



ROGUES
OF THE
LOWLANDS

A
ROGUE
TO
FORGET

HIDDIE

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

MCQUEEN

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A ROGUE TO FORGET

ROGUES OF THE LOWLANDS BOOK TWO

BY
HILDIE MCQUEEN



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Text by Hildie McQueen

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Dragonblade Publishing, Inc. is an imprint of Kathryn Le Veque Novels, Inc.

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CHAPTER ONE

Glasgow, Scotland
April, 1823

THE SOUNDS OF the night were interesting, Henry Campbell pondered as he headed home. His horse nickered, probably complaining at being out late an hour. As he went past the now closed Kerr Tea Shop, he could not help but recall the last time he'd entered the front doors.

It was a gathering place for those out and about who required refreshment and perhaps a pastry. There always seemed to be a table open amidst the place and a warm and friendly smile from whomever came to serve.

At this late hour, the shop would have been closed; however, obvious it was abandoned now.

Devoid of light.

Devoid of life.



Two weeks earlier

THE TRYST HAD been enjoyable enough that Henry reluctantly left the woman in bed. It was a hard rule that he never spent the night. Lingered after with a casual assignation could bring about expectations. No matter how he preferred never to hurt a woman who willingly shared her body with him.

As he rode up to Kerr Tea Shop, he noted that, although it was much late now for the business to be open, the front door was thrown open and a dim light flickered inside. Something felt wrong.

Riding past, Henry tried to look inside; the only thing he could see were the outlines of the chairs and tables. If someone was inside working late, he should not have left the door open. Finally, he pulled the horse to a stop.

the while convincing himself there was absolutely nothing wrong.

After tethering the horse, he stood outside and looked around the c street. There was no harm in ensuring nothing was amiss. Once he d he'd close the door and inform the owner the next day of the mishap.

His footsteps echoed and the wind blew, tickling the back of hi seeming to send a warning of danger. Not one to ignore a premonition bent and pulled a dagger from his boot. Considering that the owne Kerr, would be there working late and he didn't wish to scare him, kept the dagger hidden in his cuff.

d as he The blade would be accessible in case the shop was being vandaliz
at such robbed and the intruder remained. Given the silence, he doubted it
uld not never hurt to be prepared.

When Henry entered cautiously through the open door, the fro
ishment looked to be unperturbed. Without the clatter of dishes and
he busy conversation, it felt like a different place. Still, the pleasant aroma of
and baked goods hung in the air.

it was "Anyone here?" Henry called out. There was silence.

Lifting the glass of a lantern on a back table, he lit the wick and in
the dimness was lessened. He scanned the room, ensuring to keep his
the door, and found everything in its place. Nothing had been broken
eerily silent.

"Is someone here?" Henry called out again, and continued to th
where the only light in the entire place had emanated from.

His footsteps seemed to echo with each step as he made his wa
expecting someone to appear at any moment.

oman's Preferring to be prepared, he'd pulled the dagger from his cuff, ho
hat was out, and continued ever-so-slowly through the second doorway.

hat, he Slumped over in a chair was a man he recognized as Mister K
im. owner of the tea shop.

uch too "Mister Kerr?" Henry approached the slumbering man. "Mister Ke
n and a jostled the man to wake him. "Are you unwell?"

ae were It was then the metallic smell emanated and Henry saw the dark pu
blood under the man's head and neck.

te, they The man's throat had been sliced open.

stop, all Immediately, Henry had stuck his dagger back into his boot. T
thing he needed was to be blamed for killing a man he'd only met c

twice and, as far as he could recall, never held a conversation with. Desperately, despite not knowing the man, sadness at what occurred enveloped him. He realized that he rushed back outside, mounting his horse, and went in search of some help. Luckily, two constables stood two streets over and had hurriedly cleared the scene.

Henry After alerting the authorities, he'd been the one to give both the constables and Hannah the bad news. It had been a horrible evening, the memory of which Henry's heartbreak strong in his mind.

It had been especially painful to break the news to Hannah, Hannah's daughter, who he'd made friends with.

A rider approached and shook Henry out of his musings. It didn't occur to him that he was distracted when riding through the city at such a late hour. It left one area of the city vulnerable to be robbed or attacked.

The two passed each other without a word or acknowledgement.

Henry recognized the man who was married and father to two daughters, who'd recently been introduced into society. The man obviously did not want to be seen riding in the vicinity of a well-known house of ill repute. He instantly pulled his hat down and averted his face as he rode past.

It mattered not to Henry what the man did; he did not particularly care. It was him, as the man was ruthless. A banker, who took little pity when it came to someone's life by withdrawing support or calling loans. What did Henry care? The fact that the man would go home and lay next to his wife.

He never understood how married men could do such a thing.

Finally, his family estate came into view. His family home was genteel, but not to society standards; his father had not only inherited a huge family fortune, but had amassed additional wealth by investing and sponsoring businesses. Although not titled, they were held in high esteem by members of the society. Something Henry did not give a fig about.

"Ah, there you see, we are almost home," he said to the horse, "I apologize for the late hour." He quickened its pace. Henry chuckled.

Upon arriving at the mansion that was his home, Henry rode to the middle of the driveway and went about unsaddling his horse and preparing the animal for the evening. He filled the oat bucket and ensured there was fresh water for the horse. He steered before he was finally able to head to bed.

Entering through the kitchen entrance, he hesitated for a moment, once considering if he should grab something to eat. There was a loaf of bread on the counter.

the table that was covered with a clean cloth. No doubt it was to be used for him as breakfast. He sliced a piece of bread, retrieved a glass of milk, and alone devoured the simple meal.

He lit the lamp to the darkness of his bedchamber was doused when he lit a lamp and began about undressing in preparation for bed.

There was much to do the next day. For one, he would meet with his mother and discuss the various worries of father and ask for a larger monthly stipend.

Secondly, Henry had to formulate a plan to come up with the funds for the error, the his portion of an investment he'd agreed to be part of.

He'd left his wayward ways in the past and began working with his father to do what he could to rebuild the trust that had been lost after he had openly squandered a small fortune in the gambling dens of Glasgow.

No longer the reckless gambler who'd relied on his father to cover his gaming debts, Henry carried the burden of guilt and promised himself that when his investment paid off, the first thing he would do would be to repay his father every single cent.

The investment amount he required was large, a sum he did not currently have. Somehow, in the next few weeks, he had to come up with the money to care for his father. He and three friends had discussed and wagered that the quickest way to ruin was to seduce a wealthy woman and convince her to give them the money for her capital.

Laying on the bed, hands behind his head, Henry considered that the women he knew were quite astute. As much fun as it was to court and by convincing someone to hand over such a great sum, it would be no easy feat. With his family connections, he could easily marry a young lass. An dowry would undoubtedly cover the sum he needed. However, it was a high step to take for capital.

The ship would be sailing in a few weeks, and he had to figure out what to do. He would not be the one to let his friends down. The investment would return tenfold to those who funded the vessel, and he would do anything to become a sponsor.

It was the only way to repay his debts to his father and become a reliable man.

moment,
read on



used for “I DID NOT expect to see you up so early.” His father’s greeting had a quickly annoyance. “You were not at the evening meal, and I suspect you home quite late...again.”

and went Henry lifted the cup of tea to his lips and met his father’s gaze. “I did. But I am here prepared to work. As I’ve told you, Father, I wish with his as much as I can from working alongside you. I have a sponsorship and another business venture I am considering. I do not wish to making form mistakes.”

At his statement, his father’s brows rose in surprise. “I would like s father more about these businesses you plan to be part of.”

er he’d “It is so good to hear you two discussing your day. It is the way it be,” his mother said with a curious expression. “I for one am more int over his in ensuring you give me a list of whom you’d like to invite to the ga elf that next week.” Her gaze pinned first her husband and then Henry. “Yo o repay both agreed it is a grand idea to host an event here.”

“Mother I only have three good friends and you know who they rrently cannot think of anyone else to add to my list.” Henry began eating, s oney. mother would insist on more names.

est way “What about a young lady or two? You really must be cons needed marriage. At your age, your father and I already had two children.”

The thought of an entire family dependent on him made Henry s most of Thankfully, his mother had turned her attention to her husband and on sider see it.

y task. “What about that young lady, I believe her name is Penelope? She whose Johnstone’s sister. How old is she?”

a huge At the thought of courting his friend Miles’s sister, Henry’s eyes r “I have no idea and I wouldn’t dare attempt to court her. Miles has ut what clear she is off limits.”

t would “Nonsense,” his mother stated.

ig to be “Besides, I have no title. I am sure they will seek a titled man fo Henry added.

re self- His mother rolled her eyes. “He is only speaking as a brother. Alt must admit, he has a greater understanding of your private life than v hate to know why he insisted that you not court his sister.”

Despite his mother’s grave expression, Henry chuckled. “Mothe sure it is because his family has already chosen a partner for the lass. I

note of know her; perhaps she is too young still for the marriage market.”

arrived “What about...?”

“I will think on it, I promise,” Henry interrupted his mother. “N
ndeed Ime, who is coming to help you prepare. Alana?” he asked, know
to learnmother would not wish to have his sister there at the moment. In .
endingcurrent state of expecting her fourth child, she was a bear to be around
like any It wasn’t that his mother was opposed to the children, it was that h
was rather annoying when in the family way. Complaining about eve
to hearfrom the weather to even the air she breathed.

Henry found it comical; his mother, not so much. The family as a
shoulddid their best to avoid Alana, except to ensure she was well. She lived
teresteddistance away with her ever-suffering and doting husband.

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IT WAS LATE in the afternoon when Henry finally left his father’s stud
sideringout. He needed to check on someone, ensure she was well.

Hannah was alone, with no family and barely enough money. Alth
hudder.was not his responsibility, he’d made it so to look after her. The dis
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is Lordin a convent.

That he’d been the one to find her father’s body, and had given th
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Hannah insisted that he should not come around and witness her
state, but something about her pulled to him. It was more than attrac
or her,”the lovely woman. The situation brought out the protector in him; a p
never known before rose and demanded he ensure Hannah came to no

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r, I am
I do not

know her; perhaps she is too young still for the marriage market.”

“What about...?”

“I will think on it, I promise,” Henry interrupted his mother. “Now tell me, who is coming to help you prepare. Alana?” he asked, knowing his mother would not wish to have his sister there at the moment. In Alana’s current state of expecting her fourth child, she was a bear to be around.

It wasn’t that his mother was opposed to the children, it was that his sister was rather annoying when in the family way. Complaining about everything from the weather to even the air she breathed.

Henry found it comical; his mother, not so much. The family as a whole did their best to avoid Alana, except to ensure she was well. She lived a short distance away with her ever-suffering and doting husband.

“Goodness no.” His mother sipped from her cup, her eyes moving to the windows. “I have plenty of help from my friends.”



IT WAS LATE in the afternoon when Henry finally left his father’s study to go out. He needed to check on someone, ensure she was well.

Hannah was alone, with no family and barely enough money. Although it was not his responsibility, he’d made it so to look after her. The distraught young woman was not only reeling from her father’s murder, but being abandoned suddenly by her mother, who’d decided she needed to seek solace in a convent.

That he’d been the one to find her father’s body, and had given the news to both her and her mother, it set things in motion for Henry to stop by often and visit.

Hannah insisted that he should not come around and witness her mental state, but something about her pulled to him. It was more than attraction to the lovely woman. The situation brought out the protector in him; a part he’d never known before rose and demanded he ensure Hannah came to no harm.



CHAPTER TWO

HANNAH PUSHED THE curtain aside and peered out to the street. A carriage rambled by. The driver sat ramrod straight, gaze ahead. Across the street a pair of women walked by, each with a basket hanging from their arm. Most probably, they headed to the market to shop for the day's needs. All she wondered what they would purchase and if they had other problems in their life besides ensuring to prepare a good meal that day.

As of late, she'd spend most of her time indoors. Mourning her husband's death meant she should not attend any social functions, nor go out to do other things. Not at least for a month. It had only been two weeks and she grew restless and bored.

It would be different if she had company, but living in the house alone meant the only company was her housekeeper, Marta, who was a good woman and a young chambermaid who came once a week to clean.

A man on horseback appeared and at once she knew who it was.

Henry Campbell.

She stared down and watched as he dismounted and tied his horse to ensure it stayed. Then straightening his jacket, he walked to the front door.

Automatically, her hand went to her hair. She'd not expected to see him that day; it had only been a pair of days since he'd last come by.

For whatever reason, Henry had taken it upon himself to be her protector and ensure all was well. As much as she looked forward to his visits, the thought that one day he would go and never return brought anxiety to her heart.

Voices downstairs told that Marta had invited him in, and she glanced quickly in the mirror to see the visage of drawn features and an empty gaze. Dragging her eyes away, she exited the room and went down the stairs.

"Hello Henry," she greeted upon reaching the landing. "It is nice to see you. I did not expect your company again this week."

Butterflies tumbled in her stomach when his gaze met hers. To catch

him would sound like an exaggeration. Her closest friend, Felicity M had often described him as “beautiful” and Hannah had to agree.

Henry was exquisite, there was nothing about him that was not Tall, with light brown hair that he did not have to do much to for the w fall into place. He had clear blue eyes that were framed by thick long and further enhanced by two straight slashes for eyebrows. He had a jawline, and his lips were just thick enough to give a woman un thoughts.

It was clear that he was either unaware of his attractiveness, or l his best to ignore it, not seeming to notice the looks of appreciation fro men and women whenever he entered a room.

Hannah was certainly not immune to him and had to remind constantly that he was only a friend, and their relationship would n further. Not just because of the fact he’d never once attempted a familiar, but also because their social standings were vastly differe was on the verge of destitution and he was a member of a very v family.

“Please come into the sitting room. I am craving a cup of tea.” l walked into the only room she and her parents had spent money on to company could be hosted without showing how horrible their fi situation had become. The walls, carpets, and seating had all been u just a pair of years past, and for it, she was glad.

Marta brought a tray with tea and two plates with a slice of cake o The woman was a wonder when it came to stretching the budget for fo

“What brings you today? Is there something I can help you Hannah asked as she poured the tea. “I am so grateful for company. I wait for another pair of weeks to pass so I can go out and do simple t She smiled, handing Henry his cup, a tingle going up her arm whe hands touched.

“I came to see how you were. I was passing by on my way to me someone. Business,” he clarified.

Hannah poured tea into a second cup. “I see. Well thank you so mu

“My family is hosting a party next Saturday,” Henry said and cringed. “Sorry. I am not sure why I am telling you as you will sti mourning.”

It was hard to not smile at his discomfort. “Even if I was not in mo

MacLeod, I am sure that I would not be on the guest list. You and I are on very different social levels.”

perfect. “You are my friend, and I would invite you. As a matter of fact, if you cannot attend, know that you are very much invited.”

lashes Despite the pang in her chest, Hannah chuckled. “Thank you very much, Mister Campbell. I am honored. If I were not in mourning, I would accept.” She teased.

She studied him for a moment. It would make it so much easier on her foolish heart if he did not visit as often. When he married, which he would, she would be devastated.

He met her gaze for a moment and then looked around the room. “What do you think you decided what to do about your living situation? You should never be alone.”

“Says the man who is here visiting me while I am unescorted,” she retorted. She goaded.

His sensuous lips curved, and his gaze moved to the doorway. “The housekeeper is about.”

Hannah “I have written my only aunt, who lives closer to Edinburgh, and she would consider moving here to live with me. I am not sure she will, but she is a widow and has been alone for a few years. It could be a good change.”

He nodded. “It would be a good solution. It would be safer and a good change for you to continue to live in this house.”

“And you should not visit as often. I know you are doing it with kindness.” She left unsaid that rumors would spread that she hosted a man. But Hannah was not important enough for the gossips. Then Henry was one of the most eligible bachelors in Glasgow and he did care about the eye of the rumor mongers.

“What are your plans for the week?” he asked, sitting back, looking at her. For a quick moment, she pictured him living there and having tea and discussing their weeks. It would never come to be that way. They would be together, but she decided to enjoy moments such as this one presently.

“I have decided to inventory all the furnishings. Those that are broken and repaired easily, I will see about it. Those that are no longer suitable for use, I will sell. Although I do not have much money to spare, I plan to redecorate.”

ifferent dining room and entrance. It will make me feel better. Once I am mourning, I can host teas and such for women friends.

lthough “Wonderful idea,” Henry exclaimed. “I will personally see to help get rid of the things you do not wish to keep. I know of a man who v / much, for old furniture as he repairs them and sells them at a market on the o / cept,” of town.”

Her heart warmed at how he knew people that most of his soci on he rarely paid any attention to. “How do you know him?”

ould of “I have a rather large family and have helped some of my relativ such matters.” He stood, went to the doorway, and peered tow. “Have entrance. “Once you are ready, I will personally take you to his sho not live will be amazed at his work, and I am sure you can barter with him replacements and repairs.”

Hannah Unable to stop herself, Hannah stood and rushed to him throw arms around his waist and hugging him tightly. The action violated ev “You of polite society, but she didn’t care. “Oh Henry, thank you so muc have no idea how much I treasure your friendship.”

asked if When she sniffed, Henry hugged her back. “Are you crying?”

I agree, “I cry about everything lately,” Hannah replied, smiling up at him e she is a tear trailing down her cheek. “Do not pay me any mind.”

His blue gaze met hers, a soft lift to the corners of his mouth. “Of c way for pay you mind.” When he cleared his throat, Hannah took a step back.

“In two weeks Mister Campbell, I expect your assistance in mak out of house presentable for company.”

a single When he hugged her again and pressed a kiss to her temple, Har t again, out a sigh. There was no doubt that when he married, her heart wou atch the into a million tiny pieces.

“I best be on my way,” he told her, his arms loosely around her sho ng very “Do not be sad. You can start making a list of which items you pla id them what with.”

at they “That is a grand idea,” Hannah replied with what she hoped was he one face. “Have a good day, Henry. Thank you so much for seeing about n

Together they went to the front door, and she stood in the doorw can be watched him go to his horse and mount. Unfortunately because he do , I will that, she could not see the sunlight play on his hair. However, he cu rate the form on his horse as he waved at her and rode away.

out of There was something about the way he'd looked at her that was d
that day. It could be her imagination, but it was as if he had a se
ing you wished to share but didn't dare.

vill pay "Miss Kerr, I am going to the market, do you require anything?"

utskirts Hannah turned to Marta. "I cannot think of anything. Would you
see if anyone is giving away puppies? I think I would like one for com

al class "Of course." The woman went toward the parlor.

es withcare of it; I plan to finish my tea. Go on ahead, enjoy the pretty day."

ard the "Very well. It would do you good to sit in the garden and get som
p. YouMarta replied.

1 to get Hannah nodded and smiled at the older woman. "Thank you, Mart
do just that."

ing her

ery rule

h. You



"I HAVE BEEN knocking on the door for a long time, thank goodness
unlocked," Felicity Macleod, her best friend, walked out to the garc
despitethrew her wrap over a chair. "Honestly, Hannah, you should be more
Someone could come and accost you. You could be robbed."

course I "I do not have anything worth stealing," Hannah replied, standing
her friend a hug. "I am so glad you came. Firstly, is there any news?"

ing my Felicity sat down and gave her a worried look. "Evan went to spea
investigator charged with your father's case," she informed her, refer
mah lether husband.

d break Her stomach sunk. "And?"

"Nothing," Felicity said with a shake of her head. "No one saw
oulders.enter or leave the tea shop. They do not have any idea why someone
n to dokill your father. Although the investigator did find out from a ma
delivers supplies that about a month ago, a man came and argued wi
a bravefather."

ie." "Who was it?"

ay and "The investigator would not give Evan a name. He said he was l
onned afor the person to speak to them."

t a fine They sat in silence for a beat while Hannah tried to gather her thou

ifferent do not know what Father got himself into, but I suspect that Mother
cret he idea and that is why she left.”

“Why not tell you before leaving?” Felicity asked, annoyance ting
tone. “I still am in utter disbelief that she abandoned you at such a l
t pleasetime.”

pany.” “I am not sure I can ever forgive her,” Hannah replied. “How co
do that to me, her only child?”

will take Hannah held her face up to the sky, the sun warming her skin wa
kiss. She opened her eyes and looked at Felicity. “Henry was here. In
ie sun,” me his family is hosting a party next Saturday.”

Her friend’s brows lowered. “Why would he tell you that? You ca
a, I will out socially.”

“It was obvious after telling me, he realized his blunder. It was
endearing that he insisted that if I were not in mourning, I was per
invited.”

Felicity laughed. “He has certainly taken the role of your prote
it was heart. Evan commented on how he often mentions the need for you
len and proper precautions in place. Being as what happened to your father
careful, fact you live alone.”

“I am sure whatever happened that caused my father to be kil
to give nothing to do with me,” Hannah insisted, although a shiver of apprel
traveled up her spine. “Surely they must be aware, I have absolu
k to the money or anything of value.”

rring to “The thought occurred to me as well. If whoever murdered you
did it because he failed to repay a loan, then it should be obvious he
have access to any money whatsoever.”

anyone Hannah sighed. “I wish I knew what happened. It may be that I wi
e would find out.”

an who “I would like some tea,” Felicity said, standing. “I am abs
th your parched.”

They went into the house through a side door that opened directly
kitchen so that Hannah could warm water to make a pot of tea. Sh
looking Felicity probably had errands to run and other things that were
important than spending time with her, but her friend would not le
ghts. “It matter what she said.

“I brought you a few gifts,” Felicity said when they went into the

On a table were a few wrapped bundles, and thrown across the back chair, dresses and other items.

"What did you do?" Hannah asked. "Felicity, you must stop spending money on me. I can do with what I have."

"Nonsense," Felicity replied, waving off her protests. "I bought a wardrobe of dresses and other necessary garments because once you are out of money we will be going out for tea. Also I plan to host a gathering and in the form of a book club. You will be helping me with it."

While Hannah opened the packages to find a silky nightgown, a chemise, and some stockings, Felicity sat perched with teacup in hand looking on with the expression of a gleeful child. Her eyes twinkled and she wore a wide grin when Hannah held up the items.

She didn't have the heart to not accept them when seeing her friend smile so proudly at her choices in colors and just the right touches of adornment that were exactly what Hannah would have chosen.

"I am so blessed to have you as a friend."

"You are my sister," Felicity corrected her. "And sisters take care of each other."

"Thank you. I love everything."

They spent the rest of the afternoon together. When Felicity finally left, it was almost time for supper. It was only then that Hannah realized Marta had not yet returned.

She hurried into the kitchen and found it empty. Then she went to her father's back door and along the side of the house to peer down the street. There was no sign of Marta.

Hannah returned inside, not sure what to do. Had something happened to the woman?

By the time the sun went down, she was frantic. Just as she was about to head to the nearest house to request that they send their coachman to get about her housekeeper, the key in the front door stopped her.

Hannah hurried to the door to a rather frazzled Marta. The housekeeper knew she was in trouble and rushed inside with a young man in tow. She slammed the door and locked it more quickly.

"Miss Kerr, you are not safe. There are very dangerous-looking people asking about you."

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CHAPTER THREE

AFTER A SLEEPLESS night, Hannah got out of bed and dressed in a hurry. Marta had told her what happened the day before, it had been impossible to sleep.

According to Marta, she'd noticed a man following her upon leaving to go to the market. It had not been much later, after she'd finished shopping that the men approached her. A menacing-looking man had asked Hannah had come into a large sum of money recently. He'd insisted Marta spy on her for him.

He'd introduced himself as a business associate of the late Mister Kerr and insisted that he'd like to hire Marta to help him collect ledgers and check for items in the house.

Marta had assured the man there was little money in the household, the family had pinched pennies for years, and even more so now that Mister Kerr had died, along with him the income from the tea shop.

The stranger had obviously been relentless, telling Marta that there would be money hidden somewhere. When she'd finally extricated herself from the conversation, she'd been too nervous to return to the house and instead hired a coach to take her to get someone to come and provide protection.

The ever-resourceful Marta had traveled to her village and fetched her nephew, Silas, who'd agreed to come. The young man was perhaps twenty, but brawny and would hopefully deter someone from approaching her.

Hannah was not sure how she would pay this nephew of Mister Kerr. Although her housekeeper had assured her that a little something was available, more than he'd been making, it still bothered her.

Once on the first floor, the first thing she did was hurry to peer out the front windows. A few people were out and about, which made her feel safe. Surely no one would try to approach her in broad daylight.

"Have you considered what to do, Miss Hannah?" Marta asked, w

her hands. "I pray someone will help." She turned to look in the direction of the kitchen. "Silas comes now."

"I do not have any idea what to do. I will visit the Murrays and ask for assistance in this."

With the young man in tow, Hannah hurried down the street in the direction of the Murrays' house. Hopefully Felicity's parents would be able to help.

y. After
sible to
Up until her abrupt departure, Hannah's mother and Mrs. Murray had been close friends. Mrs. Murray had been as astounded as Hannah's mother's decision to leave so suddenly.

ving to
opping,
l her if
ed that
"You can wait for me out here," Hannah told Silas as they approached the house several minutes later. With a good-natured grin, Silas promptly sat down on the bottom step and looked up and down the street.

er Kerr
l search
ld, that
: Mister
Hannah imagined being in the city had to be a big change for him. "Dear one." Mrs. Murray ushered her into a beautifully furnished room. "You should have sent word. I would have come to you."

Hannah hugged the woman tightly, fighting the urge to cry. The resemblance of a mother figure sent her reeling. "I brought Marta's nephew, so he can be the way. In the future, he can bring notes for me."

Mrs. Murray went to the doorway and motioned to the butler. "Show the young man into the kitchen so he can have some refreshment." The woman lowered to sit and motioned for Hannah to join her. "What happened?"

By the time Hannah finished telling her about what had occurred, she was openly weeping. Her hand shook when accepting a glass of water. Thankfully, the drink had the desired effect and helped settle her nerves.

