

# LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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**PER ARDUA  
AD ASTRA**  
Gil Cole

# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

## PER ARDUA AD ASTRA

By

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love Has No Boundaries* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a free gift to you.

### What Is Love Has No Boundaries?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what they do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love Has No Boundaries*.

Whether you are an avid M/M romance reader or new to the genre, you are in for a delicious treat.

### Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

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# PER ARDUA AD ASTRA

By Gil Cole

## Photo Description

Two Royal Flying Corps Officers look out at the night before one of them goes on a dangerous mission the next day...

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*\*coughs\* Excuse in advance some very fetish points in my request.*

*Possible name: Lost Planes*

*Possible plot line: Incest - father and son (if not then age gap)*

*Genre: Historical, Military. HEA*

*They never dared admit their true and mutual feelings. Until the war brought them together. Closer than ever, they must survive and become clear about their relationship. The decision may free them or destroy them.*

*Please, let sex be at the highest level!<3<3*

*PS: I mean an adult man and his father, not an underage boy.*

*Sincerely,*

*Vessto*

## Story Info

**Genre:** historical

**Tags:** military men, BDSM, age-gap, oral, anal

**Word count:** 13,751

# PER ARDUA AD ASTRA

By Gil Cole

“Listen a moment, Freddy.” Hugh gently pressed his hand across the younger man’s mouth, just now set with apprehension. “I’m right here. There’s no need for any fuss.”

Freddy inhaled as he shut his eyes, taking in the familiar mixture of Hugh and a trace of soap with—what, lavender? yes, that was it—and his nerves settled. When he opened them, he looked into Hugh’s eyes and nodded. “I know. It is—it is simply that I’m frightfully attached to you, you know. I can’t—”

“Then we won’t. Look.” Hugh pointed to the night sky outside the window of the small, tidy room at the King’s Arms that had been their sanctuary, their secret, their kingdom, their solace, since their Corps Wing was stationed at Larkhill for training. Though not at its fullest, the moon shone brightly on them. “Listen to me carefully. Do you see how the light falls on us now?”

Freddy gazed through the window a moment and saw how the moon silvered the village. “Yes.”

The older man said, “Be here with me, now, boy. Look at me. There is only this moment.”

The younger man tightened his grip on the man he held. He leaned down and kissed him.

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The orders had come down that morning. These last six weeks, their Wing had flown reconnaissance missions deep into occupied France. Their skills had been duly noted. Most noteworthy was the fact that their Wing took the lightest burden of casualties. Of course one wants to demonstrate one’s backbone and serve one’s King and Country, but the result of showing that one has the steel to put on a good war was that Command seemed determined to test that steel even further.

Hugh Penderby was a man everyone thought would rise in the ranks, to Colonel easily, and beyond. He was to lead this first sortie. Freddy Llewelyn-Jones had just made Captain. Both were first-rate pilots. From his very first flights, Hugh showed an instinctive skill for new feats, things that no men had attempted before, that it was uncanny. While some dared call him reckless, none questioned his valor. Lately he was valued as a man with an eye to sort out the weaker fellows, those who sought glory but hadn't enough stuff in them, and train them for missions that demanded more than ever of His Majesty's airmen. He had spent the last year training the best of the new flyers at Larkhill. Freddy served there with him.

They'd been at the same school, nearly together. It would be most accurate to say that Freddy had idolized Hugh from afar, when Freddy was a snout-nosed first former, and Hugh was going up to Oxford the next year. Hugh had all the graces, including the grace not to lord it over the other boys who lacked what he'd been given. He even wore the coarse nickname his awe-struck mates had given him—Huge Pendulous—with aplomb. That nickname fascinated Freddy long before he understood precisely why it was so appropriate. And when finally his innocence was disturbed, he was overjoyed.

That happened on a halcyon summer's day, two years before the world and everything in it went to pieces.

Freddy was rowing in the Summer Eights for Balliol. Hugh, in his day, had rowed for Magdalen, and never missed a chance to exhort his college on to glory in the races. Neither college's crew managed to make Head of the River in any of the five races so far, getting bumped each day. University College maintained their position as Head of the River and was looking very strong to take the laurels altogether. After a raucous commiseration with his fellows, Freddy felt the familiar wish to get away, his usual urge for solitude. He was not a morbid fellow, not one to shun the company of the good men in his college, but there were times when nothing would do but to seek out the quiet he found in the woods. He put some provisions, a blanket and a bottle of ale, in his rucksack and set out along the wooded track by the river. The afternoon

light sifted through the pale green canopy of early summer. The heat of the day was past, and a breeze set the forest to whispering.

At that hour most would be taking their tea. Freddy didn't expect to encounter any other seekers after solitude. His path ran close along the bank of the river where he spotted Hugh, standing in the aft of a punt, pushing along, for all the world as if surveying his own domain. Freddy scanned the scene around them before turning his gaze back to the man on the boat. Though it had been several years since he saw this man's silhouette, sufficiently long ago that it was before Hugh attained the zenith of a man's maturity, Freddy knew he'd seen him before.

The first impression Hugh left on the younger man had persisted so strongly that, from time to time, and always with the wishful promise of something more, he had intruded into his dreams. Chins like Hugh's can have that effect. And that profile, like the charioteer of Delphi. Heroic traits like these can be a burden. They mark a man, and force something on him that may be welcome or not, but demand to be contended with. Hugh contended with his gifts with modesty and confidence, for it was in that spirit that he accepted them. It wasn't but a moment before Freddy realized just who that strapping figure on the punt in the river was, only a few yards from where he stood. He stopped, wondering whether he ought to call out.

His indecision hardly mattered. Hugh had the acuity of a hawk, and the moment his gaze fell on Freddy, he steadied his boat in the water. The golden light was on the verge of turning a soft mauve. There was no one else on the river. This mattered only somewhat to Hugh, who had the confidence openly to admire a beautiful youth he came across in the woods near college.

He pushed the punt toward the riverbank and called out. "I say, weren't you rowing today? What college was it? Wasn't it—Balliol, I want to say."

"How extraordinary. Yes, I was among that unhappy few today."

"Yes, bad luck. Still, you put a good face on it. It's the bump that will sort things out."

"And we've been sorted, worse luck. My last year, too."



“Ah, well. It’s the spirit of the thing that counts.”

“I hope you won’t mind my saying so, but I know you. Not that we’re acquainted. I mean to say that I know who you are. Weren’t you at Harrow? Aren’t you Hugh Penderby?”

“Well I’ll be blown. Yes, I am. But how on earth do you know that?”

“I was a first former the year before you came up to Oxford. You were, how does one put it? You were the chap one aspired to be.”

Hugh smiled with appreciation. His afternoon was proving to be of great interest. “How is it we didn’t meet until now—?”

“Freddy Lewellyn-Jones. Sorry. Don’t know why we would have met, really. You took your firsts several years ago, I imagine.”

“Quite right. Longer ago than I care to mention. “He grinned. Freddy’s interest seemed genuine, so he continued. “I found my way to what was called the Air Battalion Royal Engineers. The Sappers. Never cared for that term, I must say. The Royal Flying Corps, now, which suits. I’m at Chatham. A bracing life, doing one’s duty and all, but one misses certain particular pleasures that won’t easily be found in such surroundings.”

“But you’re not in—”

“No, left the khaki behind. I’m in mufti for the weekend. And what of you, young man? What particular pleasures do you seek? What brings you to linger alone in a mystical wood in the summer twilight?” Hugh grinned at the absurdity of his poetic effusion.

Freddy blushed. Hugh tied his punt to a slender tree and lightly jumped up to the path. It was not lost on Freddy that this handsome man had just purposefully interrupted his river voyage to move closer him. There had been no lovely girl at Hugh’s feet in the boat, no basket with champers and sandwiches, no parasol to shield coy lovers’ kisses. Freddy quickly formed a distinct impression of what Hugh may have sought that afternoon away from the throng.

