

My Aim Is Steady And True

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My Aim Is Steady And True

by [nianeyna](#)

Summary

100 percent all-natural fandom-grade h/c. Please ignore all the reasons canonical, medical, and logical why this doesn't make sense. shh. just come.

Notes

Beta'd by the inimitable [Cascaper](#).

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

Their contact was late.

So was Emmanellain, but that was hardly out of the ordinary.

Honoroit paced idly around the Intercessory as he waited. He paused at a tea table set unobtrusively into a corner - not a usual feature of this room. There was a folded slip of paper tucked under a tray of muffins. Honoroit extracted it curiously.

H -

Terribly sorry for scheduling a meeting before breakfast. I asked Medguistl to make this up for ~~you~~ us.

- E

Honoroit smiled helplessly at the familiar handwriting. There were those who called his lord Emmanellain thoughtless, and indeed it seemed that Honoroit was forever chasing after him for forgetting one or another of his responsibilities. Yet of all the things Emmanellain forgot, or left for last, Honoroit had never been one of them.

It was ridiculous to still feel this way every time Emmanellain did something like this. He wasn't a wide-eyed child anymore, ready to fall in love with anyone who was kind to him. But Emmanellain wasn't anyone, and he was still in love. Hopelessly, and forever, it seemed. His twentieth birthday had passed months ago, and with it his fading hope that his feelings were but a fleeting product of hero worship and hormones - the way he, such a sensible child, had told himself they were. At twelve, and fourteen, and sixteen, and eighteen, and -

Well. He wasn't a child anymore, he supposed, and perhaps it was time to admit he wasn't sensible, either. A sensible person wouldn't spend his life pining over an utterly unattainable lord who would forever see him as a helpless ten-year-old, but that, apparently, was what Honoroit intended to do.

It was enough, he thought, setting the note down with care, to be adored. To be the most important person in Emmanellain's life. What matter then, his thoughts of his lord's hands, and eyes, and irrepressible smile? He could live this way - he always had.

The door of the Intercessory swung open - their contact, finally. There was no sign of Emmanellain. The man they were to meet was a rather burly Hyur swathed in what seemed like an excessive amount of layers, even for Coerthas.

Honoroit, regretfully abandoning breakfast, hurried forward and held out a hand. "Ah, Master Thorne. Awfully good of you to come. Your information about the anti-Dravian rebels will be most - oh!" He broke off, because Thorne had grabbed his outstretched hand, used it to pull him off balance, and then spun him around and backed both of them up several steps towards the center of the room. And he had been hiding steel in all those thrice-damned layers. Honoroit could feel it pricking his skin, through the layers of fine clothing he was wearing and *why hadn't he worn armor*, this was meant to be a *military outpost*.

“Here’s what’s going to happen,” said Thorne. (*If that’s even his name*, thought Honoroit. They’d clearly been played for fools.) “You’re going to tell lord pretty-boy that I’ve given you the location of the True Faithful’s headquarters, and that you have a plan to catch them but it requires absolute secrecy and for him to meet you at Providence Point. Alone.”

“Ah - why would I do that?” asked Honoroit in disbelief.

“Not too bright, are you?” Thorne sneered, and jabbed his knife demonstratively. “You’ll do it because if you don’t, *this* goes in your ribs.”

This is madness, thought Honoroit. “I-If you kill me in front of my lord you’re a dead man,” he pointed out, cursing his voice for wavering. “You’ll be executed, if he doesn’t just kill you where you stand.”

“Then I’ll have died for my faith.”

Wonderful. A fanatic.

“He’s not going to do something that stupid just on my word,” Honoroit ventured rather feebly, his heart sinking because he knew very well that Emmanellain would absolutely do something that stupid, especially on Honoroit’s word. Thorne clearly knew it too, because all he did was scoff.

Trying to think of a way out, Honoroit kept coming back to the same idea. It was a bad idea. He hated the idea. He really, really didn’t want to do it. But he’d been studying medicine, ever since Emmanellain had got himself injured in that Ixali raid and he hadn’t known what to do and had promised himself, *never again*. He knew how to do it. It would work.

Probably.

