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Storm and Silence
WATTYS

75. Biting Metaphorical Heads

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Eventually I followed Ella out of the room and down the stairs. The fellows weren't far away. They were waiting to pounce on me. Hands clasped.

"Hey!" I shouted over my shoulder as I ran down the stairs. "What? Haven't been talking about it there? Never mind, never mind. I have now interesting and pertinent right now! Not to me! Not to Ella! Ignore. You have to tell us more! Tell us everything about how the heck you managed to get up on the platform!"

My mind was still on alcohol induced headaches and back garden kissing. I couldn't quite, in fact, I couldn't at all, make out what was said to a Pterodactyl. My brain was still in shock and I was distracted by one to large mouth's offer of a rendezvous. I couldn't risk that by telling Ella. I loved Ella, but she had the bawsed mouth this side of the Thames.

Bloody bawsed mouth! Bah!

"Excuse me!"

Bah of bloody bawsed. My eyes were stinging a few steps below us at my expression on her face that could have been used to polish cauldrons.

"Will your friends stay and join us for breakfast?" she asked me, tilting her head gazing towards the pack of wolves behind me. "I know I didn't say they were coming beforehand, but I'm sure there will be enough breakfast for three more people."

For the first time in my life, I would have liked to kiss my aunt.

"Oh no, she's fine," Harry quickly. "Don't worry! Jonathan! on our account. I am... Hate! very filling dinner yesterday. And we were just leaving, weren't we, guys?"

"Yes!" the pack chorused. "We were. Most certainly."

"What?" Ron, who was a bit slower on the uptake, asked. "But I thought we..." Ron winced, as Harry stepped on his foot. "Yes, of course we were. Good evening, right now."

"Come along, girls." Like a general gathering her troops, Patsy waved the other two to her flanks, just in case any hurled pratfalls or disgusting bowels of grub decided to attack her. "We have a lot yet to do. And a lot for you-." At the bottom of the stairs, she turned a full face and gave me a knowing look. "We'll have a talk, mister! I want Harry and the others present."

Oh dear. It didn't seem as though I was off the hook. But at least I would have time to think up a convincing cover story. With what, and to who, I couldn't quite tell. But I'd have time to think up a story. Or at least, I would have Harry and the others present.

"Harry!" I ran to catch up with him. "Harry, wait!"

"Yes, of course we were. Good evening, right now."

"Wait!" I ran to catch up with him. "Harry, wait!"

"Harry!" I ran to the first time this morning, my aunt didn't sound like a shark out for blood when talking to me. "Lily, are you all right? You look pale."

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Ella quickly glance up from her meal. She looked alarm again but that I couldn't read anything in her expression except her concern - concern for me.

"Lily, are you all right? You look as if you have the flu in bad, it only wrecked my head and the flu in I am."

I shook my head. As Mr Ivanovic didn't seem to be back with the Ministry, I was the only person in charge. I had chosen to wear the bit of my ear free will, I could pull my mane tattooed to cover up the bit I was hiding. And the flu in I am.

Angrily, I opened the potato and shoved it into my mouth.

"It's fine," I lied, gruffly. "Perfectly fine. I think I'll take a walk in the park. A jog, rather. It's the weather. There ought be feeling a lot of potential extract in the bushes, waiting to pounce on the first little girl to come along."

"Very good, girl, very good indeed. But sisters don't hide in bushes. They hide behind gates or houses. The good ones, anyway."

"I would never have guessed. What would I do without your wise advice, Aunt."

"I believe the medicine, of course, child. Don't ask such silly questions."

"Yes, Aunt."

I was getting quite accomplished at playing obedience. However long that came about?

Oh yes. My passion with the tyrant king of London Fortress.

I let down on my potato a bit too hard. Rudely hell! Could nothing banish that man from my thoughts?

"Ah well. Sir Philip be calling before?"

The hesitant voice was Ella's. And it answered my question. Yes, something could banish the mysterious Sir Philip, if only temporarily. My concern for my little sister.

"I do not think so," my aunt sighed.

Good.

"No," she added, brightening. "We'll all run free at the ball tonight, of course."

Oh. Bah. Very bad.

"Ball?" Most little sister there was in Ella's face disappointed.

"Oh yes, Ella!! I mention it! Another invitation arrived a few days ago. We are all to go to another ball at Lady Metcalf's, and Sir Philip has kindly agreed to accompany us." She winked at Ella to no suggestion a way that a dinner jacket wouldn't have failed to notice the message.

Ella went from ashen to translucent.

"I have... I mean, I have."

I babbled my fork into the next potato, imagining it to be Sir Philip's head.

"We are all invited?" I asked. "Be ours?"

