

Florian's Tale

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Chapter 4

Walking in so tight a harness of leathers was an awkward process, Florian's hips stiffened by the binding, but the valet showed little deference for his discombobulation, as the man marched onwards.

Steered not unlike cattle, by that imposing grip on the reins of his loins, the young painter was led through a communicating passage, into a second chamber beyond.

Within awaited a fresh cadre of handsome young footmen, standing at attention and armed with an improbable array of cosmetic implements, powders and unctions.

Sighting their battlefield, murmurs rippled through the battalion as they appraised the lay of that well-tended landscape of Florian's chest and legs, and he heard them drawing their plans of attack against his ill-guarded figure quite brazenly.

The operation began with his moustaches.

"Do try not to move overmuch, sir," Wooster said, as he painted shaving soap over the precious follicles. "It would quite spoil the effect, were you to present yourself to the party tonight bloodied."

"Hold there, Wooster," Florian replied, managing to rise to indignance despite the unseemly state of his person. "I would have you stay your hand, as there can most surely be no exigency to compel you so far as *shearing* my whiskers, blameless as they are in this matter."

Dignified as the man sounded, at least to his own ear, the valet simply smirked, a facile expression more apt to humoring a disgruntled rascal of a boy than a genteel artist of repute.

"Sir will look much more the part once divested of any... indiscrete lapses in personal grooming. A suitably *smooth* countenance will suit sir better, and prove most efficacious in producing the desired effect, of a countenance unblemished. A flawless canvas, one might say, if I may encroach upon your own demesne of expertise, Sir."

Not even the most rambunctious of street-rat ragamuffins had ever ventured so far as to term his whiskers an *indiscretion*, but the man spoke with such assurity, as his firm, imperious hands began to draw the razor over Florian's face and his nethers strained and throbbed below, that the gentleman found himself quite compelled to accede the point.

Somewhere in the farther reaches of his perturbed thoughts, was a notion that if his man felt so strongly on the matter, that Lord Grosvenor too might prefer to see him clean-shaven.

Smooth to the touch.

Lord Grosvenor's touch, mayhap.

Florian felt a peculiar tightening of his breeches again at that... singular concept... as though the valet were once more pulling taut the strings.

It concentrated, as the man went next to Florian's scalp.

"A necessity, that the hairpiece prepared may fit you, Sir," Wooster assured him.

A hairpiece would be far from the proper mode of dressing for the head of a gentleman such as he, however Florian was too focused on that uneasy tension around his hips to protest the fresh indignity, even as he felt his locks shorn unfashionably short.

Commanded not by internal will, or the prized self-determination of all respectable men of good birth, Florian was heeding instead the touch of this other, obeying the hands of the valet as they moved and posed him, as they held him in a style so unlike the manner of those many ladies who had come before.

Demanding.

Implacable.

Controlling.

He cared little for the softer touches of footmen's fingers on his newly shorn face, save for that pleasing feel of smoothness to his skin as they cleansed his features.

The first puff of powder was another matter, however.

Patted into his pores and caking in layers atop his face, the fine dust penetrated his nose and drew a sneeze even before he had comprehended its purpose.

"Is this... a lady's face cosmetic?" he demanded of them, "I must insist you proceed no further – my whiskers I may part with... for the sake of his lordship... yet I do not mean to be mistaken at the ball for a *damsel*, courting the gentlemen present with her feminine graces and beautified features."

"There is small danger of Sir being mistaken for a *lady*," Wooster assured, impassive as ever.

"I'd not venture quite so far as *that*, Mister Wooster," the head footman replied, with a snicker.

His impertinent hand had found the taut mound of Florian's captive crotch, and rough fingers twisted the surface as he gripped the painter, making the man gasp with the startling, shameless touch.

"Not a lot to be seen here now, is there? Of course they say an artist should never blame his materials, isn't that so?"

Florian should have thrown off the wholly improper touch at once, yet his body like his mind, seemed compelled to be captured and examined in that absurdly degrading manner. Still worse was how the sensual contact spread within his loins, the pressure translated through layers of leather into throbbing skin and swollen sex, his baffled brain failing to decipher the shapes he sensed, or find any trace of his formerly imposing phallus in the bulging pouch which was his prison.

