73. Victory Party

With a cry like a hunting hawk, Eve burst into the room and jumped onto my bed with a force that jarred my teeth and made little fireworks of agony explode in my aching skull.

"Lily, where have you been? We waited for you, hours a-the event yesterday, and searched all over the place for you, and asked about but they told us you lie in a coach and we didn't know where you were so we came back here then we didn't come home until we didn't know where you were again and waited some more but you didn't come so we decided to go home when I got sick but we were so worried and you much never do anything like that to us ever again, understand? We all so terribly angry with you!"

She hugged me as if I were her favourite kitten and pressed a kiss on my forehead.

"Yes," I told her. "I can see how terribly angry you are."

"Shut up! You're worse! I already person! Did you know that? I'm you probably did, but just in case you didn't, I'm going to tell you: you're a genius!"

She hugged me again. Over her shoulder, I could see the figure of our anyone better, Leadhead, pin his hobbled down the landing and respectfully stopped at the open door, not daring to enter a lady's room.

"Forgive me, Miss, but these... females simply forced their way into the house and insisted on seeing you. Thought I'd better..."

"It's no problem, Leadhead," assured him, while attempting to duck out of the way of another infant hug. "They were worried that I'd be lost, I could take right now. "They're my friends. You remember Patsy, don't you? She called by last month to tea."

The old butler opened his mouth to give a reply, but you had to be quicker than that to be part of the conversation while Eve was in the room.

"Yes I'm a genius!" the burst out again. "An absolute genius. You know, at first we were in a large with you or you to or something in Great Park - Patsy was foaming at the mouth!"

"We was!"

"Yes, and I didn't know what to do, take her to the cheat for rabies or go or you and try to bring you to your senses or something else, even here a million cities flying around in my head at the same time, you know how it is."

"I can guess."

"But we had already made the signs, and we couldn't just not go through with it because you had the jitters."

"Very admirable. But Eve..."

"I should have known any attempt to stop her was in vain.

"And then we showed up then, and you separated up on the stage, all dressed in men's clothes, and gave a speech. It sounded kind everybody listened And cheered! Long live La rugaari Oh Lily!"

She hugged me again, but this time, I wasn't hoping to fight her. My attention was focused on Leadhead, who was still standing at the door. There were two red patches on his normally pallid face, and his eyes were about to pop out of their sockets.

"Stressed is a word, I suppose." Mere Lily! What in the world is name...?"

"That's another, I guessed, hastily planning a hand over Eve's mouth. eager mouth to shut her up. "It was character We were playing charades."

"Oh I see, Miss." The old chap's eyes retreated into their sockets, his face cooling. Having, no doubt, been faced with all the mischievous a sensible servant could murder at the upper classes' strange habit of dressing up in sorts of stupid costumes for fun. "Well, be so kind as me, Miss, to begin/gin you and your young friends your amusement."

"Thank you, Leadhead."

"Do you require anything? Master's old hats and coats? His Indian turban? The old cook's apron?"

"No, thank you, we're not planning on playing charades right now, Leadhead."

"I see, Miss. Well, I'll leave you to it, then."

"That would be nice."

The old servant turned with geological velocity. When he was almost facing the door, he turned to look back over his shoulder and almost toppled over in the process.

"By the way, Miss, breakfast is almost ready. I shall begin serving in a few minutes, so you won't lose long."

"I'll be down directly," I assured him.

When Leadhead was outside and the door was closed, Eve couldn't hold it in any longer.

"Oh! Bronte! Knowing dame dockbiz lot di this gizt tonic..."

I removed my hand from her mouth, and she grabbed me by the collar of my nightshirt.

"Lily! Are you mad? You're not going down to breakfast in oil and pot dress gloves! Everyone your uncle puts on the table! You're staying here with us to celebrate, do you hear me? If you try to leave, I'll personally hit you on and gag you!"

"Which would rather get in the way of my celebrating," I pointed out, squeezing my eyes shut and wrinkling my nose. "Eve, I promise, I'll that felt good. My headache was much better already. Apparently, I just the right stimulant for the cure of thing. I let a cup of tea, You couldn't ask for more. I'm sure everything is fine. Well, I'm sure I wasn't, but, by now, I'm sure it will be fine. Now, if you don't mind, I'm starving. I'm sure there's a cake in the kitchen, and another twenty to get to the dining room table with all the pies, bowls and platters. We have plenty of time."

"So... we can celebrate now?"

"Yes," sighing, I let myself fall back into bed. "We can celebrate."

"Tiggong!" My hands took stinks in an iron grip and more or less wrenched me out of bed. These seconds later I was dancing around the room in my nightgown, a little/gin/ka an an over-energetic dance partner.

