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November **18** 2011

Walton, Jo. Tooth and Claw

A noble patriarch, on his deathbed, tells his parson son make certain the unmarried children he leaves behind receive their fair share of the inheritance. The parson assures him it will be done. But the greedy, arrogant husband of the eldest heir bullies his way to the fore and takes much more than his due. Now the other heirs?two sons and two daughters?must find their own way in the world. The unmarried son wants to sue for wrongful damages. The daughters agree, but are fearful of their position in the world. One daughter will be going to live with her elder sister and the bullying husband, after all. The other daughter, who will be living with the parson son and his wife, wishes to pursue the lawsuit, but the parson and his wife fear losing the protection of their patron due to scandal. Both daughters wish to find good husbands, but their dowrys are not large and the honor of one daughter has been wrongfully impugned by an impertinent neighbor.

A novel of manners à la Austen or Trollope, a novel of political intrigue, a novel of the delicate savagery of uppercrust life, a novel of custom and tradition?a novel of a sort with which we are all very familiar. Or are we? All of the characters in Jo Walton?s clever, original, and quite compelling ?Tooth and Claw,? you see, are dragons.

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