"This is most dreadful. You poor dear, having to go through all this. I have to put my foot down and insist you come to live here, at least until you receive word from your aunt."

Marta's.
is more
"I do not know what to do. I wish to move forward. I have plans to make changes to the house and sell some furniture. I want to take care of my own house."

Mrs. Murray gave her an incredulous look. "What if they come to your house? They obviously think your father was hiding something."

out the
el safer.
ringing
"There is nothing of value left in the house except the pieces of furniture my Mother left, and even that would not bring enough that it was worth anything to my father for."

"We will go speak to the constable," Mrs. Murray said. "If the constable says it is safe, then we will go back to the house."

ction of protection, you must accept it. Otherwise, I will insist you come a here.”

ask for

AFTER LEAVING THE constable’s station, Hannah and Mrs. Murray v in the Felicity’s house. It felt odd to be out after being in her house for two lp her. weeks. Although, if she were to be honest, Hannah cared little about ay had proprieties. No one other than Felicity’s family and Henry had cared to by her on her or see about her wellbeing after her mother left.

As far as she was concerned, she didn’t owe anyone an explanat hed the her actions. Of course, she would not attend social functions or go to o tly sat public places. Not because of what society expected, but because he was genuinely broken, and she had no desire to do much more than be

Felicity’s house was large and quite lovely. Along with Felicity and l sitting Grant, Felicity’s brother, also lived there.

Grant was a ruggedly handsome man who was rumored to be q minder rake, often visiting with older women who paid for his extravagant c knows and lifestyle. Yet despite his roguish reputation, Hannah liked Grant families had been close since they were children.

Gerald, In the parlor, they were served tea and delicious shortbread, it.” The Hannah devoured, realizing she’d not eaten since waking.

“What “I can have Cook make you something more fulfilling to eat,” she was said, a worried expression yet to leave her face. “Honestly, Hannah, she was agree with Mum, you should go live there or here. It is not safe for yo sherry alone.”

s. Just then male voices carried from the entry. Three to be exact.

s alone. “Oh dear,” Felicity said. “Should we tell them what happened?”

ntil you “No,” Hannah said. “Henry especially. He is already going out of l to ensure I am well. He is feeling responsible since finding my father.”

o make “Felicity, did you hear what happened?” Evan appeared at the d self.” eyes widening at seeing Hannah. “So you have.”

to your Henry and Grant joined Evan, both looking on as Hannah blew jewelry breath. “I am well. There is nothing to worry about.”

“We spoke to the constable, and they have agreed to send a man jewelry killing by daily,” Felicity’s mother said.

“I heard about it from Marta when I stopped by to drop off sweet y offer

Henry walked into the room and met Mrs. Murray's gaze. "With respect to the constable and officers, once a day is not enough."

Looking up to the ceiling, Hannah could not think of what to say. She turned to Felicity. "I will stay here for the time being, but we must find out what it is those men are after. That means searching my house from top to bottom."

"And finding out exactly who those men are," Grant added. "I have an idea."

Everyone turned to Grant.

His lips curved. "We will send Hannah and her housekeeper to the market. Each of us will follow separately, at a discreet distance. When we are approached by this stranger, we attack."

"Attack?" Mrs. Murray exclaimed, her hands on her chest. "What do you mean attack?"

Felicity huffed. "Grant, you will not put Hannah in danger in any manner."

"Not to mention they could possibly be murderers," Hannah said, looking at Grant.

"There is that," Grant admitted and sighed audibly.

The men settled into chairs and Hannah gave up trying to dissuade them. They would set a plan in motion, and she for one wanted to know what they intended to do. The sooner they investigated, the sooner she would find out why people thought there was money in her house. Additionally, if they were the ones who killed her father, it could prove helpful once she informed the proper authorities.

"First things first," Evan said. "The three of us will search the house. One of us will remain there in case one of the men come."

"I will do it," Grant and Henry said in unison.

Hannah stood. "The sooner we get this over with the better."

"First you will eat," Felicity said, leaving no room for argument. "I will check with the kitchen to make something. Let us discuss all of this while we eat."

Hannah was glad for the delicious meal of a simple chicken stew. While eating, everyone discussed the situation.

Despite the state of her life, one thing was certain. She was not alone. The people there in the dining room were like family. Each of them concerned

all due her wellbeing and doing their part to help. There was no doubt in her
how fortunate she was.

Finally,

just find

top to



HOURS LATER, THE search in her house continued in earnest. In her
study, they found documentation that indicated her father had indeed s
loan from a business called Brown Ltd. Of course, Hannah had no ide
the loan had been for.

Just after her father's murder, investigators had come and ask
en they mother for documents, but for some reason, she'd either not known or
wish to provide the ones they found.

In a secret drawer of the desk, they found several hundred-pound

The money would be helpful, but again, not so large an amount that s
in that would kill over.

"I will inquire with my father about this business that Mr. K
glaring dealings with," Henry said, and looked to Grant and Evan. "You shou
do the same. Perhaps one of our fathers knows them through b
dealings."

Once they finished in the study, they moved to the library, which
exactly nothing more than some interesting arrangement of books. Hannah l
would considered it strange that her parents insisted the books be
ally, if alphabetically by title and not by author. Apparently the norm was t
ce they books by theme or author.

When they went to her parents' bedroom, she chose not to en
house. instead went to the kitchen to seek out Marta.

The woman sat at a table with Silas, both looking glum. Marta loc
as Hannah entered. "If you go live elsewhere, does it mean you no
require my services?" The woman wiped an errant tear.

"It is only temporary that I will be gone. I am sure this matter
is overcleared up shortly. I do not wish to remain away for more than a v
two."

"So I should stay here?"

"I do not know. Would you prefer to go with me? It will be safer."

"I can take care of my aunt," Silas said. "She will be safe."

ned for

er mind Marta nodded. "Then I prefer to remain here."

"Either Mister Murray or Campbell will be staying here to keep out for anyone trying to come into the house. I feel better that you will be alone, Marta."

When hearing the men come back down the stairs, Hannah hurried to meet them. Henry held a box. "Does this look familiar? Do you have aught a

ea what It was a rather large wooden cash box and it looked heavy. After studying the box, she shook her head. "The one from the tea shop was returned to me; you saw it in father's study. It only had a few pounds in it." "We will have to force it open," Grant said. They went to the room where Henry placed it atop a table and then pulled a small dagger from his boot. He met her gaze for a long moment. "This may have the answer to what happened to your father."

omeone He waited until she nodded and then made quick work of unlocking the box. The top opened upwards and in the hollow space, bundles of large and small banknotes were neatly arranged. When Henry pulled the drawer open, there were also several gold and silver coins and a few old banknotes.

usiness Everyone was stunned silent.

yielded money?" "Why have we been living in misery for years when he had yielded money?"

had not "Perhaps he was holding it for someone," Grant mused. "Is there anything else in the box besides money?"

o place "No," Evan said, studying the box. "The initials atop the box do stand out as odd."

ter and The initials "H.B." had been inscribed in an elegant font.

oked up in the room knew the reply. "I do not understand. Why is this here?" Hannah asked, knowing that the man who had

longer "My parents knew yours for a long time," Grant said. "We should have known better than to trust them."

will be Hannah's head spun. With the amount hidden in her father's desk drawer and the amount in the cashbox, they could have been leading a much more comfortable life. Instead, between her mother's small inheritance, the meager profits from the tea shop, they'd barely been able to cover their food, heating, and such.

Why had her parents hidden the money? Who did it belong to? And who was the man that appeared suddenly after his death?

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CHAPTER FOUR

HENRY WASN'T SURE what to think about the day's happenings. He entered his family home after leaving Hannah's. Grant had volunteered to spend the night there and Hannah was safe after they convinced her to stay at Evelyn's for the time being.

For once, he decided to step back. There were things of his own he had to concentrate on. The amount of money required for his portion of the business deal that he'd made with his friends had to be raised. They were to sponsor a ship that was to travel to the islands and return with spices and other goods that would make them very rich.

There was the matter of the ship sponsorship. His utmost concentration at the moment should be the acquisition of the capital required. He'd nearly reached the amount needed and had to figure out a way to acquire it.

At first he'd considered marriage to one of the debutants, whose father would pay a handsome dowry. But the more he considered it, the more he did not like the idea. True, his parents were anxious for him to marry. As the eldest son, he felt responsible to the family. Also because of his being the one to inherit upon his father's death, he would become wealthy and therefore considered a great match.

However, he'd yet to regain his father's trust after the disastrous incident of him losing considerable sums at the gambling dens in the city. His father had paid at first, but only to keep him alive. Then after a stern warning, he stopped helping Henry.

Not only that, but he'd also closed his accounts and no longer provided him with more than a small monthly stipend and a place for him to live.

Lately, he'd acquired a bit of money from a small investment. But because he'd begun to regain his father's trust and now worked alongside him, he was given an exchange for the monthly stipend.

Henry did not begrudge his father. In his place, he too would have stopped throwing money at a son who had no regard for it.

“There you are, son,” his father greeted upon his entrance. “When have you been that you have that expression of worry?”

“More puzzled than worried,” Henry said and went to the sideboard. He poured brandy into a glass. “I was at the Kerrs’ home...”

“Again?”

He ignored the question. “Grant, Evan and I found a box with a great deal of money. It is possible the box was the reason John Kerr was murdered and the money was hidden. Henry took a sip, the warm liquid trailing a path down his throat. “Do you think it is rather odd that someone would hold a large sum of money and never spend it? And go so far as to risk their life for it?”

His father, a man who loved mysteries, lowered to a chair and frowned. “Was it an old box?”

Henry described the box in great detail. “I have never seen something like it before. Quite intricately carved.”

“That may be the answer.” His father leaned forward in the chair, intrigued. “You must find out who made the box. Look on the bottom if there is an inscription.”

Catriona Campbell stood at the doorway, dressed in a beautiful blue gown. She looked every bit the lady of the house. Her blue gaze snapped to Henry and narrowed.

“Son, we had guests for dinner. I had informed you of it and you failed to come home. I am most embarrassed and disappointed.”

Another of his mother’s attempts at matchmaking schemes, he thought with a sigh. “I apologize, Mother, I was detained.”

“There is no excuse for insulting some of the closest family friends,” his mother swept into the room. “I took the liberty of assuring Una Stewart you would take her for a carriage ride tomorrow afternoon.”

Henry suppressed the urge to groan. Not only was Una Stewart one of the most pampered and overindulged women he’d ever had the displeasure of meeting, but she was overly clingy. He’d been around her on many occasions since their mothers were friends, and always did his best to avoid being alone with her.

“I would prefer not to spend time alone with Una. She and I do not get along well.”

“Nonsense,” his mother replied. “She is a lovely lass, and in my opinion she is a good match for you.”

re have “I would think the lad knows who he prefers to spend time with his father attempted to intervene. “You should not push him to a specific ward and Catriona.”

His mother’s right eyebrow lifted and both he and his father held their breaths.

eat deal “First of all, if I do not push this issue, we will die before our son is married.” She gave her husband a scathing look. “Secondly, I must see you note everything in this matter since you, dear husband, have not made even the smallest effort to help.”

When she turned to Henry, he swallowed. “You will escort her home tomorrow afternoon and ensure she has an enjoyable time.”

“Additionally.” She pinned him, her eyes narrowed. “You must stop talking like nonsense of considering yourself a champion for Hannah Kerr. I understand you wish to be chivalrous, but you may be misleading her. I am in a chair, giving the lass false hope. She is not an acceptable match for you, as you and I are well aware.”

Henry exhaled. “Mother, although I have no plans to court Hannah Kerr, I would not argue with anyone else for that matter, I have never considered you to be an elitist. I am not judging her social status as much as the fact her father has questionable connections. There are rumors all over town about why she was killed. A man is not murdered unless there is a good reason.”

His father’s expression was bright when looked to Henry. “I dare say you had no tire episode, as disagreeable as it is, does intrigue me. However, when I found the dead man, I think it is a good idea that you remove yourself from anything to do with it. I will look into things.”

“Why?” his mother asked, shaking her head. “This has nothing to do with our family. There is no reason for us to intervene. If I were one of the investigators, I would find it strange.”

sure of “A mystery, dear, is something that has always intrigued me. There are occasions nothing more interesting than finding out why certain things happen.”

g alone “This is a murder, William, not a game,” Lady Campbell placed her hands on her hips. “I forbid any further engagement by either of you.”

not get After a lingering murderous expression aimed at them, she turned and walked out.

pinion, “I will go and speak to the lass tomorrow,” his father said with an expression of glee. “There must be something she knows that she’s not

th,” his “Father, she’s been through enough,” Henry protested, once again
woman, protective of Hannah. The thought of her being interrogated by his
father made him cringe. “Mother is right, we should leave things be.”
ld their “Enjoy your carriage ride, son. One thing your mother is correct a
that you must begin the courting process. You should marry.”
on ever “Once I accomplish what I have planned and have a bank account
ust doproud of, I will then and only then consider marrying.”
ven the



rt Una

“IS IT NOT the perfect day?” Una, who clung to his arm, said the follow
top this as they rode in a park commonly frequented for carriage rides. The car
: I dotrees and well-tended pathways invited the people of Glasgow to eitl
her and the perimeter or walk on the pathways and enjoy the foliage and shade
you are provided.

He studied the woman who sat across from him, Una’s compa
nah, or rather rotund woman who seemed to be constantly out of breath. The
:.” appeared or acted as if she was falling asleep.

er had From the corner of his eye, he looked to Una. “It certainly is.”

he was Una Stewart was the middle daughter of Lord and Lady Reginal S
one of four Stewart families in Glasgow. Despite the fact her father of
ay, this generous dowry, Una had not married after her debut into society.

as you He would describe her as interesting in looks. Her face was tri
:lf from with a pointed chin and pursed lips. She had dark hair that was coife
rather complicated style. Despite attempting to smile while speaki
do with expression seemed rather pinched.

of the With long bony fingers, she patted his leg, sending shivers up hi

“Why were you not at dinner last night? Your mother was put out.”

here is “I apologized profusely to my mother. Matters beyond my contr
me away until late.”

ed both There was something in her gaze, as if she tried to figure out if he
truth, which annoyed him. Henry looked away to a passing carriage
ied and upon recognizing the couple, nodded in greeting.

Immediately, Una whirled to see who it was. “Was th
with an MacKinnons?”
t said.”

feeling “Yes,” Henry replied. “Tell me, what do you spend your time
curiousUna?”

At the question, Una brightened. “I am terribly busy with many
about isMother and I are patrons of the arts and theatre, and I work tirelessly
money for causes near and dear to my heart.”

it to be “Such as?” Henry was aware that her family often hosted formal
that were touted as fundraisers for the poor. No one had ever seen th
serving the poor, nor did they ever travel outside the circle of v
estates.”

“The poor, of course,” she replied, waving her hand. “Feeding
ing dayclothing, things like that.”

nopy of “Very admirable,” he replied, to which she preened.

er ride “Thank you.”

e nature “Do you go out personally to ensure the funds are spent well?”

“Of course not,” she all but snapped. “We send people to do that.
nion, aspeak of something brighter,” she continued. “Your mother very gra
womaninvited my family to the party next Saturday. I am very curious to kno
you plan to wear. I would love to have you as an escort and wear a dr
is complementary.”

stewart, “Unfortunately, I cannot escort you as Mother expects me to help
ffered aHe had to clear his throat at her presumptuous request. “Of course, I
in attendance and look forward to seeing you there.”

angular At being turned down, Una let out a sharp breath, then turned aw
d into apretended to study the passing foliage.

ng, her “Who is she?”

“Excuse me?”

s spine. “There must be a woman who is taking all your attention. Yo
missed the last several social functions, and from what I hear, you hav
ol keptbusy with some mysterious cause that is causing much speculation.”

Considered a popular eligible bachelor in the city, perhaps second
told theMiles in desirability by mothers of elite society, he expected ther
ge, andconstant rumors and gossip. Expecting it, however, did not mean it
irritating.

at the “I have a project that I am working with three friends on. It rec
great deal of our time...unfortunately.”

“If rumors are to be believed, which of course, I give ther

doing, credence..." she began then let out a huff. "Anyway, they are saying I'm involved in the tea shop owner's murder."

things. "Thank goodness you do not give them credence, else you would raise yourself in the company of a murderer this afternoon."

Una's companion gasped, her mouth opening and closing as Henry's events unfolded. Una looked to her, waiting to see if she could breathe. The man's words were almost swallowed. "Sir, you should not say such disturbing things."

wealthy "I apologize," Henry said, smiling at the woman, whose cheeks reddened at his attention.

Henry, Not seeming to care for attention taken from her, Una crossed her arms. "Tell me about the party? Is there a theme?"

The woman already knew. Her mother would have ensured to know the theme, which if he remembered correctly was garden or but not or perhaps it was spring. "I do not recall the theme," he answered her. "Let us say as you may be aware, themes do not affect men as much as it does the more delicately lovely sex."

what Una preened at the implied compliment. "Oh I remember novels that feature butterflies."

It was hard not to roll his eyes. "I am sure you will represent it perfectly as a host." By the time he was able to disengage from Una and ride back toward the manor, Henry was much too restless to go home. "To the Macleod estate," he called out to the driver.

Henry and Upon arriving at Evan and Felicity's house, he was ushered in by the butler, who gave him a warm welcome. "Mister Campbell, everyone is in the dining room enjoying tea."

Since he'd not eaten since the morning, Henry was quite hungry. He had rushed to the room, not waiting to be announced. Sometimes he forgets. Evan and Grant did not live there alone and, therefore, he had to be mindful of social protocols.

only to "I am so glad to see you," Felicity said by way of greeting. It was expected that there was no food on the table.

wasn't Instead, atop the surface, monetary notes were spread, the wood paneling was open, and several pieces of parchment lay beside the items.

quires a "What are you doing?" he asked, peering at the items.

"We are trying to solve a mystery," a booming voice replied. It was a little while he noticed his father was seated with a glass of what he presumed

you are brandy, holding a magnifying glass, inspecting a drawer from the box.

He looked to Hannah, who seemed worried, her hands gripped on the table. Her wide, round eyes up at him. "Your father has given us some very important information. It seems my father may have come in contact with a well-known and criminal family."

At the news, he lowered to a chair, looking over his shoulder toward the kitchen. "How did you come up with that?" He met his father's bright, hardened gaze. "The emblem on the bottom of each drawer and the box itself is the Blackwells, a well-known crime family that embezzled money from their arms businesses about twenty years ago. The leader then disappeared with the money they'd taken; neither they nor the money were ever recovered."

He met Hannah's gaze. It was evident all the talk about her father's dealings had her overwhelmed. "Would you mind a moment? I'd like to say a few words."

She practically jumped to her feet. "Of course." They went to the kitchen and she gave him a curious look. "Why are you coming in here?"

"I am famished," he replied, peering around for Rosalie, Evan, and who always ensured he was well fed.

"The servants have gone to the market," Hannah said with a soft smile. "There are scones and some sausages." She went to a covered dish and transferred items to a plate for him.

"You shouldn't be present during that conversation," he said, attempting to meet her gaze, which she kept lowered. "It must be horrible to hear about these things."

"What is horrible..." Hannah began, "is realizing I didn't know anything about my parents at all. My father could have been involved in horrible things. My mother, she left without a backward glance, not seeming to care if she would be left alone. She may have even been fully aware about my father's past for all I know."

He then asked, "Have you considered writing her?"

"I already did. I doubt she will reply." Hannah let out a breath and attempted a soft smile. "Felicity tried to talk me out of being present during the conversation, but I insisted. I have to know."

Henry closed the distance between them and drew her into his arms as she seemed to collapse against him, to draw strength from his embrace.

His eyes closed at her body flush against his. It was much too far

a thing to hold a woman who was no more than a friend. And yet he
her lap, need to touch her each time he was near.

important “Did you find what you needed?” Evan stood at the doorway.

-known It surprised Henry that Hannah did not jump away from him. Inste
turned to his friend and wiped a tear. “Henry is hungry,” she said by
ward the explanation. Then pushing the plate toward him, she went out tow
eyes. dining room.

ignified “You made her cry?” Evan asked with an incredulous expressio
n many does not need to be further distressed.”

. all the Although it was good to see that he was not the only one protec
her, Henry did not care for it. “I did not make her cry. She is upse
father’s situation.”

. like a “If you care for the lass, this would be the time to declare yours
needs someone by her side.”

kitchen, “I have been supportive and done all I can.”

Evan gave him a knowing look. “It cannot continue, Henry. You
s cook, appear at her home at all hours unescorted. As much as I understa
feelings of responsibility after finding the lass’s father, it is not good
t smile. her false hope at a time like this.”

d began “We are but friends...” he started.

“Not from where I’m standing,” Evan interrupted, and then motio
umping his plate, gave him a pointed look. “Come, we have some inte
ar such developments to discuss.”

Why did everyone think they could interfere in his life an
ither of unwarranted advice?

gs, and “Bloody hell,” he murmured softly and took the plate to follow I
e that I the dining room.

father’s In the parlor, his father was holding court. Explaining what h
about the Blackwell criminals, as he put it.

Henry sat at the opposite end of the table and ate while keeping an
ath and Hannah to ensure she was not overly upset by what was being discusse
during To his amazement, she held up a hand and began to talk. “I do not

Father would have given his life to keep this money from someo
ns. She obviously did not have plans for it as he’d never seemed to touch it. Fr
dust on the box, it had not been handled in a very long time.” She lo
iliar of him as if seeking assurance and Henry gave a slight nod.

felt the “What I think,” Hannah continued. “Whoever approached Marta the money was hidden in our house, and I will gladly return it to avoid trouble.”

ad, she “Brilliant Idea,” Felicity exclaimed. “Do any of you know one c way of people?”

ard the Henry and his father exchanged knowing looks. “I may know son Henry replied, and everyone turned to him with varied expressi n. “Sheinterest. He dared not meet Hannah’s gaze.

“When I lost money when gambling recklessly, I owed them a larg ctive of Someone approached me and offered to loan me the money to co t at the debts. I do not know if they were linked to the Blackwells, but it could

“Did you accept the loan?” Hannah asked.

elf. She Henry nodded. “I was young and stupid. I did. I was not able to pa back as quickly as they wished. Let’s just say that by the time the ord over, I was beaten badly enough that my father paid the debt for fear cannot up dead.”

id your “It may not be the Blackwells,” Evan said. “However, they may l to give one of them remains in Glasgow.”

With reluctance, he looked up. There was no judgment in anyone’ instead, Grant slapped the tabletop. “Good, so we need you to go an ning to to them.”

resting “Wait,” Hannah said, holding up both hands. “There is no need to j or any of you in danger. If someone is to speak to them, it should be n id give is my family who is affected.”

“While I admire your bravery, lass...” his father started “t Evan to absolutely no possible circumstance in which a woman should appro of them. Therefore, it must be a group of men, or perhaps we can e knew messenger.”

“Where?” Henry asked. “We cannot very well go to every gambl eye on and ask.”

id. Evan spoke next. “Perhaps they will approach Marta again believer returning to the market. She owes them nothing; therefore, they will ne. Heher. We must know who exactly knows about the box and wants it.”

rom the “The man who approached Marta did not specify a box,” Hanna oked to “He asked that she snoop and get ledgers and look for money.”

Henry’s father cleared his throat. “If they murdered your father ov

knows then these people or person is very dangerous.”
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CHAPTER FIVE

HANNAH'S TEMPLES THROBBED. The more they discovered, the more she did not believe any of the present circumstances had anything to do with her family. After asking for a few moments alone, she collapsed onto a sofa in the sitting room. The room was dark as the curtains had not been pulled back that day, and it suited her perfectly.

If only she could go back in time and wake up to find she was still at home, her father alive, and all that had transpired not more than a night away.

However, the renewed pain behind her eyes reminded her it was all too real.

Why had her father been murdered? Killing him did not bring her any closer to finding the money. Had they asked him to sea the money out of the house, or did he take the money and they wanted it back?

Nothing made any sense.

If only her mother had remained. Then again, it could be she didn't know anything. Or... what if she'd left because she was afraid whoever killed her father would come after her next? If that was so, she'd not cared about leaving, Hannah was now in danger.

The entire situation left her feeling as if she never truly knew her father. Never in the past would she have guessed that her father would be murdered over money or that her mother would have no qualms about abandoning her.

"Hannah?" Henry walked in. Each time she looked upon him, her heart instantly lifted. Although it was unhealthy to continue the friendship in this moment, she needed him.

One day he would walk out the door and never return. She would never forget him. Once he married, it would be unacceptable for them to continue to be friends. As it was, they pushed the boundaries of social norms, becoming so close.

Despite what they should or should not be doing, she clung to the friendship because at the moment, he and Felicity were the only people who understood her.

knew who would save her from falling into a deep pit of despair.

"Please tell me all this will all be over soon," Hannah said, looking at him. "Say that all will be well and I have nothing to worry about."

His smile did not reach his eyes. "It will be over, hopefully soon." He sat next to her and took her hand, holding it with both of his. Strange and yet so comfortable his closeness and touch had become. Neither of them had any qualms with touching one another. Was it because they were true friends because she was deeply in love with him and his spirit sensed it?

He rested on the back of the settee. "We've decided the best thing to do is to wait and see if they approach someone in the household again. If they approach the Blackwells and it isn't them who are involved, it could lead to further troubles."

"I agree," Hannah said and let out a sigh. "I plan to return home tomorrow. Marta and I will be fine. There will be a constable patrolling the streets. Marta's nephew, Silas, is staying in the house with us."

A frown marred his handsome face. "Nephew? Who is he?"
"Silas, a young man from Marta's village. Seems capable enough."
Hannah sighed. "You and your father must have much to do. I beg you not to waste any more time on this."