So he turned to Hugh and squared his thick and graceful shoulders and met Hugh's frank eagerness with an invitation. "I have no other commitments this evening. The clamor of the crowd was a bit much for me. This always has been one of my favorite walks. From this day forth, it will be my *ne plus ultra*, for I can't think of a fellow I'd rather meet here than you."

Hugh took in Freddy's level gaze, dipping deep into the blue pools of his eyes, and noted an acceleration of his pulse. "By Jove! You are a chap of direct and economical means. And handsome."

Hugh put his hands on Freddy's shoulders, drew him close, and kissed him. Freddy's mouth had the clean salt taste of an active youth, untainted by any use of tobacco, and he'd refused the consolation of the loser's cups. He still had the fresh alive scent of an athlete who'd exerted himself manfully that day.

Their mouths met easily, comfortably. Freddy felt the older man's broad back as he slid his hands up inside the striped blazer, to the damp warmth of muscles well used and ready. They drew themselves tightly together for a moment then broke away to scan the forest around them.

"Well, Mr. Lewellyn-Jones, I'm not about to let this moment pass without more, much more. Do you—?"

"Yes, I do. This way. We'll retrace our steps later. Your punt will be fine as it is."

Down the path, beyond a bend in the river, a smaller path led away, deeper into the forest, to a tumbledown shack, no more than an enclosure now, overgrown with bracken and ivy, its roof half fallen away, but sufficient to shield the men from the view of any passersby.

Freddy unfastened his rucksack, drew out the blanket, and tossed it on the ground. He turned to Hugh. "I have something to drink if you—"

Hugh stopped his mouth with a kiss, drew Freddy into him forcefully. The younger man clasped his neck, then his torso, then his face, as if in his excitement he couldn't decide how to feel this man's power swiftly and deeply enough. Freddy broke away and peeled Hugh's blazer off. Hugh unbuckled his belt, the dove-grey flannels dropped, and he stepped out of them. He lifted

Freddy's jersey over his head and knelt to untie the knot in his crew shorts. Freddy slid his hands across Hugh's shoulders and kneaded the muscles that were lightly furred with gold. Freddy was standing at full attention, and Hugh buried his face in the ginger bush before him, took in the young man's scent, and his hands cupped the full ivory spheres of Freddy's bum. Hugh looked up.

Freddy stammered, "I—I—you have no idea—"

"Oh, my young friend, I believe I do. I have a very good idea."

With that, Hugh turned his eyes back to the proud prick that already bore the glistening proof of Freddy's joy, and he licked it off, flashed another crooked smile, and then took all of Freddy deep into his throat so swiftly and firmly that Freddy nearly lost his balance. His knees buckled and he fell softly backward onto the blanket. Hugh stayed wrapped around Freddy's body and after hungrily taking all of Freddy into his throat, he explored each ridge and fold of his young manhood with his tongue. He snorted with joy as he licked his way around the ballsack, deep into the musky groin, tasting the salty bittersweet of his sweat as he found his way to Freddy's hole. Then Hugh straightened up. He knelt above Freddy, helped him to remove those remnants of clothing that remained—a sock, his own undershirt.

Freddy spoke again, "I mean it, Hugh, you have no idea what this moment is for me."

"My boy, if I can read a man by the way he makes love, then I think I do. This is a rare day, a rare moment."

His own cock, thick and arching upward, conveyed his excitement clearly. He looked down at Freddy, whose breathing was so quick and whose face was nearly frantic with joy. He was stricken a moment. Tears, suddenly tears. He brushed them away and fell on top of Freddy again. Their wrestling kisses stopped when Freddy, now atop the older man, slid down to take Hugh into his mouth. He could manage only part of the huge cock, but the taste of Hugh so inspired him that it required no effort to leave it dripping and glistening, and then the rising frenzy newly kindled inside allowed Freddy to produce enough slick wetness to prepare his hole.

He straightened up, straddled the big man beneath him, and knelt poised to take all of him deep inside of himself. He looked into Hugh's eyes, sparkling now with amazement.

Hugh murmured, "Well, you're a fellow who knows what you want, aren't you? Take it. By all means, take it. That's for you. Take it."

Freddy rocked back, felt the head of Hugh's cock at the opening of his hole, the pressure, inhaled deeply, released the air and pushed down onto the big man's prick. He shouted with joy at the burning acceptance, pushing up deep inside of him. He knew that the way to take a man as large as Hugh was to want it, to want him inside more than anything.

"Oh god, yes. Oh god, to have you inside me. Oh god, yes."

Hugh held Freddy's white flanks as the younger man rode him, slowly at first, then as he opened up more completely, faster. And as he rode, he squeezed his muscles around that beautiful big cock, squeezing as he rose up, releasing as he plunged down again, filling himself with the man's bigness, feeling the strength burning deep within him. He felt the mounting urgency of his own crisis rise, then subside, as he rode. Their eyes locked.

"Oh, you beautiful boy, ride me, it's for you. That's for you."

Freddy reached round and cupped Hugh's balls as he rode. Hugh had taken each of Freddy's nipples and pulled. Freddy bounced more frantically the more Hugh pulled.

"Oh god, I'm going to come. You're going to fuck the come out of me. Oh god, you're going to fuck the come out of me!"

"Yes, yes, ride me. Ride my cock, boy. Ride me, boy. I'm going to fill you up, boy, I'm going to pour myself into you, boy, this is my hole, boy, I'm going to pour myself into you. Yes. Ride me."

Their cries rose. Hugh exploded first, emptying himself deep into Freddy, who clamped down onto Hugh as his shout subsided into moans. Then Freddy straightened up and cried out as his jism spurting an arc across Hugh's stomach, the trail of golden hair down his middle jeweled with the opal juice.

Freddy fell forward, his hands on either side of Hugh's head, and the lovers' mouths joined again, slowly but each as determined as before to find the essence of the man before him.

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Freddy's rooms at Balliol were as shabby as any other college man's. Haphazard towers of books leaned against the legs of a brown leather club chair whose seams strained with wear. A low table was strewn with tea-stained china cups that left their telltale rings on papers prepared for tutorials. A couch hid its old age under an exotic India shawl whose once-illustrious provenance was now fallen into undergraduate obscurity. The men sprawled facing each other on the sagging sofa in the soft glow of candles. They nursed a very dry Spanish sherry in the quiet as crickets scolded in the trees outside the open casements and a faint breeze ruffled the muslin curtains.

Freddy's peace had been disturbed by the afternoon's collision. He was far from an aesthete. No one would identify him as sharing the sensibilities of the infamous Wilde, but none who carried a secret passion for Greek love had been unshaken by that man's fate, and though his death was twelve years past, some, like Freddy, seemed almost haunted by it.

Magdalen had been Wilde's college. Hugh had followed an uncle there—Clive, the younger sibling to his mother. Clive's charm resided in a wicked and mordant wit that could not quite obscure his warm heart. Since Hugh's boyhood, Clive had regarded his nephew with a knowingness that offered an odd comfort. There were times when Clive hinted at his own rather colorful career at Magdalen; sharing with Wilde the brilliance of youth's brash efflorescence. The chill cast by the trials, though it was well after undergraduate carelessness was a dim, fond memory, slipped its icy fingers close. But if it reached into Hugh's confident approach to the world, his solution was as insouciant as Freddy's was earnest.

"You see, I can't quite reconcile myself to my duplicity to Kitty," Freddy confessed.

“You say that as if it were a shameful thing, not to be able to countenance duplicity. But I admire you for it. And I quite understand.”

“Duplicity does seem to be demanded. One’s survival depends on it. It is the imminence that troubles me, especially now.” He looked into Hugh’s eyes a moment, then cast them down to his glass. “She expects an engagement, as soon as I have assumed my place in the business.”

His family had a large concern capacious enough for the middle and youngest sons to follow the eldest brother into it. Freddy had put off actually considering whether these were his wishes because it had been so terribly unlikely that he would discover himself to have wishes that clashed with those of his family.

