

KILL THEM WITH KINDNESS

A dark, grainy photograph of a hand pressed against a surface, illuminated by a bright light source. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, with fingers spread. The light source is a bright, circular glow in the center-left, creating a strong contrast and casting shadows. The overall texture is rough and textured, suggesting a metal door or a similar surface.

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It is tough to weigh cruelty when you've never known kindness.

Unfortunately, I've never had the honor in meeting kindness, but lucky enough to take a hint into its daily routines. The beam it leaves on people's faces, the style it uses to revitalize their day.

I would like to distinguish such a skill. Surmount it and become superior to the primary. I am your scholar—mold me. Breathe secrets into my distressed mind and plant erudition within my barren soul. I shall monitor from a distance. Carry on, put on a show as I eagerly extract annotations.

So I wait. I am a patient being. It is required of me.

A lone chair poses in front of the only window conveying radiance into my obscure cave. I peep through the glass and discover the world from one spot. People greet one another, children chortle, and even the sun takes part in such an exuberant experience.

When will it be my turn?

Clearly, I already grasped the answer. I ruined my opportunity. That is why I am alone. I dare not step out my monochrome doors and into a realm that refuses to accept my approach due to one gaffe.

I overhear the chatter of neighbors.



An elderly woman speaks over them all. “It’s not safe by yourself at night, now. You recall the missing woman two months back? Poor thing, her family must be devastated. I’ll never forget the way she sang up and down these streets. Sweet girl. I hope they catch that bastard and burn him alive.”

I don’t blink throughout their collective judgment.

Another voice seeps through. “I’m sure it’s that man that never leaves his house. Such a strange one. What do you think he does all day cooped up in there? Never mind, I’m getting uneasy just speaking of it.”

The ladies migrate back indoors and I’m left being condemned, yet, I remain impassive. I must.

A woman, garbed in silk threads, glows—shaming the sun. Her doe eyes pierce in my direction and I shy away.

She can’t be looking at me—she can’t.

A man’s voice echoes through the wall. I can witness nothing but his profile, with a hat too broad for his head and shoes too petite for his feet.

The woman in silk skips to the man. Her tresses remind me of a rose, dancing with each step.

My rose.



The man compliments her. “My, you’re looking lovely this morning.”

Her cheeks begin altering to hues of pink. She places her angelic palms over her velvety face, concealing her smirk.

But why suppress it? Is this a normal reaction to kindness?

His husky fingers grab hold of hers as they vanish from my sight.

I lean back, taking in my lesson.

I clear my throat. “Y—you...you’re looking lovely...” I attempt to mimic.

I scan my room, as if I would get a response. A crack forms on the corner of my lip.

Kindness. I wish to release it to her—my rose.

So I wait. I’m used to it—I am a patient being after all.

I assemble in my chair, gape out my window, and anticipate for my cherished rose to come waltzing back to me. I will illustrate benevolence like none other—display my amity in all elements.

She will accept me. I’m sure of it.

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It is difficult to critique morality when you have no conscience.

The moon takes its place in the sky, shining a blue spotlight in the center of the street.

The moon has always been a companion of mine. It has caressed the soft brush of sympathy, and it has been struck with the prick of abandonment. Tonight, it has been escorted by speckled stars. I pray my fate matches that of the passion above me.

I glare out my window, waiting—avoiding sleep so I wouldn't miss her. My rough fingertips trace the fogged glass just as I spot her.

She is alone.

Alone? How could that be—a woman of her status should have an escort at all times.

Is that my cue?

Exit stage left—I remove myself from my seat, grabbing a coat and pace to the doors. I crack the entrance and leisurely step out, heading to my flawless floret.

I follow her down an alley.



What must I say? How can I articulate the words when I do not own the proper vocabulary?

“Ex—excuse me?” I choke.

Her head whips around, hazel eyes demanding for an explanation.

She takes a step back, cautious I wouldn’t notice, but I always do.

“Yes?”

I come closer but her raised hand stops me.

“Can I help you?” She asks, squinting under the street lamp.

