

2067 by Anne Morris

book excerpt:

There was dancing in one corner of the largest conference room. A small area was designated with special flooring laid down for people to dance on. LizE noticed that Mara and Mark were running the electronics, which made her cringe. Their curiosity often led them to experiment to the point of destruction. No one over thirty was dancing, and it was mostly the new hires, Uni interns, and all of the teens who were on the dance floor.

Armed with fresh drinks, LizE and LotE watched their teenage siblings and speculated on the amount of alcohol the teenagers might have stolen from the bar. There was no pairing up of couples, but all the kids danced in one big group.

"Is my brother dancing with your sister?" LotE asked as she drained her wine glass.

"Which sister? I think they're all dancing together. Perhaps Maria is dancing with Luna, and John is dancing with KitE, it's hard to tell." LizE looked at her bottle. "I think we shouldn't be drinking so much."

She turned and put her bottle on a small table that held many other discarded empties. She wondered why two beers had made her feel so light-headed. LotE had consumed more alcohol but didn't seem to be showing the effects.

"I'm going to get some water," said LizE, and she trailed off to the bar. A small pool of people was in front. She waited patiently while the two bartenders passed over drinks, conveniently forgetting to check IDs. LizE pursed her lips as she considered that Luna and KitE were smart enough to have noticed and finagled a beer.

*"No French varietals at all?"*

She was roused from her thoughts by a deep voice. A tall back in front of her stood stiffly, his hands on the cold steel counter.

"No, sir," the barkeep answered.

"Not even champagne, a real champagne?" The man pronounced the word with what must have been an exquisite accent.

"Sorry, sir," said the bartender. She didn't sound sorry.

"You are rather rude," said the man, leaning towards her.

LizE nudged in beside him. "Look, your highness, this is California. We have wines to rival anything the French can grow; have you ever considered giving one of *them* a try?" The bartender gave her a smirky smile before schooling her face.

"I've only ever drunk French wine." The man looked down at her with furrowed brows but with an otherwise unreadable face.

"Perhaps you ought to get down off your throne and consider trying what the little people drink. Might be tainted, might make you sick." She leaned in closer to him. He stood his ground. "You know what, *we* don't want to share. Don't you ever drink California wine, ever!" She slapped the counter. "It's our treasure. It's our local pride, our glory, our..." she faltered, racking her brains for more synonyms.

"Madam, you can be *assured* that I *never* will." The man turned abruptly and walked away.

"Oh, boy!" LizE turned and leaned her back against the counter to watch him fade into the crowd. She turned back to the bartender. "Water, I came for water."

"Thanks, that was quite a show you put on." The bartender popped a glass in front of LizE and filled it with water. "I can't believe that guy *only* drinks French wine. He didn't sound foreign, sounded like a regular American to me."

"That was Mr. Derby, came with Mr. Bingley. They're investing in the Institute," said a man on the other side of LizE.

"*Darcy*, his name is Darcy, owns Darcy Rail," said Mr. Robinson, who owned one of the few shops in town.

"I just insulted the owner of Darcy Rail?" said LizE, who had heard of the powerful transportation empire.

"It was so worth it," said the bartender.

"My god, he was so rude," said one man.

"Highness,' that was a great insult," said Mr. Robinson, "it was fitting, would have been even better if he was some airplane magnate." He laughed.

LizE gulped down her water, had it refilled, then went in search of LotE. By the time she reached her friend, she had decided that Mr. Darcy was rude, ridiculous, and

disagreeable but that the whole incident was quite funny. The funniest point was that LizE didn't drink wine. She joked with LotE that she might have to begin.

Her friend was a little shaken when she discovered who it was that LizE had threatened, but she assured LotE that she had no reason ever to see him again. "He doesn't know my name, and he deserved what he got!"

Copyright © 2020 Anne Morris