They sat in silence for a long spell.
"I do have to prepare for the party."
Henry's tone made her chuckle.
"I am sure you will have a delightful time. Felicity is looking forward to it."

"Will you come?" he asked, turning to her. "You do not have to go if you can just be company for Felicity."

"No," Hannah replied, her chest constricting. "I am still in mourning. Besides, I am sure your mother would be put out that you invite a woman to what, I am sure, is an occasion to help find your future wife."

"My coming out ball," Henry said and held up a hand, with his fingers spread.
"Oh dear, what should I wear?"

Hannah laughed despite the tangible pain that racked through her head. "I am sure you will look perfect. Every eye will be on you."

This time he chuckled. "When I marry, it will be the woman of my choice, not someone handpicked by my mother because of what she thinks. My Father consider a good match."

"I have no doubt you will find the perfect woman." Hannah pulled up a hand free of his when she heard footsteps.

Felicity hurried into the room, her eyes bright. "What are you and he discussing?"

"Henry's coming out ball," Hannah replied with a smile.

"Oh yes," Felicity said, lowering to a chair opposite them. "It is a grand event for the town. The butterfly event at the Campbell estate."

"Butterflies?" Hannah wondered what the significance was.

"Mother's idea," he replied. "She loves the creatures."

"Butterflies are beautiful," Felicity said. "I am wearing several in my dress. I am also having the seamstress embroider one into the bodice of my gown."

Hannah nodded, feeling left out, but in a way, she was used to not being a part of her best friend's social circles. "I hope to see you in it."

"I must bid you both goodnight," Henry said, standing. "I must bid Evan and Grant from my father."

When he placed a kiss to her temple, Hannah's eyes rounded. "When we were alone, it didn't matter, but that he did so in front of Felicity must not be comfortable."

"All will be well. You will see," he said, and to her consternation he took her hand and squeezed it.

He nodded at Felicity and walked out.

"Before you say anything, I do not know what came over him and such liberties." Hannah didn't dare look at Felicity directly.

"The man is madly in love with you and has yet to admit it to his dance," Felicity beamed at her. "I believe the feeling is mutual."

Hannah shook her head. "Whether I have feelings for him or not does not matter. He will marry the daughter of a lord, or a duke. Not a woman who lives alone and whose father was murdered, and mother absconded."

"You do have a very sordid life, Hannah. When this is all over, you should write a book." Only Felicity could turn things to a place no one else would think about.

"When this is over, I plan to continue with my plans to redecorate my house one room at a time until it is beautiful, and I can host teas and parties for my book club of yours."

"That is boring," Felicity said. "What if we go on a trip? Or perhaps a summer masquerade party?"

led her Hannah met her friend's gaze. "Here at your house. No one will c
my house. There are too many shadows in the corners."

ou two That night as she lay in bed and considered the events of the d
thing that stood out the most was how kind Henry's father had been
entering, he'd asked to be introduced to her and had ensured Hannah r
the talk would come to her.

He'd also insisted on being included in helping. According to He
father was a keen investigator by nature and had often assisted th
constable with cases that were hard to solve. Having the gentleman
ny hair, high standing included hopefully meant that things would be resolved
own." There was the situation with Henry that she refused to face. She
t being have to prepare her heart for the fact that he would be marrying. That
reason for the party after all. To ensure Henry met eligible women.

rescue Despite Felicity's opinion, that they had strong feelings for one a
Henry would one day inherit his father's vast fortune. And because c
en they had a responsibility to his family.

ade her He had to marry a woman of his social standing, not one who v
only beneath him socially, but brought with her the scandal of murder.
n, took



to take WALKING TO THE market with Marta had been Hannah's idea. She
cleared it with any of the people at Felicity's house. It was Saturday,
mself." of the Campbell party, and she needed the distraction of being ou
Besides, nothing was more distracting than the possibility of
loes not approached by a killer.

an who She and Marta lingered in front of several stands, purchasing bread
and vegetables. No one paid either of them any mind, perhaps l
er, you Marta's nephew stood a short distance away.

e would "I see him," Marta whispered.

Hannah's heart jumped in her chest. "Where?"

ate my "What do you think?" Marta said loudly, holding up a bunch of
perhaps and then lowered her voice. "Look past the carrots to the man leaning
tree."

ps plan Holding out her hand to touch the carrots, Hannah saw the man.

some bulky, whether from muscles or fat, it was hard to tell since he wore a black coat.

lay, the “Are you sure?” Hannah said, putting the carrots into her basket.

Upon “A pence,” the woman at the stall called out.

to harm Marta paid the woman and they moved to the next stall. “What should she do?”

nry, his “I have no idea,” Hannah said. “I wish I could see his face clearly.”

ie local They walked to where a man sold chickens and Hannah asked for one. The bird was quickly killed, tied together, and handed to Marta.

soon. The entire time the man watched from a distance. He’d moved to look on without interfering, not bothering to keep from being noticed. He wanted Marta to have what she wanted.

“We should not have come alone,” Marta said, shivering. She motioned to Silas. “Stay close.”

of it, he Hannah had to admit, it was unsettling to be watched by someone who could possibly mean them harm. She searched the area for a constable, but there were none to be found.

Just then she spotted one. With the ease of a man of authority, he swung his club and walked assuredly down the street.

“I should speak to him.” Hannah hurried toward the officer, who turned to her and stopped walking.

He’d not “Is everything all right, Miss?” he asked, glancing around. Upon seeing the man in the black coat, his eyes narrowed.

indoors. Obviously the man had a reputation. The man in the black coat blew a whistle and strolled away.

“He kept watching us,” Hannah told the officer. “Do you know who he is?”

because “A petty thief. Often paid to do things such as watch people and collect debts. I would return home and ensure next time to be in the company of my husband. If someone in your household has debts with people of a certain nature, they should pay.”

carrots, “I do not have any dealings with anyone of any bad reputation. I live with my maid. There was no reason for that man to watch me.”

The constable did not seem overly worried about her safety. “His name is Beans. I would keep my distance.”

“Aren’t you going to go after him?”

a long “Miss, there is no law against looking at someone.”

Annoyed, Hannah began to walk in the direction the man—Beans—was going. The constable hurried alongside. “What are you doing, Miss?”

“I am going to ask him what he wants and why he approached me last week.”

“You didn’t tell me about that.” The officer sounded winded.

Noting that the man had stopped, and did not notice they walked past him, she hurried her pace. “I made a report.”

“Miss, you should stop at once,” the constable managed to say as they reached the man, who turned and looked at them wide-eyed.

Hannah stepped up to the man, who was shorter than she expected. “You approached my housekeeper last week and now, today, you follow me.”

“I ’ave no idea what this woman is talking about,” the man spoke, looking from her to the constable. “A man can look and be to ’imself.”

The constable seemed to regain his composure. “Beans, did you approach the lady’s housekeeper?” At this point, Marta and Silas had caught up.

Hannah motioned to Marta. “Tell the constable what I say is true.”

Marta nodded, her eyes moving from Beans to the officer. “He asked me to steal ledgers from the house.”

“I see.” The constable turned to Beans, who began walking backward.

“I did nothin’.” Beans turned on his heel and ran. The constable spotted him, blowing a whistle to alert others if they were near.

Hannah, Marta, and Silas stood in a line watching as Beans did his best to run, but he was not very fast. The constable seemed to be losing his touch, his face turning red.

“I better help.” Silas took off sprinting across the market, cutting through the middle. Within moments, he caught up to Beans and tackled him to the ground.

“Ha!” Marta exclaimed. “That’s why it’s better to raise lads in this country. Lots of room to run.”

Hannah began to shake as they watched the constable and another man who’d materialized drag Beans off. “I suppose we will have to go to the constable’s offices to see what they find out.”

“Perhaps you should get someone to go with you,” Marta said. “I think a young lass should go there without escort.”

“You’re correct,” Hannah said. “Everyone is attending the party. I

sure who to ask.”

—went. “What about Mister Murray?”

“They are going to the party as well.” They began walking home and Silas could go with me. I will hire a carriage.”

Just then Silas caught up. The young man was barely out of breath he beamed with pride. “The constable said you need to stop by the way towards Aunt Marta.”

“When?” Marta asked. “I have chores.”

just as “Once we put the purchases away, we will all go,” Hannah said. “I must find out what he knows and then hopefully I will get closer to the truth about my parents and what secrets they held.”

By the time they arrived at the constable’s office, there wasn’t a new word to learn. It turned out Beans refused to talk. He was held only a couple hours, which in Hannah’s opinion, didn’t last long enough.

“What can we do now?” Marta asked as they arrived back at the house.

Hannah felt as if she’d been kicked in the stomach. “We will wait. If he is being paid to find out information, then he will not stop. Ensure you tell me Silas with you when going to the market.”

Upon entering her bedroom, the room was cool, but she didn’t feel any better. Hannah fell back on the bed and closed her eyes. Everyone was excited for the Campbells’ tonight. She imagined the bright ballroom, music filling the room, and people dancing. There were probably many single women there. The best event was at Henry’s home.

Was he enjoying being the center of attention, or bothered? Hannah smiled. In most likelihood, he was annoyed. Then again, if a certain constable caught his attention, he was having a good time.

Her chest constricted at the thought. Why did she have to fall in love with someone out of reach?

The question was ridiculous. Henry Campbell was so very kind. There was something about him that made her feel different. When he was near, the air was lighter, and everything seemed to fall into place. A simple touch, although she was sure it was meant as only friendly, made her feel as if she could face down the world.

Blowing out a breath, she went to the window and caught a glimpse of two constables speaking. They seemed relaxed, one smoking, the other pointing in the direction of her house as they spoke. It was reassuring.

they were indeed patrolling nearby.

Still, there had to be something more that could be done. So she said, “You wanted her father’s ledgers and the money. But who?”

Perhaps it was time to visit her mother and find out the extent of what she knew. Her aunt had yet to reply to the letter, which did not bode well. No matter. She would ask Felicity to accompany her to the convent as soon as possible. Whether or not her mother wished to speak to her was another matter. Hannah would give her no choice in the matter.

d. “We
finding



Nothing with Evan for company, Hannah and Felicity left for the convent early the next morning. The carriage rolled over an uneven road heading toward the town where Hannah’s mother had gone. The convent was housed in a rather old, ramshackle building. It was as if it was built haphazardly, rooms added on as needed. As the carriage continued toward the front of the building, several windows looked out over the gardens, straightened and looked on with curiosity as they passed.

Barely able to breathe past the constriction in her chest, Hannah managed to climb out of the carriage, her hands shaking. After the heartless visit from her mother had left, with scarcely any kind of explanation other than for her to return to the convent, as she knew her true calling, Hannah had absolutely no desire to see her.

“Perhaps we should wait a bit,” Felicity said, placing a hand on Hannah’s shoulder. “You look pale.”

She met her friend’s gaze. “I must speak to her. I fear my reaction to seeing her. I did not wish to ever speak to her again. But I must.”

Felicity nodded in understanding. “I will not leave your side. I promise. Her dear friend clutched her hand. “Let us see what she has to say.”

“I will wait here,” Evan stated, although it was redundant as men were not allowed inside.

The mother superior was less than pleased at their presence. “When Margaret arrived, she left all behind. You must understand, I cannot visit.”

“Sister Margaret? How refreshing to be able to escape and start a new life,” Hannah replied in a bitter tone. The last word caught in her throat, she knew that

her eyes and stopped speaking.

Thankfully, Felicity would not allow them to fail. “She left my friend and daughter, behind, not only without chaperone or protection, but right at the place where her father was murdered. Now, whoever murdered her father is now threatening Hannah. Sister Margaret will either speak to us, or I will ensure that authorities visit next.” Felicity’s tone was sharp, her words without irony. She didn’t except when stating the word “sister.”

The nun faltered, her gaze pinning Felicity before looking to Felicity who at this point was seething.

“Why is it that she gets to abandon her responsibilities? Fleeing when danger threatens and finds protection. I understand this is a new life for her, but she must help me. She is still my mother.”

“This is a matter of life and death,” Felicity added. “We must survive together.”

After a few moments of the woman seeming to calculate what was best for all nuns, she finally relented. “Very well. Wait here.”

“The audacity of that woman acting as if we are the ones in the village,” Felicity paced, obviously as angry as Hannah.

“If the situation was different, we would be,” Hannah replied, attempting to calm her racing pulse. “If she doesn’t know anything, then her only option is leaving me behind.”

When the door opened and a woman walked in, Hannah found she recognized the woman who entered. Her mother seemed to have aged years, her face drawn. Upon seeing her, she turned back to the door and was about to flee.

“Do not run away again,” Hannah said, barely recognizing the stern tone of her own voice. “Once you answer my questions, you can go back to your life and never see me again.”

Dressed in novice clothing, her mother collapsed into a chair, her hands never meeting Hannah’s or Felicity’s. “What is it?”

When Felicity started to say something, Hannah stopped her.

“A man has confronted Marta and followed me. He asked Marta to show him her father’s ledgers and find money that is hidden in the house. I have to go back to my village, but I am afraid with constables patrolling the house.”

Her mother’s eyes snapped to her and then quickly away, confirming she did know something.

“You must tell me what you know. They are threatening me.”

“Threatening?” It was as if she was talking to herself, not loo

“Who are they?” Felicity asked. “You must tell us.”

A tear rolled down Margaret’s hollow cheek. “I left in hopes they

Hannah and Felicity exchanged looks. Neither wanting to interrupt

“It is all my fault. I failed your father. I failed God.”

That she didn’t mention failing her, made Hannah grit her teeth,

The story tumbled out, in disjointed bits and pieces, none of it

“I was already with child when I met your father. We agreed to k

By the empty look on her mother’s face, she was not there in the

“When he found me again, I was going to leave, to come here and

“What does the man want?” Hannah asked softly.

“He is the one who burned down our business. Probably who kille

“Why didn’t you return it to him?” Felicity answered.

“She died suddenly. I searched and searched, but never found it.”

“Who is he?” Hannah asked again. “You must tell me. Who is t

to fetch

live in

ing she

“You must tell me what you know. They are threatening me.” Hannah fought against shaking the woman.

“Threatening?” It was as if she was talking to herself, not looking at anyone. “Why would they threaten you? You do not know anything.”

“Who are they?” Felicity asked. “You must tell us.”

A tear rolled down Margaret’s hollow cheek. “I left in hopes they would give up. I did not want any of this to happen.”

Hannah and Felicity exchanged looks. Neither wanting to interrupt, they remained silent.

“It is all my fault. I failed your father. I failed God.”

That she didn’t mention failing her, made Hannah grit her teeth, but she remained silent.

The story tumbled out, in disjointed bits and pieces, none of it making sense.

“I was already with child when I met your father. We agreed to keep it a secret. My son. I said he was dead. But the father never stopped blaming me. He thought I killed the babe. I took the box of money from him and escaped.”

By the empty look on her mother’s face, she was not there in the room, but transported to the past.

“When he found me again, I was going to leave, to come here and answer my true calling. But then you.” Her gaze was accusing when finally meeting Hannah’s. “I was with child again.”

“What does the man want?” Hannah asked softly.

“He is the one who burned down our business. Probably who killed John. I cannot prove it, but I am sure it was him. I could not give him anything. I do not know where the money is. I’d asked the housekeeper who worked with us before Marta to hide it well.”

“Why didn’t you return it to him?” Felicity answered.

“She died suddenly. I searched and searched, but never found it.”

“Who is he?” Hannah asked again. “You must tell me. Who is the man you had a child with?”



CHAPTER SIX

“THE EVENING WAS a success,” his mother announced at breakfast morning, her face alight with happiness.

Henry’s heart softened; it was always nice to see her happy. “Yes Mother. You outdid yourself. Everyone commented on the beautiful de

“There are butterflies everywhere,” his mother commented with a
“I hope they make their way to the garden.”

The night before, living butterflies had been released just outside doorways. Unfortunately, lured by the light, many had instantly flooded the ballroom. Many had fluttered about the room, landing wherever wished, unfortunate ones straight into candle flames.

It had been a bit comical, as some of the ladies did not care for sitting in their hair adornments. Everything had settled when the music played a lively waltz, luring the guests back to the dancing.

“Where is Father?” Henry asked.

“He is unwell this morning. Imbided a bit too much last night” his mother replied with an annoyed expression.



THE GENTLEMAN’S CLUB was emptier than usual when he arrived. Henry assumed it was because most of the usual patrons had been at his home the night before.

Upon spotting Lord Miles Johnstone, Henry went to sit in a chair next to the brooding man.

A server immediately materialized, and although Henry was not in the mood to imbibe, he ordered whiskey.

“What has you in a dour mood this morning, friend?” he asked Miles, who nodded by way of greeting.

“My plans have been thwarted and I am not pleased,” Miles replied.

wasted weeks only to be turned away.”

Henry let out a bark of laughter. “You, Lord Johnstone, the most bachelor in Glasgow has not gotten his way? We have wondered who had been as you’ve been scarcely seen about town.”

“Paris,” Miles replied, the word dripping with annoyance. “I’ve Paris.”

“I hear the food is good,” Henry replied, accepting the glass of liquid. “What happened?”

“She wanted marriage.”

“Ah.”

“So without a proposal, no money.”

Miles shrugged. It was obvious he was not heartbroken. It was pride, as he’d expected his company and attention alone should have the woman to hand over a huge amount of money. To Miles, the entire thing was more of a game, a competition. If his friends could come up with the money needed for the investment through seduction and prowess, he wished he could do the same and perhaps even better in some way.

The only reason Henry found the entire thing amusing was because he did not need the money. He was wealthy and had more than enough of his own portion without help.

“So we are both in the same situation,” Henry said. “I have yet to find a woman who will help me. Last night at the ball, there was one who promised me. But for some reason, I cannot do it. I cannot make myself do it for someone right now.”

“There is only one reason for that,” Miles said with a pointed look. “You are in love with someone else. Perhaps someone who cannot give you the money.”

At the words, Henry started to adamantly deny it, but the rebuttal stuck in his throat. Was he in love? Or just infatuated?

Hannah Kerr was indeed in his thoughts constantly and there was no doubt he enjoyed more than being in her company. However, the fact he liked her with her did not make it love.

“I am not in love.”

Miles did not reply. The man had a way of looking at a person that seemed to see past all pretenses. Most of the time, Henry found it amusing. This day, however, he did not.

“What? Why are you looking at me that way?”

“Is it that what started out as feeling responsible for Miss Kerr has
ere you into something deeper? You do not know it yet perhaps, how deep
feelings go.” Miles had the nerve to smile.

“What is your plan now?” Henry asked, purposely changing the
“Knowing you, there is already something in the works.”

“A woman by the name of Louisa Kent has arrived in Glasgow
purchased a large home not too far from Evan and Felicity. I am sure
friends will not hesitate to have her for tea.”

“And you, being a thoughtful gentleman, will not only be at this
you will insist on showing her around Glasgow.”

Miles’s lips curved. “Of course.”

The plan had promise and Henry wondered if he could perhaps in
re thing and beat Miles to the woman.

“Luckily, Grant has left to the continent. He is traveling with the
d to do who he expects will give him all the money he requires.”

“If his plan does not work, he will be hard-pressed to come up with
e Miles money in a very short time.”

Henry chuckled. “I am confident in our friend. He will have the money

“What about you?” Miles asked, his gaze once again delving. “What
find your plan?”

“I am going to ask my father for a loan.”

It was an hour or so later that they walked out. Miles looked to
“Where are you going?”

“To see Evan.”

“He is not home. I went over there earlier, and George informed
they’d gone to the convent to see Hannah’s mother.”

The news struck him oddly. In that moment, he felt left out of something
important. “How far is it?”

Miles shrugged. “I am not sure, half a day, maybe further. I would
be surprised if they return today.”

Looking on as his friend mounted and tapped his hat in farewell,
remained rooted to the spot. Why had they decided to go to the convent
and something must have happened the day before.

He mounted and guided his horse to Hannah’s house.

The housekeeper did not seem surprised to see him. Since he

visited, the woman was used to his unannounced visits.

turned “I hear Hannah went to see her mother,” Henry started as he walked up your the foyer. “What happened?”

Marta motioned him to the sitting room. “Would you like to sit subject. Mister Campbell?”

“No, thank you,” Henry replied, trying to keep from sounding imw. She “I am not staying.”

our dear The housekeeper seemed to consider whether to reply or not. “The who approached me the other day at the market. Miss Hannah and I s tea, but yesterday. He was arrested but refused to talk. Miss Hannah decided answers from Missus Kerr.”

“Did the man try to approach you? Who is he?”

tercede “He did not, especially when Miss Hannah went to a constable chased him and my nephew Silas caught him. He is a man called Bea womannot know his first name, but his last name is McBean.”

Henry nodded. “Thank you.”

with the Moments later, he rode near the market and slowed his moun leisurely pace, he continued past the stalls of fruits and wares until s oney.” the man in question. He knew him. Years ago when pursued for payi What ish his debts, this particular man had been sent to find him.

Although the man had not caught him—Henry was a fast runner remembered Beans clearly.

Henry. Henry dismounted and walked closer until catching the man’s g has been a long time since you’ve chased me,” Henry said by greeting.

ned me Beans’ yellowed gaze narrowed. “If I were you, I would keep walk “Who do you work for now? The Blackwells?”

nething At the mention of the name, Beans looked around. “Go away. Ye clothes will not stop me from punching you.”

ould be The man seemed to lose some bravado when Henry walked clo squared his shoulders. He was almost a foot taller than when the m , Henry chased him. “Who hired you to follow Hannah Kerr? That is all I nvent? know.”

The man let out a dry bark of laughter. “You and everyone else. If will ruin my reputation.”

e often “I think you will give me a hint for coin.” Henry pulled notes fi

pocket and glanced down as if noticing them for the first time. "Who?"
ed into Beans looked around, scanning the area. "You do not know him.
Jules Brown." Beans snatched the money and hurried away. Apparent
down, Jules Brown did not pay much.

With his newly acquired information, Henry wasted no time. He
patient, the one place where he could find anyone. One of the few places in G
where information about who was who flowed freely.

he man The women of his mother's quilting group looked up and beamed
aw him entrance. Lady Campbell, not so much. Her eyes narrowed with sus
to seek "What brings you, son?"

After greeting the five women in the room, he went to his mot
kissed her temple. "I am searching for Father, but upon seeing you at
e. They friends, I wished to greet everyone."

ns. I do "How polite," his mother replied dryly. "I wished to speak to y
morning after breakfast, but you went out."

Henry nodded. "I had a business meeting with Miles. After I rode j
t. At a market." He produced a beautifully embroidered handkerchief. "I got
spotting you."

ment of "Thank you." His mother, who loved getting gifts, smiled.

"Mother, have you heard of someone named Jules Brown? Are th
ier—he people that we know with that last name?"

His mother shook her head. "Not that I can recall."

aze. "It "I knew someone named Brown," one of the women said, Lady W
way of one of the town's biggest gossips. "A rather interesting man," she
getting everyone's attention. "You must remember him, ladies. He v
ing." one who owned the building before the Kerrs did. The one that burned

Henry's gut clenched. "Where is he now?"

r fancy Mrs. Wilshire waved her hand dismissively. "He died not long
believe from illness."

ser and Another woman nodded enthusiastically. "That's right, I rememb
ian had I believe his name was Horace Brown. He was well known for
want to eccentric."

"I had no desire to get to know that man, always ma
I talk, I uncomfortable," Lady Wilshire stated with a shudder.

The women began to discuss the different illnesses that could c
om his man and Henry made his way back to the door. His mother's ques

' gaze met his just as he walked out.
Brown. Everything was falling into place, and yet so many questions remained. The following day, he would visit Hannah. Hopefully she would get information from her mother that would help them figure out what they went to her.
Glasgow



and at his
suspicion. HIS FATHER FINALLY appeared at dinner, looking well-rested. He met I
gaze. "Did you meet with the actuary today?"
her and "Yes Father, I did. All is in order. He left some documents for
and yoursign," Henry replied.

"It is good to see you two working together," his mother added.
You this have a question for you, dear." She looked to Henry. "Why were you
about a man called Jules Brown?"
past the At the mention of the name, his father straightened. "I recall that
this for Not sure from where."

It was best to tell them, despite knowing they, especially his mother, would object to him being so focused on a situation that had nothing to do with the family.

"The man who approached Hannah Kerr's housekeeper is a street called Beans. I saw him today and questioned him. With reluctance, he admitted to being hired by a man called Jules Brown."

He began, At the information, his father stopped eating and leaned forward, looking wide with anticipation. "Is that so. Jules, is he related to Horace Brown?"
"I do not know." Henry continued doing his best to ignore his mother's irritated expression.

"However, this Horace Brown owned the building
ago. I John Kerr acquired it."

He almost smiled when his father rubbed his hands together with glee. "er now. must all be connected. The burning of the building, the money box being murder."

"For goodness sakes," his mother exclaimed. "This is not a topic for dinner conversation."

"Do you not see how very interesting this all is?" his father asked.
claim a As expected, his mother gave them each a pointed look before stationing

obvious. "This has nothing to do with our family. Delving into matters maintained as this can be dangerous. Do you wish for harm to come to us? Some matters are best left to the authorities."

Heatened "I am only providing assistance by studying the facts," his father said, his tone filled with pride. "They very much need the opinion of an expert in rational studies."

Henry looked at his plate to keep from chuckling.

"And you?" his mother asked. "What exactly is your interest in this?" Henry's mother asked. For a moment, Henry had to ask himself the same question. Why was she so invested?

you to "Hannah is my friend. I found her father..."

His mother held up a hand to stop him from speaking. "That doesn't make you responsible for the lass. She has the support of the Murrays and the MacLeods. It is much more than people of her social standing could hope for."

He bit back the annoyance he felt at his mother's estimation of Hannah. "She is a good person, Mother. I admire her greatly."

