

Vendetta Hotel

Friday, March 11th, 2022, 10:42 am.

“Liam, we made the paper!” Izzy shrieked in my ear. She held the newspaper up to my face. The headline read “FIRST WEDDING IN 50 YEARS: Future Mr. and Mrs. Davis Book Their Wedding at the Vendetta Hotel.”

“No way. Are we going to have uninvited guests?”

“Hmm,” Izzy flipped through the pages. “I don’t think so, there isn’t a date, and I highly doubt people would visit the hotel regularly just to see our wedding.” Our cab was about five blocks away from the hotel, but I was still stressed. The tables had centerpieces assigned ahead of time, and if I had to reassign the tables for potential wedding crashers, I would have to demolish the centerpiece pattern.

Izzy and I continued to flip through the newspaper when our cab stopped sooner than I thought it would, and I snapped my head up to see a line of cars and pedestrians standing outside the hotel.

“Sorry, you’re gonna have to walk the rest of the way unless you wanna start your wedding with vehicular manslaughter,” Jerry, a middle-aged man with a rather noticeable gut, motioned us out of his cab and popped the trunk so we could grab our luggage. We didn’t have much, as we sent all our wedding apparel and decorations to the hotel separately, but Izzy’s bag was still large enough that I hated making her walk the final block with it. But she still thanked Jerry for his service, as her kind heart will be the death of her. I thanked him as well and tipped him 10 dollars extra than necessary.

“Here, put this on,” Izzy commanded while she grabbed two sashes out of her purse. Mine read “Groom To Be,” while hers, of course, said, “Bride To Be.” Although I’m not a fan of tacky wedding traditions, the grin on Izzy’s face convinced me. For Izzy, I’d move mountains. We walked down the street towards the hotel, and the chattering crowd grew impossibly quiet. Izzy looked at me concerned as it became apparent that the crowd’s eyes were following us, so I grabbed her hand and beckoned her to sprint with me the rest of the way.

“Welcome, Davis party!” yelled a wide-eyed girl, who had the shriekiest voice I had ever heard come out of an adult and looked more panicky than excited about our arrival. We thanked her, and she revealed her name to be Staci as she led us to our room, explaining that she would be our hotel-provided wedding assistant, meaning she would check our rooms to ensure we were getting to our events on time. I managed to get the entire wedding party on the same floor and hallway. My two college roommates, Blake and Tim, would be rooming together across from Izzy’s two childhood best friends, Valerie and Megan. Our best man and maid of honor share a room across from us, as it is my childhood friend Alex and Izzy’s sister, Taylor. Alex and I went on a double date with the Huxley sisters in tenth grade, and we’ve all been inseparable.

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Friday, March 11th, 2022, 6: 31 pm.

“You may now kiss the bride!” the minister exclaimed. “But don’t do it now. Please wait until tomorrow, as long as you make it through the night.” I heard Alex let out a small chuckle at

his humor, but it left me with a sour feeling. The wedding rehearsal felt like it had been going on for hours when in reality, we'd been here for 45 minutes. I counted the minutes until we could all break away and the pre-wedding fun could start. We just had to get through the formalities first.

We had a rehearsal dinner as well. I was in charge of assigning the table placements about three months ago, and I was micromanaging that all relatives and close friends found their way.

"Hey, relax a bit," Izzy came over and grabbed my hand. "Everyone is here except for Blake, and I'm sure he's just grabbing some stupid gag gift." She was right; I had nothing to worry about. Except, I had a weird feeling in my stomach, and I started to feel nauseous, so I shut my eyes. Still, my typically dark eyelids showed me a scene of obnoxious colors and shapes moving violently throughout the abyss. I shot my eyes open and shook off the feeling.

"Everyone, listen up!" Taylor stood up, clinking her glass to get the crowd's attention. Izzy led us to our seats to listen to her sister. "Izzy and I have been close forever, and she's my built-in best friend. I've seen you with Liam and without, and I can confidently say that you are ten times happier with him than--"

"SOMEONE CALL 911" Everyone looked up above us to where the sound was coming from. The voice sounded shrieky, the same shriekiness I had heard from Staci earlier today.

"Liam, what room is directly above this one?" Izzy asked in a small, shaky voice.

