

FADE IN:

INT. TAILOR SHOP - EARLY MORNING - 1934

The needle of a sewing machine punches in and out of a piece of rough-textured cloth.

A young man, TOM BARROWS, quick and intent, works away at a treadle sewing machine on a muslin of a suit jacket. He holds it up for inspection, dresses a body form with it, and chalks off alterations. He stands back to survey his work, then nods.

He glances over at a clock on the wall. Six AM, time to get going. He grabs a tweed jacket and a newsboy cap off pegs on the wall, then picks up a large piece of burlap that he drapes over his shoulder.

EXT. TAILOR SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Tom exits his shop, locking the door behind him. The picture window shows body forms wearing suits and gowns. A plain but professional-looking sign over the door reads TOM BARROWS, FINE TAILORING AND DRESSMAKING.

EXT. RIDDLING WAY - CONTINUOUS

He makes his way down the street of his red-brick working-class neighborhood, passing a sign that reads RIDDLING WAY. Other people are out and about as well, boys selling newspapers, shopkeepers opening up, sweeping their doorsteps and doing chores.

SUPER: Fairfield, Connecticut, 1934

Tom exchanges greetings with many of them as he passes, sometimes pausing briefly to shake a hand, or lend one, to his neighbors.

EXT. UPTOWN - DAY

The town of Fairfield wakes up. In the upscale parts, gentlemen and ladies drive in their cars or ride in the occasional carriage from their houses up on the hills.

EXT. LORING'S END - DAY

The large, beautiful house at the estate at LORING'S END begins to stir with groundskeepers tending to the gardens.

EXT. LORING'S END - FRONT GATE - CONTINUOUS

A carriage waits outside the front gate of the estate. EMMA LORING, stern, middle-aged, impeccably dressed, comes down the path in a hat and a walking stick.

EXT. LORING'S END - UPSTAIRS WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

A pretty teenaged girl, ALICE LORING, sits in the window of her upstairs bedroom. It is pretty and immaculate but totally impersonal, as if she has not lived there long. She lays out a pair of framed pictures of school girls in Venice and Paris, but they are of little comfort. She looks sadly out at the lawn, watching Emma as she drives away in her carriage.

INT. DRAPER'S - CONTINUOUS

Tom removes his hat as he enters a crowded draper's shop and tucks it under his arm. It is filled with bolts of cloth of every variety, stacked up in piles or displayed in rolls on racks. Drapers assist customers, some housewives, some fancy professional tailors and dressmakers, some apprentices to the same. They select whole bolts and cut yardage laid out on tables.

INT. DRAPER'S - RACKS - CONTINUOUS

Tom surveys the racks of cloth when a well-dressed older gentleman followed by several apprentices comes over. Tom is pushed out of the way as the apprentices swarm in, immediately monopolizing the attention of several drapers. One older woman notices Tom's plight and slips away to come over to him. He smiles gratefully.

DRAPER

Morning, Tom, what can I get you today?

TOM

Wool suiting. Weft weight if you've got it.

DRAPER

That all? We got some silk
georgette in just the other day.
Beautiful stuff, good price too!

She pulls down a brightly colored bolt of fabric to show Tom.

TOM

Just the wool. Not making dresses
like I used to.

DRAPER

A shame, when you've got talent
like yours.

Tom dips his head modestly as the draper goes off to fulfill his request.

INT. DRAPER'S - CUTTING TABLES - CONTINUOUS

Tom collects several rolls of fabric from the draper, dodging apprentices as they swarm around him, collecting the bolts ordered by their master. One girl apprentice recognizes Tom, sparing a moment to wave and call out to him.

GIRL

Tom, how have you been?

TOM

Not bad at all! And yourself?

But her master snaps for her to follow him, and she must run off before she can answer. Tom shakes his head, smiling ruefully, and turns back to his cloth.

INT. DRAPER'S - REGISTER - CONTINUOUS

Tom pays a draper for his order, then wraps the bolts in his piece of burlap to protect them. With effort he hefts the whole bundle over his shoulder. Shaking the draper's hand, he carefully turns with his load.