He fidgeted as casually as possible, thinking hard about anatomical diagrams. “*Stop moving*,” Thorne growled, pressing the knife harder into his ribs. *Not quite*, he thought, and twitched one more time, carefully. The knife scraped painfully along his back, but that was fine. That was good to know, the location of the knife.

The door opened, and Emmanellain walked into the room.

“Right, what’s to do?” he inquired cheerfully, shutting the door behind him. “I suppose Honoroit’s already got everything worked out and all that’s left is to give me my marching orders, hm?” He looked at Honoroit. “What are you doing all the way over there, my boy?”

Honoroit took a deep breath, tried hard not to think about what he was about to do, and said very clearly, “I’m sorry.” Then he threw himself backwards as hard as he could, onto the knife.

Oh, was the next thing Honoroit could remember thinking, blinking at the several ilms of steel poking out of his chest, *it’s really more of a sword than a knife, isn’t it*. He couldn’t remember the knife - sword - actually going in, because apparently there were levels of sheer stupidity that the mind simply refused to comprehend, but he couldn’t have lost much time

because all three of them - he, Thorne, and Emmanellain - were still standing there in shocked silence. Honoroit looked up. Emmanellain looked - stricken. Lost.

Then Thorne made a noise of absolute disgust and yanked the sword out of Honoroit's back, not gently.

Honoroit might not remember the sword going in, but he felt every excruciating moment of it coming back out. *There's the pain*, he thought, choking, as his knees buckled. He heard Emmanellain scream wordlessly and rush forward, and then there was a great deal of noise, which he ignored in favor of breathing shallowly into the rug. It was dusty. They really ought to clean in here more often.

It was possible he'd miscalculated, Honoroit thought, dizzy. He couldn't remember ever feeling this bad. Not even when he was ten and down with chocopox and raging with fever. That was before he'd been second in command, before he'd even been steward, when he was only Emmanellain's manservant. He'd been brought into the Fortemps household barely a month before, and he'd been terrified of being turned out for not being able to work. Instead Emmanellain had given up his own bed so that Honoroit could have a better sickroom, and fussed over him endlessly, laying cool cloths on his forehead and reading to him quietly through the nights when he couldn't sleep for the pain and the bloody itching.

If I'm going to die after all, thought Honoroit, tasting blood, *at least it's for him. At least I didn't let him down.*

He wasn't terribly worried about the outcome of the fight going on above his head. Emmanellain had had his sword strapped to his belt, and he had been (somewhat to Honoroit's original surprise, and then pride) diligent in practicing the weapon for the last five years. He was a knight. This intruder was a thug. The body falling to the floor just now was not Emmanellain's, or if it was, at least Honoroit's throat was about to be slit and he wouldn't have to know about it for much longer.

Someone landed on their knees next to him. "*Honoroit*," said Emmanellain. "No. *No*."

"Don't fuss," Honoroit croaked, mostly to let Emmanellain know he was alive. He really thought he could do with some fussing at the moment, actually, but he wasn't about to admit that. Unfortunately talking caused the tickle in his throat to become un-ignorable and he coughed agonizingly into the rug. Yes, that was definitely blood. Lovely. That wasn't supposed to happen, and he was fairly sure it meant he'd really cocked this up. *For an archer you have terrible aim*, he thought, disgusted with himself.

"Oh, you're alive," Emmanellain breathed in profound relief, and then, indignantly, "Don't fuss?" and then, "I have to get - I have to - stay here, *don't move*." And then he was gone. Not too far - he seemed to be at the door shouting for a surgeon. This seemed eminently sensible and indeed entirely necessary under the circumstances, but Honoroit still, stupidly, wanted him back.

There was an odd crashing noise, and then he was back. Honoroit turned his head, needing to look at him. He was holding - a tablecloth? Oh. From the breakfast cart. That was what the crashing noise had been.

“Why do you have the tablecloth,” Honoroit mumbled, watching Emmanellain rip the tablecloth into a few large pieces with the aid of his belt knife and fold one of them into a square. Oh, gods, talking hurt. Instead of answering, Emmanellain pressed the square of fabric to his back.

Honoroit lost another few seconds. When he came back from the sudden white-out of pain Emmanellain was brushing his hair back from his face with his free hand and saying frantically, “-orry, shh, I’m sorry. Sweetheart, I’m sorry. It’s just that you’re bleeding - rather a lot.”