"Tim and Bla-" I felt my heart drop as I realized Blake has never been a minute late in his entire adult life, and especially not over a gag gift. Staci ran down to us, mumbling words I couldn't quite make out. I ran past her up the stairs into Blake and Tim's room to see Blake on the ground, appearing to have a seizure, but something was wrong. He was chanting the words, "*se non possiamo essere Felici Nessuno può*" I know for a fact that Blake took Russian in high school, and that was definitely not Russian. He suddenly stopped chanting and froze. I ran over to him to check for a pulse but couldn't find one, no matter how hard I gripped his wrist.

Blake was dead.

I didn't realize I was crying until Izzy pulled me off him and wiped my eyes.

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Friday, March 11th, 2022, 7:51 pm.

It had been about an hour since Blake had been found. Izzy and I were back in our room. We let Tim room with us, but he decided to retire to the hotel bar for the night. He promised me he wouldn't get wasted on the night of the wedding, but I couldn't promise him the same. Izzy and I were about halfway through our bottle of red wine when I started getting a headache. I closed my eyes and saw the same funhouse designs painting my eyelids as I had earlier. I reopened my eyes, and that's when we heard a thump from next door, followed by the most painful scream I'd ever heard. Izzy almost dropped her glass before running next door, and I wasn't far behind. Valerie stood over Megan, screaming and crying, staring at Megan's shaking body.

"No, no, no, no," Izzy crumbled on the floor beside her friend, but I stayed frozen above her.

*“Se non possiamo essere Felici Nessuno può,”* Megan said the same as Blake had. I didn’t know what to do, so I just dropped to my knees and let myself grieve all over again. When Izzy dropped her wine glass, the last few sips melted onto the hardwood floors. I ran to grab a towel to clean up the mess, just to feel like I had some sense of control left. The pooling wine coated my towel and soaked through to my hands. Staci ran in after hearing our screams and called the police. Izzy crumbled into me while we watched Megan’s eyes flutter shut.

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Saturday, March 12th, 2022, 3:17 am.

Around midnight, Izzy and I attempted to go to bed, but it was no use. The terrors of our friends screaming haunted our bed, and we lay silently next to each other, both pretending to be asleep for the sake of the other, but we both knew we were awake. The night was pretty silent, I’m not sure when I fell asleep, but I would assume it was around 2:00.

“Liam,” Izzy shook my arm. I pretended not to notice, as I guessed it was the morning and wanted to sleep more. I was in the middle of a dream where I was at a carnival and about to go on the Ferris Wheel.

“LIAM,” Izzy shook me harder, and that’s when I heard it.

*“Se non possiamo essere Felici Nessuno può,”* The chanting rang through my head and the halls. The chant was the loudest I had ever heard and seemed to surround our bed. I jumped out of bed and whipped my door open to find the chanting from every room in our party. I tried to open each entry, but it was no use without a key. I scrambled to the lobby to find a night shift worker almost asleep.

“HELP!” I screamed as I ran up to him.

“Wha-What?” The man asked, his name tag reading “Max.”

“MY FRIENDS- ROOM KEYS- HELP,” I was so out of breath I could barely get the words out. Max, suddenly more awake, jumped to his feet, grabbing a set of keys from the bottom drawer of the front desk. He followed me up the stairs, still rubbing his eyes, trying to wake up. When we got upstairs, the floor was quiet again, and only the faint sound of Izzy sobbing broke the silence. I convinced Max to open the three doors to see every party member on the floor, still dead. My own hotel door slowly opened with a shaking Izzy appearing. After seeing the sight, she collapsed, screaming so loudly that guests down the hall ran out in their pajamas to see what all the commotion was for. I was numb at this point; no tears were left in my body. But I knew that I didn’t have time to grieve. I can’t get distracted now, and I must know what happened.

If I didn’t, Izzy was next.

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Saturday, March 12th, 2022, 5:16 am.

I hadn’t slept and knew I might wake up to Izzy chanting if I did.

I wrapped Izzy in a blanket and gave her a cup of coffee before dialing room service.