EXT. DRAPER'S - CONTINUOUS

Balancing his bundle, he walks past the apprentices loading their master's order into the back of a wagon as he leaves.

INT. DELLA'S PUB - DAY

Tom enters a working class pub that is already bustling with patrons, trying not to bump into anyone with his bundle.

DELLA CARRUTHERS the pub's owner, a pretty, full-figured woman about ten years older than Tom, is waiting on tables with her husband DONNIE. She notices Tom with a smile.

DELLA

Tom!

She beckons him after her. Tom makes his way over, picking his way through people and tables.

INT. DELLA'S PUB - BAR - CONTINUOUS

Della goes to stand behind the bar. Carefully Tom lays down his bundle and sits in one of the high chairs.

Della splashes some coffee into a mug. Tom shields his fabric from the droplets.

TOM

Careful there! I just picked this up.

DELLA

Of course you're already going.

TOM

What can I say, I love my work.

DELLA

Nice of you to spare a moment to stop by. Eggs and bacon?

TOM

Just the coffee. It's all I have time for.

DELLA

I swear, you're going to run yourself ragged. I don't see why you left a fine position just so you could kill yourself running your own place.

Tom smiles and takes a drink of the coffee.

DELLA

Are you making any money yet?

TOM

It's not about that.

DELLA

So you aren't.

TOM

I wasn't doing my best work, Del.

DELLA

It was the fanciest dress shop in town!

TOM

I want to do my own work. Without somebody else's name selling it, or telling me how I ought to get it done.

DELLA

Still, Tom. A man ought to know what he's worth.

TOM

And there's more to mine than just the money. Now I should be off. How much?

DELLA

Save your money, love.

TOM

Aw, Della--

DELLA

You're going to need it.

Tom grins. They kiss each others' cheeks, then Tom collects his fabric bundle and turns to go.

DELLA

Hey, Tom?

He turns back.

DELLA
Is it worth it?

TOM
We'll see, I guess.

Tom exits and Della returns to her work.

INT. TAILOR'S SHOP - DAY

Tom returns to his shop and his work day gets underway.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

A gentleman client arrives for a jacket fitting. Tom helps the gentleman into a suit coat muslin. The man regards himself in a full-length mirror, tentatively pleased, then glances back to Tom for confirmation. Tom gives him the thumbs up.

Tom lays out muslin pattern pieces on some of his new wool suiting and cuts them out.

The bell RINGS as another gentleman customer comes in through the door. Tom has to stop mid-cut to attend to the customer. In a moment Tom has the man in a smartly creased pair of suit pants and is taking up the hems.

As he dresses yet another a male body form in a shirt and tie, he glances over to his unused female forms and sighs.

He eats a sandwich as he goes over his books. He looks distressed as he circles numbers with a red ink pen. He looks up at the clock and realizes he is behind, so he leaps up, sandwich forgotten.

Hastily he collects a suit off a body form and tries to pack it up in a box. A customer arrives to pick it up before he is quite finished, and glares at him impatiently. The man irately writes him a check and stalks out. Once he is gone, Tom heaves a sigh of frustration and snags his sandwich as he continues on.

He puts on a pair of loupes to do some delicate hand sewing.

INSERT: Through the lens he is carefully stitching his mark inside the cuff of the jacket, an embroidery of his initials, TJB.

He lays it down, then stretches his stiff neck and back. He looks out the window to see the darkened sky, and breathes a sigh of relief.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. TAILOR'S SHOP - EARLY EVENING

Tom finishes clearing up his work space for the day. He looks up suddenly as the the bell on the door rings. In steps Emma Loring, her heels clicking as she walks.

EMMA

Excuse me? Is the tailor in?

Tom pulls himself together into business mode.

TOM

Indeed he is, ma'am.

EMMA

Are you Mr. Tom Barrows?

TOM

Yes, ma'am. Welcome to my shop. Who might you be?

He holds out his hand to shake, but she does not take it.

EMMA

I am Miss Emma Loring, of Loring's End. Perhaps you've heard of it?