Sweetheart? Honoroit wondered, trying to catch his breath and stop whimpering. Seven hells. He really must be dying. That was embarrassing. That hadn’t been the plan at all.

“I’m fine,” he tried to say, though some more blood came out with the words and rather undermined his point.

“You’re *not*,” said Emmanellain. Honoroit couldn’t deny that this was probably true. It was getting harder and harder to breathe.

“Keep talking,” Emmanellain begged. “Say something. Anything. Tell me why you did it.”

“Melodrama,” Honoroit gasped, because he didn’t have the energy to explain. “I thought it would appeal to your terrible taste in theatre. How did I do?”

Emmanellain laughed wetly. “Good. Yes. Keep insulting me. Tell me more about my personality flaws. Say I’m frivolous and unprincipled.”

“You aren’t,” said Honoroit, “not anymore. I never cared if you were. You saved me.”

Emmanellain actually blushed. He also looked increasingly worried. Honoroit had to admit he didn’t often heap praise on Emmanellain, as the practice didn’t come naturally to him and he generally thought Emmanellain needed a bit of reining in, anyway. But his normally bottomless well of sarcasm seemed to have run dry. *Perhaps it really is in my blood*, he thought, amused - but he didn’t think Emmanellain would appreciate the joke.

“I don’t think I ever... thanked you,” Honoroit breathed.

“No,” said Emmanellain, appalled. “Stop. *Stop it.*”

With a great effort, Honoroit moved his right hand to touch the closest part of Emmanellain, which happened to be his knee. Emmanellain made a small noise and caught Honoroit’s hand in his own, squeezing it desperately. Honoroit tried to squeeze back, though he thought the strength of his grip, or lack thereof, might not be entirely reassuring.

“I’m sorry,” said Honoroit. He was. “I wish I’d thought of something better.” He coughed again. Oh, gods, that hurt. “It was worth it though. You. Everything.” He blinked hard, but it didn’t clear his vision. There was something very urgent he needed to say. Wasn’t there? “I love you,” he gasped, “...so much.” Yes. That was it.

If Emmanellain made any reply, he didn’t hear it.

“No. Honoroit? No. Don’t.” Emmanellain pressed harder on Honoroit’s back, and there was no response. *Oh. So there is something worse than the noise he made when I did that before,* he thought hysterically.

Before he could panic - any more - he heard the door burst open. It was the surgeon. Emmanellain couldn’t remember her name. *Honoroit would know,* he thought. She took in the situation at a glance and then knelt beside Honoroit. “Unconscious?” she asked.

“Only for a moment,” said Emmanellain. “But his breathing -” Honoroit was breathing in tiny gasps. Each one felt like a wound on his heart.

“Hm,” said the surgeon, reaching into her bag and retrieving a small sharp knife. “You’ve done well to keep pressure on the wound, but we’ll need to cut this doublet off and ensure there are no trapped fibers.” As she spoke, she efficiently slit Honoroit’s doublet up the sides, adroitly navigating around Emmanellain’s hand which he hadn’t dared remove from where it was keeping pressure on the wound. She produced a wide roll of clean white bandaging. “Alright, my lord, you can let go now.”

Reluctantly, Emmanellain loosed his grip on the pathetic square of tablecloth that had been holding in Honoroit’s life’s blood. The surgeon, unperturbed, shouldered him aside and peeled off the back of Honoroit’s doublet, bandage and all. Emmanellain couldn’t help a distressed noise at the gush of blood that followed, but he was ignored. The surgeon swiped at the wound with a cloth dampened with some potion, examining it closely. Seeming satisfied, she cut a square off her roll of bandaging and pressed down on it firmly. “Hold,” she instructed Emmanellain, who did so with alacrity. She pulled a potion out of her bag and, opening the stopper, drizzled it around three sides of the dressing, then smoothed it down with her fingers, where it seemed to create a seal.

“Right,” she said. “Any injury to his neck?”

“No, ma’am,” said Emmanellain. “Just the...”

