

Comparing Fortunes

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Comparing Fortunes

by [Taeyn](#)

Summary

I blinked stoically over her shoulder, all crossed arms and wounded pride.

“I came to see if you were alright.”

She said it with such easy, unassuming grace, and before I'd time for anything more dignified, unwelcome tears were prickling behind my eyes.

“Oh, Francis.” Camilla wrapped her arms around my middle, and I shut the door behind her.

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(or, the scene where Francis and Camilla wait on the footbridge, and the one that follows after.)

Notes

For the lovely eyeslikerrain, thank you for so so much amazing encouragement, inspiration, and utterly beautiful writing, I am so over-the-moon happy you have joined the fandom!

^^ all my love, Taeyn <3

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

“Francis Abernathy.”

“*Abernathy*,” I repeated, and we both burst into giggles. I forget now how the joke started, but pronouncing my surname had become a common ritual for proving how drunk we weren’t, and in this case, we very much were.

“Do you not have a middle name?” asked Camilla, and she slipped her hand into mine. She was wearing woollen cutoff gloves that night, her palm scratchy and her fingertips cool and smooth.

“Thankfully, no,” I said briskly, then tripped over a crack in the pavement. “I think my mother wanted it to be *Vance*, but my grandparents won out on that one.”

“I’m glad,” she mused. “Imagine that. *Vancernathy*.”

I spluttered a laugh, then had to wipe my nose on my wrist. It was freezing, I was lightheaded, and she could be terribly, painfully charming.

“I do believe we’re lost,” I said after awhile, the carpark blurred into a vague impression of asphalt. We were waiting on the footbridge above the moat, the pond lit purple and ash from our cigarettes dusting our shoes.

“Here,” she said, and passed me her smoke while she fetched something from her jacket. “I love these.”

She split the fortune cookie in two, bit the tacky paper inside and pulled it out with her teeth. I took a drag of both our cigarettes at once, making her smile.

“*Expect a kiss from the man of your dreams*,” she read, her voice hoarse and nebulous. “Ooh. I thought it would be something cryptic.”

I leant back on the railing, damp soaking into my elbows. “I think I left mine in the restaurant.”

“You did, and I saved it.” She gave me the most indiscernible wink, very Charles. “Come on, it has to be you that opens it.”

“Otherwise it won’t come true.” I handed her the cigarettes and she smudged them out. “Alright, let’s see what the oracle has in store.”

We peered over my crumbled wafer, and I lowered my tone a fraction.

“*Luck is the residue of design*.”

“Well, that *is* cryptic.” She sucked her lip, thoughtful. When she looked at me again, her eyes were grey and bright. “I like mine better.”

I love her a great deal, Camilla, in some ways more than anyone. The others know about me, of course they do, but there’s always a certain degree of pretence, the greatest lie being that I’m wholly comfortable with it myself. I love her because she shares that too. I love her because she enjoys it. I love her because she isn’t paradise. And I love her because she’s beautiful.

“Yes,” I said, “I do too.”

I grazed my thumb beneath her jaw, caged my fingers through her honey hair. I wanted to sweep her off her feet, the moon behind us and portraits framed in black and white. We arched, my hand at the small of her back and hers on my face, pulling me down. I licked into her mouth and she

gave a harsh whimper, my heart racing, rising in my chest. I thought it would be silly, a bit of fun, we were the best of friends. Now her nose squashed into mine, her fists tangled at my collar and I felt elated in her arms. I trembled, her tongue curious and vicious, I made some indistinguishable noise and we laughed ridiculously, panting and warm. I felt unusually daring, and she reached in, a whisper balanced on her lips.

Charles lunged at me from behind.

“Francis!”

Camilla shouted at the same time I choked, his fingers digging welts in the back of my neck. I whipped and thrashed in reflex, but he had my arm twisted behind my back, my eyes popping open as I felt my muscles wrench at the joint. My stomach slammed into the railing as he thrust me forward, and for a horrible, dizzying second, I thought I was about to go over. Instead, we tipped the other way, and I stumbled and landed flat on my back, heat bruising at my cheeks.

“Steady on, old sport,” came a resounding voice, and I saw Bunny had Charles by the arm. I felt bitterly pleased when Charles struggled against his grip, sweating and none too comfortable either.

