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By the time we arrived at Lady Metcalf's, I was a nervous wreck. And I didn't mean some figurative speech kind of wreck. I meant an old Spanish galleon, with broken masts, a rotting hull and missing	
canons – and, possibly with the rotting skeleton of the captain in the master cabin. Blast, blast, blast! What am I going to do? Lord help me, what am I going to do?	362 a62
The coach crunched to a halt on the gravel outside Lady Metcalf's residence, and Wilkins leaned over to my little sister with a look in his eyes as though he'd just been hit over the head with a heavy cudgel. Or maybe he was in love.	118
"You look so beautiful tonight, Miss Ella." "Um thank you, Sir Philip. You are too kind." "No, I tell you nothing but the truth. And to further enhance your	a å å
beauty, I wondered if you would do me the honour of wearing this in your hair tonight?" He pulled a single white rose from behind his back. Ella paled. I could	362 d
see what was going on in her head as clearly as though she had told me herself: she had accepted his attentions, even his giss, because it was what courtesy demanded. But openly wearing a sign of his a ection, and thus accepting it? I could tell, something in her was	
screaming that it would be a betrayal to Edmund, her love. Silly, of course. It wasn't a betrayal – It was only a ruddy flower! But there it was. "I feel honoured," she began haltingly.	a ⁴
"But then," Sir Philip interrupted her, "I reconsidered. I thought that maybe this flower would fit the colour of your hair better!" And letting go of the white rose, he pulled out a sunflower, as big as my	a³
palm. Ella's eyes widened. "And then, Miss Ella, I again thought, no. Nobody would see it. We need contrast to show o your beauty in the best light, it is what you deserve. So I brought this." And he pulled out a red rose. With an	36 5
uncertain smile, he looked at Ella. "I simply cannot choose; they are all so beautiful! Could you perhaps pick one for me? Or maybe just wear them all? That would be the simplest solution. We could put the sunflower here, and the roses"	₫ĸ
I had heard enough. "My sister is a lady, and not a flower-arrangement," I cut him o, briskly. "You forget, Sir, that she has to dance, and those beautiful flowers might fall out of her hair and get trampled underfect. We	á ^t
flowers might fall out of her hair and get trampled underfoot. We wouldn't want that, now, would we?" "Oh oh, I suppose you're right." The knight looked crestfallen, like a little puppy that had been denied his stick to play with, and for a	ä ¹
moment I almost felt something like pity. Then he perked up. "But she could always wear them a er the dance, or maybe" I pulled Ella out of the carriage before he could finish the sentence. The others were already out there, enjoying the attentions of servants	ã ²
who were bowing, taking coats and opening doors, something which in our house happened very seldom. "Quick, quick, take my coat!"	ਕੌ ਕੌ
"You there! Open the door!" I sighed, trying to shut out my twin sisters' voices. At home, If you wanted to wait until Leadfield had opened a door for you, you'd probably die of old age, and if you wanted him to take your coat, he'd	å¹
collapse under the weight. So this was a very welcome change, especially for Anne and Maria. The swarm of buzzing servants escorted us to the ball room, where Lady Metcalf was already awaiting us. I looked around anxiously. But	203 a
the lean, dark figure I feared to see was nowhere in sight. Just Lady Metcalf. "Ah! Mrs Brank! Miss Linton, Miss Linton and Miss Linton! Thank you very much for coming. I am	ä
delighted that you could make it." I must say, I was impressed. Lady Metcalf's smile was even more fake than mine, and she lied like a professional politician. But then, her	36K
father had been Foreign Secretary, so maybe it ran in the family. "Lady Metlcalf," my aunt trilled. "I was so excited when we received your invitation. It was very nice of you, considering you have never before deemed to include us in one of your festivities."	261 284
Ouch! I could see where this was leading. Poisonous fumes already hung heavily in the air between the two older ladies. "I simply could not resist," Lady Metcalf purred. "Sir Philip was so	á ⁵
enthusiastic. And I simply had to invite the young lady who has been so fortunate as to attract the a ection of one of London's finest young men, despite of her err regrettable social position." If looks could kill, Lady Metcalf would have been a red blot on the	á4º
wall right then, and my aunt would be hauled o to Codbath Fields Prison faster than you could say Jack Robinson. Unluckily, though, looks couldn't kill, and my aunt remained a free woman. "Remember," she hissed at me, while curtsying to Lady Metcalf.	185 a
"Behave yourself!" This was going to be a very long night. And hewould be there! *~*~***	ਰੱ 44 ਕੋ
The young man approached me with vigour in his step. He wore a bright waistcoat, a carnation in his buttonhole, and a bright, confident smile on his handsome face. I disliked him immediately.	1.5K
"Miss Linton?" He bowed deeply. "Will you do me the honour of granting me your hand for this dance?" I smiled back at him, one hundred times as brightly. "Why certainly! How could I refuse to dance with you Sir?"	176 a ⁸⁴
Now if I could only remember your name, so I could put you on my list of murder victims "Thank you, Miss."	ä¹ a'
Stretching out his fingers, he clasped them around mine. Blast! I knew I had agreed to dance with him, but did that mean he actually had to touch me? Working hard to keep my fake smile on my face, I let myself be led onto the dance floor. From the edge of the crowd I	
could see Anne and Maria ogling me with incredulity. I smiled at them, too. Tonight was smiley night! Argh! As the first notes of the quadrille began, the young man put his arms around me and began to shove me across the dance floor. I believe	3 74
o icially it is called steering, but that word implies that the steerer actually knows what he is doing, whereas my dancing partner evidently did not.	a 6
"Enjoying the dance?" he asked me with a cheerful smile. "Why yes, of course," I replied with an even more cheerfuller smile. Curse you! May the furies of hell hound you to pandemonium and back!	都 a ^t お ^k
	a⁰ a⁰
gouge out your eyes, pickle them and eat them for breakfast! I would have dearly loved to grab the bugger by the collar and see how he liked being 'steered' himself, but my aunt was watching. So I	a ¹
smiled until my face hurt, and just contrived to step on my partner's feet now and again. Finally, I had discovered an advantage of hoop skirts: nobody could see what my heels were doing. Not even my aunt.	236 d
I danced with partner a er partner. Most of them were actually quite good dancers, and those who were, went away with their feet still intact and an annoyingly good opinion of yours truly. In passing, I heard somebody say: " and that Lilly Linton such a nice, quiet,	
charming girl. Always smiling so brightly, it really lights up the evening. And so very" Mercifully, I was swept away by my partner then, so I didn't have to hear any more of my false accomplishments. Nevertheless, I knew	3 07
that my aunt had been right. If I just said "Yes, Sir, of course, Sir," to every question asked and smiled prettily, gentlemen who before would have been running in the opposite direction at the sight of me, were suddenly delighted with this blasted charming new Lilly. It	
made me want find an umbrella-stand to vomit into. All this play-acting took considerable concentration. Not enough though, to make me forget about the special guest to whom Wilkins had promised to introduce us tonight. Continuously, my eyes	a 5
scanned the ballroom for any sign of Mr Rikkard Ambrose. They never found any. My anxiety grew with every minute. What's the matter? Why isn't he here? Or maybe he is here! Maybe he is watching me, gazing coldly and my dress, my fan and any other.	3 53
articles that screamed "female!", getting more determined to get ricof the girl in his o ice with every passing minute! From the moment the idea first entered my mind, I felt an itch on the	d 29°
back of my head, as though he was standing behind me, his cold gaze drilling into the back of my head – which of course was a load of cobblers because I was dancing the quadrille, ergo twirling continuously around the room, seeing everything.	ď⁵
Blast! He can't be here! And he certainly can't be watching me from behind if I'm always pirouetting! Still, I fretted through three dances over Mr Rikkard bloody Ambrose! Only when I caught sight of Wilkins and Ella dancing a few paces	á'
away did I remember that I had other worries tonight as well. Remorse shot through me. For the moment, I had completely forgotten about protecting my little sister from Wilkins' overdone attentions.	a⁴
Well, if I wasn't going to saw a hole in the ballroom floor through which Wilkins could be disposed of, I couldn't do anything while they were dancing. A erwards, I swore to myself, I would become the most steadfast bu er in the history of womankind.	43
But my kind sisterly plans were cruelly dashed. By the time the dance had finished and I had manage to disentangle myself from my partner and rush to my sister's side, the evil flower-presenter was	-32
nowhere to be seen. "Where's Sir Philip?" I asked. "I don't know." Closing her eyes, Ella sighed and leaned against my shoulder. I let her. I had originally come to serve as a sisterly bu er,	a ²
but I might just as well be of use as a support column. "Somebody told him something, and he excused himself. Honestly, I don't care. I only care that he's gone for the moment. Oh, Lill!"	260
Her eyes fluttered open again, and I saw moisture glinting in there as she looked up at me imploringly. "What should I do? What in God's name should I do?" I was about to answer her (and a very clever answer it would have book) when Sir Philip appeared out of the multitude around us an	å²
been!) when Sir Philip appeared out of the multitude around us, an eager smile on his face. I noticed that the sunflower he had brought along for Ella was sticking out of his buttonhole, rather clashing with his green and red waistcoat.	1.2K
"My dear Miss Ella oh, Miss Lilian, you're here too? How wonderful! Where's the rest of your family? Ah, there!" He waved them over eagerly, and they came, interested to see what he was so excited about. I was starting to have an idea, and felt a dark	å
pit of dread opening up in my stomach. "What's the matter, Sir Philip?" Maria asked, breathless – maybe a bit more breathless than absolutely necessary. "Is something wrong?"	a a
"On the contrary, my dear, something is right." He beamed at all of us "Remember that I told you of this special guest who would be here tonight?" They all nodded. The black pit in my stomach grew by leaps and	å
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bounds. My knees wobbled. "Yes, of course we remember." Anne's eyes had become very large. "You don't mean"	
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Continue reading next part □