TOM

I think everybody has around here. What can I do for you?

Tom goes to his workbench to find a sketchpad and pencil. Emma walks around the shop, sizing it up critically.

EMMA

I hadn't been aware you were in business. Tailoring and dressmaking?

TOM

Yes, ma'am. I see mostly orders for gentlemen's suits these days, but most of my experience is with dresses.

EMMA

Indeed?

TOM

Learned at my mother's knee. You couldn't find a finer seamstress.

EMMA

Your mother, you say.

TOM

Oh, yes. If madam requires assurance, I can give the names of some satisfied customers--

EMMA

Not at all, Mr. Barrows. In fact, I am convinced you are the man for the job.

TOM

What did you have in mind?

She opens her handbag and looks through it.

EMMA

You must forgive the quality of the picture. It is quite old.

She hands him a picture cut from a newspaper, wrinkled and yellowed with age.

INSERT: Picture of a pretty, dark-haired girl in a long, old-fashioned gown with a lily pattern in beading on the bodice.

TOM

It's lovely. Out of the style now, but lovely. Silk satin, straight cut?

EMMA

Imported from China. You have a good eye. You can't see in the newsprint, but it was the most vibrant shade of cornflower blue.

TOM

And the beading... it was an artist made this.

EMMA

Indeed. I would like this dress to be remade.

TOM

Remade?

EMMA

It must be identical.

TOM

All respect, ma'am, with just a clipping from a newspaper... that's a lot of missing detail, and I don't know how I'd match the color.

EMMA

I shall have a bolt of the proper material sent over. You'll find the measurements written on the reverse.

TOM

But the fitting--

EMMA

There will be no need for that.

TOM

This will come to considerable expense--

EMMA

Cost is no object.

Emma takes out her checkbook and writes Tom a check.

EMMA

I am certain you'll find some way
to manage.

He looks at the check and his eyes widen.

TOM

I'll... do my best, ma'am.

EMMA

I am counting on you, young man.

She hands him her calling card, then turns to exit the shop. Tom looks up from her card to watch her climb back into her carriage and drive off, an uncertain expression on his face.

INT. TAILOR'S SHOP - DAY

Tom sits at his table, surrounded by paper and colored charcoal, trying to sketch. A bolt of cornflower blue silk sits on the table beside him.

He puts down his pencil, crumbles up the current paper, and throws it into a wastebasket. He leans back and sighs in frustration.

TOM

All right... let's try this again.

He takes the newspaper clipping of the girl in the dress and slides it beneath a desk magnifying glass to regard it more closely. He begins a new sketch.

TOM

Floor-length, War-era evening gown
in cornflower-blue silk satin with
intricate beading detail. Appears
to be of a lily design.

He jumps up from the worktable and goes to a female body form that is draped with some flowing fabric. He manipulates the fabric over the form to emulate the shape of the dress in the clipping.

TOM

Loose over the bust, fitted through
the waist, with a wide waistband

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

and... a hip swag-- yes, knotted in the front and left to hang. God, lovely detail.

He grabs a loose scrap and wraps it around the form's hips as a makeshift swag.

TOM

Now how does that attach? Does the band... wrap? Can't tell. The skirt is straight-cut, most likely... but is that a rear train? With the swag over it? Who knows, can't see the back at all.

He slumps back down against the worktable, defeated. He picks up the clipping, then glances back over the table, strewn with sketches. Then he comes upon Emma's check. Tom looks pained.

EXT. RIDDLING WAY - NIGHT

Tom is in a phone booth at the end of the block. He puts in a nickel and holds up the earpiece to his ear.

OPERATOR (V.O)

Operator. How may I connect you?

TOM

(over the phone)

Loring's End, please.

OPERATOR (V.O)

One moment, please.

The phone rings. In a moment an older woman, the housekeeper MRS. SUSAN WARREN, answers.

MRS. WARREN (V.O.)

Residence at Loring's End. Who's calling, please?

TOM

It's Tom Barrows the tailor. I'm calling after a gown Miss Emma

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Loring ordered from me. I'm...
having some trouble with her
commission.