"We showed them! We showed them! We showed them! Well, technically it was you, but who cares: We showed them! We showed those Inaccurate pen's! Uhhhh... sorry! Jackdaiaria! Yuuuuh! Yeuuuh!"

All I saw of the room were a few wildly impressions as Eve spun me around like a top. Occasionally, I would catch sight of Eve's anxious face, happy, Jane, and Patsy's smile from where she stood in the background, leaning against the window, watching my impromptu dancing lesson. All this twirling around wasn't doing much good for my messy head, though. I saw lights beginning to flicker at the edges of my vision.

"Eve! Eve, stop!"

"We showed them! We showed them! We showed them!"

"Eve! Hold Patsy!"

"We showed them! We showed them! We showed them!"

"Eve! I said stop!"

With all the force I could muster, I dug my heels into the ground. Unfortunately, the force I could muster a or a night out on a bender wasn't all that great. Eve seemed into me and we landed on the floor in a confused heap of cotton gowns, sheets, hats and shouts of "We showed them!" You hadn'a give Eve cash for being determined.

Spitting out the end of a silk shawl with purple peonies printed on it, I left us.

"What the dickens did you do that for? I challenged Eve. Sitting on her derriere, her crossbred Ashtonal underwear/tie, Jane glistening at me broadly.

"We showed them! We showed them! We showed them!"

Apparently, she wasn't quite ready for sensible conversation yet.

Scrambling to my feet, I turned to the other two. Flora gave me a shy smile, and Patsy - Patsy just stood there, leaning against the wall beside the window, in the background, where she was normally least likely to be found. The smile on her face was small, but unmistakably there.

Eve spoke not.

"Eve, I am banned. I curse forward. The rest of the room didn't exist anymore. We met in the middle, and she caught me up in a hug so fierce it could have squashed an elephant into mincemeat.

"Lily!" Eve said.

"Yes?"

"I never should have doubted you.

"Thus the jiggs!"

"Oh, Sorry." Relaxing her grip, she stepped back, but I held on to her arms.

"Don't be," I gasped. "I needed that."

"Oh Lily, Lily." If I hadn't known better, I would have said there were tears twinkling in the corners of Patsy's eyes. But I did know better. She was much too tough to cry, right? "Lily: You mad, ingenious, wonderful girl! Why didn't you tell us what you were planning but of?"

Planned it! Planned what? Why were they all so pleased with me? And then it struck me. She was convinced I had called in my participation in the demonstration to go up on that stage and hold that speech. Not anything else.

Actually, I hadn't planned a single little thing in the last week the way I had turned out, but I couldn't tell her that. I could see in her fiery eyes that she had gotten it into her head that all had been part of my master plan. Of course, Patsy was not at a loss to go up there on her own.

"It was risky," I said, with an apologetic shrug. "I... well, if I'd told you, you all would have felt obliged to take part, and there was a much greater chance of success if only one of us had to go up there on the podium. In any case, as soon as one of us started her speech, all eyes would be on the speaker, and it would have along with her. So, a solo assumption just made more sense."

"Sure I agree." Patsy hugged me again, so to this time, but with unbearable warmth. "You are a genius."

I looked up into her broad face with wide, watching eyes. "Sir I'm forgiven?" I asked, and wasn't able to keep the quiver totally out of my voice. This was painfully familiar territory, and I felt a sense of my quarrel with my biggest, fastest friend. Not to have Patsy having a quarrel with me. Not to be having a fist-on-the-hood - a cold and unpleasant feeling.

There's nothing to forgive," she told me. "You're my best friend, and always will be. Nothing will ever change that."

"Very! And what about me?" Eve protested from her floor level.

"Yes," Patsy laughed, "are my most annoying friend, and will always be. Nothing will ever change that, and we promised never to quarrel. Tried to educate and restrain you."

Eve learned at the compliment, and I pattered to her feet. Then she suddenly clapped her hand with her forehead. "Oh, where did I leave my hatbox yesterday? We brought you something!"

"A present?" My face lit up, and it only hurt a little bit. The day was getting better already. "I love presents! What is it?"

Maybe a piece of solid chocolate...

"No, not a present as such..." Patsy warned at Flora, who retrieved something from behind her back, where she had stashed it along with her hands for the last few minutes. "Rare a memento of sorts. A trophy of a victorious battle."

Taking the object from Flora, she handed it to me. I stared down at the black piece of artifacted in my hand, and confusion must have been evident on my face. Patsy smirked.

"Turn it over."

I did. And there, in large, bold letters were the words:

VOTES FOR WOMEN, TELLERS... OR ELSE!

I didn't know what to say.

But I didn't need to, really, because Eve did all the talking that was humanly possible.