"Do not allow this admiration to be more than that. You are not allowed to ruin everything by setting your sights on someone who is not of our class."

His mother was a kind person who worked tirelessly to help the poor, the runner, the unemployed, the impoverished in the city. And yet did she ever really notice them?

"I find it hard to reconcile your works for the needy with your predisposition against those that have less than us."

"I?" Lady Campbell sighed and shook her head. "I have higher aspirations for my son, that is all."

before

glee. "It and the

ic for a

ting the

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CHAPTER SEVEN

HANNAH DOUBLECHECKED TO ensure all the doors and windows were despite the fact Marta had insisted they were. Silas slept on the first floor in a small room beside her father's study that they'd emptied. The fact the man was in the house along with Marta, who'd moved into Hannah's bedroom, made her feel safer.

Both Marta and Silas had gone to bed and the house was quiet. Hannah could not fathom sleeping. Instead, she paced in the parlor, attempting to gather her whirling thoughts into some sort of cohesion.

She'd asked to return home after leaving the convent. More than anything because every inch of the house needed to be searched.

Hannah wanted to make sure there weren't any other secrets hidden.

Her mother had given her very little information, refusing to name the man she'd stolen the money from. It was obvious, to Hannah at least, that her mother was not in her right mind."

When Mother Superior returned to inform them they had to leave, Hannah had pulled the woman aside and explained how she felt about her mother's mental state.

In that moment, it was obvious the nun expected as much. She promised to keep her apprised if anything happened.

A soft rapping at the glass made her freeze and Hannah called out, calling for Silas. Because there were several lanterns in the room, it was not hard to see out. But she noted the outline of a man and wondered if it was one of the constables.

Narrowing her eyes, she went closer, prepared to call to Silas if she saw someone who meant harm.

"Henry?" She opened the French doors to allow him in. "What are you doing here so late? It is dangerous to be out."

He walked in and removed his hat but left the caped overcoat on. "I need to speak to you."

They stood still for a long moment, the silence enveloping them w
around, a silent mist of questions and expectations.

At once all the burdens of the day overcame her and Hannah fell
his chest, the cold outer garment sending shivers through her. "I am g
are here."

His hat hit the floor with a soft thud.

locked
oor in a
young
h's old
Hannah
ting to
nything
n.
ne who
hat her
leave,
out her
omised
sidered
made it
was one
it was
are you
"I must

When she looked up, he kissed her. The softness of the kiss broug
to her eyes. She clung to him, needing to be close, and prayed he did
away.

A wave of relief fell over her when he wrapped his arms around
deepened the kiss, his mouth pressing against hers in a manner she
expected. Then his tongue pressed against the seam of her lips, and she
them to allow it past.

Every sensation pulsed through her body when he tipped her fac
that he could continue exploring her mouth with his.

Although a novice and not having been so thoroughly kissed
Hannah responded. Raking her fingers through Henry's hair and press
body against him did not sate the need that suddenly burned.

When tingles of heat traveled through her body to the most intir
places, Hannah pushed away abruptly.

"Ah. I-I think we should not," Hannah stuttered, her eyes glued
"Why are you here?"

His chest lifted and lowered as Henry fought to catch his breath. I
wondered if he'd felt something similar. Surely not. After all, she
doubt he'd kissed other women and was a great deal more experienc
she.

Instead of answering, he bent to pick up his hat and placed it on
then he removed his coat and carefully folded it over a chair.

There was a softness in his eyes when he looked at her. "I neede
you after hearing where you went. Are you well?"

"Yes. I am a bit overwhelmed."

"Please sit." He motioned to the settee. "I found out something tod

"Would you like some tea?" Hannah replied, thinking it was best t
the parlor and go to a less secluded room. Then again, they were alc
practically empty house.

"If you wish," he replied, following her out of the room. Just

whirling walked out, Silas appeared in the doorway.

“Is everything in order, Miss Hannah?” His sleepy gaze moved to look
against Hannah nodded. “All is well. Go back to sleep.”

lad you Once in the kitchen, Hannah put the tea kettle on to heat. “I was
about this from Marta tomorrow.”

“I would not come so late, but this is important.”

ht tears “Miss?” Marta appeared. “What happened?”

not pull Henry motioned to the housekeeper. “Please sit, you have to hear
well.”

her and The women exchanged looks and Marta sat. “Bad news?”

e never “No,” Henry replied. “I found the man Beans. He informed me
e parted was paid by a man called Jules Brown. Do either of you know this man?
Both shook their heads, gazes glued to Henry.

e up so “Father and I believe this man Jules is the son of Horace Brown.
out that Horace used to own the building that your father owned, the one
before, burned.”

sing her “Goodness, what is happening?” Hannah said. “I do not understand
“I spoke to one of the men who investigated the fire before coming
nate of Henry continued. “Rumors ran during the time of the fire that Horace
burned the building. However, it could not be proven. The investigators
to his me they could not figure out why, but they were certain Horace had a
against your father.”

Hannah Henry met Hannah’s gaze. “Horace Brown died recently from illness
had no “My God,” Marta said crossing herself. “This is like a bad dream.”
ed than “I may know why,” Hannah replied. “It is making more sense.”

Marta hurried to the teakettle and poured the hot liquid into three
a table, Then, looking to the doorway, poured a fourth. Silas walked in and sat
c

Hannah let out a long breath. “I found out today that Mother was
l to see child upon meeting my father. The father of her child demanded to
what she’d done with the boy. She told him the boy was dead. According
Mother, she took the box of money and came here to Glasgow to hide.

ay.” “What of the babe?” Marta asked.

o leave “All she said was that she told the man he was dead. However,
me in a not say he’d actually died. She was not in her right mind. It was obvious
entire sequence of events unsettled her greatly.”

as they “Jules may be that boy, must want the money,” Silas finally spoke

you think he is your half-brother?"

Henry. Hannah shook her head. "I do not know. It could be that somehow found him and told him everything before dying."

ill hear "I will find this Jules, and when I do, you and I can go speak to Henry stood. "I apologize again for the late hour. I felt that you should this information as soon as possible."

"Thank you," Hannah replied. "I will walk you to the door." She r this asto the kitchen where Marta and Silas continued to sit. "What do you Marta?" Hannah asked. "Did you ever hear of Jules Brown before?"

The housekeeper shook her head. "Once I did hear your parer that reheated conversation. Your father insisted she tell him about a boy. It 1?" make sense at the moment, but now, I wonder if they spoke about the l

"They kept many secrets," Hannah said quietly. "Too many secrets I found one that



l." "WHILE STARTING ON my plans to redecorate the house, it will give g here," opportunity to search for any other items that may help us discover ace hadhappening," Hannah explained to Felicity and her mother, who'd stop tor toldthe following afternoon.

grudge All the furniture from the dining room had been dragged into the l and sitting room so that the walls and carpet could be redone.

ss." Amidst the flurry of activity, she'd forgotten that the ladies were by to discuss the ongoing issue of the money box.

"After much discussion with Evan, we think it is best to disclose e cups and its contents to the constable. That way it is reported and confir low. your property. Anyone wishing to snatch it is then a thief," Felicity sai

as with "My husband agrees," Felicity's mother added.

o know Marta brought tea and they were silent as Hannah poured.

ding to "It is a good idea," Hannah replied. "However, for one day, or " would like to not think about that odious object."

"What about the money?" Felicity pointed out. "You need it, Ha she didwill ensure you are secure and can provide for yourself well. Al ous thisadmittedly, you still require a chaperone or a better living arrangeme the present."

ce. "Do

“Marta is my chaperone. I have not heard from my aunt. Why Horace being my mother’s sister does not surprise me. It is obvious they are people.”

o him.” “I am so sorry.” Felicity reached out, placing her hand on his forearm.

Felicity’s mother sighed. “I would have never thought Margaret would be so heartless. How could she just leave?”

I think, “Oh if you would have seen her, Missus Murray, you would have understood. She is not well mentally.”

its in a Her friend gave her a bright smile. “Evan and Henry have hired a detective to investigate to find this Jules Brown and what he is about. They’d probably find him themselves until I threatened to call the constable.”

is.” “Always the heroes,” Hannah said with a smile. “I appreciate every one of you who have replaced the family I have lost.”

Poor Silas was exhausted by the time the ladies left. Each of them had ideas as to what furniture should be placed where.

me the The sideboard from the dining room was moved to the entryway, and a rug that had not been used in a long time.

oped by Hannah polished the piece and then placed a large vase that was also from the dining room atop it. Immediately, the area was transformed beautifully and she took a step back to admire the work.

“Missus Murray has a good eye for décor,” Marta said, coming up to stop her. “Eileen is here to help clean. I will take advantage of her keeping company, Miss Hannah, and go visit my sister.”

the box “Yes, please go,” Hannah replied while adjusting a picture on the wall. “It will be fine. Please take Silas so that you are safe just in case.”

d. Hannah walked into the empty dining room, and unable to do anything there, found herself ambling into her father’s office.

With the housekeeper in the parlor, she decided it was as good a time as any to begin searching for more information.

First she sat in the chair behind the desk and placed her hands flat on the surface. “What other secrets did you have, Father? Why were you murdered?” Her gaze moved over the familiar surface. On the desk sat an inkwell and quill. A lantern, wax, and seal along with small stacks of invoices and notes.

Her father took advantage of every scrap of paper to scribble no

ch, hermade no sense to anyone but him. Reminders of deliveries, of items to
selfisheven who was owed what.

The corner of a page stuck out from one of the ledgers and she p
annah'sout. It was another of his notes that listed items. Milk, black tea,
cinnamon, nutmeg. Nothing unusual, except it was strange that he wo
ould besuch basic ingredients. He must have been considering a blend of
perhaps. At the bottom of the paper, the words caught her attention.

d have
Margaret must know. Ask again.

private
nned to Her poor father. Was he trying to goad his wife into telling him wh
box of money was? It was possible he was receiving threats on his l
the only way to save himself would be to find the money.

anything.
Then again, if he had no idea where the money was, or if it even
then he could not very well find it.

em had
Why hadn't her mother torn the house apart to find it? In the end
not been too hard to find the loose floorboard and, in turn, the box.

as well
Hannah placed the note atop the ledger and stood. She walked to
and began pulling books in order to look behind them.

so from
By the time she was finished searching the bookshelves, the s
itifully, setting. Other than the note, she'd found nothing of interest.

behind
"That is because you did not know anything," she murmured. "
was who kept the secrets."

ing you
It was a good thing her mother was closeted far from there at
convent because Hannah would not have been able to control her rea
wall. "I she saw her. How could the woman stand by while her husband aske
the money?

nuch in
A tear trailed down her cheek at the thought of her father's last mo
He must have been so afraid.

time as
Footsteps sounded and Hannah wondered if Eileen was leaving.

t on the
"Eileen? Have you finished?" Hannah asked, walking out of the
There was only silence.

re you
"Marta?"

was an
Again, no reply. Sure she'd heard footsteps, she inched back i
acks of study and scanned the room for something she could use as a weapon.

tes that

o order,

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sugar,
ould list
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Mother

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e study.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

IF NOT FOR the fact that Evan and Miles were also in attendance, another social function, Henry would have left. He'd wanted to stop see Hannah, however, he'd been detained until late at a business meeti

"Is she the lucky woman to be on your arm for the rest of the Se Miles asked, his gaze moving across the room to where Una stood nex mother.

"I hope not," Henry replied, giving his friend a stern look. "Do n me about this. I am not in the mood. Why do mothers make it th purpose to marry off their sons and daughters?"

Miles's lips curved. "Because they wish to have grandchildren." T tensed upon seeing someone. "I too have been avoiding my mother' attempt at a match for me."

Following his friend's line of sight, two women walked through th arm-in-arm, behind them the Duke of Spencer, Miles's father.

The women, one Lady Johnstone, the other a feminine version of although with softer features and was quite fetching had to be his Penelope.

"Is this your sister's first Season?" Henry asked.

To his amusement, Miles's eyes narrowed. "I am afraid so. Alre vultures swarm."

"She is lovely," Henry said. "Why are you surprised?"

"Because she is much too young and has informed my parents t will not accept any suitors for at least another pair of seasons."

Unable to keep from it, Henry laughed. "Good for her."

"Indeed," Miles replied, not taking his eyes away from his sist was approached by a young man.

"I wish to dance." Felicity neared. "Have you seen Evan?"

"In the study with your father," Miles replied. "In a game of cards have the pleasure?"

The pair walked off and soon Miles led Felicity around the room, the music enveloping them as Henry watched. To his consternation, his eyes caught his eye and looked to Una.

Duty called and he crossed the salon and guided the delighted Una to the dancefloor.

“I wondered how long before you claimed your spots on my dancefloor,” Una stated.

He’d not signed her card but had a good idea who had done it for him. With Una in his arms, they danced the waltz and, admittedly, he enjoyed it. Although he did not find himself attracted to Una, he did like to dance.

Whatever would it be like to dance with Hannah? He considered it once her mourning ended, he would be sure to invite her to a social event.

“Ouch!” Una yelped when he stomped on her foot. “We are not allowed to goad up with the others,” she added.

“Sorry.” They fell into step and, at once, Una’s hand inched around his shoulder so that they were closer than socially appropriate. The woman was relentless.

When the song ended, he guided Una toward where his mother had been but she was no longer there. He searched the ballroom for where to find the woman. Una hung on his arm and smiled up at him. “I am pleased to see you. Would you be a dear and take us to find refreshment?”

“Where is your mother?”

“She did not come. I came with a chaperone. She is sitting either in the garden or in the solarium. Should we look?”

Henry nodded. “Of course.”

Whoever the woman was, she was not in the solarium. After a thorough search of the room, Henry made for the doorway. There had been plenty of women caught in such places and forced into marriage and he did not intend to be one of them.

Admittedly, the fresh air of the garden was welcome. However, looking to the area where benches had been set up for companionship, he announced that her chaperone was not there.

“Perhaps she went for a walk. The ninny can be quite thoughtless.”

They walked a short distance away when Una stumbled forward. Henry caught her, and she met his gaze. “Thank you.”

Before he could react, she kissed him full on the mouth, he

om, theentangled around his neck.

mother Henry kept his arms to his sides, but then had to take her by the sh
to move her away.

a to the “Oh dear,” someone said, and he turned to find a pair of older
walking past.

e card,” “You should not have done that,” Henry told Una, who gave
dreamy look. “They will go inside and tell people about it.”

or him. It did not take long to figure out that it had been Una’s plan all al
oyed it.when they made their way back toward the ballroom, an older

. appeared. “There you are Miss Una. I have been looking for you.”

ed that “I am in good company, as you can see, Millie. Do not fret.” Una
ent. him toward the ballroom.

keeping Henry could barely keep from saying something untoward. Inst
gritted his teeth and searched for his mother. Upon spotting her, they

und hisand it was obvious she’d already heard about the kiss.

ian was “We must speak directly upon arriving at home.” His mother’s g
his then Una’s. “Are you well, dear girl?”

d been, Una nodded, her cheeks pinkening. “I am unharmed, as you can
depositwas but an innocent interval.”

arched. After making a feeble excuse, Henry hurried away to where his
stood. By their expressions, they’d also heard.

“Oh what now?” he asked upon nearing. “It was nothing mo
r in the something planned by her and my mother. I have no doubt.”

“Her dowry will be enough that you will have the capital necess
your portion of the sponsorship,” Miles said dryly.

rnabout Henry fought the urge to punch him in the face. Especially when
coupleslips curved into a knowing look.

d to be Evan grimaced. “You, my friend, may be caught in a web that wil
easy to escape.”

r, after

is, Una



’ “YOU ARE AVOIDING going home?” Miles said, giving Henry a curious l
. Henryis not often you suggest coming to my home.”

They were in a townhouse that Miles currently lived in. Desp
r arms

parents' huge estate, the bachelor preferred to keep a more private household in the city. Miles would spend days at his family home, however it was often that he resided in the city.

women “The last place I wish to be is at my family home today. As you know now that Evan is married, we cannot go there after social events. I wish to tell him aFelicity go directly to bed after and I don't wish to upset the household. Henry plopped down on a sofa and crossed his arms.

long, as “You must get a piano and perhaps more liquor.”

woman Miles poured them each a glass of brandy. “I will ensure to bring the home up to your standards.”

he pulled “The kiss,” Miles said. “Your mother and the young woman will see the fact you were seen and insist on a marriage proposal.”

head, he Henry straightened. “Have you ever spent time with Una Stewart?”
neared, “I have not had the pleasure.”

“She is clingy, self-centered, and immature. I can only abide to be in her presence for short periods. And the family...they are the type who would do anything to be on the pages of all the gossips rags.”

he see. It Crossing his legs at the ankles, Miles leaned back. “Sounds pretty much like every other family in our social class. If not for gossip and scandalous friends would have little meaning.”

Despite his sour mood, Henry chuckled. “You are correct, friend.”

re than They remained quiet for a few moments. Miles finally stood. “You are in the spare bedroom is. Stay as many days as you please. I must be ready for Tomorrow the search for my portion of the sponsorship begins anew. I met an interesting woman tonight. I have a good feeling.”

Evan's “Good on you,” Henry said, standing. “Thank you for the hospitality.”

It was late the next morning by the time Henry left Miles's home. The cook had outdone herself and who was he to turn down the delicious breakfast offerings?

Instead of heading to his home, where he was sure his mother would be waiting with some sort of ultimatum, he went to Hannah's.

Despite knowing it wasn't true, Henry convinced himself that the reason for his visit was to be sure there were no new occurrences.

Marta was at the door, and after giving him a soft look, she opened the door wider for him to pass.

“Mister Campbell. Miss Hannah is somewhere amongst the furniture.”

ome inThe woman walked away, weaving past chairs, tables, and
is moremiscellaneous items.

“I must say. It does look much better,” Hannah said from somewhere
I know,the furniture. He made his way into the dining room that had been turr
He andsome sort of shop. Silas polished a table as Hannah looked on holding
ehold.” Her face brightened upon seeing him. “Good morning, Henry. As y
see, we are preparing the furniture for when the man you spoke ab
come by.”

ing my It seemed Hannah had chosen to pretend the kiss between them
happened. He steadied himself to ensure a neutral expression.

eize the Walking into the space, he noted furniture had been separated an
on opposite walls.

’ “You have certainly been busy the last couple of days,” Henry
astonished that she’d decided to take on the task amidst the
e in hercircumstances. Then again, it was probably a good way to keep he
will dooccupied.

She neared and accepted his kiss to her cheek. “When do you th
y muchman can come?”

als, life “I will seek him out today,” he assured her, wishing Silas was not t
that he could hug her.

“Is something wrong?” Hannah asked, studying him. “You seem
u knowpreoccupied.”

t retire. “I...um,” he cleared his throat. “I am fine.” Was it possible that he
7. I metlove? It couldn’t be. Especially not now when he had so much to do.

Hannah tugged a chair closer to where Silas was. “What do you
ty.” Keep or sell?”

ne. The The young man poked a finger into a hole in the upholstery. “Depe

ous full “Pooh! I did not notice that,” Hannah said, inspecting the chair
“Sell.”

awaited After announcing it was enough for the moment and instructing
finish polishing the table and another, she walked with him out of the r

he only “What brings you?” She looked up to him, her eyes filled with cu
“Any news?”

ened it “I will not know until after speaking with Evan. I spent the night at
home and am just now out and about.” They went into the parlor wher
niture.”of tea awaited. Hannah lowered to sit and poured for them.

other Her gaze moved to the French doors. "I had a fright last night."

Immediately, he sat forward. "What happened?"

ere past "Marta and Silas had gone so that she could visit her sister
ied intohousekeeper was here. I was busy for hours searching for things
a rag. father's study when I heard footsteps. I called out, but there was no ar
you canpractically fainted when I walked into the study and a man stood
out candoorway. It was a constable who'd thought to have seen someone leav
house and found the door open."

had not "Do you think someone was here?"

Hannah shook her head. "In all probability, it was the house
id linedleaving. I will have words with her about it. Especially if she left t
doors open after cleaning them."

y said, "You definitely must speak to her about safety issues." Henry
currentuneasy feeling. "Did the constable think it was a man or woman leavin
er mindhouse?"

"He was too far to see. By the time he hurried closer, the pers
ink theturned the corner and he did not pursue them, wanting to come and
nothing was amiss here." She met his gaze. "Do not give me that look
here sonot move in with Felicity or the Murrays."

"Someone inside your house while you were here alone is quite se
n a bitHenry insisted. "Something has to be done."

Hannah stood and looked down at him. "It could have been Eileen
was insaw. I refuse to live in fear. For all we know, this person is workin
supposition that the box is still here. Something perhaps said to him by
think?on his death bed."

"He must believe it enough to take drastic steps. Otherwise, why
nds." whoever it is hire McBean?"

closer. "It doesn't matter. If not for it being lost all these years, for all he
the money is spent. Whoever he is, the man is a fool."

Silas to Unable to keep from it, Henry stood. It was proving impossible
room. keep from wishing to protect her above all things. It mattered not to hi
iriosity.his parents or anyone thought. If anything happened to Hannah, he wc
forgive himself.

Miles' "You will go stay elsewhere or I will move in here."

e a tray Her mouth fell open and then, to his consternation, she laughed. '
do not be like this. Please go home. I am not your responsibility. Yo

said why you came by today?"

The question took him by surprise. Swallowing past the lump in his throat, he cleared his throat. "Because I care deeply for you. How can I help you?"

She looked down, her gaze traveling then to the doors. "I need to know if you will stop coming here. There is no need for it. Not only am I not taking on the responsibility, but also, I believe we are becoming overly attached for the only outcome will be hurt feelings. You and I cannot continue in a close friendship."

Obviously, she was distraught and unable to form clear thoughts. He let out a harsh breath. "I will speak to you tomorrow when you are settled."

She stopped him from walking out with a hand on his upper arm. "You will not speak to me unless we happen upon one another at the fair. Do not return here."

When he met her gaze, he saw that she actually meant it. The pleading in her expression, the depth of her emotions visible by the tremor of her bottom lip and welling of tears.

"Why?" was all he could formulate.

"Because I must protect myself. People have surely noticed your visits. Although I am not of your social stature, the gossips notice you and they are already beginning to murmur about your visits. Besides, any assignment I take on will harm any chance of you finding a proper husband."

"Of course."

It wasn't until he mounted that Henry realized he'd left without the chance to hug or kiss to the temple.

"Mister Campbell." A constable approached, his gaze going to the window of Hannah's house and then to him. "How is Miss Kerr this morning?"

"Unsettled," he replied and then dismounted. "Were you who saw the person leaving her house yesterday?"

The young man shook his head. "No, I work during the day only and would not have seen it was a tall person."

"Could it have been a woman?"

The young man shrugged. "I suppose, but we think a man."

"Thank you." Henry mounted again and rode away, unsure if he was ever prepared to face his mother and yet another unpleasant situation.

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“THE STEWARTS ARE demanding action on your part to repair the damage that by your actions last night,” his mother said as a way of greeting. “That you be seen to immediately. You must propose.”

Henry stood in the doorway looking into the parlor where his mother had a stack of correspondence next to her. “I will not marry a woman who purposefully attempts to entrap me. It was her who acted and kissed me.” Henry “You are a strong virile man, how can you possibly be accosted by a girl more of a girl? Honestly, Henry.” His mother shook her head. “It is time for you to settle. We cannot hope for a better match.”

“No.” “I will speak to the Stewarts if you wish me to. I will explain to them the full truth. I will not be proposing to their daughter and offer my apologies. That is all I will do.”

“Henry.” His mother stood and walked to him, her gaze direct. “What are you blushing exactly are you waiting for?”

The question was unsettling. “I will marry whom I choose and not because of circumstances that were an obvious ploy. I am not fully satisfied that the regulars were not involved in this plan.”

His mother rolled her eyes. “There is no malicious plan at play, just a woman with active imagination. You will pay a visit to the young lady and set her up with a wife.” right.”

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CHAPTER NINE

HANNAH WAS GIDDY with excitement when the man Henry had recom finally left with a cart full of furniture. He would return for a few pie preferred he repair.

The amount he'd paid was decent. Thanks to Marta, who'd haggl him and gotten almost double what he'd first offered.

"Here." Hannah handed Marta a handful of notes. "Thank you."

The woman's eyes widened at the amount, her mouth falling ope me?"

"You earned it," Hannah said. "Do not use it to leave me."

Marta laughed. "I could never do that to you, Miss Hannah. You h too much already." The woman folded the notes, then pulled one. "I w this to Silas for his help."

"There is something else I wish to speak to you about." Hannah m for Marta to sit. "I have been thinking. We should hire a permanen You do too much, and I can afford one more person now."

The money from the box had been deposited at the bank. S financially secure now, not having to pinch pennies or worry about rep the house or other things that had plagued her since her mother's depar

"I do not mind," Marta said, looking around the kitchen. The wor fiercely territorial. "Would this person live here?"

Hannah shrugged. "Not necessarily. Perhaps someone who come day to help and leaves in the evening. I will need you to accompany m therefore there must be someone here."

"Very well. I will help you find someone."



WITH SILAS IN tow, Hannah rode in a hired carriage to Felicity's hou butler greeted her warmly as she stepped into the parlor.

“Missus Macleod is in the sitting room.”

Hannah entered the room and could sense something was wrong. She let out a sigh and motioned to an empty chair. “I am so glad you’re here. You could use the company.”

“Is something wrong?” Hannah studied her friend’s face.

Felicity smiled. “No, nothing really. I was just worried about you. With all the rumors flying.”

“I told him not to come back. It is not right for a bachelor to come here all the time.” Hannah smiled at Felicity. “I was becoming too attached.”

Her friend’s wide eyes met hers. “When did you see him? How did you hear?”

“This morning,” Hannah replied. “I have not heard anything as of yet. I knew sooner than later, the gossips would speculate about his visits often and alone.”

