

“A Trail of Redd”

“My ole jeeves will let anyone up here.” A smile grew on Redd’s face when he said this.

“You know you’re the only human being in 2028 that still sends letters, you dork.” Olive Dabord replied, holding up the invitation to Redd’s birthday party in his hand.

“Well, when you stop responding to my texts, what am I to do?”

“Oh you, bring it in.” Olive embraced Redd in a hug, placing her hand on the back of his knees and sweeping him off the ground. Redd giggled and returned the embrace holding onto Olive’s broad shoulders. She stepped into Redd’s home, closing the door behind her with her foot.

“So, what brings you here 2 hours before my amazing party,” Redd questioned, “You never were one for punctuality?”

“Well, Princess, I-”

Redd could see that she had forgotten. He could also see her deep in thought, her brain working so hard to try and remember. He could watch this all day, he thought. His hand went to her face in a benign manner and he held it. 7 years of estrogen had resulted in it being soft and fleshy to the touch, but as it was started too late, rigid cheekbones contrasted the feeling. The estrogen, along with Adam’s apple removal therapy, had sweetened her voice and made the um’s and ah’s she was making even more pleasant to hear.

Eventually Olive remembered and as soon as she did she dropped Redd to the floor, directly on his head.

“Oh yeah.” Olive shouted, “You’re planning on asking Eugene to marry you tonight at your party.”

“What?” Redd feigned surprise as he looked back to Olive, getting up on his feet.

“I should’ve known it,” She shouted as she paced in front of him, “It’s your birthday next week, and isn’t that your silly deadline for getting into another wasted marriage.” Redd looked back at him offended and scoffed.

“I’m not doing anything of that sort, Romeo.” His smile was sharp, and he sauntered behind the camelback couch in the middle of his living room. “Besides,” Redd spoke while wagging his finger beckoning Olive to come more into the home, “why should you care who I like, you’re just my first ex-wife.”

Olive trudged over, obeying Redd’s finger. “That’s a low blow.” Her finger was in Redd’s smiling face as she shouted. “I could care less if you marry and divorce again for the, what is this, the 10th time.” She managed to get her saliva all over Redd’s face and not in the way he enjoyed. “All I care about is you seducing, Eugene, and you know I like Eugene and you will anyways because that’s what you do.” Olive chased after Redd further in and he fled to the dining room and allowed Olive to back him into a wall. “You seduce, you’re the sneaky trickster with a shiny tongue who could convince seventeen-year-old me to fall in love with you, and you’ve been doing it every year now. And next week you’ll turn 26 and you’ll have found someone by then.”

Redd scoffed at Olive’s remark, “I may be the seducer, but you do the talking.” Olive’s palm went to the wall right above Redd’s head and she used it to keep herself up. She hovered over the man and looked at him with a confused look on her face. Redd couldn’t help but stare at her muscular arms that had so much strength behind them. Their imprints could be seen through the green sweater she was wearing. Staring at them sent a chill through him. “Sure, I can seduce, but you talked my sorry ass into thinking I had a future with you,” Redd chuckled, “and it was the best thing you ever did in your life.”

And with that Olive bent over and kissed him. The hand not holding herself up went to Redd's cheek and held it in a tight grip. She pushed her lips into Redd's for a while and then she applied little short kisses onto his. In between them, she spoke.

"You know," she moaned, "I'm starting to remember why I came here in the first place, Prince Charming." Her hand went to Redd's back and she grabbed them with force and lifted him up. Redd's legs roped around her and he continued to kiss her anywhere he could. Olive carried him over to the dining room table that has a white tablecloth set out on it and she gently slammed Redd into it. He moaned as she began to remove his jacket and unbutton his shirt. He nearly begged for her to go faster when she began to unbutton his pants.

He melted onto the table and was completely relaxed. His head fell back and he stared at the side of the room. He stared at the long-length mirror in the dining room that showed everything in this room. He could not focus on the woman on top of him who had taken a break from removing his pants in order to cover him in kisses. Instead, he focused on his fantastic house with the crimson and burgundy damask wallpaper lining every room. He focused on the gold trim that had met in every corner and surrounded the doorways. He focused on the crystal red chandelier hung from the ceiling that illuminated the gold trims of all the chairs and emphasized the Toile red pattern that backed them. He focused on the dining room table that had a white lace tablecloth over it. His fourth ex-wife had put a white tablecloth over it five years ago, and that's how he kept it. He focused on the buck he had shot himself because "all distinguished men had bucks they had shot themselves on their wall." His eyes especially focused on the two swords above him. Two rapiers with a red and gold guard were hung on the wall crossing each other. "The Redd Family Swords" he called them, they were bought by him in Italy and embellished with 24k gold in Morocco he planned on passing them down in the family he would create one day. The last thing he focused on was the grandiose mirror that's trim was sparkled with gold or more what was in it. He saw himself. His hair was a mess and not in its usual way. He wore a style that he called "purposely looks unkept," but now his dark black hair was in a messy afro and went every which direction. His brilliant red

suit jacket was now balled up on the floor. His shiny sequined red bowtie was disrespected and crooked on him. His shirt was half-buttoned half unbuttoned and full of wrinkles and he felt disgusted.