MRS. WARREN

I see, sir. I'll pass on your
message-- what's that, madam? Beg
pardon, Mr. Barrows, she'll speak
with you now.

Tom hears rustling as the phone is handed off.

EMMA (V.O.)

Did the bolt I sent over arrive?

TOM

Yes, ma'am, and it's as fine as can
be. But... it's like this, ma'am.
I've been coming at it from every
angle, and there's too much I can't
make out from your newspaper
clipping.

EMMA (V.O.)

I see.

TOM

Please don't be let down. It's
only... is there any way you could
give me something more to go on?

There is a silence over the line.

TOM

Ma'am?

EMMA (V.O.)

There's nothing for it, I suppose.
You'll have to come by the estate
tomorrow morning.

TOM

I... all right. If you think it
will help.

EMMA (V.O.)

Ten o'clock sharp.

TOM
I won't be late.

There is a click as Emma hangs up. Tom replaces the earpiece.

EXT. LORING'S END - FRONT WALK - MORNING

Tom walks up a path toward a beautiful New England estate. It is surrounded by carefully tended grounds and an ornate wrought-iron fence. He consults his pocket watch and sees it is a few minutes to ten.

He walks up to the gate and puts a hand on it. He is somewhat surprised to find that it swings open. He steps just inside.

CRIER (O.S.)
You there, boy!

A young policeman, OFFICER JOHN CRIER, strides up. He has the air of someone who is still green but wants very badly to be taken seriously.

TOM
Beg your pardon?

CRIER
What are you skulking around for?

TOM
I'm not skulking.

CRIER
Then state your name and business.

He takes out a steno pad.

TOM
I'm Tom Barrows. I'm a tailor, I have an appointment with the lady of the house.

CRIER
Which lady?

TOM
Miss Emma Loring.

Crier takes hold of Tom by the shoulder and drags him down the path towards the house.

CRIER
Jesus Christ. What were you doing?

TOM
Nothing, I've just arrived! Ask Miss Loring and she'll tell you she's expecting me.

CRIER
Can't ask her anything, boy. The lady's dead.

TOM
Dead?

CRIER
Found just this morning, God rest her soul. So what you know about that?

ALICE (O.S.)
Officer Crier! Leave that man alone!

Alice Loring rushes up the front walk out of the house, her eyes red from crying.

CRIER
I am conducting an investigation here, miss.

ALICE
I don't see how accosting our visitors is going to help. This gentleman is here for an appointment with my aunt.

CRIER
You can vouch for that?

ALICE
Yes, I can.

CRIER

And you don't have any information
about Miss Loring other than just
the business you've had with her?

TOM

I don't know anything about it.
I'll swear it on a stack of Bibles.

CRIER

Hmm. Duly noted, young man. But
mark my words, if I find you're—

He is cut off by the sound of wailing and crashing from
inside the house.

ALICE

What was that?

She turns and runs back into the house. Tom and Crier
follow.

INT. LORING'S END - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Alice, followed by Tom and Crier, bursts into the fancy
entryway of the house.

CRIER

Everything all right, then?

Stumbling in from another room is CONSTANCE DANBURY, a
plain middle-aged woman, Emma's sister and Alice's other
aunt. She careens around the room in hysterical upset.

ALICE

Aunt Constance!

CONSTANCE

Where is she? What's happened to
her?

Her stuffy-looking husband EDMUND DANBURY chases after her
with Mrs. Warren the housekeeper, trying to calm her down.

EDMUND

Constance, stop this at once!

CONSTANCE

It can't be, it can't be!

She breaks into sobs.

ALICE

Uncle Edmund! What's going on?

EDMUND

She's only just heard about Emma
and she's lost her head. Mrs.
Warren!

Mrs. Warren tries to help the struggling Constance.

CRIER

Mr. Danbury, does your wife require
assistance?

EDMUND

Thank you, sir, but this is a
family matter. Mrs. Warren, help me
get her back to her room. Then
fetch her medicine and see that she
takes it!

