

TEMPEST'S FIRST DAY



HOLLY BELL

Tempest's First Day

by Holly Bell

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Introduction

Please note that to enhance the reader's experience of Amanda's world, this British-set story, by a British author, uses British English spelling, vocabulary, grammar and usage, and a local dialects that vary from different versions of English as it is written and spoken in other parts of our wonderful, diverse world.

Tempest's First Day

The mist evaporated into the darkness in a noisome and pervasive odour. It was distinctive: a composite of burnt hessian, ammonia and Marmite.

He waved it away with a disdainful paw, examined his surroundings and drew a correct conclusion. Only a witch of unspeakable audacity, he considered preparing to deal appropriately with the perpetrator, would have had the nerve to call him from ... ah.

Granny, Senara Cadabra née Cardiubarn, stood before him, tall, upright, white-haired, uncharacteristically black-clad, her chin up. He glared at her with his livid yellow eyes. It was, for the moment, the most he could do. Unfortunately, not only was she a witch of unspeakable audacity, but she was also one of unspeakable power. They locked gazes, each armed with magical energy, ready to draw.

'Now then, Tempest,' said a gentle Cornish voice from the shadows, 'there's no need for that. We're sorry to have called you from ... well ... but we need the best.' The even taller form of Perran Cadabra stepped into the candlelight. He was backup of no mean order.

Tempest decided to be slightly appeased. 'The best,' was no more than his due. He would postpone venting his righteous wrath upon the humans standing before him in this he peered into the pre-dawn gloom outside the candlelight workshop. The feline jumped off the bench, went to the door and gazed into space. Granny, with an air of concession, followed him, put her fingers on the handle and said,

'I know you don't like it, and *you* know I don't like using magic, but she needs you.' Granny opened the door and stood back. The collection of storm cloud greys raised his tail and stalked out with disgust.

Tempest had identified the time from the equipment in the building he's just exited and the human's clothing: 21st century. Well, at least that had some advantages. Location? Cottages ... language ... the presence of Those Two. Where else? The English village of Sunken Madley.

He found a private spot for what he should have had attendants to perform with gold-handled accoutrements. For now, it would have to be carried out by Himself; getting rid of the obnoxious smells lingering from Granny's potent and dangerous reincarnation spell. The one from that heinous book of hers.

Tempest nimbly ascended to the roof of number 26 Orchard Row. He surveyed his domain. It was the sort of place, with its neat back gardens, that would be rich in adoring lady cats. Of course, there would be males too. So the next order of business would be two-handed: scoping out the local talent and putting any potential upstart rivals in their place. The former could be achieved by a little charm and the latter by The Look.

After 33 minutes of thorough grooming, Tempest descended from his eerie and began his royal tour. It commenced with the houses stretching out from his new abode by the orchard up towards the unimaginatively but descriptively named, High Street

Catflaps were an open invitation to breakfast. Kibbles, Fuffy, BooBoo, Mr Buddle and Stephen, were only too ready to defer to him and share their overnight snacks. An inspection of back gardens, the school grounds and village green yielded

evidence of sources of sport: birds, bats, mice, rats, and moths. Three foxes manifested themselves in the 20 seconds it took them to spot Tempest and flee.

At Number 1 Orchard Way a shape appeared on the other side of the glass in the kitchen door. It moved, sniffed then froze. Hmm, typical of that species, thought Tempest. A howl went up ... presently taken up by one dog after another, followed by Human protests ... then silence. That, Tempest judged, is what I call respect.

It was time for repose. He found an adequate summer house at The Grange, flicked up the latch with a claw and settle himself down on the cushions of a well-padded, brocade-covered lounger, prodded the deep red velvet, gold-fringed and tasselled cushion and wound himself down for a prolonged sleep.

Late morning brought the sound of humans bustling. Tempest emerged from slumber with interest. When humans bustled, it usually resulted in a better grade of delicacies than usual. He made his regal progress out of the summer house and across the lawn. Having jumped up onto a window sill, he looked within. Sure enough, three seniors, two ladies and one gentleman, for he recognised them as such, all dressed in aprons, were busy preparing food. There was a hamper and also a cool box on the floor. The comestibles were going to be transported.

It would be a while yet, and easy enough to follow the trail later to the precise coordinates of the festivities. Tempest casually roamed back to his own garden to check his territorial rights had been established. His humans were outside their workshop.

The product of their sorcery was nowhere to be seen. Perran, bending backwards with his hands on his waist, stretching his back, looked up at the clear blue summer sky. 'Don't worry,' he said humorously to his anxious wife, who was scanning the garden and peering into the shrubbery. 'Lovely day: that'll bring it in, and no mistake.'