“Stop!” He shouted to Olive who had gone back to work off the pants. “My ex-wife put this tablecloth here.” Olive looked at her puzzled.

“Goldie? What does sh-”

“My- My-” He looked around and then immediately at Olive, “you should go, the party is in an hour and there’s still plenty to get ready.”

“Bu-” Olive attempted to plead, but the look on Redd’s face told her it’d be fruitless. So she searched for her own pants and began to walk out of the dining room.

“Oh, regarding Eugene,” he called out to her after she had gone through the door and she poked her head back in to hear. “May the best man,” he winked, “win,” before getting off the table and searching for his pants. Olive smiled, he had always loved a challenge from Redd.

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Flooded with lights and music, Redd’s mansion was a beacon to all on that evening. The guest list was filled with gentry folks that exuded grandiose fashion. It was also a place for friends of Redd from people he ran into on the street to his favorite bank teller. Even most of his ex-wives couldn’t not be seen at the sensation of the year, Redd’s birthday party, or as cynics, his ex-wives would refer to it as the day Redd would have to find a spouse to spend another year with.

Redd was fully dressed for the part in his ironed button-up shirt with a subtle rose print and his red suit, shoes, bowtie, and even his cufflinks were red. Adorned in his favorite color he had a sense of confidence and after washing his face and going through his twelve steps facial routine he was ready to do

what he does and seduce himself another spouse. He sauntered over to where his first ex-wife stood, watching the door.

“You see him yet,” Olive asked his adversary.

“Number one, you’ve been watching the door the whole time how could h-”

“Shut up, there he is.”

It was true, there he was, walking through the door. Handsome little Eugene dressed up in a green and black striped suit jacket and a red tie. A red rose boutonniere softly lay on his chest and sparkled in the light as he drifted in. He ran his fingers through his hair and shook his head, a gesture Redd just knew was just for him. Eugene’s smile melted him, it was so inviting. Although not perfectly straight its alignment gave off a certain charm. His eyes were so kind, a dark brown, like hot chocolate simmering in a cup. It wasn’t just his looks that made Redd feel a certain way, it was how much they were like each other. They both had great senses of humor and could laugh on end at each other’s jokes. They both could just read each other and comfort the other when need be. Redd was determined to make him his that night or die trying.

When Eugene had taken off his coat and put it on a rack, he smiled at the two standing together and walked over. Redd extended out his hand which Eugene took.

“Finally, the guest of honor has arrived,” Redd said as he laid kisses from Eugene’s hand up to his arm. Eugene chuckled and blushed. Redd could see the red form on the cherub-white surface of Eugene’s face.

“Eugene Copain!” screamed Olive. She pushed Redd out of the way and embraced him in one of her world-famous hugs.

“It’s a crime that you don’t have a drink in your hand, let’s fix that and catch up.”

Eugene had placed down Olive at this point and was now walking him into the dining room to find a place to sit and talk with his arm around him.

Eugene wasn't moving it. Did he like it? What was this? Why wouldn't Eugene move Olive's crudely placed arm? Redd rushed over to turn the situation around.

"Don't be silly, Eugene can have a drink anytime, you wouldn't wanna miss the house tour." He shouted the last bit and the patrons in his house began to cheer at this.

"Oh, you can get started without me, me and Olive are discussing something, but I'll be there in a second." Redd frowned for just a moment, but his smile turned around, he did enjoy a challenge, he wouldn't let his first ex-wife get in the way that easily.

"Alrighty," He said enthusiastically, "but when you get bored, I and the rest of my guests will be admiring my walk-in closet with my wax figure of me and of course the outside foyer where I keep the ice sculptures of myself."

"Yeah, mhm, I'll be there," Eugene said, staring into Olive's eyes.

"Okay, I'll be back."

Redd did take the rest of the guests to see his walk-in closet with his 27 red suits and matching shoes. He showed them each drawer that contained red bowties of different patterns and cufflinks that were red and shined so bright you had to wear shades to view them. He presented his many rings that had rubies and garnets in them and showed them every wedding band he had ever worn which he kept behind a sheet of glass in the middle of the closer. He refrained from showing them the place he kept his leisurely clothes. And when his sixth wife prodded and asked him where he kept his other clothes he chuckled and moved the group to the next big attraction, the foyer. Eugene had yet to make his appearance.

The foyer held ice sculptures. Multiple of Redd depicted in heroic moments. There was one depicting him on the back of a great stallion and another of him skydiving. One of him flying a plane, one of him summiting a mountain, and another depicting him in a triathlon so that it first showed him swimming, and then as it melted it would show him cycling and then running. His bank teller really enjoyed the last one, but Eugene never showed up to see it.

At this time the realization struck him, Eugene had failed to join him on the tour and now the guests were angsty to see more. Redd had begun to chew on his nails, a habit he had thought he had broken when he was younger. He picked up a glass of Champagne from a waiter nearby to hold to distract himself. He had no choice but to continue on the tour and hope that the fair Eugene would live up to his promise.