MRS. WARREN

She's run out, Mr. Danbury. She's
going through it faster and
faster--

EDMUND

Then send the boy to the druggist
for more! Now, Constance, enough of
this nonsense!

MRS. WARREN

Come now, madam, let's get you to
bed.

She takes hold of Constance's arm and starts steering her
out.

ALICE

Oh, my goodness. Uncle Edmund,
perhaps I should--

EDMUND

Not now, Alice! The situation is well in hand.

She takes a few steps after her aunt, then stops helplessly, look bereft. Edmund irately collects himself.

EDMUND

My apologies for this outburst, Officer Crier. You may return to your work.

CRIER

Right, then. My condolences to your family, sir.

Edmund strides briskly from the room.

CRIER

Poor old thing. Well, Miss Alice, for now I'll take your word. Don't you go far, Mr. Barrows. You can expect further inquiry later.

TOM

I've got nothing to hide, sir.

CRIER

See that you don't. Now, good day to you.

Frustrated, he goes back outside.

ALICE

But, Officer...

He is already gone. Alice covers her face with her hands. Tom looks around and sees there is no one but the two of them.

Tentatively he moves toward her, and after a moment's hesitation, touches her shoulder.

TOM

Are... are you all right, miss?

She looks at him as if shocked that he would ask.

ALICE

No! My poor Aunt Emma...

TOM

What happened to her?

ALICE

I don't know! There are policemen everywhere and the whole house is in a dither and no one's told me anything!

As if feeling suddenly claustrophobic, she throws the door open and rushes outside. Tom follows after her.

EXT. LORING'S END - FRONT WALK - CONTINUOUS

Alice stands on the front path, sniffing into a handkerchief. Tom approaches tentatively.

ALICE

I've been away at school so long...
I didn't know it was like this. I
didn't know it was this bad.

TOM

I'm sorry, miss. Listen... thank
you. For speaking up for me.

ALICE

It was nothing, nothing at all.

TOM

It was good of you all the same.

Alice struggles to compose herself.

ALICE

Pardon my manners, my name is
Alice.

TOM

Tom Barrows. It's a pleasure to
meet you. Ah, despite the
circumstances.

She dabs at her eyes.

ALICE

Of course. So you're the tailor?
You're not what I expected.

Tom grins a little.

TOM

Not a woman, you mean?

ALICE

Well-- and so young!

TOM

I've been at it it all my life. I even stitched for Madam Vayon downtown. The wedding gown I made for Marjorie Hancock made the society page.

ALICE

That was yours? It's only... I'd never thought a young man would care so much for pretty dresses.

TOM

Why, they're for making girls pretty-- and who cares more for that?

Alice can't help but smile at that. Tom is suddenly self-conscious, and stammers shyly.

TOM

Of course, I've spent more time with the dresses than the girls. It's the work, really. The making. Tailoring suits is architecture, and dressmaking feels like art.

Alice is impressed, even a little charmed.

ALICE

I see why Aunt Emma came to you.

TOM

I suppose. I had a good teacher.

ALICE

Madam Vayon?

TOM

My mother. It's thanks to her I know something of embroidery. It was her specialty.

ALICE

Where does she sew?

TOM

She passed a few years back. And her eyes went on her early, so I'm afraid her dressmaking days were already behind her.

ALICE

Oh, I'm sorry.

TOM

It consoled her that she could pass what she knew on to me. I do my best with it for her sake.

ALICE

I'm sorry my aunt never got to see your work. Have you done much already?

TOM

I've hardly started. In fact...

He unhappily draws Emma's check out of his pocket and hands it to Alice.

TOM

I suppose I'd best give you your aunt's money back.

ALICE

Oh, my. Are you certain--

TOM

Please, I can't keep it now. And I should return the bolt of cloth she sent over as well.

ALICE

You keep that. Perhaps I'll call on you to make something beautiful for me sometime.

TOM

Anytime, miss. It would be my pleasure.

They stand at the edge of the path for a moment.

