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by cloudycats

Summary

Marika gathers everyone for a serious family discussion after Godwyn's death.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

“Where's Godwyn?” Radahn spoke into the dead, dead silence of the dinner table.

Marika swallowed her chicken, washed it down with champagne, and replied, “Deceased. Thank you, Radahn. I wasn't going to let any of you leave until someone said it.”

“I didn't do it,” said Rykard.

Every face turned to him, except for Radagon's (he was hiding under the table and occasionally taking the food Marika handed to him), Ranni's (picking her nails), Miquella's (asleep in Malenia's lap), Malenia's (blind), Marika's (drinking), Godrick's (disguised as a life-sized blue plastic deer in his chair), and Leonard's (under the table taking food from Radahn).

So only Malekith and Radahn turned towards him, really.

“Didn't do what?” Radahn said. He gasped. “Did you murder Godwyn? Rykard, why?”

“I said I *didn't*.” Rykard paused, then looked to Marika. “*Was* he murdered?”

She finished cutting her chicken, then wiped the knife down and set it on the tablecloth. “With this very blade.”

Ranni said, “Why are we here?”

“To work out who killed him,” Radagon volunteered from under the table. Ranni surreptitiously kicked him, Rykard rolled his eyes, and Radahn whispered, “Not a great time, Dad.”

“My dear husband is wrong, as ever,” said Marika, passing him chicken on a fork. “We are here to work out who stole this knife. It belongs to your uncle, you see.”

The cat sprawled beside her plate meowed despondently.

“He's not *our* uncle,” said Ranni.

Marika choked on her drink and spent a minute coughing. Radagon made to help her, and she firmly pushed him back under the table; Maliketh tried as well, and she distracted the cat with a drumstick. No one else moved. Once she'd regained control, she rasped, “He's your father's adopted brother.”

“He's *your* adopted brother,” Radahn told her kindly, as if he'd worried she'd forgotten. Dinner had lasted a very long time already before he first spoke up, and Marika had never stopped drinking throughout. Some incongruous behavior was to be expected by this point. It had to have been watered down, or she'd have long since toppled from alcohol poisoning.

“If he's my adopted brother, then he's your father's adopted-brother-in-law. It carries over. He's your uncle.”

“Not if it happened in a different marriage,” said Malenia.

Marika raised an eyebrow. “Whose side are you on?”

“The winning one.”

Marika eyed her for a second longer, then gave a one-shoulder shrug and turned back to the table at large. “Never mind. We've gotten sidetracked. On the matter of the knife – ”

“Putting aside your skewed priorities for the moment,” said Malenia, “if Godwyn is dead, where is his body?”

“I didn't touch it. It should be in the parlor still.”

“What if Miquella had walked in on it?”

“Then... he would have seen his older half-brother's bloody corpse mutilated on the floor of his childhood home. I don't see how this is relevant. We're not here to talk about Godwyn or Miquella – unless one of them is the culprit who stole the knife.”

“Miquella could have,” said Malenia, petting his hair. “He didn't, but if anyone in this family could do it perfectly then he could.”

“Are you saying he did it?” asked Rykard.

“I am explicitly *not* saying that.”

Radahn asked, “Why would *Godwyn* have stolen the knife that was used to kill him?”

“I don't know,” said Marika. “I'm just suggesting possibilities. *Someone* in this house stole Maliketh's knife. Until I know who, anyone is a suspect.”

Ranni heaved a sigh, looking at the ceiling to spare herself the agony of looking at her family. “Do you have clues to share with the class, or are we meant to sit here and blindly point fingers?”

“Yes,” said Marika.

Everyone waited.

She paused. “I apologize, that was unclear. Yes, I mean for you to sit here and blindly point fingers.”

Ranni hit her palm on the table. “Dad did it.”

“Maybe one of the basement monsters,” Rykard mused, taking the note and metal shard Ranni slipped to him.

Radahn said, “Stop that, both of – basement monsters?”

Malenia turned to Marika. “Why are we doing this?”

“You shouldn't complain, you already have an advantage when it comes to blindly pointing.” Marika spread her hands. “I've destroyed every piece of evidence I could find. Your job, now, is to give me the most entertaining argument. Whoever makes the worst attempt gets written out of my will.”

Malenia said, “You didn't destroy *all* of the evidence if you left Godwyn's body alone.”

“You'd have a hell of a time getting anything out of his body considering how much it's decomposed.”

Ranni snorted into a napkin and pretended it'd been a sneeze.

“*Decomposed*?” Malenia echoed.

Radahn said, staring, “How long has he been dead for?”

“When was the last time we had a family dinner?” Marika wondered. “New Year's, wasn't it? Godwyn's been dead since some time after that.”

“That was last year!” Radahn cried.

“Since *some time after that*,” Marika repeated. “I never said it happened *immediately* after then. It could've been a week ago. It could've been a year ago. Who can say? You, Miquella, and Malenia are losing, by the way. You're tied with Godrick. I hope I don't need to explain the depths of the unending shame those words bring to me.”

In unison, Radahn and Malenia looked at the deer in its chair. Both of their faces twisted into the same expression.

Radahn said, “Rykard probably had a hand in the theft.”

“I had nothing of the sort. Although, I will admit, if you'd put me and Godwyn in a room together with a knife and locked the door, only one of us would have walked out and it absolutely would not have been him.”

“So you killed Godwyn,” Radahn said, “but you didn't steal the knife.”