“This morning,” Felicity repeated, not meeting her gaze. “Hannah, your visits is not what I’m referring to.”

“What are you talking about?”

Just then a maid walked in with a tray. On it were two glasses of lemonade and dainty biscuits.

“Thank you, Rosalie,” Felicity said, dismissing the woman.

“Something is wrong,” Hannah said, her heart racing. “What happened?”

It was a few beats before Felicity seemed to gather her thoughts. “Last night at the ball. Henry and Una Stewart were caught in a compromising state.”

Immediately, her stomach plunged and her chest constricted. She gasped. “What?”

“From what I heard, it was a rather passionate kiss and embrace. Even women who happened upon them said it was a bit before Henry and Una even noticed their presence.”

“I see. It is not surprising. The Stewarts are close friends with the Campbells, are they not?” It was as if she was not in her body but watching what occurred. An empty version of herself sitting near Felicity, speaking as if all was well.

“I suppose,” Felicity replied, studying her closely. “I am sorry. I care a great deal for Henry.”

Hannah nodded. “This was going to happen sooner or later. Which

I was stern with him this morning. What upsets me is that he did not
FelicityHe should have informed me. Instead, he acted as if all was the s
here. Ianything, the fact he came to visit after what occurred angers me. How
he?”

To her shock, tears began to fall, trailing down her face unabated
today.again, she was to lose someone. How much more could she take?

“Promise you will never leave me.” Hannah reached for Felicity’
calling“Promise.”

.” A tear trickled down Felicity’s cheek. “I promise. I will never, ever
did youyou.”

Wiping tears away, they both sniffed at the same time. Hannah f
yet. Butsmile. “Has the detective found out anything?”

iting so “Evan is meeting with him this very afternoon.” Her friend studied
a long moment. “Tell me about the redecorating? I have something for
that he Felicity stood, pulled a cord, and moments later George appeared
Missus?”

“Be a dear and bring the bolts of fabric that were delivered,”
sses ofasked the man who hurried away.

Moments later, he appeared with Silas, who carried four bolts of d
fabrics. It was obvious Felicity did what she could to distract her and,
ened?” moment, Hannah allowed it.

3. “Last “They are beautiful.” Hannah examined each one. “What a
ratherplanning to do with them?”

Her friend gave her a mischievous look. “I saw them when I visite
Hannahat work the other day. I asked for four. With two, I will have draperie
for the upstairs and gift you two bolts for your house.”

ce. The Hannah smiled, her mood lifting just a bit. “I will be using this on
nd Unaparlor.” She touched one with a floral design in corals and greens. Th
was a bit darker with a design of a fleur-de-lis. “Dining room.”

of the They spent the rest of the afternoon having a leisurely mea
outside,discussing Hannah’s plans for redecoration and they decided Felicity
Felicity,return with Hannah to her house and await Evan.

I know



is why

tell me. IT WAS NEARLY midnight before Hannah went to bed. She'd spent the evening alone. Annoyed that although the detective had found out information about Brown, Evan refused to tell either her or Felicity anything. He was sure they'd go off and try to find him themselves, which in actuality, was a stretch.

Upon arriving home, Marta waited with two women who wished to be hired for the maid position. In the end, she'd hired the younger one, mostly because she needed the job more.

The house was too quiet now, and Hannah wondered if it had always been so. When living there with her parents, it did not seem so. At least she'd never considered it to be eerily silent like it was in that moment.

Throwing the blankets off, she went to the window and peered out. There was nothing or no one on the street. Through the darkness she spotted a small figure trotting into the yard and sniffing around. A dog perhaps.

"Yes," she thought. She threw on her robe and hurried down the stairs. In the kitchen she grabbed a piece of leftover meat and hurried out the back door into the garden.

Upon spotting her, a small dog lifted its head and made a low growl. Being it was either a tiny breed or a puppy, it wasn't at all intimidating.

"Here, sweet. Have this." Hannah broke off small pieces and tossed them close to the dog. Although wary, the dog gobbled up each piece then looked for another.

Bit by bit, she kept feeding it until it neared. Lowered to the ground in a posture of submission, the animal neared, its head low.

"You need a friend, do you not?" Hannah said, sliding her hand close to the furry pup. It was a young dog, no more than a few months old. "How did you get here all alone?"

Startling the animal, she scooped it up and brought it into the house. Then after warming milk, she set a bowl of it on the floor.

The little dog lapped the milk, its tail wagging with happiness.

After finding an old blanket, she folded it, placed it in a corner of the bedroom, and left. The dog would have a warm and safe place to sleep tonight.

Moments later as she once again peered out the window, the puppy was in her bedroom and gazed up at her. Perhaps she imagined it, but the

evening gratitude in the dog's gaze that melted her heart.

It Jules "Fine, you can stay here tonight." She lifted the little creature to the sofa and tucked it under the blanket. She was afraid on the end of her bed. After a few circles, the pup settled and fell into a content slumber.

Once again, she climbed into bed. The truth of the matter was that she was avoiding it because immediately, the fact of losing Henry became a reality. Although it was not unexpected that he would find himself attracted to someone and having to marry.

There had been no time to prepare. After asking him to not visit a second time, she had expected a few months at least to prepare herself for the inevitable.

But on the very day? That had been totally unexpected. Yes, she had a friend like a sister, but her friend had no idea how much the news of a small Henry's kiss with Una Steward would affect her. Or it could be that that was why she made sure to tell her immediately.

Giving into the pain, Hannah turned to her side and cried. Life had become so very cruel. And yet, there she was still in the middle of it, doing her best to live each day, to survive past every circumstance.

Her mother's disclosure, strangers demanding things, someone moving into the house, and yet, she had refused to buckle. Her body shook when she thought of Henry, into the sadness that enveloped. Henry would no longer be there for her. Just the thought of it tore through her.

Just then, shifting beside her caught her attention. With a soft whimper, the little dog nestled against her back. Hannah swallowed a cry. It had been her father who'd sent the small creature to comfort her in his stead.

Over the
did you



"MISS HANNAH, YOU have a visitor. You've slept in." Marta opened the kitchen curtains, brightening the room. "Should I ask that they return later?"

"Who?" Hannah sat up and looked around. "Where is the dog?"

Marta gave her a stern look. "The animal is downstairs making a mess. It's not right at home. She's been bathed and fed."

"Oh good." Hannah smiled, knowing Marta, like her, had a heart for the animals. "Who is downstairs?"

"A detective. Sent by Mister Macleod."

There was

Flinging back the blankets, Hannah slipped from the bed. "Serve the settee I will be down momentarily. Do not let him leave."

Moments later, she hurried into the parlor to find an older bearded man drinking tea. The man stood. "Garrett Baxter, Miss."

"Good morning," Hannah said and sat down. "I am glad to see you are real. Unfortunately, I do not bring an uplifting report. I found the man connected to Brown. He lives alone in a rather questionable section of town and so keep unsuitable company."

When Marta came to the doorway, Hannah motioned for her to join her. "What can you tell me about him?"

"What I informed Mister Macleod is that Mister Jules Brown has taken over Horace Brown's business. Which is the ownership of several gas stations and a house."

Marta gasped. "Most unholy of places."

"Indeed," Mister Baxter agreed. "From what I could find out, he is the best toned of money and does not seem to be ailing."

"How old is he?" Hannah asked.

The detective thought about it. "Ah yes, I failed to describe him. Jules Brown is twenty-three, has brown hair and eyes. He is of medium build and about my height."

"I see," Hannah said, considering that Jules Brown was two years younger than her. "I will need his address."

The man seemed uncomfortable at disclosing the information. "Macleod asked that I tell you he plans to pay Jules Brown a visit."

"The address, sir," Hannah insisted. "This is my family. I have reason to believe Jules Brown is my half-brother."

"What are you going to do?" Marta asked once the detective left.

"I am going to pay Jules Brown a visit this very afternoon." Hannah turned to the door. "Now let me see my little dog. I shall have to name her."

In the kitchen while Hannah sat on the floor to play with the pup herself, Marta fretted in the background.

Hannah studied the brown-speckled pup. "I know. You will be a part for Betty."

The dog licked her hand, seeming to like the name.

"Miss Hannah, you should speak to Mister Macleod about this perhaps Mister Henry."

him tea. “Mister Henry will not be visiting any longer. From what I hear, other issues to see about.” Hannah looked to the woman and smiled. “I need to learn to fend for myself. I have no family to help.”

“The man sounds dangerous.”

“.” Knocks sounded and both looked to the doorway. Marta hurried, Jules answered the door while Hannah attempted to catch the pup. It slipped from her arms, raced to the front door, and barked. The dog’s high-pitched howl would not scare anyone away.

“.” Marta turned to look at her and held out a note.

“Thank you,” Hannah said, taking the note with her to the parlor. As she sat, she opened it. It was from Felicity asking that she not do anything impetuous. She further informed that both Evan and Lord Johnstone would be paying Jules Brown a visit.

There was no word as to when. Hannah surmised it would not be long. It was not in a day or two. The men liked to preplan everything.

With a long sigh, she folded the note and turned to the view of the window. She could not continue to wait. The sooner everything was resolved, the sooner Mister Henry could move on with her life.

“.” Hannah went out of the parlor, down the corridor, and up the stairs. As she was perusing the clothes in the chifforobe, she considered that she wasn’t sure what one wore to visit a rather unpleasant side of town.

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CHAPTER TEN

HENRY STALKED INTO the parlor, prepared to face his parents and whoever was there. Although he knew Una was in all probability in cahoots with his mother, he had to make sure to tread carefully and not allow his temper to get the best of him.

There were more important things to do in an afternoon than to argue with whom to marry by mothers who had nothing better to dedicate their time to.

Sitting in the room were both his mother and Lady Stewart, who he never particularly cared for. The woman was judgmental and constantly bringing gossip to his mother.

“Young man,” the woman began. “I find it deplorable that you married without your mother and I wait even a minute. This matter of what happened between you and my daughter must be seen to immediately. An engagement will be the only way to quiet the tongues.”

He kept quiet. Otherwise he’d point out it was she who had the longest tongues, except for Lady Wilshire, who was beyond compare.

“What do you have to say, Henry?” his mother asked with an impatient motion for him to sit. “Don’t just stand there, son.”

Still standing, he eyed the scones on the tray. The cook made the most delicious scones, and he would go in search of one once the current one was settled.

First he met his mother’s gaze and then Lady Stewart’s. “I am not going to be trapped into marriage. It was Una who kissed me, not the other women around. She waited until someone was nearing. I am not totally convinced you did not have something to do with it, Mother.”

The women exchanged astounded looks.

“Henry, you are a well-built man, how could you expect us to believe you let your daughter accosted you against your will.” Lady Stewart shook her head.

He blew out a calming breath. “She kissed me. I did not say anything. Nevertheless, I will not marry Una. My heart belongs to someone else.”

At the announcement, his mother's eyes rounded. "What? Who?"

"That is a discussion I prefer to speak about at a later time. If you will excuse me, Father expects me to meet with him about a contract that must go."

Lady Stewart stood. "You must make this right. How can you be so cavalier about my daughter's reputation?"

"It is not I who acted without considering the consequences," Stewart said. "I hold you and your family in high esteem and would never else deliberately set out to hurt any of you. However, that does not mean with his I will bind myself to a woman I do not love, for life. You must explain to get Una."

Before either could speak, he walked directly out the front door where a horse awaited. Upon mounting, he rode from the property refusing to be told back. Hopefully his mother and Lady Stewart would give up on the idea that he'd instantly

Once he met with his father and business colleague, he had to decide your Hannah. It had been two days since he'd seen her. After a night of wondering what to do and avoid a marriage that would no doubt make him miserable, when you had to come up with a way to convince Hannah to marry him. be the

The building where he was to meet his father was at the end of the closest of street quite close to the Grant Hotel he frequented. Henry dismounted and handed the reins to a waiting steward.

"Where is my father?" he asked upon entering and was ushered to a large study.

His father eyed him silently, obviously noting he was late to arrive. "There is no one else here," Henry pointed out. "Whoever we are in a matter are later than me."

"What happened?" "Mother and Lady Stewart demand that I marry Una to make up for what I've seen with her in the garden. It is utterly ridiculous."

His father frowned. "You should make amends, son. You cannot go on making inappropriate advances without expecting repercussions."

"Father, I did not kiss the woman. She planned the entire thing. No matter how much I will I not marry her because obviously she is devious, but also because I need to ask Miss Kerr to accept my courtship."

At the sound of footsteps, his father refrained from replying.



ladies

Throughout the business discussion, Henry noted that his father deflected him more than once. The information he relayed was not difficult, but at the same time, it was obvious his father had not read over the details.

Finally, they came to an agreement and documents were signed, Lady witnessed.

"A word," his father said as the men they'd met with walked on that down.

Henry waited, prepared to defend his decisions both about the business transaction and the marriage situation. The fact his parents were here his arranged marriage meant they did not understand his need to make a decision based on more than social compatibility.

"Did the detective find out anything?"

"Yes, I believe the man, Jules Brown, owns gambling dens and is financially secure. He lives on the outskirts of town near one of the most interesting that he wishes to find the box when it is evident he does not have the money."

"Greed perhaps." His father tapped his fingers, his gaze traveling around the room while considering the information. "We should pay this Jules Brown a visit."

Henry sat straighter. "What would we possibly say to the man? It would be dangerous to try to warn him off."

The familiar gleam of curiosity shined in his father's eyes. "We can meet under the pretense of a business dealing and get a sense of what they're about. I have considered purchasing a building to be used as a club for young mothers."

"Young mothers?"

"Never mind that. What do you think? Let us get the carriage and go."

"What did you think about the percentage I negotiated?" Henry asked since his father did not broach the subject.

"Yes, well, unfortunately I was unable to review things as you had me out so late at the dinner party last night. It is refreshing that I can talk to you now. I am impressed, son. Thoroughly impressed."



ferred to. ALTHOUGH HE OFTEN rode with his father to different locations to conduct the business or attend social functions, Henry could not help but sense the tension between them as the carriage rambled over the uneven cobbled and street. From what he gathered, the ride would not be a long one, just enough time to speak about what had occurred before he'd left the family home. "Sit morning."

"Father, Lady Stewart was at the house. Both she and mother insist I am responsible for what occurred in the garden between Una Stewart and I in myself."

Lord Campbell nodded. "As you are well aware, son, we have a delicate relationship with the Stewarts. Your mother was most put out that you did not take initiative in this. What exactly happened?"

Once again, he repeated the situation in the garden, emphasizing that he not only did not initiate the kiss, but had not participated by any way and did not need to embrace. His father's chuckle was annoying, but Henry let it pass. "I do not wish to marry this woman. She is manipulative. I am not attracted to her in the least."

"You know it matters little what actually happened compared to what is perceived. As you should already be aware, son, it is always best to avoid a situation that could bring these kinds of repercussions."

His father's words did not help in the least.

Hopefully another scandal would occur that would take the attention away from anyone who considered this to be high on the list of gossip mongers.

The carriage slowed and his father's lips curved. "This will be interesting."

"Ensure to not draw unnecessary attention. The man cannot suspect we are here for anything other than the issue of purchasing the business," Henry said.

"I am a sleuth," his father replied. "Subterfuge is my specialty."

Henry coughed to cover laughter. "Yes, of course."

His father was neither of those things. If anything, Henry was probably for the worst.

As he'd expected a menacing sort at the door, Henry was surprised a woman dressed in a serviceable navy gown greeted them and invited them to a sitting area. The small salon was decorated in a style that one would not expect in that part of town.

There were several paintings on the walls, thick draperies, and enough tables. The chairs were upholstered in what he recognized to be expensive fabrics.

"Mister Lewiston H. Campbell here to speak to Mister Brown," his father said in way of greeting. He motioned to Henry. "My son, Henry Campbell and I will see if Mister Brown is available," she replied in a prim tone and quickly walked away.

"I expected thugs," his father said, looking to where they had disappeared past a doorway.

"Shh." Henry gave him a sharp look, which his father ignored.

There were knocks on the front door. The sharp raps seemed to reverberate in the large space.

Just as Henry wondered if anyone was to answer the door, a man appeared. This one did fit the part of whom they'd expected to greet them.

With a broken nose and huge meaty hands, the man looked like a prizefighter. He gave them a cursory glance before continuing to the door.

"What?" he said to whoever it was.

It sounded as if the visitor was a woman. The man turned to look in the direction the woman had gone. "You'll have to wait."

Whoever it was spoke again and the man huffed. "Very well, wait in the inside." He motioned to where Henry and his father sat.

A moment later, Hannah and her housekeeper Marta walked in. Their eyes rounded at seeing them. Luckily, they were facing away from the man who'd let them in.

"You have to wait for Rebecca to return. Although I doubt Mr. Johnson will see you today." The man's eyes narrowed in Henry's direction, and he walked to a desk that he assumed was the woman's and sat on the edge of it.

"What are you doing here?" Hannah whispered.

"Young lady," his father began, and Henry held his breath. "We have business with Mister Brown. However, we will strive to be brief."

Hannah seemed struck speechless.

Glancing toward the man, Henry was about to speak when the visitor

d when Rebecca, reappeared. She stopped upon seeing Hannah and Marta.
d them “She says to have an important matter to discuss with Mister Brown
uld notman said to Rebecca, who slid a look to Hannah.

Henry took advantage and pretended to brush his pants leg. “You
ornatenot meet with him alone,” he muttered under his breath.
pensive “You have no reason to be involved in this any longer,” she s
back.

s father Rebecca’s head turned toward them. “Mister Campbell, Mister Brown
bell.” occupied, but he asks that you wait a moment,” she said to his father.
one and Knocks interrupted whatever she was about to say next. “I’ll see
the man said, but she shook her head. “Go and see if Mister Brown
womanavailable yet.” She hurried to the door in what seemed to be her efficient
of walking.

Whoever was at the door seemed to catch Rebecca by surprise.
echo inturned to look at the four of them. “Please come in, Lord Johnstone.”

Miles walked in and hesitated at seeing the group gathered. He
a manbrow lifting, he turned to Evan who appeared next.

It was becoming rather crowded in the sitting room. The man and
a streetthat worked for Jules exchanged confused looks and then turned to the

“It was hard for Henry not to look at his companions, but instead,
his gaze on the duo. There was no doubt in his mind that Jules Brown
ok pastdangerous, and by the size of the man standing before them, it could
formidable threat if he became suspicious.”

Footsteps sounded and all eight people turned to watch as
appeared. The man, who Henry presumed to be Jules Brown, had the
Both ofgait of a man aware he was untouchable. His hair was dark and so w
rom theeyes.

Behind him, two men who looked like prize fighters flanked him.

Jules ignored everyone except for Hannah. “You came.”

To his consternation, Hannah walked up to Jules and pressed a fist
the center of his chest. “Of course I came. You have been sending
undesirables to approach my housekeeper and had us followed.”

When Henry took a step forward, prepared to defend Hannah, his
held him back.

“We should speak in private.” For the first time, Jules seemed to
woman, everyone else. “Leave.” He motioned to the men. “See everyone else

for the housekeeper out.”

vn,” the “I would prefer if they stayed,” Hannah said. “They are my friends
came here without my knowledge to try and keep me safe.”

u must Jules’s jaw flexed. “I am the one who gives orders here.”

“And I am your sister and will not be bossed about.”

napped At the words, Jules’s eyes went wide. “What?”

rown ischild. She gave you up because she feared your father and hoped to keep
secret.”

e to it,” It was obvious when he went silent that Jules was processing
own isinformation. Hannah met his gaze and let out a sigh, quickly averting
ent wayeyes to the others present.

“There is nothing else to say. Leave,” Jules said, his hands curling
se. Shefists.

Not for the first time, Hannah showed an extreme quiet valor. She
is rightup to the threatening man with a soft expression. “You killed my father
had him killed and he was innocent. Neither he nor Mother had a
womanwhere the box was hidden. The housekeeper who hid it took the secret
m. grave. I found it and brought it.”

he kept Marta held out a bundle and unwrapped it to show the box.

wn was “What was in it?” Jules asked, motioning for one of his men to tell
ld be abox. “Did you find anything?”

Hannah nodded. “Yes, money. It is in the bank. If you promise to
a manall of us alone, I will have it brought to you.”

assured “I have no need for the money,” Jules spat out. “I want something
ere histook from my father.”

The box was placed on a surface and opened to show that indeed
empty. Jules approached it and closed the lid. He traced the surface
following a pattern and then pressed his finger to one spot.

nger to A panel fell open and inside was a key.

sending He took it and held it up, then seeming to remember he had an audience
returned his attention to Hannah.

s father “You will not be bothered. You have my word.”

Hannah met Jules’s gaze for a long moment. “I cannot forgive you

o notice Not sure what she’d do next, Henry went to her side. “Come, let’s

except They all walked out in silence. Two men followed them to the door.

“If you ever need anything, Hannah,” Jules said.

ls, who Hannah did not reply; instead, she huffed.

“Miss Hannah,” Marta sniffed, taking one of her hands. “You v
brave.”

“I daresay, we still do not know what the key is for,” his father m

“In all possibility, larger coffers.”

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“If you ever need anything, Hannah,” Jules said.

Hannah did not reply; instead, she huffed.

“Miss Hannah,” Marta sniffed, taking one of her hands. “You were so brave.”

“I daresay, we still do not know what the key is for,” his father muttered. “In all possibility, larger coffers.”

Miles and Evan neared. “We will take you home,” Evan said to Hannah. “Our carriage is here.”

“I was about to offer,” Henry countered. “Hannah?”

“I will go with Evan. You have matters to see to from what I hear.” Not looking to him, she walked toward the waiting carriage. It was evident the encounter with Jules had affected her and, once alone, she would succumb to emotions. She’d been terrified and had been brave only because she had no one but herself to protect her household.

“If you do not mind, I will go with you,” Miles said to Henry, his eyes trailing Hannah and the others. “Brave woman.”



CHAPTER ELEVEN

HANNAH WANTED TO be left alone to grieve, to sleep, and to not see anyone. However, she was at Felicity's once again. Everyone insisted on taking care of her. She'd been given a sweetened tea for her nerves and was forced to eat. But that wasn't enough for her friend, who was eager to see her wellbeing.

She'd been brought to a bedroom with a hot bath awaiting, perfume in the water that were supposed to be soothing. Once that was done she was dressed in a warm gown and wrapped in a plush robe and now sat in front of a fireplace with another cup of tea at her elbow.

Through it all she'd been unable to utter a single word. Her mind went to every instance of the visit to Jules Brown repeating.

He was her brother, and he was a murderer. Whether he'd killed his father with his own hands or paid someone to do it did not matter.

There had been a sort of familiarity in him that had shocked her. He was favored in more ways than not. But there was a hardness in Jules that was the result of a life so very different from hers. If she were to guess, he'd grown up on the streets having to fight for everything until he found his father.

How that had occurred did not matter to her. What did matter was the fact that he'd never pay for his part in her father's murder. Men like Jules bought judges and other authorities. He was no doubt untouchable.

All because of a key. A stupid key.

Her father had died, and she'd been abandoned for a key.

"Hannah?"

Felicity walked into the room with a tray. "I brought you some soup. Please eat it. Then I promise to leave you alone to rest."

"You have fed me more today than the entirety of what I've eaten this week."

Her friend laughed softly. "You should eat more then."

As her friend kept her company, she ate a bit of the soup. Admitt

was delicious and warmed her.

“I am not sure what to do,” Hannah said. “How do I continue on knowing that my father’s killer will continue to enjoy his life, not paying for what he did?”

“I doubt that anyone who kills another person ever truly enjoys the life they have. I refuse to believe it,” Felicity explained.

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Hannah sighed. “There are people with hearts of stone that do not care about anything.”

Having looked into Jules’s eyes, Hannah wasn’t sure she could remain without emotion. There had been a flicker of something when she had spoken of her father dying in vain. Had he felt anything?

“Do you think you will ever hear from him?” Felicity asked.

She shrugged. “I doubt it. I prefer not to. He is a criminal. A man who I will never wish to see or know about ever.” Hannah let out a long breath and closed her eyes. “I hope to be able to sleep without thinking of him. I don’t want to forget he exists.”

“Of course,” Felicity said, standing.

Once in bed, her thoughts took a drastic turn. Instead of thinking about her father, she considered that Henry and his father had been there at Jules’s office. It had been a shock to walk in and see them. Marta had gasped audibly.

Why had he been there? Was it because of his need to be her champion, still clutching to the responsibility he’d felt since finding her father?

After what occurred, knowing that finally he would belong to someone other than himself, her already frayed nerves had threatened to unravel fully at seeing

He’d come to stand beside her, a show that she was not alone but had plenty of support. Not only him, but Evan and Lord Johnstone had been there, standing silently at her back. Jules must have understood that she had strong support. Just thinking of it brought tears of gratitude. She was indeed fortunate. Felicity and the support she’d amassed on her behalf.

Although, if Hannah were to be honest, Henry had been her strongest support from the first.

Now she had to become accustomed to his absence. First thing in the morning, she’d speak to Evan and ask that he meet with Henry and tell him that she wishes him well but asks that he not ever visit or approach her.

With a shaky breath, she looked up at the ceiling. In a way, it felt like she had known she’d protected herself and her household. Despite everything,

believed Jules. He got what he was after and would not bother her again now. Funny that she'd always wished for siblings. As the saying went, "what he careful what you wish for" was certainly true in her case.

her life.



Not feeling well. MORNING CAME AND, to Hannah's surprise, she felt refreshed. Although she was reluctant to have to face other people, she dressed and combed her hair. When looking in the mirror, she noted that although a bit pale, she did not seem well-rested. It could be that without the threat, she was able to sleep better.