“Very well. I’ve done all I can on this side; we must turn him over and get at the exit wound. You were right not to do so before, it may well have compromised the pressure on the entry wound. As it is, I’ll have you keep your hand pressed to the wound as we turn him over. Can you do that?”

Emmanellain indicated he could do anything that was asked.

“Alright,” said the surgeon, “one - two - hup - !” and Honoroit was flat on his back, with only the surgeon’s dressing and Emmanellain’s hand to keep his life force in.

She peeled the front of Honoroit’s doublet away - the blood was making Emmanellain light-headed - and peered at his chest, after wiping it with another odd potion-cloth. “His right lung has collapsed,” she announced, after pressing her two fingers into a few seemingly random areas on Honoroit’s rib cage. She opened her bag with a snap and came out with a long thin

metal tube, sharpened at one end. After pressing down with two fingers in another random area, she casually stabbed it into Honoroit's chest.

Emmanellain cried out in protest, but Honoroit was already gasping in bigger breaths of air. "What-" he said in a choked voice.

"A buildup of air in the tissues outside the lung," she explained kindly, not looking away from Honoroit. She appeared to be feeling his chest. "It was important to release it as quickly as possible so the lung would once again have room to expand."

"Oh," said Emmanellain quietly. The surgeon was already placing a dressing over the exit wound and producing a length of cloth from her apparently magical bag. In a maneuver Emmanellain couldn't quite follow she wound it around Honoroit's chest, holding the dressings in place. Emmanellain was left empty-handed.

"Right," she sighed, sitting back and tucking a lock of hair behind her ear with a bloodstained hand "that should do for now. We ought to move him somewhere more comfortable, however." She looked at Emmanellain expectantly.

"Right," said Emmanellain. "Yes! More comfortable! His bedroom is - it's on the third floor of - no, he can take mine, it's closer. I'll find a stretcher - and someone to help me carry it -" he leapt to his feet, and then glanced at Honoroit, hesitating. He felt, somehow, that if he left the room, he would never see Honoroit again.

"Don't fret," said the surgeon gently, "he's in rather good shape, considering. Now that we've treated the pneumothorax, the most pressing problem is the blood loss. As far as impalements go, this is very nearly the best prognosis I've seen." She glanced at Honoroit thoughtfully. "An ilm to the left and he might even have avoided the lung trauma."

There was a flurry of activity that ended with Honoroit tucked up in Emmanellain's bed, supported by a mountain of pillows. He was terribly pale, and his bare chest looked far too delicate, covered in bandages. Emmanellain sat in a chair pulled up to the bed and stared at his still face as the surgeon bustled about, doing things he vaguely assumed were medical in nature.

"He seems stable enough for now," she said finally, breaking in on his thoughts. "There's nothing more I can do for him at the moment. I've left a pain potion on the nightstand here, for when he wakes. Send for me immediately if he begins to have difficulty breathing - I suppose I need not tell you not to leave him alone?"

"No," said Emmanellain, horrified at the idea.

"Quite," she murmured. "Well. I take my leave, my lord."

"Wait," said Emmanellain. She turned inquisitively. "He will wake," said Emmanellain, unable to keep the note of desperate pleading out of his voice, "...won't he?"

Her businesslike expression softened. "I can make no guarantees," she said gently. "With wounds like this, anything could go wrong. But, if nothing does... yes. I believe he will

wake.”

Emmanellain closed his eyes. “Thank you,” he whispered. He didn’t see her leave.

Emmanellain turned back to Honoroit and watched the unsteady rise and fall of his chest for a while. *I wish I could breathe for him*, he thought, aching. He tried not to feel that this was all, somehow, his fault. That was absurd, he knew, he knew the world didn’t work like that, but then hadn’t this entire day been absurd? Honoroit had thrown himself on a sword, and Emmanellain had no idea why. Wasn’t it just as likely as anything else that Emmanellain had brought this on them, that it was some kind of divine punishment from Halone for - for things like -

- yesterday morning. He couldn’t even remember what they’d been talking about, but Honoroit was smiling at him with a bit of his hair fallen into his eyes and Emmanellain could think of nothing but stepping forward and tucking that damnable lock of hair behind Honoroit’s ear and then kissing him until he was breathless and moaning -

- and he shouldn’t want this, any of this, how could he think this way about Honoroit of all people? But he couldn’t seem to stop, not since that perfectly ordinary day months ago now when he’d glanced up at Honoroit working at his desk across from Emmanellain’s in their shared study with a shaft of sunlight gilding his hair and caressing the little furrow of concentration on his brow and he felt his heart trip and fall like a brick down a staircase, for no reason at all it seemed except that Honoroit was his best friend in the entire world and clever as an entire basket of coeurl kittens and loyal and brave and somehow, when Emmanellain wasn’t looking, he’d grown up to be absolutely, heartrendingly beautiful.