It? Excuse me! They'll learn. As Lord of The Storm and Other Things, the English spring sunshine was not his weather of choice, but one must make do, he thought with an air of martyrdom.

He wandered back up to the high street and took the scent of the air. The corner shop had potential. As he approached a willowy woman with black hair spotted him through the glass of the shop door, as he had intended she should. Slowly Mrs Sharma came out from behind the counter, crossed the small space of the shop floor opened the door and looked down at him. Their eyes met and stared deeply into his. Then she nodded in acknowledgement. He twitched an ear. They understood one another. He had the distinct feeling that she knew who he was. *Exactly* who he was. From now on, his visits would be rewarded appropriately. In return, no vermin of any description would dare cross her threshold.

The sound of children reached him. Where there were children, there was food. Occasionally good food. He navigated the narrow alley between the corner shop and The Sinner's Rue (they would hear from him later) and out into the row of houses opposite the playground. His long-range vision treated him to the sight of infants snacking. Rusks, Jelly Babies, apple sauce, yoghurt, he counted. Oh, dear me, no. Tempest ambled on.

Suddenly, he saw them. From the front garden of the last house: two streaks of fur, one smaller, crying out as she fled, the other a pale ginger form with teeth bared. They darted towards The Grange, the grandest house in the village. Tempest followed at a pace, curious. Could this be a damsel in distress? And a cad who stepping over the line? A cad in need of correction? It was worth putting on some speed for.

He followed the sound and fury to the summer house, where he had retired earlier. A diminutive young female, black and white, clearly with-kitten, was cowering back into the small space. Before her, advanced a large, muscular rough-coated faded orange tom. One eye was of arctic blue and the other a milky white with a scar running from it. The left ear was nicked, and a yellow canine pointed over his lower lip. There was only one word for such a creature behaving in so unsatisfactory a manner towards a lady in a certain situation: riff-raff.

The riff-raff was the responsibility of Miss Clarissa – Clarry to her intimates – Hempling, owner of Ye Olde Tea Shoppe in the village. The cat was one Grendel, the name was suggested by her mischievous 11-year-old nephew. He had had a fondness for the Norse legend of Beowulf, who battles a dragon. Mr Leonard Hempling, now a highly respected chairman of the Cats Succour and Rehoming charity, had since remorsefully entreated his aunt to bestow an alternative name upon the tom. He was troubled by the notion that the animal's violent and duplicitous nature was born of an unfavourable christening.

‘Lenny, dear boy, so like you to worry, but he won't respond to anything else.’

‘But Aunt Clarry, he won't respond to anything *at all*, so does it really matter?’

‘Oh he knows when his mummy calls him, don't you, Grendie simpikins? Oo I know he can be a bit of a naughty boy’

‘Aunty. People are complaining ...’

‘He needs a visit to the vet,’ Silvia the lollipop lady (thus titled because she carried a circular ‘stop’ sign on a stick used to halt traffic when the school children were crossing the road.) had pointed out to her friend, Miss Hempling. ‘That'll calm him down, not to mention burden the village with fewer ginger kittens! Not that I don't love a ginger kitten but ...’

‘Oh, I know I should, but it seems so ... and he seems to know whenever I've made The Appointment and makes such a fuss, I haven't had the heart ...’

Grendel had marked who had spoken the treacherous words and had mounted a campaign, periodically launching himself out from the bushes behind and trees above, on what he imagined was the unsuspecting Silvia. However, she repelled him each time, wielding the pole of her stop sign with skill.

‘Amateur!’ she called out. ‘I learned Kendo when I was in my sixties, so just you forget it!’

Lately, the villagers' call for Grendel's visit to the vet had been gathering force. Consequently, he was determined to sow as many wild oats and wreak as much havoc as possible in the remaining time. With ire in his soul, he roamed and raided. Unchecked. Until today.

Tempest approached The Grange summerhouse upwind of Grendel and his quarry to allow the duo to catch his scent. The lady gazed at him with an agonised plea for aid. Grendel slowly turned his glare on the intruder, exposed his fangs and ushered a hissing challenge.

Tempest looked at the sky, in thought. There were so many ways to deal with this, it was going to be fun to choose. Of course, there was any number of magical measures he could take. Still, then he would not have it said afterwards by the dastard that Tempest had taken unfair advantage. No, he would fight Grendel on the cad's

own ground. A collection of aromas was sailing into his orbit. Ah, he thought. Yes, I see. Hmm. Good.

