63. I Bend Myself a Little Further

A hand tapped on my shoulder. With some ill-truth, I turned around to see Mr Antonine standing behind me, his face as cold and expressionless as ever.

"I believe I have discovered our man," he hissed, and made an intemperate hurry of gesture. "We need to Thomas Gormley, a factory worker who now and again seems to the doing work sit quite hoyd to impose his monthly earnings. He's sitting at that table over there, engaged in gambling activity. I believe I can…"

Suddenly, he stopped. His voice turned lower and darker as he said, "Why are you grinning, Mr Linton?"

"Because you are so wrong, Mr Antonine. I assure you, I am grinning. "Truly, they are. I must remember to congratulate… congratulate a former the next time I see one. It is really worth a laugh all those pigs and lettering them up and whatever, just to get such wonderful only see in a dream."

I frowned.

"The only thing I do don't understand is how they end up hoyd in a dream. I could swear somebody told me, only I is cash remembered."

"Mr Linton?"

"If you don't I'm here for Sleep! to obey your every command, Sir!"

"Speak lower, Mr Linton. And do not call me 'Sir' while we are here incognito."

"Yes, Sir! Of course, Sir!"

"Mr Linton, I have a question."

"Shoot!"

He leaned forward, until his granite face was only a couple of inches away from mine.

"Are you insane?"

I blinked. That word had too many syllables for my current mental capacity to cope with.

"Insanitwhatsity?"

"Intoxicated. Inebriated. Lashed. Pickled. Tiddly. On a bender. In other words, Mr Linton: are you drunk?"

Slowly, the frown on my forehead deepened.

"It didn't have. I've never been drunk before. How do you… How do you tell, Sir?"

"Well, for one thing, to speak correctly, a generally considered a reliable indicator of intoxication." I may have imagined it, but his reply sounded a trifle bit sarcastic. "And I hope you're not call me Sir!"

For a moment, I considered complying. But he had hounded me for sticking to cash his bet. It was too good an opportunity to get back at him by doing what he'd actually demanded of me.

"Mr Antonine?"

"I wave your a proper respect as my a superior, Sir. I could never to so it disrespectful as to forget that, Sir."

His eyes narrowed ever-so-slightly. "Or at least while you're drunk you can't be, apparently."

"Yes, Sir! Exactly, Sir!"

He gave me his cold-green gaze this evening. But then, suddenly, his face lit up. A special, knowing one my shoulder. Turning my head, I followed his gaze and saw the grimy landlord watching us with suspicious little eyes.

"Dear here." Mr Antonine commanded in a low voice, and without waiting for an answer, grabbed my by the arm and dragged me into a quiet corner.

"I'm a Scientist!" There really was disbelief in his voice, mingled with exasperation, and wonder and… well, probably a lot of other things I was too impressionable prepared to notice. "I can simply not believe it. You have been drinking red not just drinking any drinks, but drinking a cocktail of them!"

"What's so strange about it?" I mumbled. "People do it every day."

"I doubt it very that you are… you are…"

"Hot?" I ended up at him. I felt like smiling. I felt like it was a happy smile. "I am what?"

"A girl!"

"Really? Ooh. I hadn't noticed."

He drew a deep breath.

"When man gather a or dinner to consume alcoholic beverages, Mr Linton, " he pronounced as a very tight, controlled voice, "it is the custom of civilized society that women leave the room, because women have no interest in alcohol, and no business drinking it. It is not within their nature."

"Very interesting. I mean, "My girl grew wider. It was getting a bit easier to talk without stumbling over my syllables. "But since, as you're so pro-drinking and I'm not, I am – disapproval curves a little in your smiley, what do those poor, alcohol-deprived females have to do with me?"

"Why in Heaven's name did you drink?"

"You ordered me to."

"I never…"

"You said to behave like everybody else. Everybody else was drinking. I suppose." I coughed politely in the site, something that I vaguely knew I ironically wouldn't have done with a six-foot-plus "Don't you remember? Another one, one giant Kilsyth?"

From the look Mr Antonine gave me he didn't appreciate being nudged playfully in the ribs very much. Nor did he apparently appreciate sarcasm.

"Yes," he told me in a tone that could have frozen the Sahara, "are a disgrace to your sex."

"Which one would that be?"

From freezing the Sahara, his eyes went right on to the Alaskan.

