

## 49. And a few more woes of love

You could have struck me down with a feather. Actually, half a feather might have done it. Or maybe a very small piece of yarn? <sup>245</sup>

Ella, I could see, was equally taken aback. She wasn't gaping open-mouthed at Edmund like I was – proper ladies don't do that sort of thing – but she had definitely turned an even whiter shade of pale than she normally was. <sup>244</sup>

"M-marry?" Her voice was almost inaudible over the so wind which had picked up, and which rustled the leaves in the trees as well as the so folds of her dress in an appropriately romantic manner. "But how... Aunt Brank would never agree!" <sup>244</sup>

"I asked you to run away with me, my love," Edmund reminded her, his voice gentle but firm, his gaze never leaving her face. "That means she wouldn't have to agree." <sup>240</sup>

"But... go against the wishes of her and all my family...?" <sup>247</sup>

"Yes." <sup>247</sup>

"Shame them before all the world? Hurt them in such a way?" <sup>248</sup>

"Yes, my dear. For love, it must be." <sup>240</sup>

Hell's whiskers! He's really going to do it! He's really going to take advantage of your poor, innocent little sister and whisk her away. <sup>246</sup>

Getting stealthily to my feet, I prepared to launch myself from the bushes if he made even one tiny move towards her. <sup>246</sup>

A rake! That's what he is! A dastardly rake!

I knew what was coming next, of course. I had heard Anne and Maria discuss romance novels o en enough. Next, he would grab Ella and carry her o into the night. But he didn't reckon with me in that equation! The moment he touched her, I would be ready to take up the chase!

Of course, there's the small matter of the fence between them, so you probably won't have to hurry that much. <sup>248</sup>

"Are you in earnest, Edmund?" Ella whispered. "Do not toy with my heart. Would you really make me your wife, if you could?" <sup>246</sup>

Grasping her hand, he stepped forward. I prepared to jump out of the bushes, but he didn't move to touch any other, strictly restricted, parts of her. Instead, he fell to his knees, bowing his head over her hand and kissing it so ly. <sup>244</sup>

"How could you ever doubt it?" he demanded. "For years I have admired your beauty, your charm and your loving nature. My love for you has grown and blossomed ever since it first sprang to life. Now that is has come to full bloom, nothing will stop me from making you mine. Will you do me the honour..." <sup>241</sup>

With a small sob, she pulled her hand from his grasp. I could see her face as she turned from him, towards my hiding place, her arms wrapped around her slender body as if to protect herself. <sup>247</sup>

"This," she said in a quivering voice, "has gone far enough." <sup>248</sup>

The words may have been weak, but on Edmund they fell like a hammer blow. I was almost disappointed not to see a substantial bump swelling up on his head. <sup>242</sup>

"W-what?" <sup>240</sup>

"I said, this has gone far enough." She turned back to him, and as she did I could see the moisture on her face glittering in the moonlight. She seemed to have an endless supply of tears tonight. Dear me... This love-thing had to require an enormous amount of bodily fluids. <sup>241</sup>

"Please," she continued, "do not torture me further by actually asking me. I could not bear it." <sup>243</sup>

His voice in return was broken. Utterly defeated. "You no longer love me then." <sup>245</sup>

Ella twitched as if she had been hit by a whip. Rushing forward, she grasped the poles of the fence. <sup>247</sup>

"Of course I love you, Edmund. More than my own life!" <sup>243</sup>

His face came up, displaying a whirling mix of hope and despair. <sup>246</sup>

"Then you will come with me?" <sup>248</sup>

"No! I cannot!" <sup>240</sup>

"But Ella, my love... I... I do not understand. If you love me, if you really, truly love me...?" <sup>241</sup>

Ella leaned her head against the fence. She didn't seem to have the strength to hold it up anymore. The wind tugged at her hair and pulled a few loose strands of her hair through the iron poles, onto Edmund's side of the fence, as if everything in her was straining to go to him. <sup>248</sup>

How come the weather is so bloody romantic? Why isn't it raining buckets out here?

"Edmund... I cannot find the words to answer you. But I do not have to. The poet has already given me my lines, which I tell to you now: Yes, I do love you. Desperately, with all my heart. But I could not love thee so much, Loved I not honour more[1] <sup>248</sup>

Behind the bushes, I cocked my head, trying to find the logic in her last statement. I thought it was pretty darn da , myself. Somebody had written thatdown, and been published? I would never fall in love myself, of course, but if I did, I didn't think honour would enter into the equation in any major way. Honour, respectability – they were mostly nicely sounding terms for means of curtailing a girl's freedom. Really, I loved my little sister, but sometimes she really could be a silly goose. She should just say yes to the fellow and- <sup>249</sup>

Hey! What are you doing? You're supposed to not want her to run away with him. <sup>247</sup>

Oh, right. No! I definitely didn't want that!