"Good morning," Felicity greeted her in the corridor. "I was just about to come and fetch you for breakfast. Cook has outdone herself, it smells delicious." They went to the dining room where Evan already sat. He stood and pulled out a chair for his wife and then for Hannah.

"Were you able to sleep well?" he asked her and Hannah nodded.

"After the teas, food, and bath, I slept like a babe."

"I am glad to hear it," he replied with a smile.

"We must move forward. Perhaps plan a lady's tea here," Felicity said. "I do not wish to pressure you, but the sooner we move forward, the better for you."

The underlying reason was of course that Henry was to marry someone else. Felicity tried to distract her from it.

In actuality, the thought of it broke her heart. Each time she remembered what had occurred between Henry and another woman, it was as if her heart had been split into pieces.

"Yes. I agree, it is best to move forward and begin my new life. It is best to be alone for the time being."

Felicity nodded. "With Marta as a companion, all should be well. Perhaps about perhaps hiring a butler?"

"No," Hannah replied. "I do not feel comfortable with men in my employ. Silas is enough. I have hired a maid."

It was afternoon by the time she and Marta returned home. She was excited at the prospect of continuing with redecorating the house. It had been a relief that Jules had not wanted the money, because without it, things would have been harder for her.

So, she

in. Now as she walked into the disorganized house, all she saw was
not, “Bepossibilities.

“I will change into something more serviceable. In the meantime, I will fix up the
items that will be fixed near the front door,” she said to Silas.

By the time the men arrived, and furniture was loaded and taken away, the
the sitting room and dining room were bare except for the main table.

ugh she “My goodness,” Marta said. “Where will you eat until the chariot
er hair returned?”

lid look “In the parlor. Let us set up a table with two chairs for meals.” The
atter. to the parlor and moved a round table to one side of the room near the
about todors. Then they brought a matching set of chairs from her father’s office
ovely.”put them on either side.

nd held Hannah covered the table with a large square embroidered cloth. In
the center placed a vase. “I will cut some flowers. Can you fetch tea for the
famished.”

“It looks lovely,” Marta said and hurried away.

With little Betty at her heels, seeming to find interesting smells in the
said. “I corner of the garden, Hannah walked about and snipped flowers for the
atter for Flowers she and her mother had tended over the years bloomed
despite the dire need for tending. With a sigh, Hannah realized she had
on, and forward to the task of gardening. The more to keep her occupied the better.

“You look beautiful today.” Henry’s voice fell over her and she
mbered not to turn and face him. Her chest constricted and Hannah tried
r entire attempting to keep from crying.

“Why are you here? Did you not get my message? Felicity said it
seems I be delivered today.”

He walked closer. Despite her not looking at him, she caught sight of
l. What booted foot. “I did, which is why I am here.”

“Please, Henry.” Hannah finally turned to him. It took her breath away
der my him. He was the only man she’d ever love, and now alone with him,
could think was how much she missed him and needed his touch.

he was “I am not going to marry her. I’ve made it clear to her family. I
ad been will not marry someone I do not care for or am not attracted to.”

she would The basket forgotten, Hannah hurried to the side of the house
passersby would not see her. Her chest heaved with deep gulps of air.

“What happened, are you unwell?” Henry neared and held her

were upper arms. "Hannah?"

"I have to move on. Don't you see? You cannot continue to clutter them makes it harder."

From behind him, she caught sight of Marta, who looked on away, understanding and then walked away. She'd give them privacy, for Hannah was thankful.

"I miss you when I do not see you. I think about you daily. It is I have concluded that I am in love with you, Hannah Kerr." Henry lifted his face and searched her eyes. "I cannot imagine not seeing you every French day."

"We both know it can never be between us."

Henry pressed his lips to hers. "You feel as strongly. I know you do and in whispered against her mouth, his breath fanning over hers.

What did it matter what she felt? The truth of the matter was that it never be. Even if he decided not to marry the woman in question. His ties meant he had to be careful who he did marry.

"I cannot allow this," Hannah replied, although relenting and she pressed her face against him as the familiar sense of Henry filled her. There would not be another man who would make her feel like him. Someone who would look at her reeling, overwhelming every bit of her being.

Knowing it would in all probability be the last time she'd ever see him, Hannah reached for his face, cupping his jaw with her palm. "Why do I have to be so difficult to let you go? But I must. I absolutely must, or go mad if you continue to come here."

His mouth crashed against hers and her hand slipped from his shoulder around his neck. The kiss became passionate. The feel of his body against hers engulfing hers with a heat like none she'd ever felt before.

Hannah raked her fingers through Henry's hair, reveling in the sensation. When his tongue pressed against the seam of her lips, she parted her mouth all she could. Once in her mouth, he traced the roof of her mouth and she shivered from the sensations that traveled down her spine.

When the pads of his fingers on the side of her throat traced a circular pattern, the caress was much too exquisite to push his hand away. Instead, she leaned her head to the left, relinquishing more.

Henry broke the kiss but kept his lips on hers, then trailed ever so gently down to her jawline, pressing softly against the now overly sensitive skin.

She clung to him with desperation, not wanting him to ever stop. Instead for time to stand still and allow this moment to last forever.

It was as if his lips were fevered, the heat emanating as he continued with combination of caresses and kisses. To her jaw, then up to just below her ear, which where he lingered, his tongue darting out to taste.

Hannah gasped when his mouth pressed against the side of her neck as how the ground shifting under her feet. "Oh." It was the only word that escaped her because any others would break the spell.

By the time his lips trailed to her shoulder, Hannah was trembling, unable to keep tears at bay. At the same time, heat filled her, pooling in the most private part of her. She could not ask that he stop. Instead, she did. "Henry, don't beg he continue. Something had to quench the fire inside."

"Trust me," Henry said and lowered before her. "Shh."

"What are you doing?" Hannah fought to keep from collapsing on the family ground and begging that he do something to stop the blaze that burned inside her.

He looked up at her and rose again, only he trailed his hand up her thigh, melting lifting the skirt of her dress.

"Oh," she gasped. Once again, he took her mouth. Was it possible she didn't know? Understood what was happening to her body, the absolute need for him. "I will take care of you. I promise." His darkened eyes met hers, and she felt the fire that burned so hot it threatened to engulf her completely.

"I will take care of you. I promise." His darkened eyes met hers, and she felt the fire that burned so hot it threatened to engulf her completely. "Close your eyes."

Hannah gripped his shoulders and obeyed. Once again, his mouth covered hers, and she enjoyed the kiss, but couldn't keep from concentrating on the fact that his hand touched her leg.

When Henry deepened the kiss, she gave in, but only for a moment because in the next instant, his fingers slipped between the folds of her dress. "Ah!"

Thankfully, his mouth covered hers because what he did next saved her from thereeling.

With nimble moves, he circled the nub at the center of her sex, his fingers still covering hers, sending tendrils of what she could only describe as fire down her legs. Each movement of his fingers was like adding fuel to the already blazing heat and she could only cling to him, on the verge of begging that he never stop.

Unable to keep from it, she pushed into this hand, too lost to consider anything else.

op, but actions.

“Please,” she managed to whisper against his lips.

“Shh,” Henry said and then did the simplest of things. With the ear movements, he glided the tip of his finger over a single spot over and over.

It was as if a dam burst and Hannah lost all control. Her body spilled into fragments time and time again until she dissolved into a heap of escaped but flesh.

Unless held up by him, she was sure to have fallen to the ground. She barely pressed her face into his shoulder as she fought to regain control.

“What have you done?” she managed to say. “Have you spoiled me?”
“No.” Henry’s tone was strong. “Never. It was just what can be done on by caresses.”

Taking a fortifying breath, Hannah pushed back, praying her shaking held her upright. “It should not have happened.”

“But it did. We will marry.” Henry stated and pressed a kiss to her leg, lips. “Soon because I cannot be patient and must be with you fully.”

She understood of course what he meant. However, she was not able to allow anything as foolish to happen again.

The aftermath of their intimate moment made her breathless and she fought to keep her voice stable. “We will not. You know very well what this would mean for your family. Your parents will never allow it.” She held her hand when he started to speak.

“No matter what you say to me in this covered moment, upon reflection, you know I am right. I must forget you. You must forget about me.”

“Do you not love me?” Henry took her by the shoulders and stared into her eyes. “I love you, Hannah.”

The words were like a sweet nectar sliding down one’s throat slowly. “I do love you, Henry. I admit it. I have loved you for longer than I care to admit, even to myself. However, how we feel does not change the reality of our circumstance. I would bring scandal. None of it my fault, but at the same time, a very strong reason for not marrying me.”

“I will not stop fighting until you are my wife.” He gave her a look. “Tell me you will marry me once all is cleared up.”

A tear slipped down her cheek. The man she loved so dearly stood before her, meaning every word that he said. However, both knew it could never be. She would only bring shame and troubles into his family.

“Promise not to return,” Hannah said, brushing the tear away. “Please, Henry, I need you. How can I convince you to stay with me?”

Henry looked away for a moment. “How can I convince you to stay with me?”

“I will not allow you to do this to your family. For you to disappoint your parents in such a manner that you marry a woman who brings with her nothing but a questionable murder, a brother who is a criminal, and a mother who abandoned her to live alone as a single woman.”

Hannah “This conversation is not over.” He pressed a kiss to her lips. “Vow to me.”

In a stupor, Hannah walked to where the basket lay on the ground. She lowered to pick up the blooms. Then she collapsed onto the ground, still holding a flower.

Something had to be done. Perhaps she could leave for the rest of the season. Go visit her aunt and find out if all was well. There still had not been a response to her letter.

If she remained away for a time, then Henry would hopefully miss her. Not being there would be helpful as well. She would not hear any news from him or chance running into him.

“Marta,” Hannah called out as she entered the house. “Help me pack what I need. I’ll be gone for a while. I’ll be back in a few days.”



“I cannot believe you were thinking of leaving,” Felicity said, lifting a teacup to her lips. “Honestly, Hannah. You must remain here; there is so much to be done here. Besides, I need you.”

Hannah almost laughed. “You do not need me. You have Evan, and your mother.”

“Yes, well, Grant is gone, as you know, in hopes of fleecing some of the old woman of money.” Felicity shook her head. “If I am to be a grandmother, but at least someone who doesn’t see through his ruse deserves it. Why would a young man wish to be with someone old enough to be their grandmother? It makes me shudder.”

“I don’t understand this quest of theirs for funding. None of them, especially Lord Johnstone, have need of it.”

“It is a bet. Once men set about this sort of thing, there is no talking them out of it.”

ase.” out of it. More of a competition to see who manages to get the funds.”
wait for It was a moment before Hannah spoke. “And Henry, where is he
the money?”

nt your Felicity’s right shoulder lifted and lowered. “Probably from his f
h her ado believe they have been working quite close together.” Her friend
er whonarrowed. “You have yet to explain your sudden urge to flee.”

“How is it between a man and a woman...when making love?”
Vait forasked, avoiding the topic.

Although she was sure her friend would not divulge the intimate de
ind andwas easy to understand that her friend enjoyed bedspot. In a ma
, sittingseconds, Felicity’s face softened and there was a slight pinking to her

“When with the right man, I surmise, it will be most enjoyable. It is a
: of theentire world disappears until there is only him.” Felicity sighed.

ot been “That did not answer my question,” Hannah said, sitting up straig
mean physically. What goes where?”

ove on. “Oh.” Felicity frowned. “I am not sure I should tell you such detail

s about “We promised whoever married first would tell the other. Reme
Hannah replied. “I am interested because, well...I may never mar
ck.” would like to know.”

Felicity stood and went to the doorway. She pulled the sliding
closed and then returned to sit. “What happens is, well at first you kis
it becomes rather...well you know... passionate.”

a cup of When her friend paused, Hannah didn’t dare say anything,
much toFelicity would lose her nerve.

“His sex member becomes hardened, and he enters you. At first, it
Grant,uncomfortable. In truth, it hurt. As you continue moving, then it b
better.” Felicity stopped. “That’s it.”

me rich “It sounds awful.” Hannah bit her bottom lip. “I do not think I wo
honest,it at all.” She considered that whatever Henry did was much more enj
ng manIt did not cause any pain whatsoever.

kes me “It is not awful,” Felicity said. “There is movement. You join an
and eventually you fly.”

Ë them, “Fly?”

“Float.”

ig them “How do you do that?” Hannah asked, picturing a couple levitati
the bed.

“Not physically,” Felicity replied with a giggle. “Emotionally, m
getting Your body bursts into flames; it is most wonderful.”

At the mention of flames, Hannah understood. “Oh, I see. Interesti
ather. I “One day you will find out and we will laugh about this conversati
l’s eyes Hannah studied Felicity, who she loved more than life itself. “You
very good at describing things.”

Hannah “You have a dreamy look about you. Did something happen? Is He
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atter ofme to know he will marry another. Then there is the fact that my aunt
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“Not physically,” Felicity replied with a giggle. “Emotionally, mentally. Your body bursts into flames; it is most wonderful.”

At the mention of flames, Hannah understood. “Oh, I see. Interesting.”

“One day you will find out and we will laugh about this conversation.”

Hannah studied Felicity, who she loved more than life itself. “You are not very good at describing things.”

“You have a dreamy look about you. Did something happen? Is Henry the reason for this sudden wish to leave Glasgow?”

Hannah shook her head. “In part, yes. I do not wish to see him. It pains me to know he will marry another. Then there is the fact that my aunt has not responded. She could be very ill or worse. I want to find out.”



CHAPTER TWELVE

HENRY WAS PREPARED to set things straight. There were two very important matters that had to be dealt with, and upon speaking to his father, he knew both would be solved.

His footsteps echoed on the pristine floor that led to his father's study. He'd just walked out a business acquaintance with whom his father had concluded working with. The venture had made both men quite a handsome return.

This was the opportune moment to approach his father, as the probability he would be in a jovial mood.

"Henry," his father said upon him entering. "Make sure to meet with the bankers in the morning to deposit the funds."

"I will." Henry poured brandy into two glasses and handed one to his father. "To profit and good business."

They held the glasses up and then drank.

"I must revisit something with you," Henry said, meeting his father's gaze. "The matter of a loan in order for me to invest in a ship that departs in a pair of months. I have been able to come up with a portion, but it is difficult without your help I will have the money in time."

"Tell me about this ship and who is investing." His father sat back and waited.

"The ship is called, *The Abigail*. It is captained by a well-respected man, Thomas MacFarland, who is recommended by Evan's father, Robert Macleod. He is who first brought it to our attention as a way to make money and recover from our...financial...destitution."

"Interesting." His father frowned. "Why is Robert Macleod not investing himself?"

"He has passed on the opportunity to help Evan."

"I see. Very well. I will consider loaning you the capital. If I do, you will repay with interest."

There was lightening in his chest to know that he could possibly lose a portion of the money. He wasn't disappointed in the fact he'd not acquired capital from seducing a woman. The wager had been fun in that moment now it mattered very little to him. His father trusted him and that was more to him than a bet.

"I also wish to repay you for all the gambling debts, even if it means keeping very little for myself."

His father's eyebrows rose. "Is that so?"

"It means more to me that you trust me than whatever profit comes from the ship."

When his father looked to the ledger in front of him, Henry cleared his throat. His father knew him well and looked up.

"Whatever it is, I cannot go against your mother's wishes. I agree with her that you must marry and soon."

"I am going to propose marriage to Hannah Kerr."

At the statement, if it was possible, his father's eyebrows shot up. "What?"

"I am in love with her and cannot abide the idea of marriage to anyone but her. Hannah is who I will marry."

His father stood and refilled his glass. He took a large gulp and swallowed. "I do not think this will make your mother happy. I agree that your lass is fetching and quite brave."

Henry continued. "I am aware there are many impediments. Believe me, Father, I understand. However, I cannot help what I feel."

"No." His father gave him a stern look. "I cannot approve of it, since your brother owns gambling dens and is a criminal. For all we know, he murdered her father. Then there's the matter of her mother going mad. The lass would do too much detriment to our family."

"In all fairness, no one is aware they are siblings. That her father was murdered is not her fault. Her mother, well, that is troublesome."

While his father paced, Henry lowered to a chair. It would take time for him to convince his father. It would take having his support in court to convince his mother to agree to the marriage.

Although a grown man who did not require his parents' permission to marry, going against their wishes would mean a harder life for Hannah. Not only that, but he did not wish to cause either of his parents social harm.

ave his Society and their standing was of utmost importance to his parents. Therefore, Henry needed them to agree to the marriage. His mother was the best person to set in motion how to best present Hannah to society. His father said, "Your mother will never agree to it," his father finally said. "You understand. It is her circumstance that is worrisome."

Henry stood. "Father. You have met her. What do you truly think of her as a person? Forget everything else."

"I like her," his father replied without hesitation. "I think she is a very respectable young woman. Quite independent and despite being alone has the bearing of a very respectable young woman."

"Can you tell Mother that? Will you please help me in this? Together we can convince her."

Once again, his father looked down at the paperwork in front of him. "I am not sure it will work. I myself am not convinced that a marriage would be beneficial to you. There are many other factors to consider, higher. You know very well the lass would never be fully accepted by our social circles. Why would you subject her to the scrutiny of our social circles?"

"I must insist." Henry could not think of what else to say. When his parents agreed to it or not, he would marry Hannah. That they would be included in social gatherings would not affect him one way or the other. Hannah would not miss what she'd never been part of.

"I am going to speak to Mother now." Henry met his father's gaze. "I will do it, with or without your support."

Together they went to the solarium where his mother sat reading. She looked up, scanning their faces. "Whatever it is, it must be serious."

"Henry has an announcement to make," his father said, lowering his voice. "Do not fret, dear, it is not so bad."

"What is it, dear?" his mother asked.

"I have decided to marry," Henry replied. "I am to ask Hannah Keble for my wife."

When his mother closed her eyes, Henry knew it was to keep her from blurring something she'd regret. She opened them and looked up to him. "I will never agree to such foolishness. Honestly, Henry, how can you expect me to consider it?"

"I love her."

"What you are is infatuated. You've convinced yourself to

its, and champion and now think she cannot possibly live without you.” His
ould be put the book aside and gripped her hands together. “I will not allow it.”

Taking a moment to gather his thoughts, Henry lowered to a chair
ou must from his parents. “She is a wonderful woman who will bring me a
family happiness. If you would only give yourself the opportunity to
k about know her, you will agree. Father has met her.”

Lady Campbell turned to her husband. “What have you said to
a good about this?”

rings of “I-I agree that the lass is a good match for him personality

However, I have warned Henry that she will never fit into our social
ther we and would be an outcast. He should not subject her to it.”

“You make it sound as if our friends are horrible,” his mother re-
him. “I “They are not.”

e to her “I did not imply it. However, they are not the most accepting of pe-
Henry. Henry cleared his throat. “Based on your own reactions, I wo-
r peers. neither of you are accepting of anyone without some sort of pedigree.”

With a sharp look, his mother huffed. “I know you well, Henry, a
ther his will do whatever you have made your mind up to do. Whether it har-
ere not family matters little to you.”

e other. “Where is everyone?” His sister appeared, helped by her husband
seeing them, she tugged her arm away. “This looks like a

. “With conversation. What happened?” There was an eagerness in her exp-

Alana loved dramatics. Although she preferred it to be about her, wh-
ing. She she would take it in any sort of way.

It could not be worse timing.

g to sit “Your brother has decided to marry a woman who is cloaked in sca-
Henry’s mouth fell open. “Mother, really? What scandal?”

“Her father was murdered. He was probably involved in some
rr to be illicit activity.”

“Oh, you mean John Kerr, the owner of the tea shop?” Alana exc-
p from “Horrible thing that you had to find the body.” She gave Henry wha-
him. “I pass for sympathy if not for the slight smile.

u even “Aren’t you supposed to be home, having a child or something?”
murmured under his breath.

“I heard that,” his sister replied. “Hopefully soon by the way it’s
be her in there. I needed to get fresh air. So tired of resting and spendir

motherinside.”

” He didn’t point out that by coming there, she was still indoors.
r across “We should have her for dinner,” Alana said with a wide smile.
nd thisgive you the opportunity to observe her, Mother. It could be she will
o get toinadequate, she will not marry Henry.”

“Absolutely not,” Henry snapped. “I will not have her come her
Henryhumiliated.”

His mother remained silent, looking at him without expression.
y wise. “I did not say humiliate,” his sister replied. “I mean it will give
circlesopportunity to get to know her. Marriage is a big step.” She turned
husband who ran around trying to control the other three children. “Is
marked.right, dear?”

“What?” He lifted a child and sniffed its bottom. “Oh yes, of cours
ople.” As a nanny appeared to take the children away, his mother watch
uld saythen turned to him. “I think it is a good idea. Bring her to dinner tonight

“Tonight?”
nd you “Yes, the sooner the better. I wish to meet this woman who has
ms thisyour head.”

l. Upon
serious



ression.“TONIGHT?” HANNAH STARED at him, aghast. “Why?”
ien not, They sat in the parlor that was alight with sunlight and fresh air a
left the French doors open to the weather.

“My mother wishes to meet you.” Henry wondered how much to c
andal.” His sister had decided to remain, therefore, Hannah would be facin
Campbell women.

sort of Hannah searched his face as if he held the answers to what she shc
“What did you tell them?”

laimed. “That I was in love with you and wish to marry you.”

it could As he spoke, her eyes grew wider and wider.

“You did what?” Her hands flew to her cheeks, and she blew out a
' Henry“Why would you tell them that?”

“Because it is the truth.”

kicking She looked beautiful that day. When he’d arrived, she’d been in the
ig time

that had been redecorated with a small table and chairs. A newly hire was placing vases of fresh flowers on the table and sideboard.

“It will feel so” “Henry we cannot possibly. Surely your mother and father are ag
Besides...” she reached for his face, cupped his jaw, and looked into h

“You have not asked me, and I have not accepted.”

There was a tightening in his stomach. It was true, he’d taken for
that she would marry him once he asked. It was presumptuous of him.

“Do you love me?”

The words hung in the air. Hannah let out a long sigh and met h
to her again. “You know I do.”

“If I know anything about you, it is that you are one of the bravest
I have ever known. You have faced what life has thrown at you with
e.” and strength. Fight with me for our love, Hannah.”

She bowed her head.

Lowering to one knee before her, Henry took her hands. “Hanna
will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?”

“I find that I cannot say no.” Her eyes glistened with unshed tears.
Yes. Oh Henry, what are we doing?”

He stood and brought her into his arms, holding her close as he
keep from allowing the most unmasculine of emotions free rein.

“We must tell our friends,” Hannah said after a few moments in
they sat quietly, both needing a moment to become used to the idea.

“We should.” He agreed, happiness bubbling inside him.

Hannah looked at him. “Are we compatible? What do we possibly
livulge.common?”

As expected, an intelligent woman like Hannah would delv
reasoning.

“I believe we are very compatible.”

“In what ways?” She took his left hand in hers. “Tell me.”

“Attracted to one another. We are good friends. I enjoy our time t
whether we sit in silence or have a conversation.”

Hannah nodded. “True. I suppose people with much less marry ar
a good marriage.”

“What else can you think of?” Henry prodded, knowing she ha
e parlorfully convinced in order for them to move forward.

“Do you like opera?” she asked.

maid "No."

She giggled. "I do not care for it either. What about dogs?" She looked at the dog against it, looked to her newly acquired pet who slept soundly on a bed made of his eyes, folded blanket.

"Yes, I do. I also like cats."

granted "Really?" Hannah studied him. "What about...?" She stopped and looked at him. "I cannot fathom life without you. Each day that we are apart hurts you terribly."

his gaze "That is exactly how I feel. If that is not compatibility, I do not know what is." Henry pressed a kiss to her temple.

women Marta appeared at the doorway. "Tea?"

dignity "Yes, please." Hannah stood and went to her housekeeper. "Mister Campbell has asked me to marry him, and I have accepted." Her face took on a delightful shade of pink.

h Kerr, The housekeeper looked past her employer to Henry. "I certainly hope there has been too much familiarity between you. I know it is not my place to say so, but I was going to speak to you privately, Mister Campbell, to express my concern and ask that you marry this wonderful young woman as soon as possible."

Henry closed the distance and met the woman's gaze. "You would have been very right to do so." He pressed a kiss to the startled woman's cheek. "Thank you."

The woman rushed to hug Hannah, her eyes bright. "I am so glad to have you, Miss Hannah. I have been indelighted for you, Miss Hannah."

When the women began crying, Henry quickly made himself busy by handing Hannah his handkerchief and Marta one he spotted on a side table.

Then he poured three glasses of brandy and, in between sniffs, toasted to the engagement.

together



and have UPON ARRIVING AT the Macleod home, they found the young couple in the parlor. It seemed as if they were having a disagreement by the expression on their faces.

Felicity met Hannah's gaze. "What happened? Is something wrong?"

look as if you've cried."

Hannah "I did a bit," Hannah admitted. "We have news."

de of a Evan came and stood next to Felicity. "Come sit down, please," Evan looked past them to the butler. "Pour some wine, please."

Unsure if it should be him to tell them, Henry looked to Hannah. Hannah smiled and seemed to be on the verge of tears again.

, I miss "Please tell me. What happened?" Felicity insisted, hurrying to Henry and placing an arm around her shoulders.

it know Henry smiled. "Hannah has accepted my proposal of marriage."

When Felicity screamed with excitement, her companion, Ana, and the butler hurried over; they stopped in the doorway at seeing Hannah. Felicity embraced and jumped up and down while laughing.

turned a Evan came to him hand outstretched. "I knew it." He gave him a kiss on the cheek. "It was only a matter of time before you admitted how you love me, Henry."

y place "Congratulations!" Felicity rushed to him and threw her arms around him. "I am so very happy."

woman They toasted to the engagement, the entire time Hannah looking at Henry with so much love that his heart melted. She expected him to be her strength and to have to defend her and protect her always, and he would.

cheek. Once they toasted, he and Evan were pushed aside, the women going to the opposite side of the room to discuss matters that they deemed themself so very needed for.

