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ALLEGRA

by

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ENGLISH SAMPLE

I.

Hopes. Sometimes they become so thin, so distant and blurred into the oblivion of life, that it is no surprise if, at some point, they go fuck themselves without ceremony, even if nobody around here seems to understand it. Nobody, that is, but me.

About two weeks ago, Luna was hired by some kind of insurance company.

At least, that's what she said when she came home from the job interview: "Today I was hired by some kind of insurance company."

When we asked her for an explanation, "Complicated stuff" was all that she said.

So, we didn't really understand what the fuck is going on with this insurance shit, but she makes good dough and that's enough.

My father hasn't been working for the past fifteen years, so now Luna is looking after the family winery on top of whatever she is supposed to do in that goddammit insurance company.

Luna is my sister. She's thirty-one

My name is Allegra and I am eighteen, even if everyone says I don't look older than fifteen.

Unlike my sister, I don't make good dough working for some big, fancy multinational (or whatever the fuck it is). I don't make money at all because I'm starting my Senior Year and, even though I occasionally "work" in the local theatre, they won't let me see a penny from it. Never in a million years. Therefore, I don't have time to make real money at all, even though I do find the time to spend it.

We live in a villa just outside the city centre. I like to tell everyone that we are "country folks", but I know very well that it's not true.

When my sister was hired by this company, she wasted no time. On the very same Saturday she threw a party with all her friends. Among them there was this good-looking looking guy, a dark-haired dude she went at university with a few years ago.

He was called Tic, because he had a tic that made his right eye constantly wink. Nevertheless, he was still a beefcake and I noticed that immediately.

I walked over to him and patted him on the back. "Good evening," he said, turning

around.

“Good evening.”

“So, I am talking to...?”

“The maid! I’m taking care of this house, you know... “

“Really? You don’t look like a maid at all.”

“Too young?”

“Yes, too young. And too pretty, I’d say.”

“Pretty, you say?”

“To put it mildly.”

I smiled.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Allegra, Luna’s sister.”

“I thought you were the maid.”

“Do you believe everything people tell you? If so, you’re not that smart, do you?”

He smiled.

“I think I’ll get a glass of prosecco now. Would you like some?”

A couple of days later we went out on a date and he took me for dinner in a restaurant that was once run by a friend of my father. Now it’s his son, Riccardo, who manages it.

When we ordered, Tic only asked for a mixed salad, a gluten-free pasta and a glass of white wine. Vegan? Maybe. Was he doing it out of compassion for beasts or for some kind of scruple about his own metabolism?

The fact is, I never had these scruples. As my sister says, “I don’t assimilate”, so I ordered an appetizer, a first course, a second and two sides. All accompanied by a bottle of Brunello Pian delle Vigne 2010. An excellent year, especially for Brunello.

Tic wasn’t as petulant as I had imagined. He never raised his voice and, at the end of each sentence, he put on a shimmering smile, asking me: “What are your thoughts about that?”.

I’ve always had a big mouth (I started talking when I was nine months old), so I was quite happy to say my piece.

“Those are a bunch of idiots who...!”, “That one did well to do...!”, “That cunt is

surely...!”.

Everything was going surprisingly smooth, but, when it was time for coffee and I ordered an homemade grappa as usual, he said: “Well, for some reason, I am not surprised...”

“What?”

“You drink. A lot. Of course, you do... it’s in your blood, isn’t it?”

I shook my head.

“Bullshit. I just like it. It’s not a disease.”

“Of course it’s not.”

He paused to wipe his mouth.

“Your father is a drunk, isn’t he? And as far as I know, your brother was like him too, maybe worse...”

I stiffened.

“You don’t know shit about my brother. You shouldn’t talk about him, you shouldn’t mention him at all.”

I said that trying to express all the contempt I felt. I squinted my eyes and my mouth was tighter than a chicken’s asshole. I was becoming very squirrely. Red wine makes me nervous.

“Maybe you don’t recall it. I mean, how old were you when... two years, when he left? I was in high school and I remember very well.”

“I was three. And if you really want to know, everybody says my brother was a good person, a very good person, and that he would have given his soul to help others.”

“Yes, a straight-A Christian,” he chuckles, “but also a drunkard and a junkie. People say this as well, if I’m not mistaken.”

I jumped. It was not his place to say that. He should not dare. But it was too late now; the game was over. Give credit where credit is due and kick ass where kick ass is due.

I whistled towards the kitchen.

“Riccardo! Come here for a moment. There’s a friend of mine who wants to tell

you something.”

After a few seconds, Riccardo came out of the kitchen holding a bottle of champagne. He wore his usual white undershirt, with his usual filthy apron and his usual tired smile.

Leaning his other hand on Tic’s shoulder, he said to us: “Tell me everything.”

“Tic wants to ask you something about Libero.”

“All right. Lay it on me, dude.”

Tic had just pronounced the word *drunk*, when the flat bottom of a 2006 Moët & Chandon Dom Pérignon got smashed on his noodle. He fell down like a bag of pears would fall from the fifth floor of a building. However, he did not pass out. He tried to catch Riccardo by the pants. Actually, it looked like he just wanted to get up rather than to attack him.

At that point I couldn’t do much and, frankly, I wouldn’t have done it even if I could.

I watched Riccardo grabbing him by the jacket and bang his snout on the table. He grabbed him by the waist with the other hand and kicked him out.

“You’d better learn to speak properly before you come to my restaurant, you slobbering fag!” he yelled.

Afterwards we talked for a while, Riccardo and I, and we had a couple of shots. He showed me some of his latest photos taken inside the St. Patrick’s well, not far from the restaurant. I told him that they were stunning. He replied that my brother also liked his photographs.

Back home, around 1 a.m., I found my father sleeping on the sofa and my sister awake in front of the TV. She asked me if I was drunk.

“Just enough.”

“Keep it up.” Her eyes pointed to my father.

I went up to him and kissed him on the forehead. Then he woke up. His expression was the one of a three-year-old boy watching a giraffe for the first time.

“Goodnight dad, I love you.”

He stretched his lips in a smile and went back to sleep.

Entering the corridor, I gave my sister a dirty look. She pretended not to notice, but she saw me. Her emotions... she just can't hide them, keep them inside herself. My sister is a really bad liar.

I fell asleep with this awareness: if only in that regard, I was better than her.