The priority was to remove the offending individual from the lady's orbit so that she might return home. No time to lose, from the sight of it. He really did not want to be present at her imminent happy but decidedly messy Event.

Tempest did not return the hiss, this being beneath him, but instead turned his back, and sauntered, tail raised and waving, away from the tom. It was an irresistible taunt. The tom could not resist. Abandoning his victim, Grendel turned, aiming at the grey, crouched and leapt. Tempest was far too quick for him, accelerating from 2 to 30 miles per hour in the blink of an eye. This inflamed the tom and Tempest was soon enjoying the exhilaration of leading his newly won foe in a merry dance, through Madley Wood, amongst the cars outside Vintage Vehicles, around the Snout and Trough pub, into the playground, up and down the slide, between the houses of Trotter's Bottom, through the grounds of Sunken Madley Manor, and finally with perfect timing to the church hall. The Grange ladies, Miss de Havillande Miss Armstrong-Witworth with their butler Moffat were arriving with large containers of food. And there was the hamper and the coolbox.

Tempest, still with his foe in hot pursuit, made a tour of the outside of the building, from windowsill to windowsill, until he knew the exact layout of the interior. With spot-on judgement, he reached the door as Miss de Havilland, with arms full of a large covered tray of fairy cakes made her way into the church hall. With the lady unable to see the action by her ankles, Tempest raced through the door. He knew the ginger would have to wait for the next opportunity afforded by the arrival of a similarly oblivious guest.

Inside the hall, was a large open space, with a door leading to a smaller chamber. There, as he had rightly anticipated, was a long row of joined tables covered with a white cloth. It was set with platters, a lazy susan, a tier of plates and yes ... The Cake, snowy ice, garlanded and topped with the miniature forms a figure in black and another in a white dress.

On cue, the church bells were chiming, the sounds of cheers reached his sharp ears. It would be moments now... he secreted himself beneath the trestles as two humans entered. The sound of foil and clingfilm signified the removal of coverings from the delicacies above.

'There, now!' said man's voice.

'It looks a treat, dear. You done us proud, Jim. She'll love the cake. Oo, don't she look lovely!'

'Thanks, Sylvia, let's get out front to greet the happy couple.'

'Yes, not that it'll last. I give it a coupla years at most.'

'Oh, Sylvia!'

'No, she'll take off, that one. I know who our Erik should be with. And it'll happen in time ... you mark my words ...'

They left, Tempest knowing that their exit would be his foe's passport to enter the building. He took quick stock: window sill, sink, worktops, swingbin, fridge. Not much to work with, but he wasn't a being of superior intellect for nothing.

He passed the minute before he'd have company, leaping lightly on the table, consuming all of the Beluga caviar and sampling the smoked salmon. He didn't bother to conceal his foray either.

Voices ...swing... thump, the squeak of the door. From his perch by the platters, Tempest looked down, in every way, upon his would-be assailant. Grendel uttered a growl but was too wily and experienced to attempt a ground assault. Instead,

he took to the worktop. Tempest dropped nonchalantly to the ground and began to wash his tail, clearly indicating contempt for his company.

Riled, the ginger shot down at him. Tempest jumped onto the sink. Grendel with a rrrroaw soared up, as his grey opponent gained the fridge. Instantly, a chase ensued: floor, table, sink, fridge, windowsill. A wild ride that had a single object in view. Grendel in a red haze of fury, unthinking, leaping from level to level, surface to surface in pursuit of the grey hurricane. Tempest took a carefully judged flight, landing neatly, feet apart on the rim of the swing bin then, a split second later, taking to the air. The tom launched at the spot, landed on the bin and, as the lid tilted, claws flailing wildly at the air and ungrippable plastic, slid inexorably into its ample depths, yowling in frustration and rage.

Tempest, with a grin that would have done credit to the Cheshire cat, made a last visit to the smoked salmon. He took to the ground and waited just inside the door for the inevitable. There was the sound of cheers outside, with clicks and flashes of light through the window. The two humans were back. Tempest undulated out as they cried out at the ravaged caviar and salmon. At once, they followed the inevitable sound trail to the bin. Shouts and plans for retribution echoed from the kitchen air.

Tempest, under cover of the bride's skirts and the legs of the best man, got safe passage back to the front door. Knowing what would follow, he daintily scaled the heights of the church hall roof for the view from the royal circle of what was sure to follow.

Through the open kitchen window, Sylvia's voice rang out:

'It's got to be done, Clarry.'

'Oh dear ... of very well, Sylvia ... oh but Jim, Joan, dear there you are .. don't you think ...'

'Sylvia's right, Clarry.'