"Don't you see?" She reached out to tenderly touch the hair of the broken man kneeling in front of her. "I'd rather cherish my love for you as a tender, secret memory, than do what I know to be wrong. Yes, I could go with you now, and spend the rest of my days in bliss, but where would be the good in that? Far better that I marry Sir Philip, knowing that I have done right, preserving the honour of my family and of yours, than destroy them for earthly happiness. I might spend the rest of my days in misery, but at least I will do so with a clear conscience." <sup>248</sup>

Um... All right... <sup>242</sup>

I had always suspected that my sister was, on some level, completely o her rocker. It was gratifying to have one's suspicions confirmed. Besides this purely intellectual gratification, though, I could not receive much satisfaction from the fact. <sup>241</sup>

Though he might in general have a higher opinion of her degree of sanity, in this case, Edmund seemed to share my views. <sup>248</sup>

"I'd prefer the earthly happiness," he told her outright. <sup>246</sup>

A week little smile appeared on her face. <sup>249</sup>

"That is your warm heart, overwhelming your better nature, Edmund, and I love you for it. But please, do not tempt me any further. It pains me to refuse you." <sup>247</sup>

"You can still say yes." <sup>248</sup>

"No, I cannot. We must not see each other again, Edmund. I will become Sir Philip's wife... and you..." <sup>250</sup>

She closed her eyes for a moment, and I could see the next words would be the hardest for her. <sup>248</sup>

"... and you go, find yourself a girl that is not bound. Do not let yourself be dragged into misery. Find love, be happy. Maybe, I can continue to live, just as long as I know that you are happy." <sup>245</sup>

"But I cannot be happy without you, Ella! Not ever!" <sup>247</sup>

"Do not say such a thing, Edmund! It pains me!" <sup>244</sup>

Then why the heck is she smiling through her tears?

I scratched my head, nonplussed. This love thing was obviously more complicated than I had thought. Oh, I was so glad I didn't have anything to do with it myself. <sup>240</sup>

"I will ask you one final time, Ella." Slowly, Edmund rose to his feet. Her hand slid into his, and he held it firmly. "Will you elope with me?" <sup>248</sup>

She shook her head. <sup>248</sup>

"No." <sup>240</sup>

"You refuse to go against your aunt's wishes in the matter of Sir Philip?" <sup>247</sup>

"I beg you, Edmund, understand. I cannot!" <sup>248</sup>

"Shh. Don't be anguished, dearest. I understand. I understand, my love. You cannot go against your gentle nature." He sighed. "Then there remains only one thing for me to do." <sup>242</sup>

"Y-you will do as I ask? You will move on?" <sup>247</sup>

In spite of the fact that she was trying to a ect a cheerful manner, I could see the fear in her eyes. <sup>243</sup>

Pressing her hand again, Edmund shook his head. <sup>248</sup>

"No. I shall go out and buy myself a pistol. In the morning, I shall call at Sir Philip's residence and challenge him." <sup>248</sup>

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**My Dear Lords,Ladies & Gentlemen,** <sup>246</sup>

**Tensions are mounting in our little back garden romance! ;-)** **If any of you, my fabulous fans, happen to ask yourselves which poem is the one that Ella is is quoting from during the above chapter - the wonderfully logical line But I could not love thee so much, Loved I not honour more[1] fabulous example of romantic thinking, is taken straight from the 1649 Renaissance poem Going to the Wars,which was written by Richard Lovelace before - surprise, surprise - he went to war, and was addressed to a certain lady called Lucrecia. Here's the whole poem, in case you happen to be interested:** <sup>245</sup>

**Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,** <sup>248</sup>

**That from the nunnery** <sup>248</sup>

**Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind** <sup>240</sup>

**To war and arms I fly.** <sup>248</sup>

**True, a new mistress now I chase,** <sup>247</sup>

**The first foe in the field;** <sup>249</sup>

**And with a stronger faith embrace,** <sup>248</sup>

**A sword, a horse, a shield.** <sup>248</sup>

**Yet this inconstancy is such** <sup>248</sup>

**As thou shalt adore;** <sup>248</sup>

**I could not love thee, dear, so much,** <sup>245</sup>

**Loved I not honor more.** <sup>242</sup>

**Translation: "Sorry sweetie, but a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. I love you and all, but I have to go to war and kill a lot of bad guys before I can get back to you. (I actually managed to make my translation rhyme!) The line quoted in the text above has been applied to all sorts of situations where duty comes before love.** <sup>241</sup>

**Now... do you think Ella needs her head examined? ;-)** <sup>244</sup>

**Yours Truly** <sup>240</sup>

**Sir Rob** <sup>240</sup>

Continue reading next part