

## **A matter of height**

by mazaher and athens7

June 17<sup>th</sup> -- July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012

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### **1. Patrick: Tall**

by mazaher

June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012

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How annoying.

He knows it's childish.

He knows it's not Jack's fault.

He knows Jack never really used it against him-- hell, he's never even seemed aware of the fact.

But being three-quarters of an inch shorter than his friend, his shadow, his lover, his Jack, is infinitely annoying to Patrick Moriarty.

...

That first chilly morning when they got acquainted, Patrick remained stretched on the wet snow melting under his warm hurt body, rather than stand up and have to raise his eyes to meet his saviour's.

...

In their fencing sessions, he used to charge sudden, fast and deep, so as to pierce with fury the paced, steely defenses his longer legs allowed damn Jack Waszowski to weave in front of his épée.

...

Walking side by side along the streets of London in the early days, Patrick's gait stuttered in occasional crow-hops. Jack never seemed to notice, and in time Patrick's steps began to flow more freely, his tight back to melt in smooth movement down from his shoulders, following the other's carefree rhythm.

...

At the beginning of the new century, Patrick was among the first to abandon the long-stirruped hunting seat and adopt Caprilli's *inforcatura*, when Jack still let his knees dangle open behind the shoulders of his dappled gray Irish hunter.

"Crouching up there, how can you feel his back?" Jack used to ask.

"I feel it through the stirrups, and I disgust him less," Patrick answered.

*Why on earth should he find you disgusting?* Jack wondered, but he was wise enough to keep his silence.

...

Then, the time had come when they had fallen together, down roiling waters of the mind at Reichenbach, coming out at the bottom more alive than they had ever been.

It was then that Patrick began to see another side to the height difference between them.

Jack like an ancient chestnut tree extending over him his shadow, shelter from the storm, and the blessing of sweet fruits.

Jack's love as the impenetrable armour of a giant around his bleeding heart.  
Jack heaving him up, holding him to his chest, a solid Doric column of strength around which Patrick wraps his legs and hangs, halfway between heaven and earth, safe from the fires of hell as well as lightning from the sky. On the threshold of a heaven of their own. Sharing breath at the same height.  
No, Patrick doesn't mind so much after all the three-quarters of an inch he lacks.

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*Author's notes:*

"Caprilli's *inforcatura*" refers to the natural style of equitation, based on a two-point, self-blocking, "damper" position with short stirrups, elaborated by Capt. Federico Caprilli (1868-1907). Criticising the then current style of riding in the cavalry, modeled on a badly-understood and worse-practiced "classical" equitation which frayed the body and destroyed the morale of the horses, he recommended that "...il cavaliere si sforzerà di rendere le proprie azioni meno disgustose che potrà per il cavallo" (... the rider will endeavour to make his actions the least disgusting he can for the horse).

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Genga, ridden by  
Capt. Instr. Giacomo Antonelli,  
brilliant over a stone wall  
(1909)  
(<http://tizianobedonni.blogspot.it/view/classic>)



## 2. Jack: Oblivious

by athens7

July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012

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...

It's raining, a frozen, persistent drizzle that slips under my collar and covers my skin like a thousand blunt needles. Patrick is a cat; it's a fixed point in the history of the world, a scientific fact confirmed by years of indisputable evidence. So someone would please have the decency and the benevolence to elucidate why exactly he seems utterly unwilling to share our only umbrella with me? At a certain point, while attempting desperately to prevent my lips from curving upwards at the sight of the frizzy locks caressing his brow, I propose that he be the one to carry the apparently despised commodity. For reasons that go well beyond the scope of my cognitive abilities, this seems to aggravate him even more. His ear tips flush red. I decide to blame the cold, and carry on.

...

It's the beginning of summer, and we are going home after an exhibition offered for free by Patrick in Covent Garden. The air is clean and leisurely temperate, to the point that I dare loosen my cravat and undo the first button of my waistcoat. We are strolling side by side, teasing each other mercilessly. It's one of those days. Then, a particularly facetious remark about one of his most inveterate admirers of the female variety earns me a shove, in the form of his shoulder bumping against mine. Having been caught off-guard, I temporarily lose my balance, so that I end up on the edge of the street, while he continues to stand on the sidewalk. This allows him to look at me straight in the eye, without having to incline his neck, not even a quarter of an inch.

On the heels of this observation, comes the realization, hitting me with the force of a deranged carriage.

He is actually *shorter* than me.

We are talking about, I venture to calculate, two inches at best, but there it is nevertheless. I swear to God, I never, ever --- I feel like an unidentified object has been standing at the corner of my eye for all these years, and now that it has come into full view, I become aware that I should have known all along. My disorganized lucubrations stop abruptly at the sight of his tongue sneaking out to wet his lips, while his eyes seem intent on swallowing me whole. And I understand, with an inebriating combination of elation and panic, that he is struggling with the urge to kiss me, right here, right now, and that he is on the verge of losing. So I resume walking, as fast and as unsuspectingly as I can, without even checking if he has moved with me.

Once the door to his apartment slams closed behind us, we manage to stumble over a carpet and to topple a table before he finally, gloriously takes me against the arm of the sofa.

...

It's afternoon, and I have just come home from an emergency visit.

I find him in the study, standing on his tiptoes in the attempt to reach the highest shelf of the oak bookcase. Without thinking (and oh, I really should have learned how to avoid these mistakes by now), I stretch my arm and reach the book in question for him. He turns to stare at me, on his face one of the most outraged expressions I have ever witnessed in my life. I am positive that, were the Queen to enter our chambers in the middle of the night, her expression would be the epitome of indifference in comparison. Well, drastic times call for drastic measures. I kiss his open mouth, while sliding my hands around his waist, along his spine, until my palms come to grasp firmly the back of his thighs. I lift him and carry him to the piano, setting him down on the keyboard. There I open his trousers, bend down and begin to taste him, until he has to shove his fist in his mouth to prevent himself from alerting the entire neighborhood that we are infringing the Act right in the middle of tea.

The Issue does not rear its ugly head for an entire fortnight.

...

We go to Reichenbach, we fall, we climb our way out, and we come back. Or maybe it's two new, different men who set foot again in London.

...

We are attending a party, trying to gauge what exactly would be the socially acceptable amount of time our presence is needed for before we can depart quietly from the scene. We are in conversation with the lords of the manor. At a certain point, my hand sets on his shoulder, out of my conscious control, caught as I am in the limpid sound of his polite laughter and in the sensation of the red wine buzzing in my veins. Once my mind catches up with my body, a cold shiver runs down my spine. I cannot even find the courage to look at him, as I need a few minutes more to erect my defenses against the silent wrath that surely awaits me. But then, something unprecedented happens. That is, he actually *leans* into my touch, shifting right across the borders of my personal space, a movement so subtle and unobtrusive that only a practiced observer of the subject would be able to detect it. And I pride myself on being the highest authority in the world in the field of Patrick Moriarty. Our eyes still don't meet, but his lips curve into a smile that I have never seen him use before in this type of setting (and I should know, being the highest authority and all).

It's kindness and confidence, fragility and strength. It's sanctuary, it's home.

It says, '*I am yours and you are mine*'.

I squeeze his shoulder, once, and let go.

Message understood.

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