and stay where you are!

No! Bloody hell, no!

Yours Truly

GLOSSARY:

Sir Rob

Your baking Victorian writer

eating ginger bread;-)

partners. Huzzah! ;-)

My Dear Lords, Ladies & Gentlemen,

"I would like to introduce these ladies to my honoured friend."

I proudly present to you my special additional Christmas

quite some time. Still, it'll be worth it! Yummy! ;-)

installment of "Storm & Silence"! :-) My sincerest apologies for

the fact that this author's note is somewhat shorter than normal.

I have begun baking a big load of ginger bread to supply my entire

family through the holiday season, and that will probably take up

P.S: "Crunch, crunch" (Sound of me enthusiastically

Quadrille: A kind of Victorian dance that, in most historians'

opinion, is the forerunner of the modern Square Dance. It enjoyed

danced by men and women in some a fancy ball room, but instead

by horses on a square during a military parade. Soldiers normally

performed such elaborate quadrille formations as part of their

riding exercises to train and show o their fabulous riding skills.

These military gentlemen apparently had so much fun with this

activity that they decided to exchange their horses for women &

move their favorite hobby from the training yard to the ballroom.

Which means that, apparently, male intelligence is su icient to

recognize the superiority of ladies over horses as dancing

considerable popularity during the nineteenth century in Great

Britain. However, the original quadrille was not in fact a dance