

Meth Bust

By C. Jade Wyton

Olivia has lost her pet dog, Meth. In a panic she wakes up Bertram, the only person she feels won't be angry at her for it, and asks for his help.

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*'Bertram! Bertram!' Olivia batted at the sleeping man, her voice a quiet shouted-whisper as she tried to wake him without disturbing the others.*

*'Bertram, wake up!'*

*'Mm? Liv? What—' Bertram shifted, and opened his mouth to mumble something— But immediately was silenced by Olivia's hand over his mouth.*

*'Shh!' Olivia shushed. 'I need your help!'*

*'Yer wantin' my help?' Bertram mumbled through the girl's hand. 'Not Volante's? Yer pulling my leg, ain't cha?'*

*'No!' Olivia whispered back; her hushed tone so desperate it immediately woke Bertram up to full attention. 'She can't fix this! She'll make it worse!'*

*'Fix what, spitfire—'*

*'Shh!'*

*Bertram dropped his voice. 'Darlin' what's happened?'*

*'I messed up!' Olivia managed, her voice breaking as she tried not to cry. 'I really messed up, Bertram! I dunno what to do! You're the only one who can fix this!'*

*'What about Farren? Surely he'd be knowing how t' help?'*

*'You're the only one who can fix this without getting mad at me!' it almost came out of her as a sob; though she managed to hold it back. 'Farren's gonna be so mad if he finds out! So mad! I don't want him to be mad at me!'*

*'Shh, shh,' Bertram was out of bed, now, gently leading Olivia into the hall so he could comfort her properly. 'Hey. Hey, now. Keep calm, darlin'. Y'all alright. Farren loves ya. He won't get mad at ya, no matter what yer've done.'*

*'He will!' Olivia pushed. 'He's gonna be so mad! But I can't— I need help!'*

*'Honey, what's got y'all so worked up—'*

*'I lost Meth!' she blurted; her breathing growing more ragged as a look of horror hit Bertram's face.*

*'Y'all lost little Meth?!' he exclaimed. 'Liv, darlin'! We gotta tell Farren—'*

*'No!' Olivia cried, feeling the tears starting to come. 'Please, no! He'll never trust me with anything again! Meth's s'posed to be my responsibility! I can't lose him! Farren'll lose his mind!'*

*'Alright, alright, calm down,' Bertram said softly. His gentle, calm voice helped Olivia to breathe and she managed to stop herself from sobbing. 'Ah understand. Y'all are worried 'bout Farren gettin' mad at yer.... But why'd yer wake me? Yer said before that Volante'd make it worse? How, darlin'? Ah thought she was good with handlin' yer pup? Ah'm sure she can find him in no time.'*

*'I.... It's not that I don't know where he is,' Olivia admitted carefully as she wiped her eyes. 'It's that I'm.... I'm scared to go get him on my own....'*

Bertram raised a brow. 'Why?'

'Cos... I was stealing when I lost him,' she admitted. 'And someone saw me. And that's why I ran— But when I got away I turned around and Meth wasn't with me— *What if they took him, Bertram?!*' the realisation slammed into her and she grabbed poor Bertram tight by his shirt and shook him. 'What if they don't give him back?!'

'Spitfire, calm down,' Bertram took her hands in his and gave them a comforting squeeze. 'Ah'm sure they'll give him back. They have ta! He's yers, after all. An' even if yer've stolen from them, it ain't given them the right to steal back.'

Olivia relaxed, at Bertram's words, and she nodded.

'Do yer still have what y'took?'

Olivia nodded again, and slung her bag off her shoulder to pull out the plate she'd taken.

'That all?'

'Yeah, that's all I took.'

'Right, then. That ain't so bad,' Bertram gave the girl a pat on the shoulder. 'Just give me a minute t'get dressed, and Ah'll head on out with yer.'

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Olivia hated that she was so nervous she'd had to hold onto Bertram's hand. But it was the only thing that could seem to keep her from bursting into tears as the pair walked through the streets, back towards the place that Olivia had last seen her dog.

When they came to the house that Olivia had robbed the girl paused, swallowing and digging in her heels just before the gate.

'Y'alright?' Bertram asked as he felt the tug on his arm.