Hugh gently pressed his bare foot into Freddy’s groin. “Of course she does. And what of it? You don’t wish to chuck everything, do you? Now that you’ve done all that could possibly be expected of you? What do you think will be different once you’ve married Kitty?”

“Everything! Isn’t that the point of it all? How can I, knowing my nature, enter into such an arrangement?”

“One might well ask how, knowing the times and knowing your nature, could you *not*?”

Freddy looked sharply at him and frowned. “That may be all right for you, Hugh, but I don’t wish to live that way. And what of you? Have you married?”

“Fair enough. No, I’ve not married. But I have an agreement, of quite long standing, with a charming modern girl called Sybil. Marriage between the two of us seems rather like a mirage. It shimmers in the distance to provide some agreeable answer when it is needed, and then it vanishes when the solace such an answer promises is no longer necessary. I sometimes think that I provide for her precisely what she provides for me. And so, it has been an agreeable arrangement.”

“And has that arrangement been consummated as we have consummated that which is between us?”

Hugh pulled his foot back. “My dear fellow, I quite agree that this afternoon has been unmitigated delight, but I fear that you are getting ahead of yourself. Certainly you are getting ahead of me.”

“I see. You would treat feelings such as we evoke in each other with, how shall I put it, with an off-handedness that seems quite foreign to me. I-I’m disappointed, you see. I thought—I thought otherwise.” He disentangled his legs from Hugh’s, stood and walked to the windows.

Hugh turned to set his feet on the floor. “Now see here, my boy, I didn’t mean to suggest that I wished to treat you in an off-handed way. Not at all. You’re hardly a man anyone would trifle with, and I’d be a fool to let you slip away. But you seem to be moved to a certainty so suddenly. Can you pardon me if I must plod along a bit more slowly?”

Freddy turned. “I’m the fool.” He put his hand to his forehead. “I’m blushing, aren’t I? I can tell. I beg your pardon. I’m terribly embarrassed.”

“No need to be. We’ll talk of something else.” Hugh’s ease soothed the moment. “Tell me, what are your plans for after university?”

“Only doing what is expected. That is, the family concern—insurance and so forth. In the City. It’s a big concern. Anyone with ambition would want to make a go of it there, and I have, as it were, an engraved invitation.”

“You don’t sound as if you’re honored to be so invited.”

“Being born into it doesn’t make it an honor so much as a duty, I’m afraid. Why do you ask?”

“A feeling I have about you.” Hugh stood and moved about the room as he spoke. “A sense that you’d wish to do something a bit out of the usual line. Possibly even serving your country. All I’ll say is that there are interesting things being discussed in the RFC. Interesting things for men with a bit of daring. A bit of the devil in them. Very interesting things, nothing anyone has done before. Perhaps you’ll look me up. Even come down to Kent?”

Freddy grabbed the older man and held him tight. “Do you need to ask? Of course I’ll come to Kent. Whenever you say. Just give me the word.”

“Gently now. I’ll give you the word, all right. Now, are we all right again?” He kissed the younger man, holding the back of his head. They kissed, each with his eyes open, looking into the other, knowing that there was more, much more, to come.

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The interesting thing to which Hugh referred was the expansion, over the past several years, of the Royal Flying Corps. The story of the Crown’s deployment of power in the air began when the Royal Engineers had jurisdiction over all the balloon services, ever since those remarkable hot-air inventions proved a natural requirement for the mapping of the Empire. Empire established required an empire governed and the military value of air-bound vehicles was not overlooked by high command. Balloon surveying was adapted to military surveillance in the Boer War, however unfortunate that enterprise turned out to be. Even the most hide bound traditionalists in the high command saw that if England was to maintain her superiority over all her possessions, greater might from the sky than balloons could provide was surely necessary.

Innovation accelerated with the development of the other vehicles of the air: dirigibles, then the aeroplanes whose qualities enabled an entirely new style of martial prowess. Hugh’s sparse description to Freddy of just what he did in the RFC was calculated to tantalize. His charge was to recruit the sort of men who might prove valuable to the Corps. He saw in Freddy the kind of mettle that would serve.

When Freddy came down to Kent, shortly before his fall term began, he learned that Hugh was in charge of the training of pilots for the new fixed wing aircraft, like those the Italians had begun using in 1911. Hugh had demonstrated his steely nerves in early tests of the biplanes, and was charged with training other men brave enough or foolhardy enough to want to take to the air.

They were walking from the base at Chatham toward Hugh’s billet—a small cottage nearby in the village. It was a glorious late August day. Clouds scudded across a sky that seemed impossibly and insistently blue. Hugh met



Freddy's train and he gave him a tour of the grounds, pointing out the new flying machines that were going to revolutionize how England protected her empire, and providing what information he could on the opportunities for a young man seeking something different. Since this meeting was an official one, they had not yet stolen a moment alone. No demonstration of what they had found in each other scant months before was possible. Hugh suggested that they have a quick glass of something at his digs. Freddy jumped at the chance. Perhaps, he thought, he could manage to miss his train back up to town.

Hugh asked, "So, what are your impressions? Is this something that might be in your line?"

"Rather," Freddy said instantly. "And not only because you'd be my commanding officer."

"Well that's a good thing, because chances are I wouldn't be. I'd be your training officer, but you'd be under command of another man, at least as far as I can make out. How do you think you would manage that—having to be trained by me?"

"I can think of no man I'd rather be trained by, sir." Freddy used the honorific with no hint of satire. In fact, the idea of Hugh training him was at once so serious and so exciting that he felt his cock stirring as they walked. He looked across the meadow on their right in an effort to calm himself.

Hugh felt warmth spread across his chest. "I think we may have to consider very seriously just what kind of training will be best for you. Here we are—"

Hugh guided Freddy up the path of a tidy cottage that sat behind a waist-high hedge of boxwood. Once inside, he lit a lamp, and found a couple of glasses and a bottle of whiskey.

"Can I offer you—?"

"Yes, thanks. That is, may I, sir?"

Hugh grinned, then collected himself. He poured two fingers for himself, one for Freddy and handed him the glass.

“Drink up.” They tossed off the whiskey. He drew the drapes across the windows of the room. There was a sturdy looking settee along one wall and a cabinet on the other. “Now, boy, I think some training is in order this very afternoon. I am correct, am I not?”

“Yes, sir, you are correct, sir.”

“Good lad. Now, first, clothes come off. Get to it.”

“Yes sir.” Freddy put his glass on a small table and swiftly removed all his clothes. When he’d finished, he stood at attention in the middle of the room. His cock was stiff and pointing nearly straight up.

Hugh opened the cabinet and took several items out: four coiled lengths of hemp rope, a strip of fabric, and a leather crop. He turned and looked at Freddy.

In the lamplight, Freddy’s pale flesh glowed. He was breathing fast, trembling but standing straight, ready to do as he was told. His eyes were fixed on Hugh’s.

“What do you call me, then?” Hugh demanded.

“Sir, I call you sir, if you please, sir.”

“Very good.” He took the crop and traced the inside of Freddy’s thigh up to his balls, then slapped gently with it as he spoke. “Now, you are in need of good training, boy. But I think you are man enough to be trained quite well. Yes, I think you will be a very good boy. Is that right? Are you prepared to be a most excellent, good boy?”

“Oh, yes, sir.”

“What was that?” Hugh slapped the young man’s scrotum with the crop. Freddy cried out. “What was that?” Again, he slapped, and Freddy struggled to stay standing upright.

“Yes sir, I am prepared to be trained, sir.”

“Very good.” Hugh took Freddy’s cock in his hand and gently stroked it as he looked deeply into his eyes and kissed him. “Yes, very good indeed. I think you are going to be very good.”

Hugh slid the leather crop down Freddy’s back to the alabaster miracle of his bum and began lightly to slap. Freddy moaned as Hugh hit a little harder, ever so slightly harder, harder with the crop.

