

ADA. And that's not even the worst of it. Not the even the worst—

BYRON. I know what you're going to say, you don't have to—

ADA. Is it true?

BYRON. Oh for god's sake—

ADA. *Incest.*

BYRON. *She was a HALF sister—No one was hurt.*

Start



ADA. *(Fighting him, blaming him, calling him out.) I was hurt—I was. Everyone thinking my father disgusting and disgraceful and that all of that was in me waiting to bleed out. I spent my life glared at or gawked at or gossiped about. I couldn't live my life because of yours.*

BYRON. *And why was that?*

ADA. *Because I was your daughter and not your son.*

Byron hears and understands her. He takes a new approach.

BYRON. The human condition is spent along the tight wire between want and ought, what we crave and what's expected. I would not live a life of expectation certainly if it was not my own making. *Nor should you.* To live for passion, to live at *all*, that was a choice I made and I could not have made any other. Your mother knew that my wandering was inevitable. She knew it and she waited for it and she lived drunk off of her dramatic suffering in spite of it.

But I was always wandering back to you. I just never quite made it.

ADA. Why not.

BYRON. Because I've always been the most comfortable...amiss.

ADA. "Amiss" is your excuse? For blackening my life, for leaving me never knowing if I was—

BYRON. I'm sorry.

ADA. I never knew—

BYRON. I'm sorry.

ADA. *I never knew if I was real to you. Do you know what that's like? Not knowing if you're real or a dash of fiction in your father's mind? It's unhealthy.*

BYRON. *Might it also have made you unusually comfortable with the power of imagination to set the world on fire.*

Pause.

ADA. (*Pissed.*) I'm not sure if you are defying my expectations or perfectly adhering to them.

BYRON. I will excavate a compliment in that.

And attempt to convey my...apologies. Oh god I don't know—What is the etiquette of this? For leaving you, my dear, I am sorry. But I think we both must acknowledge that I would have likely made your life much darker in the end. I tend to do that.

ADA. I just...wanted some of your...greatness. In my life, in *me*. And I might be the only woman in England that doesn't care what you did. You were a great mind, a great man.

BYRON. Yes. Just not a good one. ← **End**

Pause.

She breaks—weeps—she lets it all out—her pain, her regret—he goes to her instinctively. Holds her like a...father.

She accepts this embrace immediately—she needs it so much—but he is shocked by it—by his paternalism, his caring.

ADA. I've been in such true pain for so long...and I suddenly realized I wasn't.

This is very important to him suddenly. He focuses just on her.

BYRON. I never imagine you hardened, or sad, or lonely. In my mind you're still a child with no worry.

ADA. You missed the middle bit then.

BYRON. I meant that I tried to imagine you happy, I wished for that for you.

ADA. Wishes are rather useless things I find. There is no metal to them.

BYRON. (*Luddite in full.*) A metal wish? Doesn't that sound like a nightmare.

ADA. Does it?

BYRON. Yes. Yes it does. Dear god I hope you're not one of those modernists.

ADA. Of course I am. Who's *not* a modernist that doesn't hope to see the future? Machines *are* that future.

BYRON. Like hell they are. You cannot make things better than people.