

## Chapter 11

“How pleasant that you could join us,” the hook-handed man said in a sickly sweet voice. Violet immediately tried to scurry back down the rope, but Count Olaf’s assistant was too quick for her. In one movement he hoisted her into the tower room and, with a flick of his hook, sent her rescue device clanging to the ground. Now Violet was as trapped as her sister. “I’m so glad you’re here,” the hook-handed man said. “I was just thinking how much I wanted to see your pretty face. Have a seat.”

“What are you going to do with me?” Violet asked.

“I said have a seat!” the hook-handed man snarled, and pushed her into a chair.

Violet looked around the dim and messy room. I am certain that over the course of your own life, you have noticed that people’s rooms reflect their personalities. In my room, for instance, I have gathered a collection of objects that are important to me, including a dusty accordion on which I can play a few sad songs, a large bundle of notes on the activities of the Baudelaire orphans, and a blurry photograph, taken a very long time ago, of a woman whose name is Beatrice. These are items that are very precious and dear to me. The tower room held objects that were very dear and precious to Count Olaf, and they were terrible things. There were scraps of paper on which he had written his evil ideas in an illegible scrawl, lying in messy piles on top of the copy of Nuptial Law he had taken away from Klaus. There were a few chairs and a handful of candles which were giving off flickering shadows. Littered all over the floor were empty wine bottles and dirty dishes. But most of all were the drawings and paintings and carvings of eyes, big and small, all over the room. There were eyes painted on the ceilings, and scratched into the grimy wooden floors. There were eyes scrawled along the windowsill, and one big eye painted on the knob of the door that led to the stairs. It was a terrible place.

The hook-handed man reached into a pocket of his greasy overcoat and pulled out a walkie-talkie. With some difficulty, he pressed a button and waited a moment. “Boss, it’s me,” he said. “Your blushing bride just climbed up here to try and rescue the biting brat.” He paused as Count Olaf said something. “I don’t know. With some sort of rope.”

“It was a grappling hook,” Violet said, and tore off a sleeve of her nightgown to make a bandage for her shoulder. “I made it myself.” “She says it was a grappling hook,” the hook-handed man said into the walkie-talkie. “I don’t know, boss. Yes, boss. Yes, boss, of course I understand she’s yours. Yes, boss.” He pressed a button to disconnect the line, and then turned to face Violet. “Count Olaf is very displeased with his bride.”

“I’m not his bride,” Violet said bitterly.

“Very soon you will be,” the hook-handed man said, wagging his hook the way most people would wag a finger. “In the meantime, however, I have to go and fetch your brother. The three of you will be locked in this room until night falls. That way, Count Olaf can be sure you will all stay out of mischief.” With that, the hook-handed man stomped out of the room. Violet heard the door lock behind him, and then listened to his footsteps fading away down the stairs. She immediately went over to Sunny, and put a hand on her little head. Afraid to untie or untape her sister for fear of incurring a word which here means “bringing about”- Count Olaf’s wrath, Violet stroked Sunny’s hair and murmured that everything was all right.

But of course, everything was not all right. Everything was all wrong. As the first light of morning trickled into the tower room, Violet reflected on all the awful things she and her siblings had experienced recently. Their parents had died, suddenly and horribly. Mrs. Poe had bought them ugly clothing. They had moved into Count Olaf's house and were treated terribly. Mr. Poe had refused to help them. They had discovered a fiendish plot involving marrying Violet and stealing the Baudelaire fortune. Klaus had tried to confront Olaf with knowledge he'd learned in Justice Strauss's library and failed. Poor Sunny had been captured. And now, Violet had tried to rescue Sunny and found herself captured as well. All in all, the Baudelaire orphans had encountered catastrophe after catastrophe, and Violet found their situation lamentably deplorable, a phrase which here means "it was not at all enjoyable." The sound of footsteps coming up the stairs brought Violet out of her thoughts, and soon the hook-handed man opened the door and thrust a very tired, confused, and scared Klaus into the room.

"Here's the last orphan," the hook-handed man said. "And now, I must go help Count Olaf with final preparations for tonight's performance. No monkey business, you two, or I will have to tie you up and let you dangle out of the window as well." Glaring at them, he locked the door again and tromped downstairs.

Klaus blinked and looked around the filthy room. He was still in his pyjamas. "What has happened?" he asked Violet. "Why are we up here?"

"I tried to rescue Sunny," Violet said, "using an invention of mine to climb up the tower."

Klaus went over to the window and looked down at the ground. "It's so high up," he said. "You must have been terrified."

"It was very scary," she admitted, "but not as scary as the thought of marrying Count Olaf."

"I'm sorry your invention didn't work," Klaus said sadly.

"The invention worked fine," Violet said, rubbing her sore shoulder. "I just got caught. And now we're doomed. The hook-handed man said he'd keep us here until tonight, and then it's The Marvellous Marriage."

"Do you think you could invent something that would help us escape?" Klaus asked, looking around the room.

"Maybe," Violet said. "And why don't you go through those books and papers? Perhaps there's some information that could be of use."

For the next few hours, Violet and Klaus searched the room and their own minds for anything that might help them. Violet looked for objects with which she could invent something. Klaus read through Count Olaf's papers and books. From time to time, they would go over to Sunny and smile at her, and pat her head, to reassure her. Occasionally, Violet and Klaus would speak to each other, but mostly they were silent, lost in their own thoughts.

"If we had any kerosene," Violet said, around noon, "I could make Molotov cocktails with these bottles."

“What are Molotov cocktails?” Klaus asked. “They’re small bombs made inside bottles,” Violet explained. “We could throw them out the window and attract the attention of passers-by.”

“But we don’t have any kerosene,” Klaus said mournfully.

They were silent for several hours. “If we were polygamists,” Klaus said, “Count Olaf’s marriage plan wouldn’t work.”

“What are polygamists?” Violet asked.

“Polygamists are people who marry more than one person,” Klaus explained. “In this community, polygamists are breaking the law, even if they have married in the presence of a judge, with the statement of ‘I do’ and the signed document in their own hand. I read it here in Nuptial Law.”

“But we’re not polygamists,” Violet said mournfully.

They were silent for several more hours.

“We could break these bottles in half,” Violet said, “and use them as knives, but I’m afraid that Count Olaf’s troupe would overpower us.”

“You could say ‘I don’t’ instead of ‘I do,’ ” Klaus said, “but I’m afraid Count Olaf would order Sunny dropped off the tower.”

“I certainly would,” Count Olaf said, and the children jumped. They had been so involved in their conversation that they hadn’t heard him come up the stairs and open the door. He was wearing a fancy suit and his eyebrow had been waxed so it looked as shiny as his eyes. Behind him stood the hook-handed man, who smiled and waved a hook at the youngsters. “Come, orphans,” Count Olaf said. “It is time for the big event. My associate here will stay behind in this room, and we will keep in constant contact through our walkie-talkies. If anything goes wrong during tonight’s performance, your sister will be dropped to her death. Come along now.”

Violet and Klaus looked at each other, and then at Sunny, still dangling in her cage, and followed Count Olaf out the door. As Klaus walked down the tower stairs, he felt a heavy sinking in his heart as all hope left him. There truly seemed to be no way out of their predicament. Violet was feeling the same way, until she reached out with her right hand to grasp the banister, for balance. She looked at her right hand for a second, and began to think. All the way down the stairs, and out the door, and the short walk down the block to the theatre, Violet thought and thought and thought, harder than she had in her entire life.