Freddy could not contain himself. “Yes, sir, thank you sir, yes sir, harder sir, thank you, harder, sir.”

“You surprise me, boy. Did I bid you speak? I don’t think I did.”

“No sir, you didn’t sir. Please excuse me, sir. I could not contain myself. I’ve never—I’ve never—”

“You’ve never known something like this before, is that it, my handsome boy?”

“Oh, yes sir. I’ve never known anything like this. Please, please more, sir,” he begged.

Hugh smiled and kissed him tenderly, then turned and applied the whip to that beautiful bum, gradually striking him a bit harder and harder until he began to sweat. At this point he stopped, dabbed at his brow with a kerchief, then turned and took off the rest of his clothing.

Freddy was swaying as if in a swoon, struggling to maintain his balance.

“Good boy. You stand still until I tell you when to move.”

Hugh placed a straight-backed chair in the middle of the room.

“Come, sit, boy.”

Freddy did as he was told. Hugh stood over him, kissed him, then held his face between his big, calloused hands.

“Look at me, boy. Eyes on my eyes. Look deep. Look at me. Do you see me? Do you truly see me? I see you. I’m taking you in. Take me in. With your eyes. Look, really look, boy. Now, I’m going to blindfold you. I’m binding

your eyes as I'm binding myself to you, as I'm binding you to me. Can you see me? Can you see me in your mind? Do you, boy? Do you see me?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I do. I see you." Tears ran down Freddy's cheeks from under the blindfold. His chest rose and fell as his breathing grew faster and faster. "I see you. I feel you. I feel you, sir, around me, in me. Oh, sir, I see you inside me."

"Good boy."

"Sir—may I, may I take you in my mouth? Let me—let me suck your cock, please."

"On your knees, then, boy, if you think you can manage it."

Freddy slid to his knees and waited, his mouth open. Hugh stood in front of him and grasped the back of his head, sliding his erect member slowly into Freddy's warm mouth.

"Let me in, boy. Let me down into your throat, that's it, you must want it, you must not think of anything but how much you want it, and your throat will open."

Freddy felt the moment Hugh's cock hit the back of his throat, then let his muscles relax, felt the urge to gag, and let it go, let Hugh all the way in, down his throat, not able to breathe, tearing up with the insistent swollen flesh filling him. Hugh slid his cock in and out as he held Freddy's head and neck in his hands.

"Excellent, boy. You're a rare one. You have a rare talent. Oh, my boy, this is very good indeed." He shook his head briefly, as if to clear it. "Not too much, too fast. I want this to last. Now, stand. Up, boy."

Hugh walked around him admiring the swelling muscles, burgeoning with young manhood. He caressed his chest, dusted with red-gold hair, then slapped it, raising a pink flush. He moved down Freddy's belly with his open handed slaps, smartly, leaving it aglow. Again and again he slapped, saying, "My good boy, my beautiful good boy." He pulled on Freddy's prick, now dripping with sweet, clear juice. He licked it from his fingers.

“Oh, my beautiful boy tastes so sweet, so good. So like an excellently well-trained boy ought to taste.”

Hugh took a length of rope and wrapped first one of Freddy’s wrists three times with it, then the other, as he whispered into Freddy’s ear. “Now I’m going to test my excellent good boy. I’m going to truss you up like the prized specimen you are. You know how I prize you, boy? Do you? You can speak, now, boy. Do you know?”

At first Freddy could hardly manage to form the words through his moans, but once he began to speak, the words cascaded forth. “Oh, sir, yes, sir, I do, I feel it. I feel it in your care, in your training. Train me. Sir, discipline me, sir. Please. Please make me the excellent good boy who can please you best. Please, sir, show me how, train me to please you sir.”

Once Hugh had bound Freddy’s wrists, he looped the rope over a hook in a beam in the ceiling above them. He pulled the rope so that Freddy’s arms stretched over his head. He pulled tight so that Freddy had to strain on his toes, then he released the rope so that his boy could stand easily on his feet, squarely. He tied off the rope and drew a leather flog from the cabinet.

He pressed his face against Freddy’s and breathed in his ear, “How’s my handsome good boy? Are you learning, now? Are you learning about yourself, now, my boy? And about me, too? About how I can show you how much I love a boy I can train?”

“Oh, sir, yes sir. I am learning. Train me—I want more, sir. I want more. Please, give me more, sir.”

“This young man has depths of power only hinted at before. You make me very happy, boy. Very happy indeed.”

Hugh drew the bunched strands of leather across Freddy’s shoulders, across his chest and down his stomach. He flicked it gently across his thighs, and then drew it up against his cock. Then he took a step back. “Ready, boy?”

“Yes sir. I’m ready, sir.”

“Can you see me? Look inside yourself, and see me. Recall every detail of my face. Can you see me?” And with that, gauging just how much strength to put into the first blow, he struck Freddy’s back with the flogger.

Freddy gasped and shivered. “Yes, sir, I see you. I feel you. Thank you sir. Oh, thank you.”

Hugh drew his arm up and struck again, harder.

“Yes, this boy is an excellent boy, an excellent good boy.” He struck again and again, harder each time, each time gauging the increased intensity of the blow, feeling what the strike would be like inside of himself as he flogged the reddening flesh of Freddy’s broad muscular back. He struck lower, across the marble mounds of Freddy’s backside, again and again, until they glowed pink. And with each stripe, Freddy moaned his pleasure, his joy, and his relief. His cock throbbed as it oozed his juice. Again, Hugh stroked it, then greedily knelt to take him in his mouth.

Freddy called out. “Oh, sir, I’ll come, sir, I’ll come!”

Hugh grunted his assent, and worked his throat around the young man’s cock, bobbing up and down, so hungry had his exertions left him, so eager to drink the young man’s juice, to take this handsome youth deep inside in every possible way. He hungrily sucked at him as he pulled on his own cock. Yelping helplessly, Freddy shouted his frenzy and he spurted all of himself down Hugh’s throat, as Hugh grunted like an animal as he shot his jism up across his belly, panting to catch his breath, he fell back on his haunches and looked up at the youth strung up for all the world like a work of art, like a young god and an offering to a god at the same time.

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Machinations that required deftness and charm kept them together, part of the same squadron. Charm came easily to Hugh, his reputation was founded on deeds no one could question, and so their lives were knit together. Then innovations for the possible turned into preparations for the inevitable. When, that terrible August, war was declared, an Air Corps was nearly ready to do all it was meant to. Nearly is the operative term here.

Danger was a daily companion. In the early days of the war, Freddy chafed at simply flying as Hugh's observer; that is, the man in the second seat in the plane. But he did no flying, only sighting of landmarks and potential targets. This was not enough for Freddy. He wanted to prove himself. He was determined to have a good war too. Hugh's plan had been to keep Freddy with him as far as was possible, and that meant delaying the time Freddy flew his own plane. But the need for flyers as skilled as Freddy was great and so Hugh screwed his courage to the sticking place and swallowed his apprehension that his young lover might find himself overmatched in the skies over France. After all, it was just that heedless courage that landed Freddy so thoroughly in the deepest recesses of Hugh's mind.

The new orders they'd received from command were clear, but the repercussions were hard to foretell. They had been reassigned to covert operations, and so the risk of being part of an all-out dogfight over Germany was greatly reduced. But the dangers inherent in an operation no one had tried before were precisely what these men were going to learn. These men were the first to fly this sort of mission.

That was the glory of the RFC. They had been inventing war in the air all along. By this time, what would turn out to be late in the war, the fact that no one had done what these men were to attempt was routine. The tales of glorious invention were many. Captain Louis Strange, of Number 6 Squadron, fashioned his own bombs of petrol, and with these managed to destroy two of Jerry's fully loaded supply wagons. Lieutenant Conran of Number 3 Squadron simply dropped hand grenades out of his cockpit, dismantling two columns of troops when the explosions provoked a stampede among the horses.

