Before A Train Door

by TheLittleMuse

Summary

Mr Thornton couldn't quite convince himself to get back on the train, back to Milton, convinced that in kissing Margaret so openly and scandalously, he had once again lost her forever.

Mr Thornton couldn’t quite will himself to get back on the train, to admit this final failure and once again begin this journey to the confirmation of his ruin. He had always known that Miss Hale could never love him, though none could ever love her as he did. But for a moment it seemed that their two souls had aligned and the only consideration that their souls had was to communicate through their poor, mortal vessels.

No wonder she had stood and walked away without a word. What damage had he done to her reputation by kissing her so brazenly? Her, a lady and him, well, no kind of gentleman. He gave a sort of laugh as he glanced down at his loose shirt, with not a cravat, jacket or hat in sight. No doubt she was cursing him and her moment of … what had it been? What had moved her to kiss his hand and then his lips? Had she experienced the same moment of ecstasy that he had?

No matter. He should not think on it, and yet it was all he could think on. And still he could not will himself to get back on the train, back to failure. A sort of bitterness crept over him. She could have saved him in so many ways, and now she could have saved him financially, but he had destroyed that hope, as he had destroyed every other thing regarding Miss Hale.

But then the impossible appeared, like some returning angel. Her reflection in the window of the train he was so busy despising. He turned; her bag was in her hand, her face a mixture of love and nerves. He didn’t consciously smile, too intent was he on studying her face, but a smile crept on his face as if it belonged there. As if he were not the gloomy mill master, but some romantic hero.

“You’re coming home with me?”
It was half question, half joyous statement. She was coming home. She didn’t answer, not in words, but her whole body seemed to mirror his. He felt weightless as he took her bag, as if he had suddenly inhaled a fog of opium. They sat together in the (now most beloved) train carriage and all that mattered was that moment. Disapproving relatives and mills to rebuild didn’t exist. All that mattered now was each other, and the passing fields their only witness.

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