"We are expected at my parents' home this evening. Do not be late," Henry said to Hannah who looked over and nodded.

able. "How do you expect that to go?" Evan asked.

as, they "Honestly, I do not know. Father likes Hannah and I am sure mother will adore her. Mother on the other hand worries more about the repercussions than whether or not we are in love. As you can imagine, if mother does not approve, Father will follow suit."

They waited a few moments, Evan looking over to the women, who were still in the engrossed in conversation. Hannah seemed to be retelling how the proposal had happened.

"What about the sponsorship?"

g? You Henry shook his head. "I am not sure. Father is considering loaning me the rest of what I need. However, this may dampen his will to do so."

uses the fact I am marrying Hannah as a way to not loan me the money
have to consider something else.”

se.” He “Like what?”

“I have an investment I have not considered. A wager, of sorts.”

th, who Evan looked surprised. “Is it something that could be dangerous
unscrupulous?”

Hannah “I won a bet five years ago. I never collected upon it.”

Seeming to understand whatever was to be said had to be between

Evan stood. “Let us go to my study.”

and the

ah and



nowing *THE FOG WAS thick, making it impossible to see even one foot in front
felt toother. Henry stumbled from the doorway, pulling his cape tight around
body. He’d won a great deal of money, and yet had left empty-handed
und his only evidence of his winnings was a rapidly scribbled note.*

*That it had cost a man’s life made the entire event surreal. Why
at him entered into such a game? He’d succumbed so deep into his addiction
trench, gambling that he was willing to wager his life against another. The idea
the disgust in himself, grew with each step he took.*

going to *After a few steps, he went to the side of a building and threw them
em not smell of blood lingering in his nostrils despite the distance he put between
him and the gambling den.*

forget,” *The instructions were to take the note to the bank and ask for
Billings. The money would be held in his name in a safety deposit box
had to do was collect it whenever he wished.*

y sister

e social

e, if she



EVAN BLEW OUT a breath. “I didn’t know it had become so bad.”

to were “It was the last time I gambled.” Henry stared into the glass in his
proposal “I could never touch the money. A man died for it. All because of
hand.”

“Did you kill him?” Evan met his gaze. It was obvious that no matter
ing merely, his friend would stand by him. There was nothing that could be
o. If he

y, I will this juncture as he had no idea who his opponent was.

“No. Someone stood behind each of the players. The last two remained wagered life. We could fold at any moment. When I saw n and knew it was virtually unbeatable, I almost did. Just so the man w us? Ordie. But the man behind me nudged me and I realized he saw my ha would not allow it. If I didn’t show my hand, I would be the one to die

“How?”

n them, “Cutting of the throat.”

“Fast and painless,” Evan said. “Still a steep price.”

Henry drank the last of his brandy. “I tried to find out who he was I returned to the place where he’d played, it had been abandoned. I wa give his family the money.”

t of the “If you use the money for your portion, would you feel badly about und his “I don’t know anymore. I suppose there is nothing that can be don ed. Theit now. I could give it away to a charitable cause.”

Evan met his gaze. “I think you should take the amount you need had he the ship returning and us making our profit, replace it. Leave it the ction to you figure out what to do with it.”

ea of it, “A man died...”

“You wagered your life as well. Both of you were idiots. You v ip. The money fairly. One of you had to die that day. Guilt does not change tl etween of the matter.”

Henry laughed. “You sound like your father.”

Mister When Evan groaned, they both laughed. It felt good to share the . All he he’d carried for so long.

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“If you use the money for your portion, would you feel badly about it?”

“I don’t know anymore. I suppose there is nothing that can be done about it now. I could give it away to a charitable cause.”

Evan met his gaze. “I think you should take the amount you need. Upon the ship returning and us making our profit, replace it. Leave it there until you figure out what to do with it.”

“A man died...”

“You wagered your life as well. Both of you were idiots. You won the money fairly. One of you had to die that day. Guilt does not change the truth of the matter.”

Henry laughed. “You sound like your father.”

When Evan groaned, they both laughed. It felt good to share the burden he’d carried for so long.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“I HAVE TO wear a suitable color. I am barely out of mourning,” Hannah said while sitting in Felicity’s room.

Henry had gone home, and she would go by carriage later. Hannah decided that Felicity was to accompany her, for which she was ever so grateful.

Now in her friend’s bedchamber, they went through Felicity’s wardrobe trying to decide what was best to wear.

“What about this?” Felicity held out a beautiful gray ensemble. The fabric was soft and downy with tiny pink rosebuds embroidered around the neckline and hem of the sleeves.

“It’s beautiful.”

“Wear it. You can have it,” Felicity said with a smile. “I find it whenever I try it on, I never choose to wear it.”

While Ana, Felicity’s personal maid, combed Hannah’s hair, she looked at Felicity’s gaze in the mirror. “I am not sure what to expect. Tell me what Missus Campbell.”

Her friend bit her bottom lip in thought. “She is attractive. Favorable color blue. From the few times I have been in the same socials with her, she seems to be well-liked. Has a close-knit group of women whom she spends time with doing various charity events and such.”

“Have you ever had a conversation with her?” Hannah wanted to know everything about the woman.

“Nothing more than pleasantries,” Felicity replied. “I wish Mother were here. She knows her a bit better than I do. I believe Mother has been in the house several times.”

“What about the dance? How was she acting?”

“She was in her element. The music, décor, and food were extraordinary. It was obvious she’d spent a great deal of time planning every detail. As to my mother, it is what she loves to do.”

“I see,” Hannah said. “She and your mother have that in common.”

It seemed too soon before it was time to go. As they descended the stairs, Evan gave her an approving look. “You will win them over. I have no doubts.”

Hannah blinked away grateful tears. “I certainly hope you are right.”

Once assisted into the carriage, they set off for the Campbell estate which was not far from where Felicity lived. At the most, it would take half an hour for them to arrive.

Hannah said

She’d ridden past the Campbell estate many times, always admiring the

They’d

decorative gates with the family crest. Now as the carriage went through them, Hannah felt as if she was about to be sick.

ternally

Felicity took her hand. “You’re pale.”

wardrobe

“I am not sure I can go through with this. They will never accept my presence here, sure of it.”

e gown

Nothing else was said. Probably because there wasn’t anything Felicity could say that would help her feel any better.

eckline

The house was alight, every window bright and welcoming. If not for the huge boulder in her stomach, Hannah would have thought they were here for her visit.

nd that

There was another carriage and they waited for whoever it was to arrive. When their carriage rolled forward, Hannah gasped audibly. She pressed her hand to her head. “Lord help me.”

he met

“I am sure it is not as bad as that,” Felicity said, but there was a slight tremble to her voice.

e about

ors the

Henry came to greet them, holding her hand as she descended. “Felicity, how are you?” he asked, a slight curve to his lips.

er, she

Hannah could not speak; she managed a smile in reply.

spends

o know

Looking to the other carriage, Henry shook his head. “My sister Anne is here. She is heavy with child and should be home in bed.”

er were

“Oh.” It was the only word Hannah could conjure in that moment.

to their

Felicity came to his side. “We may as well go inside.”

They went up the steps, each of them on Henry’s arm. Upon arriving at the entry, they were greeted by a butler who took their wraps.

gant. It

She was much too nervous to notice more than the extravagant arrangement in the foyer as they went to a sitting room where several people were gathered and were talking.

cording

At their entrance, everyone turned to them.

“Mother, Father, Sister, may I introduce Miss Hannah Kerr.” Her voice was steady. He turned to Hannah and walked with her to where the parents sat. “You already know my father.”

Hannah nodded and did a quick slight curtsy.

“This is Catriona Campbell, my mother.”

Hannah kept her gaze lowered, head bent as she lowered to a curtsy. “I am very pleased to make your acquaintance.”

Henry didn’t wait and motioned to the other woman in the room. “This is my sister, Alana Robertson.”

Once again, Hannah curtsied, fully aware that Henry’s mother was glad to see her.

Henry escorted her to sit and then brought Felicity into the room. “I have all met Missus Felicity Macleod. She agreed to attend as Hannah’s companion.”

“You have no one else then?” Lady Campbell asked, her eyes fixed on Hannah. “A companion?”

“I am alone,” Hannah replied. “I do have a woman in my employ, who accompanies me whenever I leave the house.”

The woman slid a look to Felicity. “How is your mother, Felicity?”

“Very well, thank you for asking,” Felicity replied.

Henry’s sister was indeed quite late with child. She seemed a slight uncomfortable by the way she leaned back in the chair. Hannah met her eyes.

“How much longer?”

Seeming pleased to be spoken to, Alana grimaced. “Another month at least.” She let out a sigh. “Everything hurts.”

“Ah yes, drinks,” Lord Campbell said with much enthusiasm. “Welcome to our home, Miss Kerr.”

Alana seemed to sink further into the chair, her feet barely touching the floor.

Unable to stand it, Hannah looked to Lady Campbell. “May I use the pillows to make her more comfortable?”

“I doubt anything can make Alana more comfortable.”

Felicity and Hannah exchanged looks and stood. While Hannah placed a pillow behind Alana’s back, Felicity slid a footstool under her swollen feet.

“Oh my goodness, I could weep. This is perfect,” Alana exclaimed with her hands crossed over her extended stomach. “You must show my lady

Henry's do it."

Here his "Hannah and Felicity volunteer at the woman's maternity ward city," Henry told his parents.

Mrs. Campbell frowned. "I am not sure an unmarried woman should be exposed to such things."

They. "I "There is great need and not enough workers to help," Felicity with a smile. "They are very careful when assigning duties."

n. "My Instead of a reply, Mrs. Campbell slid a look at her daughter should be home, Alana. I do not understand why you are traipsing around town in your state."

A young female servant came to the door to announce that dinner was ready. "You're ready."

Hannah's No one moved. It was as if everyone waited for something. Mrs. Campbell wasn't sure, so she looked at Henry who in turn gave his parents a pinning look.

"A word, Hannah," Mrs. Campbell said, and then looked to Felicity, Marta, Henry, and her daughter who seemed to have fallen asleep. "In private, Hannah. Giving his mother what seemed like a warning look, he held out his hand to Felicity and escorted her out of the room.

"Do not dawdle," his father said as he went to Alana, who refused to budge, murmuring something about resting for the first time. Hannah's gaze wondered if she just wanted to be nosy and hear whatever her mother was about to say.

Months at Hannah lifted her gaze to the woman. It was obvious that both Henry and Alana, who was lovely, got their good looks from their mother. Alana's welcome older, Catriona Campbell remained a beauty.

Lips pursed as if considering what to say, she studied Hannah for a moment.

It took all her will not to speak first and tell the woman she cared about a little about society and all the rules that her marriage with Henry violated.

"My son is quite taken with you."

Hannah nodded.

"I can see why. You are a lovely young thing."

"Thank you."

The woman looked to the doorway. "I suppose there is no need to

to you why a marriage between you would be detrimental to Henry's s
l in the community. It would bring scandal to our doorstep. Surely you
want that."

ould be "Scandal is everywhere, Mrs. Campbell. I am not sure what scan
speak of. That my father was murdered was neither his fault nor mine
replied the killer is brought to justice, you will learn it had nothing to do w
type of felonious undertaking on his part."

: "You The woman seemed taken aback by her long response. "You see
all oversure about it."

"I know my father was a respectable man, a man with unwavering
ier was He would never be part of anything criminal. I have done investigatin
own."

Hannah Mrs. Campbell's face hardened. "And so have I. Perhaps not your
a bland but your mother has a rather questionable past. It will come to light.

marry my son, one of the most eligible men in Glasgow, inquiries
felicity, made." She held out a hand. "And before you say it isn't true. I kn
." social circles. They are not keen to accept an unknown woman, with
his arm kind of credentials to recommend her, readily."

"Mother!" Alana fought to sit up. "You are being cruel."
used to "I am being honest. This lass has to know what she is facing. Wha
Hannah will have to endure."

ier was Hannah stood. She wanted to run from the room and straight out th
However, if she were to be honest, she'd not expected a warm welcom
nry and "If your circles are such as you describe, why would anyone wis
lthough part of them? I prefer true friendships to horrible people who cannot s
a person's personal worth."

: a long "We cannot change society," Mrs. Campbell replied, her tone clip
is the way of the world."

ed very "Perhaps," Hannah replied. "But we can change whom we st
would ourselves with."

She stood and walked to the doorway, fully aware it was rude to r
for the matriarch. Once in the hallway, she listened for voices ar
entered the dining room.

At once, Henry stood and came to greet her. He searched her fa
she'd already schooled it. "This is such a beautiful room."

explain "Err...yes. It is." He ushered her to a chair and assisted her to sit.

tatus in His mother and Alana entered after and were seated. Both looked at Hannah, who sipped her wine wishing it were something stronger. Hannah refused to look at Felicity, as her friend would immediately know she was furious.

2. Once "I am glad for everyone to be here. Let us raise a glass to Henry with any Hannah," Henry's father, bless him, tried to lighten the mood in the room. Everyone lifted their glasses and took a sip.

3. Henry then cleared his throat. "I would like to toast Hannah. I am very brave in coming here and accepting to marry me despite the obstacles that will present themselves. I am proud of you." When he met her gaze, she winked, Hannah smiled. Only Henry could lighten her mood with but a word.

4. His mother exchanged looks with Alana, who seemed delighted. Henry's father had to be the most drama she'd experienced in months.

5. If you will, the meal looked delicious; however, to Hannah, it tasted horrible. The conversation with Henry's mother had left a bitter taste in her mouth.

6. Thankfully, Felicity kept the conversation going, bringing up the ball and the upcoming women's tea at her house.

7. "I will ensure an invitation is delivered promptly," Felicity said at last. Henry looked to Alana. "I suppose you will not be able to attend."

8. Alana grimaced. "No sadly."

9. Henry's father met Hannah's gaze. "What about you, sweet girl. Do you plan to begin hosting soon?"

10. "I am currently redecorating. But once it is completed, I hope to see past ladies for tea."

11. "Will there be someone living with you that can chaperone?" Mrs. Campbell asked. She knew full well what her situation was.

12. "Mrs. Murray has agreed to chaperone once I host events. I am awaiting word from my aunt. I've invited her to live with me."

13. Alana frowned. "Where is your mother?"

14. When Hannah took a breath, Henry spoke. "After Hannah's father died, her mother felt a calling to join the convent."

15. "For propriety's sake, I would think she could ignore the calling unless a daughter was established." Mrs. Campbell shook her head. "Why would she leave?"

16. Henry's father's eyes shined with interest at the turn in the conversation.

oked to Hannah exchanged worried looks with Felicity.

er. She Her friend attempted to intervene. “She was not strong enough to
he was the death and did not take it well.”

“Not the time for this discussion. There is naught that can be done
ury and Henry added.

om. Alana’s forlorn expression, as if on the brink of tears, was strange
poor dear. I cannot imagine going through so much.” She slid a look
For her mother. “We should all strive to be kind to Hannah.”

les that “There is no need to warn us about such things, Alana,” Mr. Ca
ize and said, looking to both his wife and daughter. “I think they have enough
a look. We should support them.”

at what Hannah adored the man in that moment.

Mrs. Campbell straightened. “A mother ensures that her children
. Either and have the best of everything. No one can blame me for wishing that
taste in make a wise decision and marry the right person.”

“That is what I am doing, Mother,” Henry replied. “I do not require
utterly approval of anyone but the people in this room.”

“Our social circles...our acquaintances...” Mrs. Campbell made
nd then motions with her hands. “What about their reactions? You cannot pre
be completely immune. What about me and your father?”

“Calm down, dear. I am sure things will work themselves out.”
Do you For a beat, everyone was silent. Hannah wasn’t sure what she felt.
hand, she would not break Henry’s heart, or hers for that matter, bec
to host what Mrs. Campbell suggested. On the other hand, she worried t
woman was right. It would not affect her, the marriage, but what
” Mrs. would be the impact on Henry’s family?

“I am not sure who all you refer to, Mrs. Campbell,” Felicity said.
am still remember correctly, Lord Thomas married a woman who’s been d
twice. The Duke of Stallings left his wife and is now living in Edinbur
a woman half his age. His wife, the duchess, keeps lovers and is not c
ier was about it. Then there is the latest scandal, Felicity Murray marrying the
Evan Macleod.” She took a breath and looked to Hannah. “The onl
ntil her that my dear friend Hannah will bring to your family is her strength, b
uld she and deep abiding love for your Henry.”

A tear trickled down Hannah’s cheek. Never had she felt so su
rsation and loved as she did in that moment. Henry took her hand and squeeze

“I am in total agreement with Felicity. With your outward support and marriage, it will stop some of the gossips who will be too afraid to lose esteem,” Henry added.

“Now,” After dinner, the men remained in the dining room and then returned to the parlor, where the subject was changed to a more neutral one. “You talk of the weather and gardening.

Finally, it neared time to leave.

“Thank you very much for a lovely meal,” Hannah said to Campbell. “I am sorry you are upset. I hope one day, you will come to face me.”

The woman let out a breath. “My sentiments have nothing to do with you. You are a lovely young woman.” She turned to Felicity. “I will point out what you have said.”

On the carriage ride home, Felicity went on about how horrible Campbell had been to Hannah. “I expected more from her. I’ve always thought her to be a nice person.”

“She is a product of her upbringing. People of the aristocracy are inclined to think of nothing more than social standing and what others intend to do,” Hannah said. “I understand her wishing for a good match for Henry.”

“Nonetheless. Henry has chosen you. She will have to accept it.” Hannah gave her a stern look. “And don’t you get it into your head that anything I say is valid.”

Hannah giggled. “I certainly was having second thoughts. Until that speech.”

Both laughed.

There would be interesting days ahead. Hannah prayed it would change things between her and Henry.

divorced
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discreet
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any thing
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supported
and it.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

IT FELT LIKE old times when Henry arrived at Evan's home and found three friends lounging in the parlor.

Evan sat at the piano, slow notes of nothing familiar filling the air. He sat on a chair, his long legs stretched out as he studied the liquid in his glass.

Then there was Grant, who he'd not expected to be there. Evan's brother stood next to the sideboard pouring brandy into two glasses.

"I see you have returned and look well," Henry said, crossing the room and taking one of the glasses. "What news do you bring from abroad?"

"He has not said a word as of yet," Miles said, his deep voice with a note of boredom. "I expect he waited on your arrival."

The music stopped and Evan studied them. "So far it seems only to have come up with the money. Admittedly not quite as planned. We have a few weeks before I have to meet with Captain MacFarland."

"I will have the money shortly," Grant said with a smirk. "She's agreed to gift it to me, despite my insistence to repay it."

"Ha," Miles barked out. "I doubt you put much effort into the argument."

"It doesn't matter." Grant lowered to a chair. "I will have my portion of the money looked to Henry. "What about you?"

"Not sure," Henry replied with honesty. "There is a chance I will not get it. I have asked my father for a loan, and he is considering it. Then there is another way that I am considering."

Evan huffed. "Henry will have the money. Miles?"

Lord Johnstone lifted his glass and studied it. "It seems that the one who has so far stuck to the rules of how to come up with the money is Evan. Therefore, I will do you one better." He looked at Grant. "I will seduce, and get the money from a woman in one week. I will wait until almost time and then I will begin my pursuit."

"Very sure of your abilities for someone whose plans just fell through?" Henry said with a laugh.

Of course Miles could afford to take such chances in order to beat her. He was wealthy and if worse came to worse and he could not acquire money by seducing an affluent woman, he could pay it himself.

Evan stood and went to the doors, pulling them closed. "Tell us about the woman, Grant."

They waited as Grant refilled his already empty glass. "Not much to brag about. I will admit to never knowing someone so extremely rich. We traveled throughout Europe staying in ostentatious mansions and estates that rival the Versailles. The banquets and balls that we attended had to have cost the king's ransom. At times, I had to go for long walks so as to not fall into the spell of thinking I belonged. Although the degree of luxury can be very attractive, it was all so very... contrived." He continued, "Everyone spent most days sitting about espousing about the stupidest things. The imported fabrics, the lack of taste of whatever delicacy they'd eaten the day before. Every little thing was nitpicked because they had nothing else to do after tea, everyone would go to their perspective spaces and spend the afternoon preparing for whatever evening fete they chose to attend."

Grant emptied his cup. "There was some kind of social, must-be-a-gathering every single night." He looked at each of them. "Every. Single. Night."

While he took a breath, Henry, Miles, and Evan exchanged amused glances. "How much longer will this continue?" Henry asked. "You cannot well walk off into the sunset once you have the money in hand."

The butler appeared and refilled the decanter with more brandy, then moved about the room. "Would you like something to eat in here, sir?" he asked Evan, who nodded.

"That is certainly something I have to consider," Grant replied with a pensive expression. "How long can I withstand it?"

Listening to Grant gave Henry a short reprieve. He'd expected to be questioned upon entering about the engagement. To his surprise, his father either didn't know, or did not consider it interesting.

"What?" Henry asked, noting everyone looking to him. So much for a reprieve.

"I asked why you have not come up with the money, but instead ask for a loan from your father?" Miles asked. "You had planned to marry a young unsuspecting lady with a huge dowry. Had you not?"

t Grant. It was his turn to make an announcement. Although Evan already
ire thehe'd left it to him to announce.

“I am engaged to Hannah Kerr. Although she has come ab
out thisinheritance of sorts, it is not enough for my portion. Therefore, I hav
in my quest to marry wealth.”

o tell. I Both Evan and Grant were quick to congratulate him. Each c
ravelednearing and hugging him with enthusiasm and wide smiles.

rivalled By the study of him by Miles, Henry expected his aristocratic frie
: cost anot as enthused with the idea.

into the “I am going to marry her, Miles. My parents are informed, all
e quitehappy about it.” Henry held out his hand. “Are you not going to cong
e spentme?”

ports of Instead of taking his hand right away, Miles stood to his full tc
before.height and then shook it. “Have you thought this through? There is the
. Thenof Jules Brown and his unsavory business. It could...no, it will
l hoursproblems.”

“I have taken it all into consideration. There is nothing Jules Bro
ttendeddo that would affect my family or my marriage. It was obvious he
Single.nothing to do with Hannah other than to acquire that box.”

Henry met Miles's gaze. “I understand your perspective. It is not
l looks.me that if things were different, it would be simpler to marry someon
ot veryour social circles. However, I have made up my mind.”

“Will you marry someone of your class just to ensure to keep th
his gazepedigree in your family?” Grant asked with a lazy grin directed at Mile
sir?” he “I would rather not marry than risk harm,” Miles replied. He tur

attention back to Henry. “We can try to ignore things, and for the mos
with aprefer not to think of titles and such. However, it is inescapable. Th
certain responsibilities that cannot be ignored. You will be quite v
l to beupon your father's death.”

friends Picturing punching Miles was easier than listening to yet another
explain the responsibilities of their social standing. It was ridiculous.

for the “Do you hear yourself?” Henry finally said. “Lecturing me as if I v
born yesterday. I come from a long lineage. Clan Campbell w
have tocontinues to be the most powerful presence in Scotland. I do not t
marry aduties lightly. Hannah Kerr has every quality desired in a lady; she v
waver in her duties. I have little doubt of her abilities. Therefore, tl

Henry knew, obstacle is people who think that all begins and ends within the rich clutch we live in.”

“I do wish you the best,” Miles said. “I really do.” His friend frowned. “I wish it were different. I am only presenting the facts, not how I personally believe.”

Henry relented. “I understand your concerns and do know you are an elitist. I hope that when you fall in love, she will be your social equal and was much easier that way.”

“I will support you in this,” Miles assured him. Both Evan and Miley repeated that they’d help wherever they could.

Once again, Evan began playing the piano, the music soft and melancholy.

“Should we visit this Jules Brown and ensure he will not be a problem matter Hannah?” Grant asked.

Despite the fact Henry had considered the same thing, he shook his head. “It is probably best we let things as they are. It cannot be a good idea.”

Evan stopped playing. “You should be receiving invitations. Felicity wished I are hosting a gathering, nothing elaborate. She is itching to introduce Hannah properly to those who will be more amenable to your marriage.”

lost on
came from



UPON ENTERING HANNAH’S house, Henry immediately sensed something was wrong. Hannah did not stand to greet him upon his entering the door. Instead, she looked up at him with a worried expression.

“Is something wrong?” Henry looked to Hannah and then to Marta. They were lingered at the door.

When Hannah did not reply, Marta let out a long sigh. “Your mother has a letter.”

It was then he noticed the crumpled paper clutched in Hannah’s hand. He took a shaky breath and held it up to him. “We will not marry, Henry. My family will never accept me. I cannot possibly do that to you. Please leave.”

His heart thundered in his chest as he read the words. His mother’s attempt to dissuade Hannah by informing her that he’d be outcast from family and society for marrying someone whose brother owned the land was lost on him.

liculous dens.

“Who told her?” Hannah asked.

med. “I Henry sighed. “Probably my father. He can never keep secrets from personally am sure it was a slip and not intentional.”

“For the best,” Hannah said, sounding tired. “That she knows even not an We should have told her. It was bound to come out sooner or later.”

al. It is He lowered to sit next to Hannah and took her hand. Marta walked to give them privacy, although Henry was sure she remained within ear

l Grant “I will not be outcast from my family. My mother is shocked at this and thinking the worst will happen. I ask that you give me a few d a bit smooth things over. Once I explain that Jules will never be part of life...”

lem for “Won’t he?” Hannah interrupted. “How do we know this? He is not brother, and not only that, but I do wish to know if he killed my father is head. are too many issues, Henry. Please understand me. I cannot marry you into our marriage with so many unanswered questions and obstacles. ity and way.”

roduce Unable to keep from it, Henry released her hand and stood. “Is this little you care for me? That you allow exterior things to compromise what we have?”