Now the commander of the RFC, Trenchard, had a new strategy. The most skilled flyers, those who could come in low and nimble, were assigned to deliver agents deep behind the lines. All they had to do then was to hightail it back to Dover in time to elude notice. This was far more risky than the reconnaissance missions of the last six weeks. This meant coming much closer to ground fire. And even with the recent additions of parachutes, light enough

now to take along on their flights, no one wanted to find out how the Hun would treat prisoners that fell into their territory.

The first agent was to be delivered by another ace pilot, Captain Mulcahy-Morgan. It was mid-September. He was to fly deep into German occupied France, near Mons, low and quietly enough to allow the agent to parachute into a field near a farmhouse where he was expected. Hugh was to fly another route, carrying another agent, further to the east, penetrating deeper. Freddy was going to be left cooling his heels, awaiting word as to the success of these missions.

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The silver light of the waxing September moon was all the light Freddy needed to see each button on Hugh's tunic as he pushed each through its hole. He set to his task in silence. Hugh lay back and watched him. Freddy got down to Hugh's belt buckle. Hugh started up, and Freddy firmly pressed him back. Freddy gave him a steady look in the eye, but remained silent.

"My young captain is grave this night," Hugh breathed, trying to smile.

Freddy unlaced Hugh's boots, stood to remove each, then the socks. He reached up and pulled the trousers down and off his lover's legs. Standing, he carefully lined up the creases and hung them on the back of a chair. He came round and worked the tunic off, shook it slightly and hung it over the trousers. then he pulled off Hugh's undershirt, slung it over one shoulder, and then his drawers. These he held to his face and inhaled deeply. He stood and regarded Hugh's nakedness in the silver light.

Hugh began to speak. "I'm not sure I—"

"Shhh. I know. I know, love. Nor I, neither. Just let me hold you. Will you let me do that? Through the morning? That's all I want."

Freddy swiftly undressed, shook out the quilted coverlet, and crawled next to Hugh in the narrow bed, a bed that they'd used in many ways for activities other than sleep in their time at Larkhill. But at sunset on the following day, Hugh was to fly across France into enemy territory, and this time neither man could turn his thoughts from the risk that reared before them.



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If the flyers were not back by sunrise, that was sign enough for alarm. Freddy hardly slept and was at the landing field well before dawn. He paced off its width again and again, his ears straining for the sound of engines through the light wind that blew, through the early morning bird song, through the rushing of the blood in his veins, the thumping of his heart as the sun edged over the horizon, strained to hear the faint buzzing that would signal his lover's return, and he heard nothing. He refused to give up his post, pacing again and again across the field Hugh should have touched down on hours ago.

Reggie Martindale, a runty sort of fellow, whippet thin and pale, came up behind Freddy. "You're wanted, Lewellyn-Jones, back at barracks."

"Colonel Smith-Parker?"

"Yes, I believe so. He's had a wire from command. He's rather het up."

"Aren't we all?"

"You've been asked for. I've just been sent to fetch you. So..."

"Well, you've fetched me. Anything else, Martindale?"

"No—nothing. It's—"

"Yes, it's a rum sort of day all round, isn't it? You've performed your errand, I'll come straightaway."

"Well, that would be—"

"I said I'd be there straightaway."

Martindale backed away two steps before turning to his nervous trot back. Freddy didn't know why he found the man so objectionable. There was nothing overtly bad about him. He had rather an insinuating air, as if they had something in common, as if there was some agreement that bound them. While it may have been true that Reggie had a nature like his, still it infuriated Freddy that so much was presumed with not a word spoken. Freddy preferred plain, open dealing. He had no patience left that day for any sort of nonsense.

He wanted only some word about Hugh. If that was not forthcoming, then he wanted his own orders. He wanted to act.

The news was bad, but inconclusive. Colonel Smith-Parker had only just heard. Both Penderby and Mulcahy-Morgan had been shot down. There was nothing further than that. No confirmation was possible as to whether they lived.

Freddy pressed for an assignment. Apparently, this initial failure was not about to put Trenchard off his strategy. The next assignment Smith-Parker had was a reconnaissance run, preparing for the next covert drop. Freddy put in for it. Anything was better than that infernal waiting. Even a reconnaissance mission would take him closer to Hugh. He might even fly over where his plane had gone down. He might even learn something about what had become of his lover.

Freddy came back from his flight, the second day after Hugh had gone down. And he came back from the seven other missions he flew in the next three months. Three months of stretching himself to the utmost. He was a man determined to beat back the terrors, the weakness, the pathetic sniveling that still lurked where he could not root them out, in the most remote corners of his mind. He refused to acknowledge these sentiments. He would not countenance them. He thought of his training, the training only Hugh could administer. He knew he had to prove to himself that he took that training in; that he could count himself worthy of his master.

There is a terror worse than the fear that one's love does not return from war. That is the terror that one can no longer locate the version of that lover one carries inside, always. That however hard one tries, one cannot summon up the image of that face. One cannot quite recover the sound of that voice.

Hugh had trained him well. Hugh had commanded him to look, to see. Freddy obeyed. He strained to recover his training. But the shock of it—he could not say it to himself—what shock he had suffered. He would not say the words. He would not admit that Hugh was lost. He would preserve him in the only way he could, with the incessant reaching for him. A reaching in his mind. A reaching in darkness toward a figure whose contours he knew utterly,

whose smells he inhaled, whose hands had left their marks on his own body. He could recover those sensations. The taste of Hugh's juice. The sweet burn left by Hugh's hands. The dull and sharp blows of the flogging that brought him so intensely to life.

His hands seemed to remember the contour of Hugh's plush muscles, the broad flanks, the swelling chest, the rounded fullness of his arms. He could recover all this, but he could not see Hugh's face before him. He saw only a blank silhouette of the man who knew him better than any man knew him. This admission, that he could not recover Hugh's face, could not call it up in his memory, was the dreadful thing he had to elude. He had to act, in whatever way he could, to keep this at bay. But there it was. The fact followed him like a ravening wolf. He ran like a man fleeing the direst of dangers and always there it was. It was implacable. And so he had to be, too. Implacable in his determination that he not know that which was impossible, that which could not be.

And then, he was rotated out. He had been too effective in his resolve. He'd flown too many missions. There was some whispered concern of a kind of mania. That he had been stretched too far. He was to be sent back to Chatham to train the new men, the novice flyers. This was unwelcome news to Freddy. He knew that time away from the strain of danger was something that he must avoid. It was in that sort of respite that vulnerability lingered.

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Freddy's impatience made him rather a thorn in the side of the newest men. He didn't suffer fools, and would brook no pretense. All the men knew he was thorough, and for that, in time, they came to be grateful. No man squeaked by without an absolute respect for the machines they were flying, and the risks they faced.

It was in this time spent at Chatham that Freddy learned of the sickening slough of the Somme, of the vile use of mustard gas, of the immeasurable waste as the war ground on. All his charges learned about the war's unceasing destruction, and still each of them chafed to fly a mission, a mission that might

finally make the decisive difference; that his run might finally break Jerry's back.

He took Hugh's old cottage at Chatham, the one where he'd received his first training at Hugh's hands. It was a good thing for Freddy to have that cottage. Tending it in the long months as the war raged on was the only way to keep the panic that solitude promised at bay. When he returned from the airfield, after a day's work with the new trainees, he made sure the cottage was tidy, ready for Hugh's return. The cabinet was still there, and Freddy restocked it with the items they'd need when Hugh returned. He made sure a good whiskey was on the sideboard, though he didn't break the seal on the bottle. He kept supplies in the larder, that is, when there were supplies to be had. But all was kept in readiness.

