

The Sitter

by

Jayjay Sanson



Published on behalf of the author by Bickering on Sea

© Jayjay Sanson, 2021

All rights reserved.

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

The Sitter

“Eyes forward, please.”

Emilia’s gaze drifted away from the shafts of unearthly light that streamed in through the window beside her and back to the dim figure at the easel.

Over the last few days she had begun to notice the golden haze of spring as the light filtered into the room. Winter was at last relinquishing its hold and cherry blossoms, and lambs, and April showers would soon show their faces.

Not that I’ll be seeing it any time soon.

She stared coolly at her solitary companion in the studio. He had been in a foul mood from the start of the session.

He could be charming when he wanted. That was what had brought her here in the first place. The irresistible draw of confidence, certainty and personality that had lit up the room when she had first seen him. Blue eyes and a smile; that was what had imprinted in her memory. To be the source of that pleasure, the reason his mouth curved; it had become a drug to her, infused with the rush of his laughter and the biting edge of his rarely given compliment.

She shifted in her chair, aware of the familiar ache in her back from a requested awkward pose.

Blue eyes met hers sternly and she halted the movement with an answering glare.

There was no joy in him. A bitter discovery that.

All that energy and vitality and no joy to ground it in any kind of depths; only an empty, yawning, dissatisfied pit of cynicism, calculation and manipulation, all covered over with a thin veneer of charm and blue eyes. The highs had become too high. The lows could seem unending. As his praise had made her heart soar, the criticism had clipped her wings. The slightest word could shatter her. And he knew all of her secrets now. His arsenal was infinite and hers non-existent. For how could one wound the soulless?

How she hated him now.

“Rest.” He commanded, throwing his brush into the water jar.

He snatched up his jacket, pulled his flat cap onto his head and swirled the jacket around to pull on one arm and then other as he marched to the door. Pausing briefly to extract his pipe from the jacket’s left-hand pocket and light it, he unlocked and opened the door, and slammed it to behind him. His feet echoed away along the path.

At last Emilia relaxed, the tension uncoiling from her core. She moved slowly and deliberately, alone at last.

She stretched luxuriantly, reaching her hands up and up over her head, rolling her wrists together and over each other like a dancer, a silent, solitary act of private defiance. She rolled her body forward, her stomach folded over her knees, her fingers thrust down to her toes to relieve the ache in her back. He might be gone for hours – or days. There was no knowing. But here he would expect to find her.

She checked the door, turning her head to strain her ears for any sound on the stone path. She barely breathed as she waited.

Nothing.

She glanced at the clock and weighed her plans. Another hour, she decided. It was worth an hour today. She could risk that much.

Silently, carefully, she leaned down to the base of the chair and gently moved aside the drapery he dressed all of his sets with. She slid out the metal object beneath, rearranged the cold metal loop that had chafed at her ankle all morning, and began, once again, the monotonous sawing action that had become her entire purpose for being.