“Hello! You have reached the Vendetta Hotel Hotline! If you wish to order breakfast, lunch, or dinner, please press one. If you wish to speak with an employee, please press two; if

you wi- Okay, sending an employee to your room. Please enter your room number.” I frantically dialed in room 208. “Okay, Sending an employee to room... 2... 0... 8.” I slammed the phone back on the charger and waited patiently for an employee to arrive. About six minutes later, not one, not two, but three hotel staff members knocked on the door. As I swung the door open, I noticed that the three people standing before me were Staci, Max, and a man I’d never seen before.

“Are you Liam Davis?” The mystery man asked me. Once I nodded and motioned them in, he continued. “My name is Christopher Vendetta. I’m the hotel manager,” He shook my hand as he let himself in.

“Oh, I’m so sorry to disturb you, but I’m sure you’ve heard what’s happening,” I said as if everyone in this hotel didn’t know what was happening. Our party has been getting noise complaints. That’s a nice way to put it.

“Unfortunately, yes. And I’m so sorry for your loss,” His eyes grew solemn, and he motioned for us to sit across from each other at the small table in the room. “I need to ask you a strange question, but you must understand this is all to save your wedding. Before the deaths have occurred, has anything been consistently weird?”

“As a matter of fact, yes. The victims chant before they pass.”

“Chant?”

“Yes, words in a different language, I’m not sure which. Sounds something like French, but I took French in high school, and that’s not it.”

“Probably another romance language; could it be Italian?”

“Possibly, they sound like they’re saying ‘See no possum erase Feliz Navidad poy’ or something like that,” Mr. Vendetta looked at me with wide eyes and turned to Staci.

“Do we still have the security cameras in the hallway?” Staci asked Mr. Vendetta with a small voice.

“I think so.”

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Saturday, March 12th, 2022, 5:58 am.

Mr. Vendetta walked his two employees and me to a room in the lobby behind the front desk. Inside was a room filled with computers, whose screens were all taken up with either security camera footage, booking screens, or emails and news. Mr. Vendetta sat at the largest computer, and I put a stray mug of coffee on a coaster while wiping up the ring it left.

“Any footage we have will be right here. Any chance there was a door open during any of the deaths?” Mr. Vendetta spun his chair around to ask me.

“Yes, I believe Blake’s death had. His was the first. Around 6:30 last night.”

“Alright, let’s start there,” Mr. Vendetta took his time finding the correct footage. After about 12 excruciating minutes, he let out a sigh of relief and played the audio on the clip he discovered.

*“Se non possiamo essere Felici Nessuno può,”* this time very static, but not impossible to understand. Mr. Vendetta replayed the audio four times, writing additional words on a note sheet in front of him after each play.

“Alright, I’ve got your chant,” He showed me his piece of paper.

“Do you know what it says?”

“I know it’s Italian, my grandfather was the original owner of the hotel, and he was Italian, but I never learned. Fortunately, Google translate exists.” I watched Mr. Vendetta type in his words to Google Translate, which translated to, “If we can’t be happy, nobody can.”

“Damn it. I was afraid of this,” Mr. Vendetta rubbed his temple.

“What? What were you afraid of?”

“The last wedding to take place at this hotel ended in disaster. The night before the wedding, the entire group went to a carnival. I later learned that this group wasn’t exactly the peace corpse, but they still didn’t deserve their fate. They all came back drunk, and I’m not too sure what time they reentered the hotel, but I do know that around 2 in the morning, after hollering and screaming at the bar, my great uncle, who was a co-owner at the time, convinced the bartender to slip “sleeping pills” in their beverages. Unfortunately, the naïve bartender did as he said but quickly realized the pills were much more powerful than just sleeping medication. Tramadol, which is found in opioids, was given to each person in high doses, causing each of the guests to collapse into a seizure. Since they were already abusing substances, all of the wedding party died. My grandpa learned his brother did it on purpose and not only removed him as an owner but also vowed never to host a wedding at his hotel as long as he should live.” Mr. Vendetta took a deep breath. “My grandfather passed away two weeks before you called to book your wedding.”

“So no one was going to tell us this ahead of time? What the hell? Of course, we made the headlines, God,” I was mainly talking to myself at this point. He probably could barely hear me since I was mumbling. “So that’s why I keep seeing a funhouse.”

“You what?” Max finally broke his silence.

“Get visions of a funhouse right before a death,” I was so snippy I almost felt bad before I remembered they kept a murder from me.

“When you get the visions, do you keep your eyes closed or open?”