Two summers he kept the small garden up properly. Two autumns he prepared the cottage and its yard for two winters. Two springs mocked him with life's renewal. But he kept the irony of spring's return away from his mind. He kept all disturbances from his mind. He was a disciplined man. A man determined to preserve himself at all costs. And he found the method whereby he could do this. All his daily tasks were like a mantle wrapped snugly round him. He drew it tight and it protected him. He knew that if only he could attend to just what appeared in front of his face, to the tasks that lay ready to hand, that he wouldn't run mad. It was the only way. He must not go mad, how could he serve Hugh properly if he were mad? No, he tended with care to what was before him.

One early spring morning, when a feeble grey light through a weak cold drizzle cast a uniform melancholy on a weary world, the silence of the cottage was disturbed by a firm knocking at the door. Freddy expected no one. Surely if it had been Hugh, he would not have knocked. Surely if it had been Hugh he'd have sent word before hand. Still, Freddy's heart leapt into his throat at the shock. He drew back the curtain at the front window to see who stood at his door. He stiffened with surprise, and then opened it.

"Kitty—how good of you to—but how on earth did you find me? I beg your pardon. Come in, come in."

She stepped into the little hallway and handed him the umbrella she'd just shaken out.

“My god, Kitty, it's been—”

“Yes, Freddy. It's been quite a time. May I?”

“Oh god, of course. Let me take your things.”

She shrugged off her damp traveling cloak and he hung it on the hooks by the door.

“Some tea, perhaps. Come in and do sit down, here, sit down.” He gestured toward the sitting room where no one had sat for two years. He lit a lamp. The surprise of seeing her sent him into a flurry of activity.

“I'll just be—” he called out as he walked to the kitchen to put the kettle on the fire. He arranged some biscuits on a plate. “Or perhaps something else—to warm you? You must have taken the early train down.”

“Yes. It was no trouble, really,” she called to him from the sitting room. “Gerald told me where you were posted, and when I inquired at the station, well, they knew where to direct me.”

“You've spoken to my brother?”

“Why yes. I ran into him in town. He was with a very lovely girl—Ursula, I think?”

“I—I haven't had the pleasure.”

“So they said.”

He stepped back into the kitchen to pour the hot water. He tried to collect himself. He arranged a cup and saucer on a tray. He felt his pulse called to urgency. He set the teapot on the tray, lifted it, and went back to find Kitty.

She sat looking about the room.

“I say, you do look very well,” Freddy felt a fool, beginning this way. He set the tray down and handed a cup to her. She reached for the milk pitcher.

She was a perfectly nice girl, and hardly deserved to be treated in the way he'd treated her. But that was so long ago, now.

"Thank you Freddy, but you can leave off. I'm not here as a scorned woman. I'm here because there are those who care for you, and we're intensely curious about just how you are doing."

"Let me begin again. I behaved abominably to you, someone who deserved far more. There is no excuse for my treatment of you, and I—"

"Oh, do stop, Freddy. Do you really think that I have come because I want to make you suffer? I don't, really, I don't. Actually, I've met a very nice chap, a fellow with some prospects. If ever this beastly war—well, you know... But I'm really very well, you know. You do flatter yourself rather by thinking that I've spent all this time nursing a broken heart." She flashed a smile and laughed lightly to take the sting out of her observation.

"I say, you are marvelous, Kitty. You're quite right. I've become a self-centered monster."

"Yes, quite a monster. Monstrously heroic, if you ask me. Or anyone. It's true. You've been a hero. At least those who have any knowledge of what you've done know that. There are people who are frightfully proud of you. Nothing is being held against you. We just want to know that you are, well, that you are quite all right."

"Right as rain. As right as anyone can be, given..."

"But why, then, have you been so resolutely incommunicado? If you're right as rain, why not be in touch with—?"

"With my family? With you?"

"You don't, I assure you, owe me anything. You don't owe anyone anything. But we're concerned." She paused, looking about the room. "This is a charming place. Have you been here—?"

"Since before the war. We were posted to Larkhill at the start, but after my rotation back to training, this seemed quite the best place."

"You live here alone?"

“Quite.”

“Always alone?”

“No—not before...”

“It doesn’t look as if a woman has been tending it.” He looked at her sharply. “Oh, Freddy, I don’t mean to pry. It’s just that, well, you understand that I—What I mean to say is that I reached my conclusions about what went wrong with us quite some time ago. It was clear to me then that there was someone else who had a claim on your heart, and that you could not bring yourself to tell me, or anyone else, for that matter, who it was. So, I reached the only conclusion a thinking person would.”

Freddy stared into the worn Persian rug on the floor.

“Freddy, dear, dear, Freddy. I am happy for you, if you are happy. But I see that you are not. Can you- can you accept that I still care about you, that I want good things for you?”

Tears had started to roll down Freddy’s cheeks. He sat utterly still. His breathing was shallow. He tried to speak. “Kitty... Kitty, you are—you are quite right.” He roughly wiped his face with the back of his hand. “There is someone.”

“Can you—?”

“I don’t think I can. You see, he’s been—he’s been detained. A great length of time. He’s been—” He sharply drew breath in and squared his shoulders. But he could not speak.

“He was another flyer. He’s been shot down. He’s been missing all this time. And you’ve been here, making sure things are just so, for the day he returns. This is just like you, Freddy, to do this. Just this way. So very like the Freddy I’ve always been so fond of. Thorough and dependable and disciplined.”

Freddy had begun to sob as Kitty spoke. Her voice warmed the March chill, and it was as if a blockage of ice melted in Freddy’s chest. He inhaled deeply for the first time that morning. He gave way into shuddering sobs,

sitting quite still in his chair. He didn't raise his hands to his face; there was no need to cover his grief.

Kitty sat patiently for a while, then, when Freddy quieted, she reached over to take his hand. "My dear, dear, boy. You've been such a brick. This man you love is a lucky one. Is there—is there any official word—?"

"No. Inconclusive. Impossible to be certain. So I'll simply—"

"You'll do your duty, your work, and wait for word. No one could conceive of you doing any different. Is there—is there anything I might do for you?"

He looked at her, and tears rolled down his face again. It was her kindness that he could not face without giving way, her grace that made it impossible for him not to feel all he was feeling. Finally he spoke. "I really can't think of anything. I have, as you say, my work. I'm still of value to His Majesty, as far as I can tell, so... I simply will remain where I hope Hugh will think to find me, once he makes his way back. What else—?"

"Indeed. What else indeed? Just—do promise me—will you—that you'll look after yourself properly? Is there anything that you'd like me to tell your family?"

"Only that I'm fine. That they needn't worry. I'm out of harm's way, now. At least I am unless I rotate back to active duty. So, yes, can you, tell them I'm, I'm as fit as can be expected."

"You do write to them, don't you?"

"Not nearly as often as a dutiful son ought to. My father sends me letters, or rather, his secretary sends me letters, and I respond. I'm a disappointment to him, you know—"

"Oh, no, you're not, really, Freddy, you're not—"

"Once they reach the conclusion you've so readily done, of course I'll be a disappointment. At least a disappointment. More likely an outrage. But I don't waste any time thinking about that. I've got my eye only on what I can do this



moment. It is all I can do. Just do what must be done, this very moment. I can't manage anything else."

"No, I quite see that. Nor ought you to try. Can I help with the tea things?"

"Oh, no, really. Are you—are you off, then?"

"I thought I'd get back on the next train. I don't want to intrude. I simply wanted to see you, dear, after all this time. To make sure. You understand?"

"I do now. And—I can hardly think of a way to—to express this sufficiently—I'm so, so terribly grateful to you. You can't imagine how grateful."

"My dear. You can repay me by introducing me to your fellow once he's back. Will you?"

The sun broke through the glowering clouds and shot a ray across the floor. He reached out, snatched Kitty's hand, and bent down as he brought it to his lips. She ran her fingers through his hair. The moment lingered.

Finally she stood. "Well then, I'll be off. I think the rain's let up, at least for now..."

"Yes. Kitty, I'm so glad you came. The next time..."

"Yes, much more than, next time. Do take care of yourself."