ALICE

I should go. Perhaps one of the officers will take pity on me enough to tell me... something. Anything at all. And I ought to look in on my Aunt Constance.

Tom turns to leave, but hesitates.

TOM

I'm very sorry about Miss Emma. If... if there's anything I can do...

ALICE

Oh, I'm sure you've spent far too long listening to... some girl.

TOM

In my line of work, I learned quick to always listen to girls. It's taught me everything I know.

Beat.

ALICE

Thank you, Tom.

TOM

For what?

ALICE

For talking to me.

INT. DELLA'S PUB - DAY

It's lunchtime and crowded. Tom's at the counter and Della puts a plate in front of him. He looks around at the

murmuring patrons.

TOM

Is everyone talking about that
business up at Loring's End?

DELLA

News spread fast. Every Tom, Dick,
and Harry's buzzing on about it.

TOM

I was just over there.

KENNETH GARNER, a grizzled middle-aged man with a worn face that makes him look older than he is, also sits at the bar with a mug of beer. He looks up at Tom's words, but Tom doesn't notice him.

DELLA

Were you? What were you doing up
there?

TOM

I was called up--

KENNETH

Why would they call up some townie
to the palace?

DELLA

Mind your manners, Ken.

TOM

I had an appointment to see Miss
Emma Loring.

KENNETH

What would she want with you?

TOM

I'm a tailor, she commissioned me.

KENNETH

Of course, they don't have much
social use for tradesman. Did she
say anything to you?

TOM

Like what?

KENNETH

Ah, of course not. Closed up
tighter than a drum, that old bag!

DELLA

Show some respect, Kenneth, the
woman's died.

KENNETH

Couldn't have happened to a nicer
lady.

DELLA

Shame on you! How can you say a
thing like that?

KENNETH

There's always been a cloud over
that family. It was the old man
that put it there.

TOM

What do you mean?

Kenneth leans into Tom and grabs a hold of his jacket.

KENNETH

And you got no idea what might be
going on?

TOM

Here now, let go of me!

DELLA

Hey, have off there! Leave the boy
alone.

Tom pushes Kenneth off. He stumbles back, shoving aside bar
stools, until he collapses against the bar and clings to
it. Della smacks him with her dishtowel.

DELLA

Now get going! Or I won't be
letting you back in here anytime
soon!

Kenneth stumbles away. Tom watches him go.

TOM

What was that all about?

DELLA

Pay him no mind, Tom.

TOM

Who is he?

DELLA

Ah, that's just old Kenny. Some ne'er-do-well who drinks too much and hangs around.

TOM

I don't think I've seen him here before.

DELLA

He's just gotten back out of the lockup. I feed him every now and again, so he keeps coming back. Like a stray cat. Of course, I could say the same about you.

Tom chuckles.

TOM

Guess so. But why was he so hot about what happened to poor old Miss Loring?

DELLA

Couldn't tell you. He's a strange one for sure.

Tom gives one last look in the direction Kenneth went off.

DELLA

Now you'll never want to come back and see me here. So drink up and forget about the lowlifes that haunt my establishment.

INT. LORING'S END - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Alice sits at the dinner table in the elegant dining room with what remains of her family. She stares at the vacant place where Emma used to sit. No one speaks.

When he finishes the last of his coffee, Edmund rings a small silver bell. He rises as Mrs. Warren comes in to clear away the dishes. He exits, and Constance leaves as well soon after, leaving Alice alone.

INT. LORING'S END - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alice follows Constance into the hallway. She comes up behind her and looks about to speak, until she notices her aunt is bent over a side table, shakily removing the dropper from a glass pharmaceutical bottle. Unsteadily she lifts the dropper to her mouth and squeezes a few drops under her tongue. Alice's eyes go downcast. She turns in the other direction.

INT. LORING'S END - PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Alice goes into the parlor, where her uncle is sitting reading a newspaper. At length he looks up from the paper and notices her.

EDMUND

Yes, Alice?

ALICE

Nothing, uncle.

INT. TAILOR'S SHOP - EVENING

Tom is finishing another long day of work. He sits down tiredly. He notices the bolt of blue satin Emma gave him still leaning up against the worktable.