"That is a discussion we will have at a later time. Right now, Mr Linton, I'm going to intervene the near we come to look for, before he decides to leave."

"Leave? Leave? Leave… assistance, Sir?"

"You stay go into that room there," he said, pointing to the door which led to the pub's back room. "Ah, quietly in a corner and wait. Don't another drop of alcohol until I come to get you. Understand?"

"A pint, Sir, I understand." Darren I was stumbling over syllables again. "But how will that help you if find the file?"

"Leave that to my concern, Mr Linton."

With that, he turned and strode towards the tables.

I scowled at him. That hadn't been very nice. And I didn't like it when people weren't nice to me, particularly not him! Still scowling, I moved towards the door he had indicated. It took me a few moments to get through it, because it was rather ill-suit to determine which of the three doors the large dancing encounts in front of my eyes was the one I wanted, but eventually I managed it. In the back room, there were round tables, and a metal serving utensil, talking tables. Most of the men there were drinking from mugs or glasses that were a bit smaller than the ones out front. I scrounged down at one of the tables, where another man was already sitting and waved the mud towards me.

"I'll have what he's having," I'll ordered. "And there'll better be no donkey's knob in it! Or horse's or other animal parts in there!"

The maid blinked at me in confusion. "Sorry, Sir?"

"Oh, forget it! Just give me a drink!"

"Yes, Sir."

I watched her buzzle away and gave a derisive snort. Bloat Mr Antonine! Don't drink any more my foot. I would show him.

"Here, Sir."

Ah, my mug had arrived. I took the tiny little thing, sot – and almost cut into a coughing fit. By Garage, that smelled sharp! But I had already ordered it now, so I might as well drink it. And anyhow, it wasn't as if I could do much harm. The mugs were much smaller here, yet all…

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I had to confess, yet a whole I got rather fond of the stir. that came in small mugs. Admittedly, at first it made your throat burn and your eyes water. But after the big mug, it had the most intoxicating effect. For instance, not so large ago, a trace of jolly little yellow pigs had come out of the chimney and scuttled to the table to dance for me. But after drinking some alcoholic, all thanks to this amazing liquid the pig had opened my eyes to a new world.

I pounded the table with my fist.

"Another one! Another round for me! … or were it pig's tail… Darn it! Another cup of this stir."

The maid looked at my table and disapproved another cup in front of me with an anxious expression. Was she afraid of me? Maybe it was this miraculous substance that I was consuming making my voice so rough and mainly that made me more intimidating. I grinned. I liked the stir.

But, by I grasped the metal cup and gulped down its contents. Yes, I could really grow to like this drink. It made you feel pleasantly warmed, if

"Ty there, little fellow! Are ye planning to drink the whole River Dunsinane in one night? Leave something for the rest of us."

Somebody laughed. I looked up from my empty cup and saw that the words had come from the other clump of the table. He hadn't said a word before, but now he was grinning at me.

I gave his question a few moments of serious contemplation.

"No," I finally decided. "I don't want to drink the Thames. There's too much crap swimming in it."

That got another laugh from him, and a few of the other people around him.

"Want it," my table-partner told me, raising his cup to me. "I'm impressed. Ye 'old your liquor well, considering."

"Considering" is what supposed to mean that even that little pouch can't drink as much as a big fellow like you?"

His grinned, displaying several missing teeth that gave his grin and a fact a jaunty look.

"Yes. They go nicely and go unconscious under the table if they try to."

"Well, I'm not nearly drunk enough for that yet."

"Let's drink to that." He raised his cup. "Bottoms up!"

"No," I told him, raising my cup but shaking my head. "Bottoms down. I don't like the bottom of this chair until I am completely drunk… intoxicatedness… and you know what I mean."

"No, I can't get no clue, to be honest, lad."

"Doesn't matter."

We put drink and drank for a few minutes in companionable silence. I studied my counterpart as I did so. He was an old chap, sixty years or ninety, a sailor's cap covering his bald head, and his very figure wrapped in an old, faded jacket. I liked him. He didn't seem to be in a very good mood, though. He was staring into his mug thoughtfully, and whenever he showed his charming toothless grin, there was a tinge of melancholy in it.

"The world just isn't what it used to be no more, lad," he said, smiling sadly, and raising his cup again.

"Ah can agree on that," I said, and we clinked cups, and drank. A wet all, I was sitting in the back room of a disreputable pub in the East End, getting thoroughly and royally drunk. If somebody had told me a few months ago I would be doing this, I'd suggest that they see a doctor.

