## Skills

358 a

ď

**601** 

a<sup>8</sup>

333 a

*A*31

a<sup>2</sup>

å

₫¹

ã

đ

å

a⁴

**a**<sup>6</sup>

a

284 a

đ

209 a

a<sup>5</sup>

đ

**a**7

219 a

**3**99

á<sup>7</sup>

å

á

ď

**209** 

**54**K

322 a

ď

å

<del>12</del>5

ď

a<sup>4</sup>

183 a

ã<sup>7</sup>

å

**å** 

å

á

á

**191** 

å

ď

a<sup>8</sup>

a<sup>8</sup>

a™

ā¹

đ

**ā** 

á

å

a¹⁰

ď

ã

**3**86

768 a

635 a

**5**03

å

185 a

₫

a<sup>4</sup>

665

å

đ

á

292 a

**a**°

å

a<sup>k</sup>

á

á

a<sup>2</sup>

á

ã

ã

168 d

**Yours Truly** 

Sir Rob

71. I Polish my Housebreaking-

Nothing happened. Nothing at all  Those were the last words he had spoken to me that night. Leaning out of the chaise, he had flung a command at the porter, who'd hastily opened the large outer gate of the back yard. I had yanked open the door on my side and clambered in. The driver hadn't needed prompting a er that, he appeared to be well familiar with Mr
Ambrose's distaste for wasted time.  "Gee up!"  The cry of the coachman was followed by the crack of the whip.  Seconds later, the coach lurched forward and we were rattling over the cobblestones, out under the massive archway into the street. The blurry shapes of gas lanterns rushed past us, like ghosts on their way
to the underworld. I wondered if any of them could be bothered to stop and haunt us, maybe rattle their chains for a few minutes or something like that. Mr Ambrose certainly looked like he could use the company.  He was staring out of his window, his face turned away from me. He was even more cold and taciturn than usual. What was the matter?"
"Mr Ambrose?" Silence.  "Mr Ambrose, Sir?"  More silence. Really quite extraordinary silent silence.
But then, why should that surprise me? This was Mr Ambrose I was trying to talk to, a er all. Still, for some reason I had expected him to be more talkative. I had expected him to want to talk about something. something important. The memory hovered on the edge of my consciousness. Once more, I reached up and touched my lips. In his icy, silent corner I saw Mr Ambrose shi , almost imperceptibly.
Had I had we?  No. I just couldn't remember.  The streets rushed past as if in a dream. The houses shrank, the streets narrowed. No more palatial mansions and memorable marble façades, we were now driving past honest middle-class homes, the
comfortable little brick houses of greengrocers, shoemakers and probably also piano-tuners and their sons who had ilicit a airs with young blonde ladies.  "Oh gosh," I mumbled. "I almost forgot about them!" My gaze wandered to Napoleon who was sitting between me and the ice-cold statue in the corner that was Mr Ambrose.
"You couldn't take care of that for me, could you?"  The emperor shook his head sombrely. I sighed.  "I thought so. Blast! You're an abominable slacker, you know that, don't you?"
Mr Ambrose slowly turned his head towards me. His gaze cut into me like a deep-frozen razor.  "I didn't mean you," I clarified. "I was talking to Napoleon."  Mr Ambrose turned his head slowly away from me again. He didn't speak.
"Where to exactly, Sir?" called the coachman from the box. It seemed Mr Ambrose hadn't given him an exact address. I perked up. Surely, now he had to open that stubbornly silent mouth of his.  Wrong. He sat in the corner, staring silently out of the window, just as before.  "Err Sir? I ain't got no idea where to go!"
Nothing but perfect silence came from the granite monument at the window.  Raising my hand, I knocked against the roof of the chaise.  "Driver?"
"Yes, Sir?"  A strange feeling ran through at me at having somebody else call me 'Sir' – the same hated respectful address I had been forced to give Mr Ambrose day a er day, week a er week. I felt a surge of power rush through me at hearing the word.
"Do you know St James Square?" I yelled over the rushing wind.  "Yes!"  "Take us there. I can find my way from there."  "Yes, Sir!"
He turned towards the street again, and I settled back into the seat, a contented smile on my face. Napoleon nodded at me, approvingly.  Not long a er, the chaise began to slow down, and we then came to a halt. Looking out of the window, I saw the familiar three and fourstory houses around St James Square looming up out of the darkness. Only in a few windows light was still visible.  I turned to Mr Ambrose.  "Well I guess that was it, then," I mumbled.
Silence.  "I don't suppose you want to congratulate me on my excellent work?  You know, finding the place where the file is for you, and all that?"  More silence.  "That's what I thought." Sighing, I pushed the door open and
clambered out of the carriage. I was careful when I set my foot on the cobblestones of the square. St James was familiar, a friend – completely unlike the floor in Mr Ambrose's o ice. Still, you never knew. Tonight, all flat surfaces seemed to have it in for me.  I already wanted to walk away, but then I hesitated one final time.  "Mr Ambrose?"