"You didn't answer me before," she accused me, tapping on my cardboard. "Where were you? the wasted again and again and again for you to return, and you never did? Where did you go? What did you do? We wanted to celebrate with you so badly, and to bicack you on the head for doing something like that without telling us, but we couldn't Where did you go? Were you abducted? Held prisoner?"

"Eve, I'm fine. I'm back in the seats to the previous night. A driver shut down my spine, and I had to mediate myself from touching the lips again.

"Lips... no. Neither of those."

"Well, what happened, then?"

Relaxed Ambrose. That's what happened.

"Nothing really. It just took me a frightfully long time to get away from those men. They had a lot of questions, none of which I answered. They went away."

I shrugged.

Eve gave me a disapproving look. "Is that all? I expected at least that you were held captive in some dark dungeon miles under the city where a group of conspirators determined to prevent the no-right movement from rising up against the corrupt world of men tortured you into revealing all of your secrets. Nothing happened, then?"

"No... no. Sorry to disappoint."

But I don't thought she would be disappointed if she knew the truth. I thought she would be relieved and even an and so regret concerned if I told you everything. Ambrose, Ambrose, Ambrose, a little fight in the East End and a mind-blowing, toe-curling encounter with Ambrose.

No! Don't think about it! That part was a hallucination. It was all completely imaginary. And even if it wasn't, under no circumstances are you ever going to reveal that to Eve!

Thank you. Thank you so very much for this. "Holding up the lips I mean, I didn't know what I was doing. I was in a daze. I didn't even know I was alive in great sense. "Yeah, I'd be fine. I... I think it's about time for me to go down to breakfast." I started towards the stairs in earnest, but Eve was quicker. She blocked my way, neither to pull make my escape.

"Oh no, it is not over yet by half. We aren't getting away so easily in that. Do you know how many unanswered questions we still have?"

She indicated the other two, who surrounded me like a pack of jackals.

"Don't! Or maybe two?" I suggested, hopefully. Crap! I had to get out of here before I started stumbling over my own lies.

"At least a thousand. For starters, who was that man?"

"What man?" I asked, hoping to hell they wouldn't realize my jitty ears burning.

"I'd assume." Lying back her hands, if she polished her back and added a threatening-looking grimace. If there had been any doubt in my mind as to who she meant before, it was gone now. "The one everybody treated as if he were the emperor of China, France and India put together. The one that gave that monstrous speech. He had a face like Vivi" With her fingers, she pulled her mouth even farther, until it was almost nothing but a straight line. "And he stared at you like he had iceberg for eyes, and would freeze/melt you if you didn't agree to every single little thing he said?"

"Oh, Man," I coughed. "Um... yes, now that you mention it, I seem to remember a man like that."

"I don't think he looked like that, though." Flora dared to point out, thoughtfully regarding her a facial contortions. "I think he looked much more handsome. In fact," she added with a slight blush, "I found him very interesting."

A second later, she quashed under the punishing glares Patsy gave her.

"Anyway in case, Flora Mere! / we promised Jeremy." Then she's in a convey of the cause! Minus our eight would-be knights and a lot of eligible women!"

Flora's cheeks reddened - though not half as much as mine did. Blast Why was I blushing? I had nothing to be guilty about, did I? Well, did I? He is misogynist, and arrogant, and a bigot, and a...

... except when he's kissing you.

Luckily, Eve was still too firmly on the trail to notice anything wrong with my face.

"You still haven't told us who he is," she said, narrowing her eyes at me. "And up on the platform, he introduced you as his secretary. How on earth did you get that of a ?"

I opened my mouth - and no convenient lie came to mind.

Of all the times I needed a series of creative and believable excuses, I couldn't think of one. Why Eve - and Ambrose - chose to call me Ambrose? Bugger! Nothing was visible anywhere nowadays.

"Well?" Patsy aped me curiously. "How did you manage it?"

I were standing with my back against the door, the three of them surrounding me, with no escape in sight. And just Eve and Patsy were burning with curiosity, too. Even Flora had stopped blushing and was staring at me. She never stared at anyone. She thought it was rude, and that this was enough reason not to do it. But now she was staring at me.

I met my Eyes.

"I... um..."

My Dear Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The time has finally arrived: The moment has come to CAST VOUR VOTE for your favorite artwork in the great "Storm & Shower" Art competition (4 drawing, paintings) and other assorted Illustrations. Please take a moment to look through the entries from my Twitter account for all of you to see. In order to cast for the your favorites among all the fabulous portraits of your favorite Victorian couple & Jhon Reg choose the whom, please go straight to my Twitter profile, located at

http://twitter.com/TheUrbanSoft, just click on the artwork link, or google "TheUrbaN", which happens to be my Twitter username! and retweet the pictures/ which you think should win!

The voting period will last until next Wednesday. The Ambrose & Lilly portrait with the most votes shall win!

Yours Truly

Ez Rob

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