She took her cloak, and with the familiarity of long acquaintance handed it to him. He held it for her as she loosely knotted the ties about her neck. She recovered her umbrella, then turned and stopped at the front door. She went on tiptoe to kiss his cheek. "Until next time, then..."

"Good bye, Kitty. Until next time..."

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Finally, impossibly, inevitably, Jerry's back was broken indeed. November 1919. Armistice. Celebration was all around him. Freddy remained suspended, numb.

He could hear the celebration. Strains of singing from the pub reached him, but the joy and relief in those songs were not for him. Celebrations like those

were too cruel for those like Freddy. The bereft ones. And if he were to acknowledge that singing, he would, of force, have to acknowledge his state. That he was indeed bereft. This he would not do. And so, he tended their cottage with care. Prepared it for a third winter. Made it snug, warm, and ready.

It was a beastly winter. Rain, slush, and mire. Mire all round. The end of the war brought Freddy's decommission. Without knowing it, exactly, he'd turned away from flying. What he could turn toward was the question. Not an easy one to answer. His father urged him to come up to town, to take his place in the business. This was, however, too great a disturbance for Freddy to countenance. He could not have told anyone this, but if he deviated too much from his routine, his daily tending to the things that needed doing, those tasks that were plainly in front of him, he would be finished. He'd be thrown into an unknown he would not acknowledge. And so he wrote respectful, grateful responses to his father's entreaties, not demurrals altogether, but temporizing. Drawing out what must be drawn out.

Kitty had written him, and he responded, always with the opaque message that did not persuade her that he was quite as right as he insisted. But it was enough for her to know he maintained his disciplined life, and it was enough for him to know that he was held in the mind of another.

Just when everyone in the village thought they could not stand the mire a day more, the clouds drew back and revealed a brilliant sky. The harsh winter light emphasized the tending the garden needed, and so Freddy put on his muck boots and oiled the leather of his gloves, working them back into suppleness sufficient for wearing as he worked. He went round to the back to get the scythe and the rake out of the shed. He'd have to sharpen the blade if it was to be up to the task hacking down the dead growth to make way for the spring planting. It was a bit early for these chores, he knew, but the day and his solitude called out for strenuous activity. It would be good to feel his muscles work, to feel them strain against the flannel of his shirt, to have the smell of the earth in his nose again, to feel the sun on his back as he cleared out the overgrown brown weeds.

The rasp of the whetstone on the scythe's rough blade was enough to drown out any other sounds. So Freddy hadn't heard the man whistling a tune as he wandered into the back garden of the cottage. And since Freddy was so bent on his task, he hadn't seen the man with a weathered, handsome face, tall, broad through the back, leaning on a cane slightly as he walked. The man stopped and watched Freddy work. After a few minutes, Freddy was satisfied that the blade was sharp enough for the job, and he put it aside, straightened up, stretching his arms over his head, and looked about. Only then did Freddy see that Hugh stood only two yards away. Hugh pushed his cap off of his head and opened his arms. Freddy could not move.

Finally, Hugh dropped his cane, and took one step toward him. Freddy rushed at him, wrapped his arms around him, and lifted him off his feet. Their mouths met. Slowly Freddy set Hugh back on the ground, but their lips and bodies didn't part.

At last Hugh drew his face away. "I knew it. Didn't I? I knew just where you'd be, didn't I?"

"I knew just where you'd come—" this was all Freddy could manage. He swallowed a sob.

Hugh spoke, "Steady, old man. I'm here. All's right again. I'm here. Come, sit here while I—"

Hugh led Freddy to the stone step at the kitchen door, where the sun might keep them warm a moment.

"When did you—? How—? Oh, god, you've—"

"All right, my boy, all right. I'm here. Let's just sit a moment. I seem to have given you quite a start. But you see, you've got me again, and for good and all, if I have anything to do with it. Can we—help me up, will you?"

"Oh, god, your leg, what happened—?"

"It's nothing, really, just a bit crumpled. Took a nasty spill. I can still use it, for the most part, but for a good long walk, I need this old thing." He

nudged the cane that lay next to his foot. “Come along, then, I could use a stiff one.”

Freddy helped him up, and they went in through the kitchen door. Hugh stopped and looked around. “You’ve kept things up nicely. Just as I knew you would. Will you—can you—?”

Freddy stepped up and kissed him again, holding his face in his hands. When he drew his face away, he looked at Hugh, tracing each line, each lineament the war had scored into his handsome face.

“You’re thinner. You need a good feeding.” He helped Hugh out of his coat.

“You’re right about that. Now, about that drink.”

Freddy dashed to the cabinet where the whiskey was, twisted the cap off, and poured a tumbler full.

Hugh sat at the kitchen table and took a gulp. “Much better. Now.” He stretched his legs out, leaned back, and looked at Freddy. “There is far too much for each of us to tell each other in an instant, that I know.”

“There’s plenty of time for that.”

“I quite agree. What I’d really like is a bath. Can that be arranged, do you think?”

Freddy set to pumping the water and lighting the fire. Hugh had set his small satchel at the front door. Freddy retrieved that, and put it in the bedroom. Hugh followed him in, and Freddy began to undress him. Hugh stood still as Freddy unbuttoned his shirt, unfastened his belt, and steadied him as he stepped out of his trousers. Freddy slid the undershirt over Hugh’s head, the drawers down his hips, and then quickly slipped out of his own clothes. He turned and knelt in front of him.

“Oh, sir, how I’ve—”

“And how I have, too, but we’ll have plenty of time for that.” Freddy had already taken Hugh’s cock into his mouth, tasting the musk and earthy smell of his lover once again.

Freddy looked up. “Come, now, let me tend to you.” And he took Hugh’s hand and led him into the kitchen where the brass tub sat ready. He poured the hot water out of the steaming kettles, refilled them, and set them back on the stove. The kitchen warmed with the fire and the steam.

Hugh stepped into the tub, holding his glass of whiskey, sat down and leaned back. Freddy took a sponge and a cake of soap and worked up a lather. He started with Hugh’s feet. He knelt at the tub, taking each foot and resting it against his swelling cock, and carefully washed each toe, each crevice, rubbing the sponge along his instep, up the arch.

He wrung the sponge out and dipped it in the warm water and washed an ankle, moved up the calf, caring as he washed for each vein, each tendon. He pulled the other foot out as he set the first back in the tub, and carefully washed it, and the ankle, the shin, the calf. He dipped the sponge in the warm water and moved up inside Hugh’s thighs, looking intently into Hugh’s eyes as he massaged his master’s tired muscles. He looked for any scarring along Hugh’s legs, but could see nothing.

“There’s no visible damage. It is nothing that will limit me too severely.”

“Pain?”

“Negligible. Only when I’m on it for too long. Your touch is balm to this tired soul,” Hugh smiled as he leaned against the back of the tub, inhaling the peaty aroma of the whiskey, allowing Freddy to wash his ballsack, his cock, his belly. Freddy reached under with the sponge and washed his bum. Hugh lifted himself up slightly, saying, “Yes, that’s right, clean it up, my boy.” He drank.

Freddy poured more hot water into the tub, picked up the soap, and worked up more lather. He moved round to Hugh’s back and scrubbed along his shoulders, noting how he could see each muscle, each bone in his back, even the ribs where the muscles parted like a dense curtain. Hugh was thinner, but still hardy. Freddy leaned over and set the glass, now empty, on the table. Then he set to washing Hugh’s chest, where the hair grew white now, just at the center over the sternum, then lifting each arm, rubbing soap into each

armpit, rinsing away the dust of the road, warming away the cold of the journey.

He turned and picked up the towel he'd set on the kitchen table and snapped it open smartly. Hugh leaned forward and pushed himself up to his feet. Freddy wrapped his lover in the towel, rubbed vigorously, worked his way down each arm, each leg, lingering over his furry bum, the lush forest of hair at his crotch.

“What do you need now?”

“Just to look at you, my boy. Now I have everything. Now that I can look at you. And, to be perfectly honest, if I had another whiskey, then truly I couldn't ask for another thing.”