You wanted him breathless, thought Emmanellain, heat prickling behind his eyes. *Maybe the Fury heard you.*

He slid slowly out of his chair onto his knees beside the bed, elbows propped on the familiar counterpane, keeping his gaze fixed on Honoroit’s still, pale face. Honoroit hadn’t moved at all since taking Emmanellain’s hand, what felt like days ago but couldn’t have been more than half a bell. It was this, somehow, that Emmanellain could no longer bear. The first sob ripped out of him utterly uninvited. After two more he buried his face in the bedspread, trying to muffle the awful sounds so that he would be able to hear if anything went wrong with Honoroit.

“Wake up,” he gasped, balling some of the bedclothes in his fist. “Please wake up. You have to wake up and *tell me why you did this.*”

Honoroit’s breathing changed.

Emmanellain bolted upright in sheer instinctive terror, but Honoroit was blinking large green eyes at him and *oh blessed Fury thank you he’s awake*. “You’re awake,” said Emmanellain.

Honoroit opened his mouth as if to say something, but instead his eyes squeezed shut and he made a choked noise of pain. “*Oh,*” said Emmanellain, lunging for the pain potion, “here - drink this -” he clumsily uncorked the vial and held it to Honoroit’s lips, unthinkingly sliding a hand underneath Honoroit’s head to steady it. Honoroit whimpered, but his hand came up to

weakly grasp Emmanellain's wrist, and he drank. After a moment Emmanellain realized he was gently stroking the shell of Honoroit's ear with his thumb. He stopped immediately, mortified.

When Honoroit had finished the potion he collapsed backwards, wheezing, and Emmanellain reluctantly withdrew his hand from his hair, letting his head rest against the pillows. After a few moments Honoroit's breathing slowed, and he sighed a little and opened his eyes.

"Oh," he said weakly, sounding faintly surprised, but also somehow satisfied. "It worked."

This statement was rather too much for Emmanellain. "It *worked*?!" he said, in what he would later deny was a shriek. "What do you mean it *worked*? What in the name of the Fury were you *thinking*? I can't - you - *why* would you - " Emmanellain's voice failed.

Honoroit was staring at him, wide-eyed. "I'm sorry," he said in a small voice.

Emmanellain shook his head jerkily. "No," he said. "Just. Tell me why."

"He - was one of the rebels," said Honoroit. "He wanted me to convince you to walk into a trap. He got the better of me - I'm sorry, my lord. I shouldn't have let that happen, but he had the blade on me and he said that if I didn't - so. I didn't really see a way around getting stabbed."

Emmanellain stared at him in disbelief. "You didn't consider *doing what he said*?"

Honoroit gave him a look that was so blessedly familiar he thought he might cry. Again. It was the *why-are-you-so-stupid* look. "No."

Emmanellain took a moment to recover from that. "Right. But. You didn't have to *hurry it along*, my boy."

Honoroit shook his head slightly. "I didn't want to risk that he would pick somewhere more fatal if I let him think about it. It seemed like a good idea at the time," he added ruefully.

Emmanellain thought about *more fatal* and shuddered. "You're the bravest person I've ever met," he said.

"You've met the Warrior of Light," Honoroit pointed out, smiling a little.

"She's nothing compared to you," said Emmanellain fiercely, "*nothing*."

Honoroit's eyes went wide. "Oh," he said uncertainly. Emmanellain looked at his face and thought, *be damned to the Fury and all the fates*.

