

Innocence is the weakest defence

It was the summer of 1799 fourteen years after the new extension on my master's house. I had recently been offered a job at Stowe House which was owned by George Nugen-Temple-Grenville, the first marquess of Buckingham. I had come from a poor family before, and this job was the light at the end of a tunnel of poverty. I was so excited and instantly accepted his kind offer.

A week later from starting I was helping my master with a party he was holding in his grand dining room, it could hold over 100 guests, and the ceiling was decorated with beautiful gold patterns for show. It took a few hours once we were finished preparing for the guests to start arriving and I waited for them at the North entrance, their carriages lined up outside. Meanwhile the chefs all began to cook the starter, a creamy White soup, thickened by breadcrumbs of kitchen-made loaves. As the last guests arrived, wearing posh colourful dresses and tailored suits, my master decided to hold a large speech at his end of the table. The speech was long, but he was welcoming his guests to his home and hoping that they liked the extension. Near to the end of the speech my master said:

"Recently, our family butler disappeared, so we needed a new one, luckily young Jack here wanted a job, so I gave him one," the guests clapped politely after the master was finished eager to get on with the evening, he glanced at me and smiled. I smiled back, then as the light from the chandelier caught one of his silver buttons, I noticed he was wearing a shiny golden brooch, displaying his family coat of arms. The guests busily chatted away to each other, talking about how grand the new dining room was, and about the new currency, introduced by the prime minister, William Pitt. It was fascinating, listening into these conversations. Weaving my way through the guests, to go to the kitchen to check when the soup would be served, I neared the exit of the dining room and heard my master bellow to me; "Bring more Ale and wine for our guests," He boomed, laughing.

Hurrying off to the cellar, making my way through the working servants and maids. I reached the door, and a musty smell hit my nose. I reached into my breast pocket and pulled out a heavy iron key. The air grew thick with dust and dirt. And I used my overcoat to cover my face. The dust swirled in the room, like a feather, drifting around in the cold air. My feet carried me across the rough floor, my conscience telling me to not take a step further. Barrels of expensive beverages littered the floor. Shelves full of the fiery liquid spread across the labyrinth of a room. I moved towards the furthest wall and what I saw would not be forgotten for the rest of my life. There in front of me sprawled across the floor lay a leg, or half a leg, the limb had been severed just below the knee, I shrieked and cried out in alarm, and the hairs raised on the back of my neck. The light from the halls suddenly brightened and shone across the floor beneath me.

I spun slowly on my heel, fearful. I was pale, sweat poured down my forehead. My face fell to an even lighter shade of white. I slowly walked backwards toward the wall. The figure launched itself across the room and covered my face with plump sweaty hands. My voice was muffled as I tried to cry out and the figure wrapped its large arms around my body, my hopes of escaping vanished in an instant. A large brooch draped on my shoulder. I screamed. All hope was lost. As I drew a struggling breath and fell to the floor, the figure whispered in my ear "Like the brooch? My old butler stole my original," he began to laugh and let me go, his large shadow disappearing towards the light. Feeling faint, I gradually got up wheezing, and stumbled out of the dreaded cellar and headed straight to the dining room to warn their guests of their monstrous host. As I made it to the massive table, I heard a voice call for me. I looked up and my master sat at the end, "Where is the Ale and Wine then?" he laughed, with a cruel knowing smirk.