The Talk (v. 2.0)

by Elizabeth (anghraine)

Summary

Wherein Mssrs Bingley and Gardiner try not to die of humiliation.

‘Er,’ says Mr Gardiner, looking at Bingley as if he’d grown horns and a tail. ‘Well.’

He pulls out his handkerchief and scrubs at his face, still red and sweaty from the torment of two minutes ago.

‘Sir?’ Bingley sends him an enquiring look, blinking mild brown eyes. He looks, Mr Gardiner decides, rather like a bull. A pleasant, docile bull, but one which might nevertheless cause a great deal of trouble in a chinashop.

He pours two large brandies. A pity, he thinks, that he didn’t consider this earlier.

Then he begins to talk, while Bingley turns white, then grey, then green. They gulp down the brandy.

‘I, er - well, sir, I, er, I am not entirely, er, that is, I . . .’

Mr Gardiner eyes Bingley’s half-nauseated, half-embarrassed face, and girds his loins.

So to speak.

‘Perhaps,’ he says delicately, ‘you have a certain degree of - what might be termed, er, specialised knowledge. Perhaps, even, you have no desire to speak more on the subject.’

‘No, sir I . . . that is, I do not wish to hear more,’ Bingley replies, wagging his head violently. ‘Ever.’
Mr Gardiner heaves a great sigh. Then he holds out the decanter. ‘Good man,’ he says, clapping his future nephew on the shoulder. ‘More brandy?’

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