Florian was feeling each moment less a man being dressed for the evening, and more a doll, *decorated* for impending display.

That foolish notion was all the more compelling, as they completed the foundation of his new face, and began the application of colors.

His skin was plastered, buried in thick layers which were almost a glaze atop his face, holding his features steady better than any command might have, but immobilized as his forehead might be, he still felt with striking clarity the strokes of a brush there. The painterly hand which he might on any other occasion have praised, filling in the forms of hairs over each eye.

If his brows were to be a forgery that evening, his hair was likewise entirely false. Extracted from a wig-box by the valet in a single piece, the toupee was a fine one, leastwise, by the inexpert eye of a gentleman who had, until that night, supposed not to have need of such a refuge in artifice for many decades yet. It fit his head perfectly, long sideboards of hair hugging each cheek, the tufts echoing those magnificent whiskers he had so recently lost.

Peering into the hand-mirror a footman held up, he saw in that carefully-regulated cut something of the military once more. Styled, he should have guessed, for the military man of old, in emulation of the soldiers of the continental war in which Lord Grosvenor had so distinguished himself.

The echo of his host in the hairpiece was a welcome encouragement, given the lengths to which his forbearance had been put in its application.

Florian felt a tingle of the adventurer's impulse in his breast as he admired his reflection, the romance of stirring deeds and stalwart men in service to their master.

Demeaning as it might seem, to be shorn and daubed, the process might prove worthwhile after all, if it should facilitate an evening spent as his lordship's leal man.

Even that growing disquiet in his ill-fitting breeches could be neglected, at least for a few hours... although there too, in that unwelcome, tingling tension, Florian was finding a strangely compelling companion.

Clenching his hips, his lip wobbled as he felt his trapped flesh strain and throb, yet his captivity was a perverse kind of titillation to him now, in addition to the natural displeasure he felt at the undignified form of dress.

"Oh I do say," spoke one of the men, "I believe Sir is rather enjoying himself!"

At those unspeakable words, all eyes turned to his hips.

To watch how they bucked and twisted with such abandon.

Chuckles spread through the small crowd, and the culprit gave him a dismissive pat, right upon his frustrated phallus.

"There there, Mister Florian, you'll have lots of time for that later, I'm sure.... For now I should say we're all lucky you *can't* indulge, given how much you seem to enjoy yourself."

Disgraceful as it was, his prick pushed out to meet the lowly man's palm, and aghast as he was, Florian rubbed himself against his touch as though it were the caress of a comely maiden, hips bucking with shameful passion for that disparaging hand.

It clenched.

That fist closed, squashed his cock, as though kneading mere chicken meat, barely fit for the table.

Florian felt the blood gathering, heart pounding as his body tried and failed to break free of its maddening chastity. He had never been so stiff, so enflamed, in passion as well as penis, yet the artist had nothing more to display than the modest bump between his thighs, his audience amusing themselves with its relentless denigration.

Wooster disregarded the antics of footmen and gentleman alike, as he took personal charge of the rouge.

At any moment in his life prior, Florian should certainly have raised objection to the dabs of red so artfully applied to his cheeks, and in the most strenuous of terms at that. The Casanova of Hyde Park could never have suffered such a thing to be seen by the ladies of the city, eligible and ineligible alike.

But Florian submitted without a sound.

Save that muted, meager whine, which rose in the back of his throat as he twitched and clenched his sex impotently in the grips of a litany of curious men.

His face was a perfect, picture-book sight, whitened features impassive under layers of powder, sealed with blush and the drawn-in highlights and shading of a portrait.

The impression of a soldierly visage, painted in place atop his own, was completed with the addition of a new false moustache, elegantly curved and quite unlike its forbear, which had relinquished that prided place that it might take up residence.

Florian little recognized himself.

Every part of the face looking back in the mirror was a fakery... save the eyes, which stared out so imploringly, seeking after he knew not what.

Certainly not the vest which was produced next.

"It's too small."