In a sudden burst of creative energy he unrolls a length of satin from the bolt and wraps it around the female body form. He pulls it around to the form's rear as if trying to imagine the unseen back of the dress in the clipping. Before he makes much progress, he forces himself to stop.

He collapses back into the chair and sighs. He takes out the newspaper clipping and places it back under the magnifying glass. After a long look at it, he moves away. He tries to busy himself with other things, but soon drops

them to start pacing.

Tom goes to a bookshelf in the back corner of the shop. He pulls down a small journal. He lays it out on the work table and opens the front page. It says "Journal of Abigail Barrows" inside the front cover. Tom smiles and turns the pages.

INSERT: pages of hand-drawn illustrations instructing how to apply beadwork and embroidery, along with images for designs on dresses.

Tom turns past designs for cascading whorls and climbing vines before he pauses in surprise.

Tom reaches for the clipping under the magnifying glass and pulls it close for comparison, then looks intently at the pages. Tom's eyes widen in shock, then with determination he slams the book closed.

EXT. LORING'S END - FRONT DOOR - DAY

The next morning Tom knocks away on the front door to Loring's End, his mother's journal tucked under arm. Mrs. Warren answers it.

MRS. WARREN

Excuse me, sir!

TOM

Mrs. Warren, is it?

MRS. WARREN

Yes. I remember you. You're that young man with Miss Alice yesterday. What a racket you're making!

TOM

Apologies, ma'am, but I have to talk to Miss Alice. Is she in?

MRS. WARREN

Hold your horses and I'll see if she's fit for callers.

INT. LORING'S END - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

She lets Tom into the entryway and leaves him to wait. Before long Mrs. Warren returns with Alice, looking stressed but trying to maintain good manners.

ALICE

Tom! What brings you back here so soon?

TOM

I'm sorry for barging in, but there's something I got to ask-- did Miss Emma ever mention knowing a seamstress by the name of Abigail Barrows?

ALICE

Not that I ever heard. Who is she?

TOM

My mother, who taught me to sew. See, she left me journals with all of her embroidery methods in them, and they're full of the designs she made.

He shows her in the book.

ALICE

They're lovely, but what about them?

TOM

You see, your aunt asked me to make an exact copy of the gown in his picture she gave me. Do you see the beadwork on the bodice?

Tom flips to the pages where the the newspaper clipping is sandwiched. The clipping lays beside a page with a collection of sketches of gowns embroidered with the very same lily bead design as on the gown in the picture.

ALICE

It's the same design!

TOM

Alice-- I think my mother made this dress.

ALICE
Your mother? Did my aunt realize?

TOM
I told Emma she was was my teacher.

Alice takes the clipping and regards it.

ALICE
It's a beautiful gown, Tom.

Beat.

ALICE
What is this from?

TOM
Your aunt never said. The girl in it looks... a bit like you, now that I think of it.

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Warren comes over to take a look.

MRS. WARREN
Why, look at that. That's Miss Bethany.

ALICE
Oh, it is! This is my aunt, Tom, my father's youngest sister.

MRS. WARREN
I could never forget that gown she's wearing. It's from the night of her debutante ball.

TOM
Of course, a gown like that. Does she live here still? Could I speak with her?

MRS. WARREN
Goodness, Mr. Barrows, don't you know?

ALICE

Tom, Bethany's been dead for years.
She died that night.

Tom stares.

INT. LORING'S END - PARLOR - DAY

Alice shows Tom an array of family photographs on the wall.

INSERT: a portrait of a handsome thirty-year-old ROWAN LORING, Alice's father, in the uniform of a WWI-era infantryman, with a framed flag and medals; that Rowan with young wife ELIZABETH, holding the newborn Alice; the entire Loring family from twenty years ago, Emma, Rowan, Constance, and Bethany, with their father REGINALD LORING.

Tom focuses on the image of Bethany.

TOM

What happened to her?

ALICE

I'm not sure. Grandfather never liked anyone to talk about it.