Yes you can. Take my hand—let us cavort through the streets of monotony and burst out through the gates of discernment.

She begins to leave my presence.

“Have a good night, sir.” She nods.

She is much better at dialect. The words effortlessly form, prancing off her tongue. I’d like to get another taste.

I catch up to her. “You—you are very lovely...”



She pauses. “Excuse me?”

I step closer, calculating the stars on her face. “You’re looking... lovely this morning.”

She exhales and a smile forms. “It’s a bit dim to be morning, don’t you think...”

Her smile vanishes, exchanging a look I never predicted from her.

Fear.

An expression plastered on every face in town but not from her—not my rose.

“It—it’s you.” She stammers, backing away. “Stay away—don’t you come near me again!”

I shake my head sternly, in hopes her ill-mannered remarks would soon plunge from my thoughts.

Where did your smile retreat to? Rose, darling, what about our lives together, the escapades we would embark?

What about my kindness? I give it to you—all of it—please take it!



Have I made a mistake?

Of course not, it's not required of me.

I chase her down, grabbing hold of her slender forearm.

“Was...was that not kind of me?”

“Let go of me!” She shrieks.

“Sorry to have frightened you. You see, I am kind. Where has your smile gone—bring it back please?”

She shoves me and runs off, but I am faster. I have to be.

I have been on the opposite end of kindness' blade—it's enemy, animosity. Now my ally.

I call for her. “Rose! Rose, my love please don't run from me I wish to show you the compassion I possess.”

I hear a shift in the wind.

There you are.

She cries as I come around the corner.



“Shh,” I pin her against the brick, “Is my kindness not worthy?”

Brushing her hair out of her clammy face she spits in mine but I do not flinch.

My right hand clenches her jaw, forcing the ends of her mouth to extend. “Oh, but you look much more beautiful when you smile.”

She uses whatever bit of energy stored to try and free herself but fails. I squeeze her jaw and use my left forearm to hold her still. Her cries are muffled and I move closer to where our noses touch. My tongue traces her cheek, soaking up the salty liquid raining down.

I stroke her locks, whispering in her ear. “I shouldn’t dissipate my sympathy on beings so boorish,” I inhale deeply, tasting the petals of spring, “but alas, I am too benign to abandon those in need of charity.”

She manages to cough up a response—an apology I hope.

“Yes, my rose?”

“You...sick ba—bastard.”

My earthy eyes sink into hers. “Why would you say that? Huh?” I tap her head against the wall. “The least you can say is thank you.”



She continues to weep through shallow breaths. “Say it. Say thank you.” She speaks silence. I tap her head against the brick with each syllable. “Rose! Thank me for my kindness!”

I hear a sudden snap, and my rose is but a wilted blossom with her jaw dangling and crimson dripping down her collarbone.

I brush my lips against her cheek. “You’re welcome.”

I carry her to my residence.

I stroll through my doors and lock it behind me. I pace down the hall and unlock a beige door.

“My sweet nightingale, you have company.”

I enter a cerise room, bedecked with porcelains, flowers, books, clothing, and other feminine collectibles. As well as my first love; wavy copper hair, half-open ocean eyes, seated in a rocking chair, and mouth slanted.

I place my rose on the bed and remove her clothing, replacing them with a fresh nightgown. I tuck her in, sitting at the edge of the bed.

“Rose, this is my nightingale. You’ll never hear a more beautiful melody than hers.” I adjust her stiff body so she sits up straight in the chair. “She didn’t understand my interest in the arts,” I widen her



eyes and repair her smile, “but we compromised.” I smile back at her, brushing her cheeks with my thumb. “Didn’t we?”

I turn to my rose. “Why don’t we show her that divine smile of yours?” I alter her mouth and place her hands across her chest, feeling more than content.

I stand and begin to leave the room.

I face them. “My, you both are looking lovely this morning.”

I delay, embracing their smiles directed towards my kindness.

I bid them a goodnight, and head back to my chair. My lone chair, in front of my lone window.

And I wait.



