



WISHBONE

A Madman's Daughter story

“Guess who?”

Two hands pressed against Juliet's eyes from behind. She grinned and her cheeks curled against the hands. They were larger than hers, but still not the size of an adult's. Combine that with the smell of camphor oil on the boy's jacket and the voice he was trying to disguise, it was easy enough to deduce.

“I guess that it's a silly boy who's been changing the oil in lamps and forgot to wash up before dinner.” She grinned harder. “And I also guess that it's this boy's tenth birthday today.”

Montgomery removed his hands. “You always know.”

Juliet spun around to face him. It was busy in the market that morning, but no one spared a glance at two children and a mangy dog, even if the girl was finely dress and the boy in livery.

Juliet bent down to pet Crusoe's head. “And is your master



having a good birthday so far, little pup?”

“He is now that someone’s remembered,” Montgomery said, adjusting the burlap sack over his shoulder. “Your father certainly didn’t. Made me rise before dawn to clean out the stables so I could get to the butcher’s this morning before all the good cuts were gone.”

Juliet wrinkled her nose, eyeing the burlap sack. “What did he send you here for, anyway? He knew mother and I were coming this morning. She’s just over in the flower stalls. We could have picked up whatever he wanted.”

Montgomery pulled his cap lower over his eyes, and adjusted the sack again. He cleared his throat. “Nothing. Just some errands for his laboratory. Which I really must get to.” He whistled for Crusoe, who hung at his heels, ever loyal, even for such a young pup. “I’ll see you at home. You should get on to your mother, anyway.”

Juliet dismissed that with a wave. “She knows I get bored with the flowers.”

“Just the same, she’ll be looking for you soon.”

He started down the busy hall of Covent Garden to the butcher’s quarter, where the stone floor ran red with blood and flies hung thick on the raw cuts of meat.

“Wait, Montgomery.” Juliet took hold of his jacket cuff. She dropped her voice. “Really—what does my father want from the butcher’s?”

Montgomery shrugged, not meeting her eyes. “Probably just something for dinner.”



“Carried home in a burlap sack? And wouldn’t he have sent the cook?”

A fruit vendor nearly collided with them, and Montgomery pulled her out of the way into an alcove of the market that smelled of far-away spices, cinnamon and jasmine. He leaned in close. “Remember the book I gave you on dissection?” Juliet nodded. “Well, I found it marked up with the most peculiar illustrations he had done by hand. I can’t wrap my mind around it, Juliet. They’re either brilliant or mad, I can’t tell. In fact, the other day he said the oddest thing about Crusoe...”

“Juliet?”

A lady’s voice came from the busy hallways. They both craned their neck to see Juliet’s mother, elegantly dressed in a summer coat and hat, basket of lilies slung gracefully over one shoulder, craning her neck.

Montgomery blinked. “Never mind. You must go to her.”

“No, tell me. What were you going to say?” Juliet pressed, ignoring her mother. “About Crusoe.”

“Nothing. It’s silly. Just that your father said the way he barks almost sounds like a person speaking. He was wondering aloud what Crusoe would say, if he could speak.”

“Give me that lovely hunk of soup bone?” Juliet offered.

Montgomery grinned. “You’re peculiar too, you know. Just like him.” He goosed her nose. “That’s what I like about you.”

“Juliet, are you there?” her mother called again. “Come here at once.”



Juliet ruffled Crusoe's hair and gave Montgomery a wink before she jogged down the hallways after her mother, but then she stopped, looked over her shoulder, and ran back to Montgomery.

She pressed a package in his hand. "Happy birthday," she said. "Whatever you wish today, I hope you get it."

She disappeared among the crowd, back to her world of wealth and society, and Montgomery opened the package.

A soup bone for Crusoe, and a wishbone for himself. Montgomery closed his eyes and snapped the bone, making his birthday wish.

I wish to grow up to be a doctor as clever as Moreau, he thought. And I wish that Juliet never, ever learn what he is really doing in that laboratory.

He snapped the bone. It split straight down the center. Inconclusive. He frowned and let it fall to the ground before turning and walked into the dark, dripping corridors of Butcher's Alley.