

Close encounter -- 3/3

by athens7 as Jack (font: Courier New)
and mazaher as Patrick (font: Verdana)

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3. The morning after (Jack)

Awake.

Eyes still closed.

I stretch my arm across the rumpled sheets and my fingers grasp thin air. I feel the angle of my lips lifting ruefully, against my own volition. I wondered.

My eyelids lift drowsily. The first thing I see is the pillow, the scent of clean skin and two single, dark-blond hair still lingering there.

My perspective expands. The window is open, the heavy curtains motionless, and there on the balcony, in the acerbic sweetness of first morning ---

Heart skipping a beat, eyes imperceptibly widening.

Well, well. Apparently I miscalculated the length of his generous mood.

He's standing there, wearing only his pants and an unbuttoned shirt; the sight of his shoulders and his legs flowing in such a casual and blissed posture is so rare that I wish I were a painter to commit it forever to history. My memory will have to suffice.

I get up, grab the robe and go to him.

He shows no reaction when I stand beside him, my elbows resting on the sill.

He doesn't turn, just keeps inhaling from the cigarette, the smoke rising in serpentine, almost invisible spirals towards the sky.

"Want some?" he speaks at last, offering.

"Thank you" I reply, and if our fingers intertwine for the briefest of moments, neither of us seems to pay notice.

"Beautiful, don't you think?" he murmurs quietly after a minute or two.

"Yes" I answer looking at his eyes.

"I was referring to the sight, to Edinburgh in the distance."

"That, too."

At this, a slightly larger-than-average quantity of air escapes from his nostrils. A huff of amusement? I'm always improving.

I lay the gone out cigarette on the cold stone.

It's past time; here we go.

We turn toward the other exactly at the same time.

Staring.

Then his hands search my face, rest lightly around my neck, the thumbs running in lazy circles behind my ears, and he kisses me.

Not the self-destructive combustion of hydrogen and oxygen of earlier, rather a spark, a controlled fire, quick to ignite and easy to tame.

"Jack" he ghosts over my moist lips, (a last shred of tobacco aroma lingering on the tip of his tongue).

"Yes, Patrick?" I answer, bringing our brows together.

"It will happen again, Jack" he starts, staring at me with heartbreaking seriousness, almost trembling with the intensity of his voice. "Not only the... the night, but what caused it. There will be other times. Many other times."

A perpetual cycle renewing itself till the Second Coming. It's our curse and our blessing.

"I know."

"I hate myself but I cannot change. I cannot."

"And I don't want you to. You are what you are. I thought I couldn't endure it, but then I found out I couldn't live without it neither. Why do you think I came back to you?"

How could I ever leave your side? What useless heroic deed could I ever carry out to be worth of your value?

Because at my words, he smiles, defeated. Not the self-satisfied glint in the tiger's eye just before clutching the prey such as he casts upon his enemies, nor the god-like, mocking curl of lips he reserves for the viles that dare cross his path.

No, this is an unguarded disclosure of all his inner beauty and kindness of spirit, a pure white ray lightening up his whole countenance and stealing all the brightness from the rest of the world.

It is for me and me alone, and so I have to take him in my arms, kiss him again, lean towards his ear and recite softly my vow:

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried. Don't ever forget."

I can't see his face, but I don't need to. His hands tightening at my waist and his head reclining on my shoulder tell me everything I want to know.

We remain embraced forever and a day, then I feel his palm starting to gently push against my chest.

No, no. Too soon, too soon. Just a little longer, I beg you...

But it's like asking Earth to stop spinning or the Michelangel's David to stop being so perfect.

So I close my eyes, take a deep breath, then another, and release him.

When I open them again, he's gone.

A lonely sparrow begins its fragile song like a timid violin, and Edinburgh is watching me from the distance.

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