He spoke with small voice, as the valet manipulated his arms for him, pushing them into the openings.

"Not at all, Sir, the garment has been carefully tailored, so as to generate the proper effect of a sufficiently imposing chest. Observe."

Starched beyond reason, the vest was much too stiff and quite unpleasantly tight, robbing him of breath as it closed, forcing his back to arch and his body to rise to a posture of attention as he was laced into it. The process was reminiscent of those times he had aided a lady in re-donning her whalebone corset, after she injudiciously doffed it, and as with those merciless tools of femininity, he found that it did indeed offer an impressive effect. Not only in the narrowing of his waist, but in the multiplication of his breast, from the painter's soft, flat expanse, to the muscular outline of a man at arms.

Uncommonly proud and broad, his figure grew more so as further layers piled atop that first. Already restricted arms were soon pinned to his sides by the trappings of a fine horse-officer's jacket and tailcoat, resplendent blue base detailed with red collars which rose up to his jowls and matching trim that decorated his front. Golden embroidery gleamed as it was done up, trapping its victim in all the opulence of an officer most high.

Trousers too were fitted to his form, pressed beige cotton which added bulk, creating the impression of a powerful build beyond the truth of the man... whilst still hewing tightly to his nether-regions, and the immodest lump at his hips.

With the garments belted, buckled and buttoned in place, Florian could not raise his feet properly for his footwear to be fitted, so the valet took him in hand and leant the man backwards, braced against one of the servants, that his half-lifted leg could be manipulated into the knee-high riding boots befitting of a cavalryman.

Finally, the finishing touches.

A sash of red satin was fed about his waist, the flowing crimson river interweaved with the decorative beige of crossing baldrics, embracing his strapped chest.

Epaulettes, gold, with finely stitched tassels, were buttoned to each shoulder, holding steady those cream bands.

Matching gloves of impressively flared and suitable stiffened cuff were fitted to his hands, restraining even his fingers in their starched confines.

Cavalry saber and spurs were strapped to his hip and heels, metal surfaces polished to a heady gleam.

Last came the black bicorn, befitting an officer of the turn of the century, with gold trim to match his tailcoat and completed by a suitably ostentatious plume.

“A marvelous affectation, if I may say so, Sir,” Wooster suggested, “You are the very image of a man of the Royal Horse Guard, such as those who lined up their bits in service under Lord Wentworth himself, on the ridge at Waterloo.”

There could indeed be no doubt as to the quality, or reality of the clothing, likely heirlooms of that very battle.

Florian had never cut so fine a figure.

Yet neither had he ever felt so restricted.

Supremely discomfiting whenever he attempted to move, the tight attire was hemming in his motion, the starched sheets of fabric and stiffened layers of coat and boot and sash all conspiring to restrain him in his own body.

Added to that was the sheen of his cosmetic additions, the stark colors of heavy powder and rouge, and the false hair. All conspired to create an impression of the *artificial*.

Florian looked more a *toy* soldier than a real man of war.

His clothing felt closer to a convict's bondage.

Or the... creative restraints, with which he had, on seldom and salacious occasion, experimented in the boudoir.

“If you would come this way, Sir,” the valet spoke, stirring him from his reverie, “I believe tonight's guests have arrived, and his lordship is most eager to introduce you.”

Taken by the arms, Florian had little say in the matter, as he was pulled along by the footmen. His body was awkward in the outfit, stepping clumsily, his too-tight smallclothes a humiliating reminder with each squeezing and rubbing step of how overwrought his nethers were, his own thighs teasing at his sex.

With only the vaguest thought of somehow adjusting, or easing that disquieting tightness, his hand reached down, yet even his own fingers could find no purchase or perceive no structure within the blob of leather and flesh under his breeches.

Wooster batted his hand away again, with a click of the tongue.

“None of that now, *Sir*, the great and good of all London are gathered to see you, so there must be no impropriety. At least on your behalf....”

It was inexplicable, outrageous even, yet that rudeness, the brusque, dismissive tone of voice and the dominant touch which came with it, had the costumed gentleman ashiver with his passions, excited and anxious in equal parts as he was marched along towards the ballroom.