MRS. WARREN

No one's quite certain, miss. Even the police never figured it out.

Mrs. Warren sighs.

MRS. WARREN

You must understand, it was a terrible time for the family. First Miss Bethany... then Miss Constance taking ill and having to leave university. Your mother leaving us right after your father...

Tom looks to the portrait of Rowan, flanked by a folded American flag and some medals in a case. Alice looks away.

MRS. WARREN

Miss Alice, the family was very happy for a very long time. I can't say I blame Mr. Loring for not

(MORE)

MRS. WARREN (CONT'D)
wanting to dwell on all that
sadness.

From the next room, Constance's quavering voice can be heard.

CONSTANCE (O.S.)
Mrs. Warren?

MRS. WARREN
Right here, Mrs. Danbury.

Mrs. Warren hurries out, with Alice following.

INT. LORING'S END - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Constance totters around, looking a mess. Mrs. Warren and Alice go to her. Tom hangs back, eyes averted in discomfort.

ALICE
Aunt Constance, how are you
feeling?

CONSTANCE
I'll take my tea in the sun room
now.

MRS. WARREN
Are you quite sure you wouldn't
like something to eat? You've had
nothing all day.

CONSTANCE
Just the tea, Mrs. Warren.

Constance makes her way to a window and peers through the curtains, wincing as if the sun hurts her eyes.

CONSTANCE
I can't abide these police officers
haunting the place. God knows what
damage they've done.

ALICE
I know, Auntie, I'm sorry.

She gestures vaguely at Tom.

CONSTANCE

Tell that gardener to keep them out
of the flowerbeds.

ALICE

Gardener? Oh, please, Auntie. This
is Mr. Tom Barrows, the tailor Aunt
Emma spoke to. Aunt Constance, I
was wondering— about the funeral—

CONSTANCE

Oh, heavens, not now.

ALICE

I know it's terrible, but—

CONSTANCE

Please, dear... don't make me speak
of it.

She leaves, with Mrs. Warren hustling off after her.

Alice heaves a sigh. She turns around to look at Tom
standing there uncomfortably. Alice trembles silently for a
moment, then buries her face in her hands.

TOM

Please, it's all right.

ALICE

It wasn't always like this. She was
different when I was small. She
would give me sweeties, and she
picked the most beautiful dolls for
my birthday. She cared for me.

TOM

I'm certain.

ALICE

They all did. I know that. At
school Emma wrote me such wonderful
letters. She wrote those things,
even if she could never say them.

A sob catches in her throat.

ALICE

Oh, Tom... why did my aunt want you
to copy this dress?

TOM

I don't know, miss.

ALICE

I don't either. I don't know why
she did anything...

Beat.

ALICE

The police are thinking she... did it
to herself.

TOM

You mean... oh, God.

ALICE

Too much laudanum for the pain. Or
else... she might have done it on
purpose, they say.

Beat.

ALICE

I don't think I knew her at all.

TOM

I'm sure that's not so.

ALICE

It is! Not Aunt Emma, not
Constance, not my grandfather or
even my own father. I don't know a
thing about my own family. I
thought I would someday... but now
it's too late.

Alice collapses in on herself again, and Tom watches her in
helpless distress. Then he screws up his courage and takes
a step toward her.

TOM

Then... we have to find out.

ALICE

What?

Tom is unsure, but presses on.

TOM

We'll do our own investigating.

ALICE

You and I?

TOM

Why not? There's so much going on here that we can't see, but it's working on us all the same.

ALICE

Oh, Tom. I'm sure you have enough to worry over without taking on my troubles too.

TOM

It isn't that, Alice. You want to know about your family— well, my mother was tangled up in this somehow too. This dress is her work, before she lost her sight. All I have left of her is what she taught me to do. There's a piece of her in this, and I'd like to get it back.

ALICE

Where would we even start?

TOM

I don't know. But it can't hurt to try, can it? Otherwise, you might never know.

Alice considers for a moment, then slowly nods.

END OF "THE TAILOR AT LORING'S END" EXCERPT