Freddy poured another drink. “Hungry?”

“Not at the moment. Just sit with me. Will you?”

It hadn't actually occurred to Freddy that he'd been in motion nearly every moment since Hugh had walked so casually into the garden.

“Just sit down, here, in front of me. I want just to look at you.”

Freddy drew the other chair in front of Hugh and sat. He wiped his hands on the towel. Hugh stretched his legs before him, leaned back, and began. “I've had rather a rough go, you know. So now, I need you to do something special for me. Can you do that, my boy?”

“You know there is no need to ask. Only tell me what I should do, and I'll do it.”

“I'll tell you all about it later, but you may have understood that I was a prisoner of war for a time. It was beastly, but you see I stood it. One had to. I spent a good deal of time as a prisoner, and I found out something important about myself. It has to do with what I'm about to ask you to do for me.”

Freddy simply listened, though he couldn't quite make out what Hugh was getting at.

“I need to put myself in your hands, boy. Can you do that for me? I can’t quite find it in me to take you into mine. At least, not right now. Perhaps you already know that. That’s why you’ve tended to me already so—well—so perfectly. But I need to you to take me over. I must just—well I think I want to simply give over to you. Can I do that? Will you take me over, will you bind me? Will you?”

Silently Freddy rose and took both of Hugh’s hands in his. Those large, capable hands now needed to feel placed in Freddy’s command. He pulled the taller man up to his feet and led him to the bed they’d shared so many nights. He pulled the quilt back. Hugh sat down and looked up at the younger man.

“I want you to make sure I’m never away from you against my will again. Do you understand? This must never happen again.” Though Hugh spoke quietly, at a measured pace, there was an intensity in his manner. His eyes were wide open and unblinking. “Freddy, you must assure me of that. I need that from you. Can you assure me?”

“You know I will never allow that to happen. Never again. This afternoon you will know that fully. Completely. I’m going into the other room for a moment. I want you to lie here, to lie still, and look about your room. You know this room. It has not changed.”

Freddy went into the parlor where the cabinet stood, opened it, and found the lengths of rope. When he returned to their bedroom, he found a large kerchief in his drawer. He laid these items on the bed next to Hugh. He stood over his lover and brushed the hair back from his brow, and began to speak.

“This man has suffered so much, so bravely. He needs to know how much he is cherished. He needs to know how rare a man he is, and how valued. Look at me, my love, look at me. Take me in. See how I’m taking you in. See how my face has changed. See how I’ve become a man who can master such a man as you. See how I can care for the man I love. Do you see me? Can you tell me that you see me?”

Tears had filled Hugh’s eyes. His breath caught and he could not speak. He nodded.

“Good. You’re my beautiful love, and I do not wish you to speak. You need not speak. I’m going to gag you so you cannot speak. Your words are not needed here, not now.”

Freddy shook the kerchief out and pulled it taut on the diagonal. “Open.”

Hugh’s mouth dropped open. His face relaxed, he sighed as Freddy put the fabric into his mouth and tied it at the back of his head. He moaned slightly as he realized that he could not form words. He moaned with the understanding that he would not be required to articulate a syllable.

“Now I’m going to bind you fast. You will not be required to use your hands or your legs, and so I’m going to bind them. You are to know that you are kept fast, safe, here, forever.”

Hugh’s breathing deepened. Freddy picked up a length of rope, and wound it around Hugh’s left wrist three times and tied a knot firmly. He tied the end of the rope to the bedstead. As Freddy worked, Hugh looked intently at his young master. Freddy spoke steadily as he made his way round to each ankle, tying it to the bedstead, and Hugh’s right hand.

“Do you feel how firmly you are bound here, now? Do you feel how tightly you are held? I hold you now. I wish you not to move, not to speak. I wish you only to feel, only to know that you are well and truly home.”

Hugh’s cock had stirred to life and arched up toward his lean belly. A drop glistened at its tip.

“I see how welcome this bondage is to you, my love. I see how much you need to be bound.”

Freddy leaned over, flicking his tongue over the head of Hugh’s cock.

“My love tastes so sweet, so good. Now, I’m going to bind that precious manhood fast.”

He stroked Hugh’s cock with one hand as he reached for a length of cotton rope, softer than what bound Hugh’s wrists and ankles. Freddy began to wrap Hugh’s balls with it, carefully winding each turn of the rope so that the pressure on Hugh’s balls gently but firmly increased with each circle of the



rope. Three times round, four times and Hugh felt the pressure of his balls being stretched. Freddy pulled on the rope as he stroked Hugh's straining cock. Hugh moaned, his hips rose and he pulled against his restraints, feeling the surety of his bondage, the certainty of the trust.

Freddy wound the coil five times, six times, until Hugh's balls were pulled well down, and they turned a resplendent ruddy rose. Freddy tied the soft cotton rope off and gently slapped his lover's balls, swollen and shining, as he pulled. Hugh's breathing hastened. Freddy's eyes were locked on Hugh's. Hugh nodded, moaned, more, he needed more. Freddy slapped harder, pulled down on the bound cock and balls, and Hugh began to thrash, his hips pushing up, his back arching. Still he nodded, moaning, more, he needed more. Freddy released his grip and began to untie his lover's ankles.

"Now I'm going to take you, my love. I'm going to claim you as my own."

He pushed Hugh's knees up to his shoulders and buried his face in Hugh's warm and fragrant bum, lapping at the rose-colored hole. His tongue pressed into his lover's depths. Hugh moaned, stretching his legs apart, urging Freddy on.

Freddy found the lotion he kept in the nightstand, and knelt between Hugh's outstretched legs.

"Feel me coming into you, my handsome one. Feel my fingers opening you up. Open yourself to me, so that we can be connected." He greased his cock now, straining with anticipation. He placed its tip at Hugh's opening. "Feel me come into you now. Breathe, want me in you, breathe."

Hugh's breathing was slow and deliberate. He nodded, his eyes wide, his moans softer now, moans that said *yes, come into me now, more*, moans that mounted as Freddy pressed himself deeper and deeper inside.

"Yes, I'm in you now. I've bound you here, where you belong. You belong to me, my handsome one, feel me inside you." He began to push himself into Hugh. "Feel my strength. Feel your strength. Feel how connected we are. How connected we always will be."

Hugh's moans grew louder and more insistent. Freddy pushed himself more and more deeply into Hugh, and pulled on that magnificent, bound cock, pulled on it as he felt himself come closer and closer to his crisis.

"We are one, again, my love." Hugh's moans grew longer. "Yes, I'm fucking my master. I'm fucking my master, my master who trained me so well. I'm filling my master with my love. I can master my master, my love, feel me as I—feel me as I—Oh god, I'm—"

Hugh's moans reached a climax and his jism shot across his belly. Freddy cried out as he pushed himself tightly against Hugh, pouring himself into his lover.

"Oh god, yes. Yes, my love, my master, my good, and only one. I love you."

Freddy reached round Hugh's head and untied the kerchief. He stroked Hugh's head as he lay against his chest. Their breaths quieted in the silence. Freddy gently untied each of Hugh's wrists. Hugh wrapped his arms around the younger man as he rested underneath Freddy's weight. Comforted by that weight. Comforted by the smell of Freddy's sweat, that smell that caught him so long ago.

Freddy looked up at Hugh. "Do you need anything?"

A grin spread across Hugh's face. He sighed deeply. "Only these things: to wake with you and to fall asleep with you. To see the sun rise with you. To see the stars on a clear night with you.

"Yes. All that you have. All that we have. Now rest."

They slept. When they woke, it was a clear winter's night. The rimed landscape shimmered underneath the stars. For a time, at least, the world seemed to be at peace.

**THE END**

## **Author Bio**

*Gil Cole is a writer and psychoanalyst who lives and works in New York City. His debut novel, Fortune's Bastard, or Love's Pains Recounted was released recently by Chelsea Station Editions.*

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