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Conspiracy in the Streets, Intestines in the Sheets

by Mia Sundby

Life, in his experience, had a kind of velvet lustre. You looked at yourself from one perspective and all you saw was weirdness. Move your head a little bit, though, and everything looked reasonably normal.

For example, from where Wickham was stood, he could tilt his head ever so slightly to the right and up a bit and he practically couldn't see the dead goblin in his bed.

There was a lot of blood, which was proving more difficult to un-see, and the poor creature's guts were, well, distressingly well-travelled. As Wickham was turning his head artfully to the side, he was dismayed to lock eyes with what he was fairly certain was a bit of entrails dangling off of the lip of his boots.

Gagging, he lifted a hand to cover his mouth and nose. Because it was just the sort of day he was having, Wickham sighed, gathered up every shred of courage he had, and stepped towards the corpse.

Flies were already buzzing around the dead goblin, and the fetid reek of rotting flesh was permeating the rented room. One particularly hideous smell was missing, though, Wickham noted with... Well, *'interest'* might be going a bit far. The stench of a corpse's emptied bowels was nowhere to be smelled. A small part of him was relieved, for the half a second it took for him to understand what that meant.

Either the goblin hadn't been killed here, or the goblin hadn't been dead more than half an hour. Neither scenario was in Wickham's favour.

Squinting, he took in the goblin's features. It was often difficult to tell the gender of a goblin, as most of them didn't adhere to the gender binary and the rest who did adhered to it from within the culture of matriarchal goblin society. Which was to say that Wickham usually didn't ask.

As he eyed the face of the corpse, though, his own fell.

"Oh no..." He murmured. Wickham was a pirate --and a sky pirate at that--, used to bad food, bad weather and bad luck. By all accounts, he had the sort of iron-clad stomach a sailor could be proud of. But as he looked down on the face of the corpse splayed on the bed, he felt his stomach surge with bile.

The dead eyes, the slack face, the gaping mouth, belonged to Tugris. Wickham wasn't sure if the goblin had a surname --most goblins didn't bother with surnames, unless they lived in cities (you could only meet so many goblins named Snubnose before it got confusing).

They were a smart goblin, a pickpocket who dealt in secrets on the side. Gods knew that Tugris had been the keeper of a few of Wickham's own secrets.

Now, looking down at the tiny body of Tugris, he had a sinking feeling that the pickpocket had paid in information, too.

For a long moment --as long as he could allow himself--, Wickham stood over the body of Tugris. He'd trusted the little bugger, and respected them more than he let on. They'd shared shit wine and good music, and whether as payment or not... Tugris had known some things about Wickham that not even his own crew knew.

Bowing his head, Wickham felt his eyes prick with hot tears. He exhaled slowly, covering his mouth. Then he straightened, angling his head to the right and up a little.

As respectfully as he could, Wickham nudged Tugris' entrails off of his nice boots, stuffed them in his leather pack --which, thrown into the corner of the room, had mercifully escaped the carnage which now decorated the otherwise sparse tavern lodging--, before making his way back out the door.