Rykard hissed. “I didn't kill Godwyn, and I also didn't steal the knife. Try someone else.”

Malenia pointed a steak knife at Marika. “*You* stole the knife. Don't think no one noticed that you tried to narrow the suspect pool to only us.”

Marika sipped her champagne.

“You're not denying it?”

She set the glass down. “I have no stake in this. I'm hardly going to write myself out of my own will.”

“Why are you in your own will?” Ranni asked.

“Well, it doesn't hurt to tell you. I've left to myself my bottomless disappointment along with my hammer. Before anyone says something like *it's good to know you're like this to literally everyone including yourself*, I will set it on the record that I am perfectly decent to Malekith.”

Maliketh kept gnawing on his chicken bone with the voracity of a cat who'd never been fed in his life.

Marika sighed. “I feed you all the time and you never stop acting like you're starving. Well? Any other baseless accusations? Miquella? Godrick?”

“I speak for Miquella,” said Malenia.

“Cheating. Denied. Why don't you wake him up?”

“For this waste of time?”

Marika shrugged and turned to the deer. “Godrick? Anything to contribute?”

The deer said nothing.

Ranni squinted at it. “*Is* that Godrick? Malenia, you're sitting closest to him, give him a poke.”

Malenia weighed her options. “I'm not touching him.”

Ranni tsked. “Radahn?”

Radahn reached over the table and gently flicked the deer. It flew and impacted the wall, narrowly missing the massive oil painting of Marika's ex-husband. Its chair fell over.

Marika clapped twice, slowly. “Didn't think Godrick had it in him. That's more entertaining than Miquella's been, I'll let him have that point.”

“You can't say *Godrick* is better than Miquella,” said Malenia.

Marika set her elbows on the table and peered at Malenia over her clasped hands. “I can and I will.”

A moment passed, and then Malenia took a deep breath, set Miquella on his own chair, stood, and went to the deer. She picked it up and pitched it out of a window. “There,” she said once all of the glass had stopped shattering, “he's out of the running.”

“He's out of it *now*,” Marika agreed, “but that doesn't retroactively revoke his points. You really should wake Miquella up. He can say literally anything and it'll put him ahead.”

Malenia pursed her lips, then wandered back to Miquella and tried to nudge him awake. Her hand met air. “Miquella?”

Radahn cleared his throat. “He appears to be gone. And there appears to be a trail of bloody footpr – ”

“*You* took him?” Malenia cried.

Radahn paused. “No?”

“Maybe say that with more confidence,” Rykard stage whispered.

“I don't *know*,” Radahn replied in an actual whisper. “It happened so fast. Maybe I did take him! Did you see it at all?”

“The bloody footprints seem a little small for you,” Rykard offered, “so I'd say not.”

Marika said, “Thank you, Malenia, you've helped to derail us again.”

“My brother is *gone*,” Malenia snapped.

“So is my husband. You don't see me making a production out of it.” Marika lifted the tablecloth to glance underneath. “I think Leonard ate him, actually. What a shame. I suppose I'll call Godfrey later.” She let go of the cloth and straightened. “Well, if that's that, then it seems like Miquella's losing his place in the will. And I do mean his *entire* place. He was going to be the next family head, you know.”

“You can't do that!” said Malenia.

Rykard leaned in, setting his chin on his wrist. “Then who's going to be the next family head? Ranni?”

“*God* no,” said Ranni. She raised a hand. “You know what, Marika, you can write me out of the will too. My mother can have my part.”

“Interesting request. I'll honor it.”

“So,” Rykard pressed, “family head?”

Marika looked him dead in the eye. “Since you're all varying degrees of disappointments, I'm giving it to your basement brother instead.”

“Our what,” said Malenia.

“Oh, no,” said Radahn.

“He's even more of a disappointment than the rest of you, but he doesn't actually *want* to be the family head, so by doing this I can deprive every single one of you of what you want.”

“I got everything I wanted,” said Ranni.

Marika swirled her drink. “Oh? I suppose you did. And you have a dear babysitter and a cute little brother, too... and whatever Seluvis is. Have you thought of what you would do if something happened to them? Hypothetically.”

“Can we backtrack?” asked Radahn. “Why do we have a basement brother?”

“It's a long story.” Marika sipped her drink, considered that sentence, then corrected, “No, I lied, it's not that long. Godfrey and I actually had three children together, not one.”

Stricken silence took over the table.

“I knew there was a reason Miquella and I like our dad more,” said Malenia.

“That's kind of screwed up even for me,” said Rykard. “Your *own* kids?”

“With every word out of your mouth I am happier to not be related to you,” said Ranni.

Radahn whispered, “You *didn't*.”

“Look me in the eye,” said Marika, “and tell me I wouldn't."

Radahn tried. The words faltered on his tongue. Marika downed the rest of her glass and refilled it from the bottle by her chair, maintaining unbroken eye contact the entire while. She drank that glass too, every gulp audible in the frozen quiet, and then she pushed her chair back and stood up.

“Well, that was a diversion. It was lovely to see all of you gathered in one place. I'm going to my study to fix the will, and then I'll be heading into the attic and nailing the door shut.”

“...Why?” Malenia ventured.

“There'll be a clause at the bottom of the will that says anyone – and it doesn't have to be any of you, either – who can collect three portions of my belongings, and bring them to the attic, and break down the door, and defeat me in single combat, will get everything I've ever owned.” She shrugged and turned to go. “Have fun sorting that out, kids.”

End Notes

the title is Godwyn watching this unfold from the afterlife

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