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Sapphire Hart

by Zoe Carroll

“Saffy,” he paused “that short for Saffron?”

“I only wish it was. No, my parents had the inspired idea of calling me Sapphire. Sapphire Hart. My older sister is called Ruby so I think it was one of those attempts to make the names match or something. My younger brother got away lightly, he was going to be called Emerald if he was a girl,” she laughed nervously, worried that she had been rambling. His gaze was intense and she felt herself squirm under it.

“It suits you,” he said after a brief pause, “you’re dazzling.”

“Oh. Thank-you,” Saffy couldn’t quite tell if he was teasing her or not so she rambled on without meeting his eye again.

“Madge says that you might be able to help us with our idea for the display team, she said something about you being in a colour or something and that you might know what we’re doing wrong and why we are finding it so difficult to plan a routine that works,” finally she paused for breath, met his gaze and smiled. He was smiling at her and she felt relieved and strangely elated. She tucked her fringe behind her ear self-consciously.

“I was in the Queen’s Colour Squadron. It’s the people you see on TV marching around in circles and making displays for the Queen at the Royal Albert Hall. I have been in a fair few display teams yes, but I’m not really sure what it is you’re doing so you’ll have to bring me up to speed.”

Saffy spent the next half hour telling Tony all about the plan to have a motability scooter display team at the airshow and he listened intently to the sorry tale of how she had tried to work out a routine for them but how it had all ended terribly badly with Wilf crashing into Sidney and a whole lot of swearing.

Tony reached across her and she felt her insides do a little flip before she realised that he was only reaching for her notebook.

“The problem you have, is that you are treating everyone as if they are an individual and what you need to do is to make them work as blocks of four,” he was drawing a diagram as he spoke and she had a strange urge to lean forwards and kiss his face which took her quite by surprise. He looked like a man who used to get kissed a lot but she doubted that he had received a great deal of kisses lately, sullen as he was.

Tony MacKenzie was in the RAFA club every time Saffy went there. Madge said that he was in there most of the time that she was there too, always sitting at the corner table with a pint and a tatty paperback. It had been Madge’s idea for Saffy to invite him to help with the display team, “I think he’s lonely,” she’d said. Saffy had been worried about striking up a conversation with him. He looked so serious all the time and she was convinced that he’d think her idea was stupid. In the end it had been a pleasant exchange that had left her hankering to see him again.

“Will you be here on Thursday night?” she asked him, hoping that he would be so that she could see him but at the same time cringing inside because surely people in their early twenties should be doing far more exciting things than going to the RAFA club bingo night with their Mum. She wouldn’t admit to anyone how much she enjoyed it and how spending time with the retired pensioners was the highlight of her week.

“If you’re going to be there, definitely,” he gave her a wide grin, “I’ll bring you a routine for your crazy display team.”