lonely with him yet i'm lonely now
how can this be hadrian i thought you were sitting near me but you aren't you are only in my head now
only in my head

What do you mean, he's dead?

I'm sorry, Mrs. Claude. He was shot, and-

You did this to him. You. Killed. Hadrian.

No, I tried to save him, I really did-

Someone call the police.

his mom cried green and his friends cried yellow but i cried mauve because hadrian is mauve the
dark bush in the garden where the gun was found it had simone's fingerprints not mine i tried to tell them
i didn't do it but no one listens no one listens no one listens

"Oxford! Oxford, first stop!"

"Merci, monsieur."

"You're very welcome, young lady. Oxford! Oxford, first stop!"

here i am mother what do i do now you sent me here and i have to make a life simone will find
me next father only laughed at me

Silly girl. Simone is a kind young woman. She would never harm a fly.

But-

Leave. You are disturbing our quiet time.

but you helped me you and hadrian in my head helped me and i'll make a life i'll make you proud
again

Hadrian, you need to survive. Please.

I . . . help.

my heart will mend someday look i have a flat and a steady job even if the mauve dresses remind me of you every day and the owner of the building looks just like simone

Hush, it'll be okay. You have to stop screaming, Adaline. Go get help.

the smoke of this cigar is filling my lungs you loved to smoke hadrian remember we used to joke how you would die from lung cancer i guess that joke was wrong

Your shoes have always clicked so loudly. I'm not surprised they're clicking now.

hadrian is that you are you speaking to me my shoes aren't clicking or maybe they are my ears are glazing over as i walk no i don't think the shoes are clicking

I love the sound of your voice, Hadrian.

You'll never hear it again, my love.

there's your voice again are you really talking to me or am i just going crazy i'm not going crazy so it must be you is this cigar still burning

Burn, Adaline. Burn.