

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Oliver woke surprisingly early the next morning. More than anything he wanted to roll over and go back to sleep, but he could not. Frustrated, he finally rolled onto his back to get out of bed. However, as he had been lying on his side, he had not realized how close to the edge of the bed he was. He hit the floor with a thump and promptly burst into laughter. Patrick came running, still in his own nightclothes, and blinking blurry eyes.

**Comment [NK1]:** I think that the word "burst" does well by itself.

"Are you hurt, Your Majesty?" he asked, trying to force himself to fully wake.

**Comment [NK2]:** Is this to be capitalized also because it is a title?

"Y-yes." Oliver laughed. "I-I will b-be f-f-fine." His laughter subsided as he climbed out of the tumble of blankets that had fallen to the floor with him. Oliver could tell this was going to be a good day. There was nothing like a good laugh in the morning, especially when he had caused it himself by being so clumsy. "Go back to bed, Patrick. You need not attend me just yet." The smile stayed on Oliver's face as he tossed rumped blankets and bed sheets back into the bed and then collapsed into a chair by a cheery fire that seemed to have been lit not too long before.

"I am awake now, Oliver," Patrick said, accusingly. "I will not be able to go back to sleep. So I will dress and find you something to wear for the day." He passed through the door into the changing room. Oliver sat for a moment, smiling foolishly at the fire. Then he jumped to his feet and looked out the window. He had just realized how dark it was and wondered what time it was. But as he looked through the glass and up at the sky, he realized that it was merely dark from all the clouds gathering. He Oliver knew there would be snow by the afternoon at the latest, and he could not stop himself from grinning.

**Comment [NK3]:** Qu: Is Patrick allowed to say his first name casually?

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**Comment [NK4]:** Qu: Maybe another verb usage would be good because of the repetition of "it was," "it was."

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Patrick appeared moments later with Oliver's clothes. Finding himself eager to be out and about, he dressed quickly and made for the door before he realized that Patrick had not yet

finished tying his cravat, and his hair ~~had was not been~~ combed from the odd shape it ~~had~~ formed itself into during the night.

**Comment [NK5]:** I think it would sound better without the helping verbs.

Breakfast was a highly amusing affair for Oliver. He felt giddy and excited about everything. Everyone else seemed excitable as well. Many talked of the many engagements; ~~while;~~ ~~Others~~ talked of the upcoming holiday and their own plans. What was not mentioned, until later, was the disappearance of Lord Hyden who was not missed for several hours. Very few of the guests seemed to notice his absence, and even fewer asked about it. The story spread that some urgent business had carried him away early. Nobody seemed extremely distraught by this news, and the atmosphere was one of relaxed enjoyment as the guests returned to the decorations, now mostly complete, and hung them around the castle. Footsteps of ladies' maids and valets could be heard running to and from the upper rooms as they prepared the trunks for the departures of the following morning.

Though people were eager to be together as much as possible, the tension of realizing this would be their last day together made them energetic and eager to do everything they could to enjoy the day. The excitement among the guests was too vast for them to settle down inside. ~~And~~ ~~s~~Soon people could no longer concentrate on making ~~the~~ decorations either. ~~So;~~ ~~D~~espite the snow that was beginning to fall, the guests were ~~soon~~quickly outside letting off the extra energy by ice-skating or having snow fights. Many of the ladies were amusing themselves by making other shapes in the snow, along with the angels that Constance had first showed them. Oliver watched for a while as they knelt in snow banks, patting down snow around them until a shape appeared. Then a nearby gentleman would help the lady to her feet so she could step back and admire her work.

**Comment [NK6]:** I changed the adverb because I modified the sentence prior to the latter sentence to begin with "Soon."

Supper was a more subdued affair, guests confirm~~ing~~ departure times with each other

and discuss~~ed~~~~ing~~ their long journeys home. Promises of invitations for other affairs and balls were spoken of among the ladies as though they longed to be together again as soon as possible.

**Comment [NK7]:** I changed the ending so it could be parallel with the first verb you used.

Oliver was convinced many new friendships had been ~~created~~~~bonded~~ during this party. Never had he attended an event where the guests had so easily attached to one another.

**Comment [NK8]:** I felt like this was a strange verb for this description.

Oliver was not looking forward to going home. The only thought that sustained him was the knowledge that Constance would follow in the not too distant future. That evening, after supper, Oliver sat in his room watching Patrick fill the trunk. Most of the guests had returned to their chambers immediately following supper as they wished to oversee the packing their servants were currently involved in. "Patrick, do you ever wonder what it would be like if Analee were not nearby?"