'What if they're mad at me?' Olivia asked, swallowing and shifting so she was hidden behind the house's hedge fence. 'Farren usually explains things before he makes me talk to them! But he's not here!'

'Y'all can wait here, if y'prefer,' Bertram offered.

Olivia's ears flicked up and she felt herself swallow. 'Really?' she asked, her voice tinged with disbelief. 'You're not gonna make me apologise...?'

'Nah, Ah think yer've learnt yer lesson already,' Bertram chuckled, ruffling Olivia's hair. 'There ain't no point in making yer look 'em in the eye when Ah can do it for ya.'

Olivia swallowed down the giggle that almost escaped her, though she couldn't hide the smile. 'Thank you, Bertram,' she said quietly, peeking around the hedge to the front door.

There was a light on in the house; meaning whoever she'd woken still hadn't gone back to bed....

'Alright, spitfire, y'all just wait here for me an' Ah'll be back soon,' Bertram told her as he started down the front path to the house. 'Don't yer worry none. Ah'll get this sorted out.'

Olivia nodded and quickly hid herself better among the hedge leafs as Bertram *rapt-tap-tapped!* on the door with its knocker.

It was answered by a goliath woman; wrapped in a bathrobe and so tall she had to duck under her door's frame to address Bertram.

'Hello? May I help you?' she asked unsurely.

'Good morning, Ma'am. Th' name's Deputy Bluebell. Ah'm sorry to disturb ya,' he said, flashing his deputy's badge so quick the tired-looking woman didn't have time to properly see it. 'Ah understand y'all were burgled, earlier this night?'

'Oh, yes. I was. By a young girl,' the woman gave a vacant nod, followed by a shrug. 'She couldn't have been more than fifteen. And she only took *one* plate. A cheap one, too. I wasn't even really going to bother reporting it. No point in pressing charges.... Did my neighbour call you?'

Bertram shook his head and retrieved the plate from his pack. 'Th' girl turned herself in when she realised her accomplice weren't with her.'

'Her accompl... oh!' the woman gave a tired chuckle and rubbed at the back of her head. 'You mean that poor pup that got left behind?' she took her plate when Bertram nodded, and turned back into her house. 'Yeah. I popped him out the back. I was expecting someone would come back for him, with how friendly he was. I'll go get him now.'

'Much obliged, ma'am,' Bertram said with a tip of his hat. Then, once the woman had vanished, he cast a glance back at Olivia and winked.

Olivia felt herself smiling back— Though she swallowed as the woman returned; holding Meth by his collar as he tried to bolt ahead to Bertram.

'Ah, that's the scoundrel!' Bertram said as he saw Meth. He then held his hand out at the dog, shaping his fingers like a gun. 'Stick 'em up! Yer under arrest.'

Meth sat down, lifting both his front paws in the air and wagging his tail joyfully.

The woman seemed to find this humorous, as she chuckled and released the dog.... And then her eyes flicked up and met Olivia's, and the tabaxi quickly ducked back behind the hedge.

'Ah'm taking y'all in under charges of burglary—' Bertram had to grab the dog by the collar to hold him back as Meth laid eyes on Olivia and tried to bolt for her. '—Ah! *And* resistin' arrest! Y'all have the right t' remain silent...' joked Bertram, before looking back up to the goliath and tipping his hat. 'Thank y'all for yer compliance, ma'am. It's much appreciated.'

The woman gave him a polite nod. 'No hard feelings,' she said; clearly addressing the girl peeking out from the hedge at her instead of the man in front of her. 'You stay safe, now.'

'Thank y'all, ma'am,' Bertram acknowledged as she shut the door.

Then, as soon as the door *clicked* closed, Bertram released Meth and let the dog run over to its owner.

Olivia threw her arms around Meth, squeezing the animal tight.

'Meth!' she exclaimed, pressing her face deep into his fur. 'I thought I was never gonna see you again! Boy— Next time you gotta run *away* from the person chasing us, not *towards*!'

A chuckle sounded from Olivia's side as she scolded her dog, and she felt Bertram's hand brush softly between her ears.

'C'mon, spitfire,' he said in a playful voice. 'If we hurry we can get back b'fore Sheshalan gets up for her early-mornin' bathroom run, an' she mightn't even

realise yer've been gone!

—END—

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