“It happens when I close them, but I open them immediately once I see the colors,” I responded to Max, and Mr. Vendetta gave him a glance coated with daggers.

“Max, what are you getting at? We’re wasting time,” Mr. Vendetta scolded.

“Mr. Davis, only one person besides you left in your wedding party, and by far the riskiest one. Once you see the vision again, keep your eyes closed, and try to see if you can move around the funhouse. Once you see them, recite this,” Max did a quick Google translate search and wrote down, “*Siamo felici e lascia che le tue anime siano libere.*”

“What does that say?”

“It says ‘Let us be happy and let your souls be free.’”

“Hey, one last thing. Please do everything you can to fight for Ms. Izzy,” Staci was suddenly by my side and pleading with me.

“For Izzy, I’d move mountains. I think I can fight 50-year-old ghosts.”

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Saturday, March 12th, 2022, 7:08 am.

I had been lying with my eyes closed for about 34 minutes. The second I got back to the hotel room, I practiced my chant for all of 14 minutes but quickly got on with my plan. Izzy was on the second bed, still asleep, and I wasn’t planning on waking her without safety.

I was beginning to think it was time to give up when I started to see the same bright colors from the night before. Despite my instinct to open my eyes, I clamped them tighter. Quickly, the vision of a carnival came into view, and I no longer felt like I was watching a foggy memory or experiencing a dream but felt as though I was there. I heard joyous screams from a tent on the other side of the carousel. Carefully, I walked over to it, unaware of whether I should expect ghouls or humans. I opened the tent’s flap to see a group of 8; to my disgust, they were decaying, blueish-green figures. I accidentally gasped, and every head snapped to mine at the exact millisecond. Closing in on me, they began chanting.

“*Se non possiamo essere Felici Nessuno può,*” They all said in unison, so enchanting that I almost forgot my response.

“*Se non possia-*”

“*SIAMO FELICI E LASCIA CHE LE TUE ANIME SIANO LIBERE,*” I said the words so loud I could feel the ground shake, but something told me that was just my vision cracking.

It was working.

“*Se no-*”

“*SIAMO FELICI E LASCIA CHE LE TUE ANIME SIANO LIBERE, SIAMO FELICI E LASCIA CHE LE TUE ANIME SIANO LIBERE, SIAMO FELICI E LASCIA CHE LE TUE ANIME SIANO LIBERE,*” I continued to repeat the words, and the ground kept shaking until it was near cracking, so I let out one last scream. “*SIAMO FELICI E LASCIA CHE LE TUE ANIME SIANO LIBERE.*”

At that moment, the ground split, revealing an afterlife in the crack. The mummified bride looked to her should-have-been husband and did just about the last thing I expected her to.

She laughed.

And not a laugh of pity, not a laugh of “This won’t stop us,” but a laugh of relief. The ghouls all lined up in front of the crack and leaped into it hand-in-hand. My eyes shot open, and Izzy was standing above my body.

“Liam- Liam, wake up,” She was shaking me a bit. “We’re getting married in 7 hours. You can’t be here when I start getting dressed,” SHE said the last part with a smile. We heard a knock on the door, and Izzy ran over to answer it.

“Oh, thank God you’re here. I was just getting Liam up,” Izzy let our guest in.

Blake?

“Dude, get up. Tim is already pissed. He has to get up before 8:00; he doesn’t need the man of the hour sleeping in past him.”

Tim?

Before I could process it, I was hauled out of the room.

Did I dream of all of this?

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Saturday, March 12th, 2022, 3: 51 pm.

“Okay, the last picture, everyone say ‘Cheese’!” Our cameraman got the last picture, and everyone was there. I couldn’t believe I had dreamt the strangest thing to ever happen to me.

But now it was dinner time, so there was a distraction.

Izzy chose rosemary chicken for dinner, which was a great hit! We spent the next hour of the reception visiting tables and thanking them for coming when Izzy announced that she had to go to the restroom. After a swift kiss on the cheek, I sent her off.

“Congratulations on the wedding!” I heard an unfamiliar voice from behind me. I whipped my head around to see who the kind strangers were and saw the ghosts of the bride and groom from my dream.

“I’m glad you’re happy, but now it’s our turn,” The bride said to me, and I watched the room melt away into a funhouse.