Silence.  "Good Night, Si-"  "Driver!" he cut me o . "Get moving!"  Behind me, the whip cracked, the grey horse whinnied. I jumped out of the way, just in time to avoid getting sprayed by the chaise as it drove through a puddle. It raced across the empty square and out of
sight as it plunged into the darkness of nocturnal London.  *~*~***  Said darkness of nocturnal London proved a not inconsiderable hindrance in reaching my uncle's house. It wasn't far away, of course – most of the streets were lit by gas lanterns and I knew the area well – but I had never considered how di erent things might look at night.  For example, there were all those pretty lights dancing in the air
around me. Were they there every night? If so, I should be out this late more o en. London seemed much more interesting at night-time.  There was a strange pounding in my ears, getting louder as I stumbled forward. It was probably Napoleon and a regiment of cavalry, riding o to conquer the world. Oh, well, I wished him luck
with all my heart. I probably had to abandon that particular project. I felt so tired Conquering all the world seemed too exhausting an idea.  Maybe you could take over just half the world? Or only Eurasia?  Yes, that sounded acceptable. But the rest would have to wait until
Finally, I found my way to the little wooden door in the wall surrounding my uncle's back garden. A er some groping around in my pockets, I managed to unearth the key and insert it into the one of the three fuzzy-looking locks that proved most substantial. Safe inside the garden, out of sight of prying eyes, I slipped into the shed
and changed my clothes. Taking the garden leather with me, I approached the window, gazing up at the mountainous height I had to climb.  Ha! I would climb this peak! And if I was going to perish like all the brave explorers before me, who had boldly ventured where no man (or woman!) had gone before, then so be it! I had been planning on conquering the world, a er all. Climbing a ladder would be easy.
Well, it didn't turn out to be, really, but I managed to hit the first rung with my foot a er only three failed attempts. A er that, things got a bit simpler. I climbed higher and higher until suddenly, there loomed an opening before me. What was this again?  Your window, you idiot!
Oh yes! Quite right. I wanted to climb through the window into my room. That was why I was up here in the first place. Funny how that had almost slipped my mind.  Through the window, I could see Ella. She was sitting in bed – in my bed, to be precise –anxiously twisting the sheet on my empty mattress between the fingers of her small, ivory hands and staring
down at my rumpled pillow.  "Lill," she sighed, again and again. "Oh Lill!"  Strange Why was she trying to talk to me, when from what she knew, I wasn't even there? And why was she up in the middle of the night? She should be in bed, recuperating from an evening of tiring love a airs at the garden fence. But there she was, sitting, awake, and
for some reason, apparently quite upset, too.  Taking the last few rungs, I swung my leg over the window-sill. When Ella heard a sound coming from the window, she sprang up and whirled around, clutching her hands to her chest. Her mouth opened to scream as she saw a sinister figure climbing in through her bedroom window.
The sinister figure, that is to say I, sprang forward and clamped a hand over her mouth.  "Be quiet, silly! It's no burglar, only me!" I hissed into her ear. "If you scream, you'll chase the little yellow piggies away!"  Her whole body relaxed in my arms.
"Mmpf! Mgmpf Nmm Mpf."  "I suppose that means 'Hello, Lilly, how nice to see you'?"  "Mmmpf!"  "I see. It's nice to see you, too. If I let you go, do you promise not to scream?"
"Ympf!"  Seeing as that was the closest approximation to a 'yes' I was likely to receive, I took my hand from her mouth. She turned to face me, grabbing me by the shoulders. Her eyes were large and moist with panic.
"Dear God, Lilly! Where have you been? I was expecting you to come home hours ago, and I waited, and waited, but you never arrived. I've had to tell the most dreadful, fiendish lies to explain your absence to Aunt. Where have you been?"  "I?" A small laugh escaped me. "I was with the little yellow piggies.  Alexander was there, too."
"Little yellow what? And who is Alexander?"  "Alexander the Great. Haven't you heard of him? Spi ing chap, absolutely spi ing."  Ella sni ed.
"Lilly? What is that smell?"  "Smell? I don't smell anything. What do you mean?"  "That smell It smells like the tables at balls where the drinks for gentlemen are served"  Her voice dwindled. Slowly, the colour drained from her face.
"Lill! No, you can't have! Lill!"  I smiled broadly. She remembered my name! It was so nice that someone did. Mr Ambrose never called me by my first name, let alone a sweet nickname like Lill.  "Yes, my delightful, dear little sister?"