So he spared no time, he lead them to the corridor where he kept hand-painted portraits of each of his ex-wives. He showed them Olive's and told them the story of a 17-year-old boy who eloped with the first person who made him feel special. He took a sip of his drink after explaining. He showed them his second's and told them all about how fun she was and he spared them none of the dirty, delicious details. He chuckled as he took another sip. He told them about his third and how naive she was, how she believed everything she heard and was so superstitious to the point life wasn't fun with her anymore. He stared at his drink before returning it to his lips and taking a sip. He told them about his fourth and how she was the reason he lived so affluently due to her dad's company and about how kind she was and how hard she worked and how he didn't deserve her. He didn't deserve to be a burden on her for a year. He had finished this glass and had requested another from a nearby butler. He moved on to his fifth and could only tell of the boat trip that the two went on. That story made the room go quiet and He chugged his drink after it. The sixth and her way of gossiping to everyone about what wasn't working in their relationship and the way she found herself in another relationship while they were still married. He found himself another drink and chugged it. The seventh and the screaming matches, the bruises, the shards of plates hitting the floor, the fear. He requested the entire bottle be brought over. The eighth who he

couldn't bring himself to realize had only ever wanted him for his money. His glass never stayed empty as he continued to pour himself a drink and immediately chug it. There were no other portraits on the wall. Merely a rectangular shape void of dust where one might look to find a ninth. He had finished the entire bottle at this point.

"Here is the final room, the dining room or whatever." He put a limited amount of life into his arm to attempt to show off this room. The guests oohed and ahhed at the many superfluous objects he kept in there: The buck he had shot himself because "all distinguished men had bucks they had shot themselves on their wall." He rolled his eyes as the words plopped out of his mouth. Next was the flamboyant gold trim that had met in every corner and surrounded the doorways. He drew their attention to the showy crystal red chandelier that hung from the ceiling and was an eye sore as the gold trims of all the chairs blinded the viewer.

"The Family Swords," he scoffed, "what family?" He muttered under his breath before slumping into the seat at the head of the table. "Married 9 times and still have nothing to show for it," he said into the empty glass in his hand. Olive and Eugene sat at the farthest end of the dining room table, where they had been for the entirety of the party, and continued to converse. Redd's gaze bore into them. He breathed hard and with force through his nose at Olive. He couldn't shake this feeling from him. He clapped his hands which caused butlers to emerge from the kitchen bringing him a bottle of wine and placing glasses in front of everyone that was seated at the table. Redd wasn't eager to, but he picked up the bottle, filled his own glass, held it up, and started to initiate a toast.

"Can I just sa-"

"Excuse me, everyone" Olive's voice rang out and Redd looked only to see her hand raised with a glass in it. He got up from his seat and got down on one knee and began to speak.

“Eugene Copain, you have made tonight and many more nights before simply wonderful, and I think I want to spend the rest of my life with you.” Silence after the fact, save for weeping. Eugene weeping into his hands before excitedly saying yes and hugging Olive.

Redd was red. This was stupid. He was stupid. Everything he had done was for nothing. He could not be beaten. He stood up on the table.

“Bastard,” He cried. He pointed at Olive. Without thinking he shouted.

“My swords, me and you, right now.” He yelled. He pointed at a butler to relieve the swords from their hanging place and into the hands of Olive and Redd.

Olive looked at Redd puzzled and then a smirk grew on his face.

“You always were a sore loser.” Olive grinned while taking the sword from the butler and thanking him. The blade was devoid of any dust but had never been used professionally.

“So whoever wins gets the hand of the fair maiden, I presume,” Olive asked.

Redd simply nodded not saying anything, his hair was a mess, his shiny sequined red bowtie was disrespected and crooked on him, his shirt was half-buttoned half unbuttoned and full of wrinkles, and he felt disgusted.

“Well, then let’s not keep my fiancé waiting, let’s begin.” Olive chanted.

Metal hit metal as Olive defended against Redd’s fast and fierce strikes. Redd would lift the sword and bring it down in a swift motion only for Olive to put up their sword to prevent contact. Olive continued to walk backward reaching the end of the table more and more. That’s when she decided to go on the offense and came down hard on Redd’s blade shocking him. The force knocked the blade from his

hand and over to the other side of the room. Guest's smiles wore off as they realized this was no play fight.

Redd rushed over to his blade, collected it, and watched Olive jump off of the table and onto the dining room floor. Redd lifted up the sword above him and ran the distance at Olive. His eyes were tightly closed and all he could think about was how much his head hurt and Eugene. And at that, he lunged. Lunged, straight into Olive's extended blade, piercing him and leaving him out the other end, directly through his heart. He fell to his knees. He coughed up blood and held his wound. He reached up for the table like an infant reaching up. This only causes him to cough up blood onto the white cloth, staining it. He pulled himself over to a chair to try and stand up, but every attempt left him back on the ground.

"I'm so sorry," He heard it. He heard it come from Olive or was it Eugene? It brought him to the realization. He grabbed at the wound and bloodied his own hands. He looked up at his adversary. She refused to look at him. The very one who had held him lovingly hours before. They had never intended to cause each other pain. It was too late for that, now. His body slumped forward leaving behind a trail of Redd.