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He was Dawnish. Such things as happened to him sometimes happen to Dawnish nobles.
He was young, handsome, studious, enthusiastic, metaphysical, reckless, and greedy.
And being young, handsome and eloquent, he was beloved.*

Lady Aubrey d'Ondine was the youngest daughter of a minor House near Hawthorn, and she was an adventurous spirit. An optimist who believed that her path to Virtue lay in her artistry, in opening herself to the world around her so that she may appreciate its sublime beauty in the manner of the flâneur. It was this feeling that she channelled into her studies as an aspiring priest of Vigilance, and she travelled from Hawksmoor to Semmerholm in her glorious search for the sublime.

One day, as she crossed the great stone bridge that crosses the Ulvenwater and stood before the white granite spires of Semmer's Rose glinting with winter frost, she gazed upon true beauty such as she had never thought possible before. It was there that she saw Florian de Tristecoeur for the first time, who was sitting upon a bench and reading a book - completely unaware that a young noblewoman had just fallen in love with him.

Fortunately for Aubrey, Florian was as taken with her as she was with him, and they were married within the season upon the Spring Equinox. Florian was an unusually talented scholar with an interest in the Winter realm, and Aubrey de Tristecoeur was the only thing that could draw him away from his research. On their honeymoon, she convinced him to go hiking deep into the heart of the woods of Hawksmoor, so that she may show him where naturally black roses grow along the bank of a natural spring large enough to be a pond. It became their secret place from there on, and Aubrey was particularly fascinated by the way the dark water bubbled gently as if from below.

Did he love her? Yes, when he first swore it. It eventually turned rotten, this passionate love; how threadbare and wretched a sentiment it became at last in the selfish heart of this wretched creature! But in its first golden dawn, when he was young, and had just returned from his apprenticeship to a great necromancer in Withy, and they wandered together in the most romantic outskirts of the city at rosy sunset, by virtuous moonlight, or bright and joyous morning, how beautiful a dream!

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“Can death part us?” Aubrey replied, pulling back to meet his gaze with a defiant smile. “I would return to you from the grave, dear Florian. My soul would come back to be near my love. And you, if you died before me the Labyrinth itself could not hold you from me: if you loved me, you would return, and again these fair arms would be clasped around your neck as they are now.”

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The moment following Florian de Tristecoeur’s single moment of pure contentment was one of shock as Aubrey, in a lapse of Vigilance while rummaging for her charcoal, caught her foot on the root of a willow tree and fell into the springwater. It was not deep, or so Florian had assumed, and yet Aubrey fell into the water as if it were air. She did not surface, and though Florian wanted to leap in after her, he dared not. His heart urged him to save her, and yet he did not. She never arose.

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Did he love her? Yes, when he first swore it. It eventually turned rotten, this passionate love; how threadbare and wretched a sentiment it became at last in the selfish heart of this wretched creature! But in its first golden dawn, when he was young, and had just returned from his apprenticeship to a great necromancer in Withy, and they wandered together in the most romantic outskirts of the city at rosy sunset, by virtuous moonlight, or bright and joyous morning, how beautiful a dream!

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A year passed, two years, and they were happy. Their Houses were one, and their love for one another did not wane. Florian became an influential Winter scholar notable for his treatises on the intersection of hearth magic and realm magic, and Aubrey became a priest of Vigilance known for her ability to capture visual memories and then perfectly recreate them on paper. In the third year, on the anniversary of their marriage, they once again returned to that bubbling springbank that grew the black roses. Here they renewed their oaths to one another, and once again Aubrey plucked a rose to plant upon Florian’s chest. To his eyes, she was more beautiful in that moment than in any moment that had come before. He gazed into her deep-blue eyes and felt a single moment of pure contentment as she fastened the rose to his breast, as she planted a kiss upon his lips, and as she returned to the springbank and reached into her satchel to pull out her drawing equipment to sketch the flowers.

The moment following Florian de Tristecoeur’s single moment of pure contentment was one of shock as Aubrey, in a lapse of Vigilance while rummaging for her charcoal, caught her foot on the root of a willow tree and fell into the springwater. It was not deep, or so Florian had assumed, and yet Aubrey fell into the water as if it were air. She did not surface, and though Florian wanted to leap in after her, he dared not. His heart urged him to save her, and yet he did not. She never arose.

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