'Then yes, all right, I leave it to you.'

'No time like the present.'

'Shouldn't we get him out ...?'

'Leave 'm in there, Jim. Put that in the back of my car. I'll be back in forty minutes.'

'Where you going?'

'On a little trip to the vet.'

'Now? What vet will see him today and on the spot?' asked Jim.

'Only my granddaughter who's got a practice in Crouch End. I'm going to give 'er a call right now on the way on my 'ands-free and get an emergency appointment. For 'er granny what paid 'er way through college, it won't be no trouble at all!'

From the tiles, Tempest saw the jolly red swing bin carried out by Jim. It appeared to be leaping, yowling and writhing with a life of its own as he loaded it into Sylvia's car. The lollipop lady got into the driver's seat, turned on the engine and, with a wave of her hand, drew off.

He watched the car wend its merry way along the high street, and south towards Grendel's inescapable destination.

Down in the graveyard was a suitable stone on which to wash one's paws. Tempest sighed with satisfaction. A good day's work. And a suitably appreciative lady to call upon at some future date. He decided to seal the deal by checking the summerhouse to see if she was still here. He crossed the grounds of The Grange, but it was clear that the little structure was unoccupied.

He glanced up at the stately house. And that... was when he saw ... *her* Natasha sat, staring down at him from her imperial height of the second floor. Her

eyes of sapphire blue lit his soul. She stroked one seal pointed ear with a silken cream paw and a nonchalance that equalled his own. Tempest was momentarily mesmerised. She turned her head away, apparently in boredom and disappeared from view.

Tempest sat, staring at the empty space. Emerging from his reverie, he gave himself a little shake. Yes ... now there was a long-term project. A project of delectable delight. Meanwhile ... hmm yes ... next on the agenda: inspect the kitchen of the pub, the Sinner's Rue.

The consumption of a respectfully contributed cold sausage later, a nap, a wash, and it was time. Yes, time to inspect his witch. She must be something special to have warranted his personal attention. Lord of the Storm and Other Things wandered back to his residence. He could manage a meal, anyway. He hopped up on the fence, cherry blossom catching on his thick but sleek coat.

He slipped down into his garden, made his progress along the path that led from the workshop between the fruit trees to the back door, flanked by pots of rosemary and tarragon. The door was left open for him. Tempest regarded this a deferential sign. He proceeded through the kitchen and the hall and made his monarchical entrance into the drawing-room.

Tempest knew which one she was. That little thing, just 15 years old, sitting in the armchair before him with the mouse-brown hair and wide blue strangely gold-flecked eyes. So this was the one. The one and only. Amanda Cadabra.

The End

Contact

Did you enjoy this story? If so, please consider signing up for the [Mailing List](#) where you can get news of free book days, the world of Sunken Madley and updates on new releases.

If you would like to read more about Tempest and the other characters who appear in the story, the best place to start is with the first of the Amanda Cadabra series of British humorous cosy paranormal mysteries [Amanda Cadabra and The Hidey-Hole Truth](#) available as an ebook and a [paperback](#) on Amazon.

Also, you can chat to me on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/hbamandacadabra/>, or Twitter at https://twitter.com/holly_b_author and follow progress on new books with my letters to readers at amandacadabra.com/blog

Thank you for reading!

Holly Bell
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Also by Holly Bell

[Amanda Cadabra and The Hidey-Hole Truth \(The Amanda Cadabra Cozy Paranormal Mysteries Book 1\)](#)

[Amanda Cadabra and The Cellar of Secrets \(The Amanda Cadabra Cozy Paranormal Mysteries Book 2\)](#)

[Amanda Cadabra and The Flawless Plan \(The Amanda Cadabra Cozy Paranormal Mysteries Book 3\)](#)

[Amanda Cadabra and The Rise of Sunken Madley \(The Amanda Cadabra Cozy Paranormal Mysteries Book 4\)](#)

About the Author

Cat adorer and chocolate lover, Holly Bell is a photographer, video maker, and student of the Cornish language, when not writing. Whilst being an enthusiastic novel reader, Holly has had a lifetime's experience in writing non-fiction.

Holly devoured all of the Agatha Christie books long before she knew that Miss Marple was the godmother of the Cosy Mystery. Her devotion to JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings meant that her first literary creation in this area would have to be a cosy paranormal. If you would like to read an interview with Holly, you can find one here: [Flora Meets Independent British Author Holly Bell](#)

Holly lives in the UK and is a mixture of English, Cornish, Welsh and other ingredients. Her favourite animal is called Bobby. He is a black cat. Purely coincidental. Of course.

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