Patrick hesitated a moment, then continued his packing. "You are already missing the Princess." It was a statement, not a question. Oliver, looking out the window, sighed and left his position to sit on the edge of his bed.

**Comment [NK9]:** I love this paragraph! I think it does a wonderful job of painting the picture and then you sigh with Oliver.

"I hardly know what to do with myself, Patrick. I have never been in this situation before. I wish that –" But he was cut off as an earsplitting scream erupted from somewhere in the

corridor. Oliver jumped from his bed and sprinted for the door, ~~with~~ Patrick in close pursuit. ~~But~~ ~~before~~ either could reach the door, laughter met their ears and they stopped short. Looking at each other, confusion obvious on both faces, Oliver ~~wrenched open the door and looked~~ into the

**Comment [NK10]:** Since it was used in the sentence prior, I thought "Before" could stand on its own.

hall. A number of people ~~were standing~~~~stood~~ in the hallway around a very distressed looking young lady. Lady Marietta, one of Princess Marian's ladies in waiting, stood in the middle of the group, large tears rolling down her cheeks. She was saying something and look~~ed~~~~ing~~ frightened, but Oliver could not understand her. Moments later, Constance joined the group, looking as though she was trying to suppress laughter.

**Comment [NK11]:** Wrenched and looked, I feel like imply different energy, possibly you could keep wrenched and change "looked" to "scanned the hall."

**Comment [NK12]:** Another possible parallel change.

“Do not cry, Dear.” she said calmly as she came to the center of the group and put an arm around Marietta. “It cannot hurt you.” Oliver tried to figure out what Constance was talking about. Moments later, one of the Pendleton twins came among the group, holding something cupped in her hands. Whatever it was gave a large croak, and most of the ladies jumped back.

The twin, however, laughed and said, “I caught it.” She passed what she was holding to Constance, who held it up where Oliver, who had now joined the outer circle of the group, could see it. A toad sat in Constance’s palm, croaking and looking at the crowd around him. In an instant Oliver understood.

“He got away.” Analee’s whisper, cracking with suppressed giggles, rang in Oliver’s ear. She had come up behind him.

“Analee, you did not . . .” Oliver began, whispering as well and barely moving his lips as he watched Constance stroke a finger along the toad’s back, explaining to Marietta that it really was not going to harm her.

“No, I swear it was an accident, this time.” Analee whispered back, still holding back a giggle. Oliver could see her shaking beside him, trying to look innocent and not attract attention.

“This time?” Oliver raised his eyebrows as he finally turned to look at her.

“Well, I let him out on purpose yesterday. He needed some exercise. ~~r~~ ~~a~~ And nobody was around. So I let him hop around a bit, and then put him back in his box. But I think he got out while I was trying to pack your mother’s things this evening. I’ve been searching for him for quite a while. I’m glad someone found him.” The sarcasm in Analee’s voice made Oliver look at her with both eyebrows raised and a quirk of a smile. Analee slapped her hand over her mouth to hold back the laughter that wanted to escape now that she had finished her whispered explanation.

**Comment [NK13]:** This was such a funny instance! I thought this was a great scene to give the reader a hint about Constance.

Once Constance seemed to have calmed Marietta, guests began retreating to their rooms. Oliver turned to go back as well, Patrick having already entered the bedchamber. But as Oliver stepped through the doorway, he looked back just in time to see Constance slip the toad back to Analee. The two shared a knowing smile and then hurried in different directions before anyone else could notice the strange exchange between them. Oliver frowned and entered the bedchamber.

**Comment [NK14]:** This is a great moment to have Oliver notice the exchange, I'm getting curious with him too.

“Patrick, has Analee always been this informal with all royalty and gentry?” Patrick looked up, confused. Oliver quickly explained what had just passed and what he had heard in the library the previous day.

Patrick pulled out a nightshirt for Oliver and began to help him undress. “I do not imagine Analee would be so informal with royals outside our palace. I suppose she may have let the princess know the toad was hers and she simply wished to have it returned.”

**Comment [NK15]:** Qu: I think it would be good to have an explanation because Analee is usually informal with Oliver and so is Patrick.

Oliver was not satisfied. “But what about the library? Why the conversation and the informality?”

“I could not say. You could question Analee, Sir. Should I go fetch her?”

“No, I want to sleep. I will ask my own questions when we return home tomorrow.”

Patrick hesitated and then nodded.

**Comment [NK16]:** Qu: I think it would be good to have the end of this section with Oliver's thoughts. Unless you are going to be bringing it up later in the chapter, which would work great also.