

MAY THE 4TH FICTION EVENT

Grand Entrance

Somewhere,
Someplace,
Somewhen, early evening

The stately manor house stood vigil over the valley from its elevated perch. Perhaps it had once been a fortification, defending the inhabitants of the hamlets below. This must have been erased long ago however, instead of defensive walls, colonnades and hedge mazes surrounded the old home now. Old sandstone walls now stood clad in reddish brown brick, creating the illusion of gentile nobility. A few open windows allowed passersby to realize a gathering must be going on. The clinking of glasses, the dull roar of soft classical live music, the chattering of a large number of guests, it all merged to form a dull thrumming roar that seemed to yell out at the quiet, relaxed surroundings that they should obey whomever was hosting the event, for they ruled here.

Inside, old nobility rubbed shoulders with new money, elected officials, notaries & luminaries, and others who had somehow caught the eye of the Master of the Household. The couple at the center, having inherited the estate and fortune from a very distant relative who had died under mysterious circumstances, seemed to be eager to use the celebration to cement their position, were quietly jockeying for position as if not sure how to fit into society as a whole. As they had been unknowns at the time of the old Count's death, the only reason they had not been instant suspects had been the fact that they hadn't even been in the solar system when he'd fallen off his Eopie, somehow gotten his neck lodged in between two tree branches and slowly choked to death over the course of several hours. Official cause of death, asphyxiation. True cause, the mortician had not been able to discern between act of god, embarrassment, or terror. The latter only due to the look on the face of the old boy. "Absolute terror, took me hours to force the rigor back enough to give him that semi normal frown onto his face and even then, the eyes didn't lie and I had to staple those shut to be honest." he had been heard whispering to one of the elderly spinsters in a dark corner of the wake.

Anyway, the old Count had been interred yesterday, and now the young couple were introducing themselves to the society they had inherited into. Rumors abounded already. The new Count had been, semi-abandoned by the family, working as a sous-chef in some out of the way diner in the capital. The wife was apparently working as the waitress and they had been married on the cheap and may or may not have been saving up to strike out for themselves and set up a small eatery on some industrialized world.

As the gathering kept going, the couple kept checking the clock. Someone had left them a note, stating they'd be here tonight. Their benefactor, the person who had dealt with the horrible old man, would be here soon.

The clock struck, as did a heavy hand on the front door, drawing shrieks from a few ladies and luring the men into the entryway as a way to prove their bravery.

Throwing open the doors, the men recoiled, the mortician fainted, some women shrieked at the sight of a tree, standing in the doorway. Between two of its branches a discoloration seemed to indicate where it had squeezed the life out of the old Count...