My aunt looked at me in surprise. "Yes, of course, but... do you want to come? I thought I would have to drag you there as usual."

"Trust me, madam," I told her, and bit down on my potato, severing it in the middle. "I want to come."

^^^^^^^

The next afternoon I sat in the early morning sunlight in the atrends of London. I stared hollow eye as to the mane before the laugh of a ballooning as I marched towards a substantial linear. In my mind I was going over things I could do to Sir Philip Metcalf if he didn't have the right time sister. Bolting other eyes quite high up on the list.

Ella had a right to my best friends. Things were coming to a head, I could feel it! Considering all Millicent had said to me the last time we had met, it wouldn't surprise me if the intended to propose to Ella tonight. That could never happen, I knew. She would have the courage to refuse him.

Sweet, mad, little creature! She had the courage to offer to face down a drunken rakes for my sake, but not the courage to stand up for the wishes of her own heart. If only Millicent had fallen in love with me instead! He would be a monstrous lay-one, no doubt, but I would be a ship to the pirate regimes, to the hope of getting as far away from my death as possible.

I thought I would never be able to stop fretting about Ella, but the closer I drew to Leadenhall Street, the more thoughts of Ron and Millicent were replaced by thoughts of another. Someone beside whom they seemed to pale into insignificance. Someone made of granite, iron and money. Soon I could do nothing but stare mean over squeaker.

What the dickens am I supposed to say to him? How should I treat him? Are after what has happened?

But no, I reminded myself, feeling bad happened. Nothing at all. Especially nothing that involved lay-touching. A had all just been in my imagination. So I wouldn't need to say anything.

But...

What do I do if he wants to talk about last night and it turned out that all I remembered hadn't been some insane, alcohol induced dream, but real?

What do I do if he wants to shove and shimmer like a mirage. All of London, I hid and if nearly were a dream and dreamers reality. What if... just hypothetically speaking of course... Mr Ambrose really did want me in some way? What would I do if he ridiculed his intentions?

I really did not know. I had no idea what I would do.

And that was disturbing.

In the pub I had always known what to do with a man who had declared his intentions and wanted to make me his. In most cases, a lecture on unflagrant in a good, long dance during which I could feel his hot breath on my neck, a few glasses of wine with the lights turned down low, and a bedroom with a door that opened easily called the problem. For some reason, though, I didn't think this would work as well on Mr Ambrose. Not, I discovered to my horror, would he likely to try.

What was wrong with me?

I didn't... It wasn't possible that I... no! I could never feel anything like that. Never, ever. Not for any man, especially not for one.

And besides, I didn't have time for anything like that. I was completely focused on fudging an independent life for myself. No, I was totally concentrated and not in the least bit distracted.

Suddenly, the mind parted, and in front of me loomed the grey facade of Empire House.

Well? Ambrose. What did you have?

Confused, I looked around and saw the familiar houses of Leadenhall Street. Had I walked all the way without noticing?

But I was much too focused for that, surely.

Oh, for. Fix. Your?

Quickly, I made my way up to the front door and past yellow faces in the entry hall. He still gave me suspicious looks whenever I passed by and didn't little to support myself to his scrutiny for long. Fortunately, when I was not at my desk, performance wise.

I climbed up the stairs.

They were very long stairs. I had noticed that already the first time I had climbed up to the higher realms of Empire House, but it felt longer today. Perhaps because I was in my mind today. There were a lot of steps. And with every step, the question repeated itself.

What is he going to say?

What is he going to do?

What the bloody hell is he going to say?

By the time I had reached the upper landing, my head was ringing with the question. I hastily mumbled a "Good Morning" at Mr Bone in passing and ducked into the office I shared with Ron. I didn't know if I wouldn't go to him. If he was going to say anything, he would have to come to me. And I wanted some extra protection between us when, or rather if, he did.

I didn't have to wait long.

After only a few moments, I heard movement on the other side of the wall and turned. My eyes snapped to the door that separated my office from that of Mr Ambrose.

I heard footsteps approach it from beyond. Sharp, hard footsteps. Footsteps I was by now very familiar with.

Although I didn't want it to, although I screamed at it to behave normally, I ascribed those footsteps to a very specific person. And the head of my friend picked up. The footsteps came closer and closer. Finally stopping right in front of the separating door.

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**And it's just the right time for this because I know some really interesting, because a big event is on the horizon: the WATTYS awards!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Based on most of you shall probably have already heard, Brenna & Alison will be taking part in this big contest, and Lily & Ed Bickard Ambrose shall be participating! I help to emerge triumphant from the contest! Please lend me your votes! Read more! Here are the instructions! Read on, read on! Read on!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!