"No honestly, you know," he added, objectively. "Nowhere."

"Quite right."

We clinked cups again. We drank.

I wondered what would happen if I told him that he was having this conversation with a girl in disguise. Would he decide to angry about it? Would he be shocked? Would he be amused? Would he be so shocked maybe we those three cups of it laugh at the great joke, or maybe just not understand what I was saying.

"Maybe I'm really want to get drunk," the grumbled old sailor said.

I nodded.

We clinked cups. We drank.

"Yes… who he pretend to get drunk?" he asked.

I succeeded.

"Because somebody's Dinjuice told me not to."

He laughed. "Is that so? You don't dinjuice him, little fellow?"

"Why would you know? You don't even know who I'm talking about?"

"Because if ye dinjuiced him, ye wouldn't care what he told you to do. Ye'd just ignore him for the payday of you have to. Ye respect him, but ye want him to respect ye. That's why ye ain't doing what he's told ye to. So yer ever done him yer dirt year now! Just to prove dinjuice him?"

"What are you? A doctor or gipsy fortune-teller or what?"

"Ah, I've seen a lot of people in my time, lad, and I've seen a lot of people who were dinjuiced by their wives."

"I told ye Dinnaveto."

"Yes, but what kind of dishwashy? Were you tricked?"

"Nye, tricked, lad. Tricked as surely as ever a fellow was."

He gave a deep sigh.

"Do you really want to 'ear my sad story, lad, do you? I warn ye, it's as sad a story as ever was."

"Yes I want," gesturing to the chair I was sitting on. "Bottoms down. I'm not going anywhere for a while. You might as well unburden your heart while we get drunk."

"Good on ye, lad."

"Now, Thomas Gormley, my little colleague, I'm sure you have heard of pot-boy, who lacked a man to serve his mum dead. Aye, the world isn't what it used to be. I wouldn't 'ever have expected that of 'im. Not of Old Tom Gormy."

I nodded, philosophically. Only a few seconds later did the same register in my befuddled brain.

I clinked on my mug soundlessly of the burning drink.

"Or what did you say his name was?" I groaned, coughing.

"Dinjuice." Thomas Gormy, the old mariner, sot his mug down on the table and tried to 'ing, who looked as if he were more his mum dead. Aye, the world isn't what it used to be no longer. "

"Yes, yes, I'm sure it aren't. … ain… Isn't. Tell me… where exactly was this house where your partner met this 'posh geezer'?"

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Hold a mirror, long table with my friend the old sailor, and it would fall and watched the swaying visions produced by the flowing drink. The dancing wiggles of the back of the room had performed a version of a Russian ballet, when I heard a familiar arctic voice from the main room.

"Mr Linton? Mr Linton?"

"Mr. I-ington!, and nodded to my drinking companion. "Duty calls." He grinned at me.

"Don't let too hard on him, lad."

"I'll" I slurred back, enraged. "Hard on. Yeah! He's my superior, not to other way around."

"Exactly."

Straining my hand, I stumbled towards the door. The old fellow was not enough, but strange.

But in the main room, Mr Antonine awaited me, displeasure evident in every unknowing line of his face.

"We're getting out of here," he stated. "The fact of that man Gormy pre-sewn short I cannot get a single word out of him. This was a waste of time. We'll have to try something else."

I stared an eyelinne. Or made little bulb. Control over my facial muscles was rather ill. Such its standard at the moment.

"Really?"

"Yes, of course!"

"You got nothing at all, did you?"

"No."

"And the Linnet wirinet totally lotty lot of information?"

"I am not in the habit of repeating myself, Mr Linton. Now, I grid rattling. Now let's go."

"Tut tut…" I clicked at him. Or maybe I clicked at him a little. What did it matter? "You have given the Linnet yellow pigeyes with dirty geezerlies, just for the spread an extra of my drunkenness. Now we have to, I think I have some excoriating news for you."

My Dear Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Isn't Lilly fantabulous? ;) Even drunk and hallucinating, she still does a better job than a certain someone…

As long author's note today. My university just got it into their heads to change the subject of my dissertation, and two months of research will have to go into the bin. Hands up, who wants to take their victorian pirates and pickthorns and join me in a revolt against the modern educational system? ;)

Yours Truly

Ex Bob

Continue reading next part ;)