

BARONESS FRANKENSTEIN, JUSTINE

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~~CATHERINE. I'm going to put this on Victor's chair! Don't let anyone move it, Mother!~~

~~*SFX: Light,, skipping footsteps fade off.*~~

~~CATHERINE *(her voice fades off mike as she goes)*. I want Victor to see it when he comes home!~~

BARONESS. She's growing up, Justine. You've done well with her.

JUSTINE. I'm only her governess.

BARONESS. You've had as much to do with raising her as I have. Perhaps more. *(A sigh.)* A child's future is a parent's duty. I wonder if I've given enough.

JUSTINE. You've given everything...to Catherine as well as to me.

BARONESS. Nonsense.

JUSTINE. I was an orphan...you took me in...provided me with a home...an education...

BARONESS. I needed a governess for my child.

JUSTINE. You could have found an older and better one. I was barely thirteen.

BARONESS. You were always older than your years.

JUSTINE. She gets her schooling from tutors, her meals from the housekeeper and the cook...my duties have been little more than big sister...

BARONESS *(quietly insistent)*. ...and excellent example. She needed a governess.

JUSTINE. And I needed a family. You shared yours. You've never treated me as a servant.

CATHERINE (*off mike*). Justine, come see!

JUSTINE. Coming, Catherine! You had no duty toward me, Baroness, and yet you gave me a future. For that, and so much more, I will always be grateful.

CATHERINE (*off mike*). Justine!

JUSTINE (*moving off mike*). Good morning, Baroness.

BARONESS. Good morning, Justine.

JUSTINE (*fading*). Here I come, Catherine!

BARONESS (*sotto voce*). All my little ones. All my little ones. (*A sigh.*)
Elizabeth! Elizabeth? Are you upstairs?

ELIZABETH (*distant*). What is it, Baroness?

ELIZABETH, BARONESS

BARONESS. A letter for you!

ELIZABETH (*distant*). A letter!

SFX: Hurried footsteps—not running—down stairs. Under.

ELIZABETH. From Victor?

BARONESS. From Henry. But I'm sure it's about Victor. Here you are.

ELIZABETH (*eager*). Thank you.

SFX (under dialogue): Tearing envelope, unfolding paper.

ELIZABETH. They said they'd be coming home next month...Henry just to visit, but Victor...

BARONESS. Yes, you have wedding plans to make. Victor's always been single minded, but I cannot fathom how...

ELIZABETH (*disappointed*). Oh...

BARONESS. What is it?

ELIZABETH. They won't be coming home next month after all. Victor has some...some research...and Henry's working with him.

BARONESS. The wedding?

ELIZABETH. Not a word.

BARONESS. Oh.

(ELIZABETH tries to provide an alibi for VICTOR. Fighting disappointment:)

ELIZABETH. Henry's...simply forgotten to mention it. I'm...I'm sure he thinks of it every day...and...and he'll be home very soon.

BARONESS. Of course he will.

ELIZABETH (*near tears, but holding up bravely*). If not next month, well then, the month after. The wedding isn't until the fall and we...if you'll excuse me, Baroness, I...

BARONESS. Certainly.

SFX: Footsteps away from mike. Door opens. Door closes.

BARONESS (*quietly*). Oh, Victor. What are you doing? What in the world are you doing?

~~*MUSIC. Payout to a low sustained note, perhaps a three count, then:*~~

~~*SFX: Incredible clap of thunder. Low rumble throughout, occasional crack of thunder. Wind under outside. Rain.*~~

~~CLERVAL. The storm's nearly at its peak, Victor.~~