"Lill, have you" She lowered her voice until it was only a hushed whisper, deserving of a dark and dingy crypt where human sacrifices were conducted by some strange oriental cult as suitable surroundings: "Have you been drinking?"  I pondered the question carefully.  "Yes," I finally decided, nodding to emphasize the point. "I have. In
"Yes," I finally decided, nodding to emphasize the point. "I have. In fact, I have it on the reliable authority of a professional drunkard that I have emptied the entire River Thames. I must confess, I had no idea my belly could contain that much liquid."  "Lill!" A moment later, I was in Ella's arms and she was rocking me from side to side as if I were a small child that needed comforting.  "Oh my dear, dear, sister, tell me, who is the man who has done this
"Oh my dear, dear, sister, tell me, who is the man who has done this to you, the rake who has led you o the path of virtue and intoxicated you? I will help you, I promise!"  She continued to rock me like a baby, making cooing noises all the time. By Jove! I had no idea she felt so strongly about me. That was gratifying. But I was also slightly irked by the fact that she thought I needed a man to lead me astray. I was perfectly capable of straying
needed a man to lead me astray. I was perfectly capable of straying from the path of virtue on my own, thank you very much!  "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid, Lill! I will go to him, make him leave you alone. He will never bother you again, I promise!"  There was a lump in my throat. Oh dear God. Was this really happening? My little sister Ella, sweet, innocent, shy little Ella was willing to face down a dastardly rake for my sake? She had a hidden
emergency reserves of courage that she had tapped now, for my sake, to protect me from the villain that was dragging me into a cesspool of iniquity. Never mind that the villain only existed in her imagination – this was touching.  She truly was the best sister one could wish for.
Yes, she is, but maybe she could stop this infernal rocking!  Very true. The motion made me feel woozy all over again, and once more, stars started dancing in front of my eyes. Ella's voice seemed to be coming from a distance now  "Who is he? Oh Lill, please tell me. Who is the man? I know it may be hard for you to concentrate right now, but you really need to tell me.
hard for you to concentrate right now, but you really need to tell me.  Can you tell me anything? What he looks like? His name?"  "Napoleon"  "Napoleon? Dear Lord, he is a Frenchman? No wonder you're in such a state! Did he touch you? Did he hurt you? Lill, you poor thing, do you remember his last name?"
"Bonaparte," I mumbled, gazing at the stars dancing across my bedroom ceiling. "You know, the emperor? The little chap with the funny hat and the hand glued to the inside of his jacket."  "Merciful God, Lill, you're hallucinating!"  "Am not!" I protested. "He was there! He was! Ask the little piggies if
you don't believe me."  "Lill?"  My head slumped to the side. The world around me started to shrink until all I could see was Ella's anxious face.  "Lill, stay with me!"
Now there was only the anxious tip of her anxious nose, surrounded by darkness.  "Lill!"  And then there was nothing.
My dear Lords, Ladies & Gentlemen,  In preparation for the great competition of this year, the Wattys 2015, I will be holding a contest of my very own! Quite a few of you, my fabulous fans, have inquired what exactly Lilly and Mr Rikkard Ambrose look like. I could just pick some famous actors
which might resemble them, but instaed of doing that, or instead of using my own modest drawing skills to create an image of our favorite Victorian couple, I would much prefer to get a chance to see what YOU believe the two of them should look like;-) Thus, I challenge you all to a drawing competition:
I, Sir Rob, would like to see portraits of our favorite Victorian couple hanging on the walls of my beautiful (& fictional) Victorian

lone ces that dea ted ave en sake, ol of ed to ne. uch s if ink led ys ead ur to rian ster to the utmost of your ability, my Lords, Ladies & Gentlemen! The subject of the art contest will be 'Lilly and Mr Ambrose fighting for the Wattys'! You've got TWO WEEKS (until the 22nd of July, to be precise) to create a beautiful artwork and post it on Twitter, with the profile name @StormNSilence in the tweet text so I shall be able to see and retweet it. And in case you happen to be a little bit less artistically talented than Leonardo DaVinci, and don't have absolute confidence in your painting skills? That's no problem either! You can help choose the winner of the contest by sharing and retweeting your favorite pictures! The images that manages to receive the most retweets shall win! Voting will be open up until July 29. The winning images shall be displayed on the wall of my Twitter account (with your own portrait and your name beside them, if you wish;), and the winner of first place will also get an exclusive "Storm & Silence" sneak peek! Continue reading next part □