"You said," he started, and cleared his throat. "You said you... loved me." Honoroit looked like he wanted to blush, but couldn't quite manage it. *Be brave*, thought Emmanellain. "I... I'm sorry to say this when you're trapped here. And if you only say the word I'll ring for someone else to watch over you. But I... I love you. I love you in a way that... that I've been afraid to tell you about because..." his voice failed. *Damn you*, he thought at himself, furious,

finish what you're saying or you don't deserve him anyway. But Honoroit's eyes had gone soft.

"My lord," he said, and then coughed slightly. Emmanellain leaned toward him in alarm, at the same time Honoroit grasped at his sleeve urgently and said, "Please kiss me."

"You're the bravest person I've *ever met*," said Emmanellain helplessly, and kissed him, as carefully and gently as he possibly could.

"Oh," said Honoroit eventually, "I think that was worth it."

"Don't say that," said Emmanellain, pressing kisses to his cheeks and his forehead and his precious nose. "I almost lost you."

"I had everything under control," said Honoroit, smiling against Emmanellain's lips.

"Right," Emmanellain sighed, coaxing Honoroit's eyes shut so he could press kisses to the lids. "Next time a deranged criminal wants to kill me, just play along, would you?"

Honoroit's breath caught and Emmanellain drew back, concerned. "I couldn't," he said. "If you died because of something I did - I love you. Did I say?"

Emmanellain shook his head, not because Honoroit hadn't said, but because he couldn't speak for remembering that moment, the blood everywhere and the terror and Honoroit going limp under his hands.

Honoroit didn't seem to notice his lack of response. "I know it's not rational," he went on. "I know I should have just let it go the way he wanted it to and made some kind of plan later, I'm good at plans, I would have saved you somehow, but I couldn't. He was going to take you away from me and I couldn't *stand it* -" he broke off, wheezing for air.

Emmanellain hovered uselessly. He wanted to rub Honoroit's chest or back to help with the fit but of course that would be awful in this circumstance, so he settled for clutching Honoroit's hand and hoping that conveyed how desperate he was to breathe air into Honoroit's lungs if only he could. "I'm sorry," he said frantically, "we'll talk about it later, I didn't mean to upset you, just don't stop breathing, *please*."

Honoroit coughed a laugh. "I'm not going to *stop breathing*," he said fondly. "Do I really look that bad?"

"Yes," said Emmanellain, "yes, yes you do, I thought you were never going to wake up, I thought the last I would have of you was your blood on my hands, and - and you still might -" *die*, he thought, but couldn't say.

Honoroit seemed to have taken his meaning. He looked stricken, and perhaps a little bit afraid. Emmanellain, who moments earlier had been wishing Honoroit would take the whole thing more seriously, immediately began babbling reassurances. "No, you'll be fine - the surgeon said nothing would go wrong -" in fact she had said *anything* might go wrong, Emmanellain recalled, but he wasn't opposed to a bit of white lying if it meant that Honoroit

would stop looking like that. It seemed to have worked, in any case, because Honoroit was now looking skeptical instead.

“Forgive me if I doubt the surgeon said anything of the kind,” he said, reaching up with his free hand to brush the edges of his bandages, his expression troubled. “My lord,” he added belatedly.

“Please don’t,” Emmanellain begged.

Honoroit looked confused. “Ah, don’t... doubt you?” he said uncertainly - as well he might, since he was wont to question Emmanellain at every turn, and it would be odd for Emmanellain to take exception to that now.

“No - I mean - please... call me Emmanellain?” He hadn’t meant it as a question, but it came out that way anyway. Honoroit had always addressed him by his title, after all, even at his most impertinent. It seemed suddenly momentous, even though their heads were bent close and their hands were tangled together on the coverlet.

Honoroit’s eyes were wide. “My L- Emmanellain,” he said. And then, wonderingly, “My Emmanellain.”

“Yes,” said Emmanellain, shuddering with the rightness of it, “yes, yours. Forever, if you like.”

Honoroit smiled at him. “I rather like the sound of that.”

End Notes

Dedicated to everyone over at #the-emmhono-corner, without whom this fic would certainly not exist. Thanks for listening to me talk about it for a year, and for all of your encouragement and inspiration during my many bouts of writer's block, and most of all (if I may get sappy for a moment) for your friendship. I hope "the stabbing fic" lives up to the hype.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!