“Let go of me, you fool,” hissed Charles, his teeth clenched and eyes wild. When Bunny didn’t, he forced a deep breath, his face a hazardous smile. “I’m only joking, for God’s sake.”

I was far too humiliated to dispute it, and, with Camilla a word away from tears, felt less like breaking her heart than I did Charles’s arm.

“Easy then,” Bunny laughed, loud and raucous. “Thought you were introducing him to the goldfish.”

It was such a stupid thing to say, a stupid thing to believe, and I hated them both a great deal right then. I got to my feet, put my hands in my pockets. I was still shaking when we found Henry by the car.

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I didn’t sleep that night, instead sitting up with an ice pack, then later a hot water bottle, feeling sore and sorry for myself. I didn’t expect a knock at the door either, and I’m ashamed to say I acted very ungraciously on opening it.

“Hi,” said Camilla, ignoring my sullen expression. “Can I come in?”

“If you’ve come to apologise, you needn’t,” I said carelessly. “It was my fault.”

“I haven’t come to apologise,” she answered, “and, it wasn’t.”

I blinked stoically over her shoulder, all crossed arms and wounded pride.

“I came to see if you were alright.”

She said it with such easy, unassuming grace, and before I’d time for anything more dignified, unwelcome tears were prickling behind my eyes.

“Oh, Francis.” She wrapped her arms around my middle, and I shut the door behind her.

“I’m sorry,” I said, but it felt relieving. Her head was tucked against my chest and I held her too, long enough to swallow a few times and pull myself together. She patted my back and I took her

coat. "I'm alright, really. Nothing to write home about."

"*Deo gratias*," she said quietly.

We wandered into my kitchen and I poured her a coffee, she searched through the cupboard and asked if chocolate would make me feel better.

"Maybe, but I don't have any." I cleared my throat, tried a smile, and then took a sip from her cup. "Do you want this? I think it's burnt."

"I don't mind burnt," Camillia admitted, she led me into the sitting room. My sofa, like all my furniture, was well-chosen and very worn, and we curled up with the coffee together, not worried about spills. I leant my face in the back of her hair, her scent of hyacinth and ash.

"May I tell you it was worth it?"

She glanced around, surprised, then kissed me on the cheek.

"You can tell me whatever you'd like," she replied, and I laughed.

"Alright. It was worth it."

She set down the empty cup. We were sleepy, comfortable, and she took my hands to play with them, weaving my longer fingers between her own. I liked her touch, her pale knuckles and bare, boyish nails. She'd clasp and unclasp my cufflinks, absentminded, then trace the lines on my palm. I realised I was doing the same, skipping my thumb along her wrists, her small bones and strong arms, plucking at her sweater. We were smiling, piqued with that strange, heady kind of exhaustion that fades at the edges, makes everything shiver and burst.

She wriggled around to face me, two spots of pink at her cheeks. Her shoulders lifted with her inhale, and when she kissed me again it was tender, her lashes soft against my cheeks. She made me shudder, which made her laugh, and we kissed each other tragically, grinning like fools as I tipped us off the cushions and onto the floorboards.

"You're biting me," she murmured against my mouth, running her teeth over my lower lip as I had to her.

"Shall I do it again?" I replied. Her mouth twitched up at the corners, her fingers tugged at my shirt. My buttons made a dull little pop as they slid through the eyelets, our attempts to loosen my necktie clumsy and fruitless. God knows what knot I'd fastened that morning, but Camilla made some jest about it all being very Victorian- half-undone shirts and britches, frilly things and her skirt caught in my belt. For some reason this pleased us terribly, she even tried on my pince-nez while I recited some poetry better left untranslated in my journal. Her eyes were dark and whole.

We laughed a lot that night, perhaps it was the relief of seeing each other smile, maybe we just needed to know we could. But it meant a great deal to me, I'm not much used to making things better. And, in some jumbled way, it was freeing. I've never slept with someone who didn't get up after the fact. I've told myself I didn't care so often, it near knocked the breath out of me to remember I did.

It felt like hours later when Camilla stirred, her head damp on my shoulder and my arms wrapped over her back. I was staring at the cracks in my ceiling. I'd carry her to my bed, of course I would, but for now the world was still and quiet and simple.

"I love you very dearly," I said, and for once it didn't sound like an apology.

End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! :) Kudos and comments are always adored and appreciated <3

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