Hannah took a fortifying breath. “It is because of how dear you are that I wish to keep you and your family away from everything that a morning waste me brings. Understand me.”

parlor. “I do understand. You should also see my view of things. It matters to me if you bring an entire army of adversaries. I would fight every sin against you. For us.”

“I am not that strong.”

ner sent “Then there is little to be said.” Henry stormed from the room, too tired to remain civil. He knew exactly where he needed to go.

nd. She

y. Your

ave.”

mother’s JULES BROWN SAT across from Henry, his gaze pinning him as he continued by his the questions he’d asked.

umbling “If I am to be honest.”



“I would expect it,” Henry countered.

Jules’s eyes narrowed. “If I am to be completely honest, I have known her. I decided whether or not I will speak to Hannah again. She believes me a murderer. To have killed her father.”

“Or paid someone to do it.”

“My father’s dying wish was to find the box. He told me to question her and get away from Kerr.”

“Your father died years ago. Why did you wait?”

Jules looked away. “Because I didn’t consider it important. I was very close to my father. However, I had to find out where the box was. I need to know if your promise.”

After a hesitation, he continued. “I did send someone to question the half-Kerr. When I found out he’d killed him, I had the killer... dispatched. There Mr. Kerr died, I sent someone to question Mrs. Kerr about it.”

Now it made sense why Hannah’s mother had left so suddenly. It was in her own way, she’d hoped to distract the men away from Glenn.

“Why would you want to continue any contact with Hannah? I can give you that information to her.” Henry cleared his throat. “I have asked Hannah what she wants to marry me, and she had accepted. However, now she is worried that her affiliation with you would cause damage, socially, to my family. She has a right to know. However, I am fighting to remove any reason for her to not marry me.”

The man’s gaze fell and when he lifted it to Henry, there was anger. “You come to me and ask that I stay away. I am a blemish.”

“After what you’ve told me, how can I not have a negative opinion of you? Your profession alone is harmful to Hannah.”

Jules stood, poured whiskey into a pair of glasses, and offered Henry a drink which he took.

“I will visit my sister one time. To explain the circumstances of my father’s death. After, I will never speak to her again.”

“If I know her, she will want a relationship with you,” Henry admitted. “I do wish things were different.”

“If my...sister is anything like me, she will find a way to make her own work.”

In his heart, Henry realized the siblings were alike. Hannah had decided that the best way forward was for the marriage to be canceled. To continue without him.

“I believe you and she will find you do have a great deal in common. Under different circumstances, Henry would have liked the same. However, whether or not he accepted it, he’d had John Kerr killed. Surely there were gamblers who continued to be harmed for not paying. A man who owned gambling dens was never without being involved in John Kerr’s wrongdoing.

“I hope you understand why I had to come.” Henry placed his glass down and stood. “I want to protect Hannah.” Jules nodded. There was nothing else to be said.



When Mr. Henry arrived home late that evening, his mother and father were in the solarium having tea. He walked into the room and sat across from his mother. “Hannah broke off our engagement.” His parents exchanged looks. “You should not have sent that letter,” his father said to his mother. “That poor girl is probably heartbroken.” Of course his mother would not waver on her stance. “It is for the best. You will see.” She reached for his hand, but Henry moved it. “Darling, there are so many beautiful women. It will be a bit, but you will find that one for you.”

“I am moving, I have purchased a townhome in the city,” Henry announced. “Father, I no longer require the loan.”

His mother was first to react, eyes widening and hand over her mouth. “You cannot move out. What purpose will it serve?”

“Additionally,” Henry said, “I relinquish my inheritance. I will be taking over responsibilities of the Campbell fortune.” He looked to his father. “Please pass it to Alana’s eldest.”

With that, he stood and went up the stairs to his bedroom.

At once, his valet entered. “Sir?” “Pack up everything. I am moving to the city. Ensure you do not leave one single thing I own. All the clothes, personal belongings, and books are decided. He glanced around to take in everything in the room. He went to the study sitting room next to it. “Pack my books.”

n.” He then pulled out a large bag and began packing what he’d need in a few days.

d. And “When shall this be taken? Can I come with you?”

g debts. Henry considered his resources. After purchasing the townhouse and paying his portion of the payment for the ship, he had enough money comfortably until the ship returned.

is down “Yes you may. Your pay will remain the same for the time being, however.”

When he returned to the first floor, his father called out. “Henry.”

He dropped his bags and went to the doorway that led to his study. “What is it, Father?”

“Will you continue to work with me? I do need you to continue to oversee things. Even if you insist on relinquishing your inheritance. You and I remain responsible for your mother if something happens to me.”

Henry nodded. “Of course, I am not shirking my responsibilities.”

“We will meet at least twice a week, here.” His father left no room for argument.

“Father,” Henry began. “You did not seem surprised by my announcement.”

There His father’s lips curved. “I had deduced what would happen upon Hannah’s mother sending that missive. You reacted as I would have expected.” His father chuckled. “Your mother is quite upset. Give her time.”

Henry “The damage is done. Hannah has called off the engagement.”

His father gave him a surprised look. “What are you going to do about it? A Campbell does not give up. A Campbell takes charge.”

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AS MUCH AS Hannah appreciated Felicity's attempt to distract her by her to dinner at the Murrays' home, she really wanted to go home alone.

The lively conversation around the room was almost grating. Admittedly it was nice to see Grant was in attendance although there was little interaction with his father.

"All those social events sound exhausting," Mrs. Murray exclaimed. "I cannot say I envy the life of the very rich."

Grant turned to Hannah. "Henry told me you and he are to marry. I'm very happy for you."

There was a stony silence. It seemed everyone except for Grant was aware the engagement had been called off.

"I have decided not to accept his proposal after all." Hannah let out a breath and attempted at a smile. "It was a beautiful dream, but there are many obstacles."

"Ah," Grant remarked. "Like my sister, I always considered you a bit of a rebel. I suppose you must have not felt strongly enough if you were fighting for him."

How dare a rogue like Grant accuse her of not loving Henry enough?

"I love Henry. Which is why I am willing to sacrifice myself to not hurt him or his family negatively. You have been gone. Are you not aware of my brother?"

Grant waved away her words and Hannah fought not to throw her hands up in his head.

"Social standings, scandals, blah, blah, blah. Those people love a scandal. They live for marriages like yours so they have something to say to each other over tea. Then when the next social scandal comes along, they move on all but forget you."

Felicity gave her brother a sharp look. "What are your plans now?"

you've returned from this time abroad with wealthy people?"

At her pointed comment, Grant nodded. "I do not know. I have finished a novel and will be meeting with a publisher in Edinburgh."

"A book?" Mr. Murray took in his son. "Do you not have better things to do. Like perhaps a proper occupation?"

The Murrays began debating what Grant should do while he smiled, keeping a secret. Hannah decided he'd come up with his portion of the sponsorship capital and would soon be wealthy enough to do what he wished.

Hannah was grateful when she returned to her quiet and admittedly comfortable house. The new maid greeted her and brought tea to her bedroom. Since Henry left, she'd not had a moment alone. It felt as if her world ended when she was now living a different reality.

She was too stunned for tears; there was no need for them. Crying would have shown that she still had emotions, but instead, there was an emptiness so vast that a bit of her being was parched.

Movement outside the window caught her attention and she turned toward the doorway. Had she left Betty outside? The poor thing would be terrified if usually only stayed out as long as someone watched over her.

Hurrying down the stairs, Hannah went to the parlor and out the back doors. "Betty," she whispered. "Come here, girl."

There was nothing, no sound except for the wind. "You have made this much easier." A figure appeared from the back of the house. "I planned to get a ladder and climb up to your window."

Hannah clasped a hand over her mouth to keep from shrieking. "What are you doing here? It is almost midnight."

"I have a plan. Whether you are willing or not, I will go through with it."

Dressed from head to toe in black, he looked every bit a villain. He wore a scarf that covered half his mouth and a cape that fell from his shoulders to his ankles.

"I thought my dog was outside. She's probably with Silas." Hannah gave her unexpected visitor what she hoped was a stern look. "There is nothing you can say that will change my mind."

He walked closer and she took a tentative step back. "I did not come to talk to you."

Hannah bit the inside of her cheek. Certainly she was dreaming.

went to the open French doors, threw something inside, and then hurried where she stood still trying to make sense of what happened.

“Come along.” He took her upper arm and guided her to the gates leading to the street. The gate was already open.

“What did you do?” Hannah peered out to the waiting carriage. “I was here as if in there?”

“Look and see,” Henry replied cryptically.

She turned to face him. “I will not take another step unless you explain...” Everything went upside down as she was lifted and thrown over his shoulder.

“Put me down,” Hannah hissed. “Someone will see.”

Moments later, he plopped her none-too-gently onto the carriage seat and dropped next to her out of breath.

Hannah looked around in the dimness. There was no one else in the carriage, which immediately moved at a rather alarming speed.

“Are you cold?” Henry said, lifting a light blanket and attempting to throw it over her shoulders. “I know you hadn’t the opportunity to get a wrap.”

Strange that in that moment, all Hannah could think was that Henry had lost his mind and she had to save him. She took a breath and turned to face him.

“Henry, look at me.”

When he did, it seemed that he was fully coherent. Then again, she had a little experience with this sort of thing. Thinking back to when her father had announced her departure, she’d seemed as if dazed. Henry did not seem dazed.

“Henry. “Have you been drinking?” Hannah asked then yelped and grabbed the edge of the seat when the carriage took a rather sharp turn.

“I have not. We are not going too far. A pair of hours.”

“Where are we going?”

“You will see when we get there.”

She hit his shoulder. “No I do not want to wait until I get there. I have to go in the middle of the night. If we go somewhere for a pair of hours, by the time we return, it could be dawn.”

“We are not returning right away.” Henry sat back, crossed his arms, and closed his eyes. “Do not bother knocking on the roof. The driver has been instructed not to stop no matter what.”

Henry Hannah gawked at him, although it mattered little since he’d closed his eyes.

ried to eyes. “Why are you doing this?” When no reply came, she nudged
“Henry? Answer me.”

that led “It is best for you to rest and not worry. Everything will be clear in
For the next hour, she did her best to remain awake. But it was late
Who is she was emotionally drained. Finally, she gave up and leaned against
wall.

The sound of voices woke Hannah and she realized she was lying
against Henry, both of them covered in blankets.

She didn’t dare open her eyes and face whoever spoke.

“We will be inside in a moment,” Henry said to the person
chuckled.

Whatever was happening was most peculiar. As annoyed as she
was with much reluctance that she pushed away from the warmth of Henry
in the body.

He gave her a sheepish smile. “We are here.”

Obviously, he would not answer her questions, so Hannah did
she could to smooth her hair and then allowed him to help her from
had carriage.

The moon gave enough light for her to see that they’d arrived at
chapel. They hurried inside to find it alight with candles and a priest
she had the front. The driver and a monk walked in and stood near the front as
mother Hannah turned to Henry. “What are we doing here?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Henry replied. He took her hands. “Hannah, I love
with all my heart and am willing to give up all for you. Today, I relinquished
my inheritance. I informed my parents that I was to marry you. I moved
their home and sent a messenger to come and inform my dear friend
Bruce that I was to bring a woman and wished to get married this very
Will you marry me?”

Something about his demeanor spoke volumes. Henry expected her
to be strong. Despite all he did, he knew her enough to know she was strong
and would not be bullied into making a hasty decision.

“Oh Henry,” Hannah let out a long sigh. She looked to the other
men, and the chapel, who pretended not to listen. “This is the most unusual thing
as it seems that nothing about my life is normal as of late.”

It was not fair to him to not reply. It was evident he prepared
for the worst.

ed him. Hannah reached up to touch his jaw. "You went to all this for me
can I possibly say no? Yes. I will marry you."
a bit." With a loud laugh, Henry wrapped his arms around her and turn
ate, and circle. "She said yes."
inst the "What if she'd not agreed?" The priest shook his head. "I would've
cross to be up for this only to learn the lass wanted nothing to do with
uddled



n, who THEY HELD HANDS while exchanging vows, the sounds of the wind out
only accompaniment to the ceremony. At the same time, Hannah co
was, it think of anything so romantic.
Henry's The candles' flickers played along the floors, walls, and faces of
people gathered. Henry's soft gaze locked to hers as he professee
faithful. Her voice shook when repeating the vows, a tear trailing do
he best cheek when they were pronounced husband and wife.
om the It wasn't until the priest pronounced them husband and wife and th
informed them a room had been prepared for them that Hannah finally
a small if it was all real.
stood at She turned to Henry as they walked back out of the chapel to
well. courtyard. "I cannot believe this. Marta will be horrified when waki
finding me gone."
ove you "I left a message stating that you and I had gone to get married
quished keep our secret."
ed from Hannah wasn't sure what to say. "In the morning, I believe that I
Father quite perturbed with you."
y night. Instead of a reply, Henry gave her a devilish look.
The room they were shown was nicer than she expected. There
r to say four-poster bed, a washstand, and a wooden chest at the foot of the bed
;-willed "Someone from the village will be here early and cook tomorrow,"
Bruce said. His gentle eyes met Hannah's. "I have known Henry si
men in were lads. He is a good man."
hing. It "He is," Hannah replied. "Thank you for staying up and doing all
us."
for the The priest chuckled, and Hannah realized he was a rather handson

e. How Much too handsome for a man of the cloth, in her opinion.

She smiled back. "Henry did not give me a choice."

When the door closed, every emotion she'd suppressed seemed to surge back. Arms extended she turned in a circle, face up, broad smile stretching across her face. "I've been so free for some reason to do something so reckless. Her entire life has been changed in the span of the last two hours. Arguably, her entire existence had taken a turn the day her father died."

Tears streamed down her face as she came to a stop, and she rushed to the window to peer out into the darkness. "I cannot say I'm happy about how things went about this."

Seeming to understand she needed time, Henry stood back. It was the way they'd gotten to know one another over the span of the last five months that he understood what she felt.

Hannah turned to face her new husband. "But I am so very glad you have your own herit. If not, you and I would have allowed others to influence us and in the end we would lose ourselves."

"I believe so, yes. However, it was my father who urged me to take control of things. Would I have otherwise? I am not sure."

It took a great deal of humility for him to admit it and yet by doing so, a small glow grew in her estimation.

"Thank you for loving me enough." Henry neared. "For allowing me to be the spirit you away and marrying me. Thank you for being brave for the sake of us and yours."

Tears welled up in her eyes. "I love you Henry Aaron Campbell. You will be a prized prize, I learned your middle name."

Both laughed.

"I already knew yours, Hannah Elizabeth," Henry quipped. "I once thought I was a failure."

"You did?" It seemed a strange conversation to have at the moment. Her father's bed loomed so large. Butterflies swooped and twirled in her stomach as she glanced at it.

"Come." Henry took her hand and brought her closer to him. "This is for nothing but what is in the moment."

They kissed. It was a different sort of kiss, one of propriety and respect. Hannah marveled in the knowledge that this man was her husband. They would spend the rest of their lives together.

When his lips traveled from her lips down the side of her throat, she
to him, wishing for the moment to never end.

erupt. The fabric of her dress seemed to take a life of its own as it slid down
. It washed over her shoulders and on past to land in a pool on the floor. Henry lifted her from
the pool at her feet and carried her to the bed. Then he placed her upon
the bedding gently.

Never taking his gaze from hers, he undressed. First his jacket, then
he shirt, exposing broad expanses of his body. When he undid the ties
of his breeches, Hannah looked away, not prepared to see him fully undressed.

She heard the thumps of his boots and then the soft rustle of
his breeches. Finally, she dared to look at him, and the sight of Henry devoid of
clothing caused her breath to catch.

It occurred to her in that moment that men were actually built like
statues from past centuries. Often she'd averted her gaze when inspecting
a man, or the other, but every so often she'd pretended disinterest while studying
a male body.

So now, as Henry climbed into the bed, she realized that he was
most perfectly formed.

“What are you thinking?”

A soft giggle escaped at the truth. “Would it insult you if I said you
look like the marble statues of times past?”

“I am about to make love to my wife for the first time and already
comparing me to statues,” Henry grumbled. “I do hope to be more like
you.” As an answer, with a soft chuckle, he nibbled at her neck. “I pray to change you
about me being a stone creation. Although I will admit being flattered
you believe me to be like a piece of art.”

“Oh you are,” Hannah replied hurriedly. “Perfect.”

All words were lost to her when he came over her, the weight of his
body somehow feeling just right.

Hannah dared to slide her hands down his back, loving the fact that
everything was right now to touch every inch of him. So strange that although
she thought of him as soft to the touch, at the same time, there was hardness underneath.

The feel of his hands moving up her sides to cup her breasts made
her thoughts evaporate. Then his mouth covered one tip, taking her
breast. That suckling gently each time sent rivulets of heat down the length of her back.

So lost was Hannah in him that when his hand moved between her

she barely noticed.

“Ah!” she called out.

The combination of his mouth moving from one breast to the other, the sliding of his fingers between her sex sent the room reeling.

“I-I cannot withstand it,” Hannah stammered, the flames of need racing across her body in a way that made it impossible to remain conscious. “Please.”

While at the same time clutching the bedding and kicking her legs, trying to control the reactions of her body, a thrilling fear filled her.

There was a nudge between her legs, and instinctively she knew it was a manhood. Hannah took a shaky breath and tried to remember what Henry had said.

What had she said?

Henry’s staggered breathing took her attention, and she pressed herself against his. The kiss turned passionate, his tongue delving deep into her mouth as she suckled at it and dug her fingernails into his back.

Inch by inch, he slid into her, his hands firm on each hip. He looked into her eyes and then with one hard thrust pushed past her virginal barrier.

Hannah flinched at the unexpected feeling. It was not as painful as she had expected.

“Are you in pain?” Henry whispered against her ear, his warm breath fanning her overly sensitive skin. “I love you.”

“It does not hurt now,” she replied. “I must admit, I thought there would be more to this. Felicity said you are supposed to move.”

Henry chuckled. “I am so very grateful that Felicity told you what you should do next. Otherwise, this would be a rather unremarkable occasion.”

Knowing he kidded, Hannah gave him a bemused look. “Well?”

Although new to what occurred, Hannah understood Henry was giving her his movements, not wishing to cause her discomfort. He kissed her, driving in and out of her, fluid and steady.

The intimacy of the moment was beyond what she’d expected. Hannah enjoyed the closeness and feeling of his body against hers. She sighed and closed her eyes, basking in the warmth of him.

“Hannah?”

“Mmm?”

Henry barked out a loud laugh. “Did you just fall asleep?”

Immediately she was alert. "Oh goodness, I suppose I did."

Withdrawing from her, Henry lay next to her and brought her against her and crook of his arm. "Sleep and rest."

When Hannah awoke, there was little light outside. She turned to lapping who continued sleeping. The fact she'd see him every morning made her coherent, giddy. She leaned over him and pressed a kiss to his slightly parted lip.

Henry's eyes flew open, then upon seeing her, his expression seemed unable. "You are awake."

"I am so sorry I fell asleep," Hannah said. "I did enjoy making love with you." "We did not exactly do anything. You were tired."

Felicity "Can you show me again what happens when you move? I am sure you can float."

His lips curved and he immediately complied, coming over her, his lips capturing hers with so much hunger that she had to cling to him. It was into her the way every inch of their bodies pressed close.

When his mouth traveled to her breast while, at the same time, his hand slid up and down her sides, a moan escaped from her lips. "Oh Henry."

The pressure of his hardness at her core momentarily startled her as she'd when he slid through the folds of her sex, the silky skin of his nipples tendrils of heat up and down her body.

She took his mouth with greed, needing to taste him, to have more of his breath.

Then to her delight, he prodded at her entrance. This time it was different. His body seemed to strain, as if he held himself back.

"Hannah," he murmured against her ear. "I love you."

He waited for her to adjust to his girth, his hands lazily exploring her body, tracing circles on her skin in a way that took her attention away from where they were joined.

Then he began to move, his rod sliding in and out of her, the rhythm of his body bringing her into what she could only describe as the most titillating of dances.

Hannah Hannah could not look away from him, the way his face transformed and he became lost in her. But moments later, she could not keep from allowing her eyelids to fall as her entire being threatened to burst.

Then it did and nothing could have prepared her for how beautiful it was.

"More. Please move more." Hannah gasped out each word.

And oh did he move. Henry took her to heights she'd never imagined.

When Henry collapsed over her, he rolled to lay beside her, his chest expanding with every harsh breath.

“You are amazing,” Hannah said, turning on her side to look at him. “Henry, don’t think to ever tire of this.”

“I want nothing more than to make you happy. I will strive to ensure we are always content.”

A smile stretched across her face, and she trailed her fingers lightly over the center of his chest. “Will you always be as free with your body? Tell me to touch you?”

He looked at her, puzzled. “Do you know how liberating it is to be allowed to do so and are not coy about it? I am a very fortunate man.”

It was strange to her that after what happened between a husband and his wife, someone would not feel free. However, there were instances where it was supposed, especially with arranged marriages where the two were particularly fond of one another.

“I cannot wait to explore life with you,” Hannah said, leaning forward and pressing her lips to his.

They talked until dawn, not wanting to fall asleep and miss a good moment. When Henry came over her a second time, they made love in a slow, leisurely way that was as wonderful as the time before.

of him.

fferent.



KNOCKS ON THE door woke them. By the light outside, it was late morning. Henry slipped from the bed and wrapped a blanket around his waist before opening the door. An older woman entered with a tray. “Tea and toast. Your meal will be ready in an hour.” Her no-nonsense ways made Hannah steady if they were not the first to appear in the middle of the night to be married.

As she walked to the door, the woman glanced at Hannah. “Good wishes to both on your marriage.”

When the door slammed behind her, Hannah giggled. “I must slow down. This will be a time of many interesting experiences.”

Henry pulled on his breeches and then brought the tray to the bed. “We eat, we will return to Glasgow.”

“Our friends will be glad for us. I am not sure about your mother.”

is chest His wide shoulders lifted and lowered. “She will come around
fret.”

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His wide shoulders lifted and lowered. “She will come around. Don’t fret.”



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

WHEN HANNAH SHIVERED, Henry wrapped his arm around her shoulder. “You’re nervous.” It wasn’t a question because he too wondered about the reactions that would greet them upon arriving in Glasgow.

His parents, he didn’t really need to guess. While his mother would most put out and demand his father do something, Lord Campbell was secretly pleased that Henry took his advice.

At the thought of his social equals, it surprised him to not care what they’d think of Hannah or her circumstances. If ever any kind of remarks were made, he would see that the person was sorted out. Not in a violent way, but with a personal visit asking that they repeat what was on his face.

“What are you thinking?”

“That our friends will be pleased when we give them the news.”

Hannah nodded. “Felicity and her mother will be upset that they get to plan and attend our wedding ceremony.”

“We can always have a celebration,” Henry suggested. “I was considering that we must decide where to live. When I made up my mind yesterday, I bought a townhouse near the center of the city, and not far from Evan and Felicity. I had my things taken there. Now that I have a clearer mind, I wonder if you would prefer to remain in your house.”

A slight furrow appeared between her brows. “This is a new start for me, Henry. My house has wonderful memories of growing up there. There are also the memories of finding out Father was killed and Mother decided to leave. I wish to move and sell the house.”

“You haven’t seen the house I purchased.” Henry chuckled. “I can admit, I haven’t walked through the entirety of it either.”

The last days had been, in his estimation, the most excitement he had had. He’d finally seen that for years he’d been idling, not living up to his potential. Even after recovering from all the gambling debts and heavy

it. It wasn't so much that he lived in the family home, but more allowed his parents, especially his mother, to run his life. Mostly because he felt guilty for what he'd put them through.

After all the years of uncertainty, Hannah had brought out the best in him. The will and need to better himself. That was what true love did to a man. Something that he could never describe to another person, but that he felt for those he held dear.

"What about your mother?" Hannah's voice trembled. "She will forgive me for this."

Henry quickly pressed a kiss to her temple. "Mother will begin the work of ensuring society accepts you. To everyone, you will appear to be upon. I ask that you go along with it if you can. It will help a great deal toward a relationship between you and her."

"And in private?" Hannah asked. "How will she act toward me? I want that I can be prepared."

"Mother, although strong-willed, and sometimes arrogant, will not mistreat you. Once you get to know her, you will realize that for her exterior display of rigidity, she is not unkind."

"I do wish to get to know her better. Once we have children, I want them to feel any kind of insecurity when it comes to their grandmothers."

Henry chuckled. "Mother will turn to pudding upon holding on to a child."

The carriage slowed. Outside, people scurried to do whatever they had planned that day. A group of men were gathered outside the Grant Hotel. Henry studied them, recognizing a few. They were no doubt meeting to discuss the upcoming elections.

"I have never asked," Hannah said. "How do you spend most of your days? Do you go there?" She looked through the window.

"I meet with Miles and Evan there often. We used to meet at home, but since he married, we do not wish to intrude. We discuss upcoming business dealings, social issues, and of course politics."

She smiled at him. "Felicity told me about the sponsorship of the race. She thinks you each planned to come up with money by ways of a wager. And that you are wagering against one another."

Her soft giggle made him smile.

Hannah met his gaze. "I have no money to help you with, therefore

that hey you going to lose your opportunity, Mister Campbell?”

ause he “I have the money,” Henry countered. “And yes, falling in love w
caused me to lose the wager. I am officially out of the game.”

in him. “I suppose Evan is still in competition since Felicity’s dow
a man substantial.”

wished “You do not think that is why he married her, do you?”

Hannah shook her head. “Of course not. It is obvious he is m
I never love.”

“As am I with you.”

ie work They arrived at Hannah’s house and Henry accompanied her insi
e doted planned to bathe and change before they went to visit his parents.

at deal While she went upstairs, Henry waited in the parlor.

Marta brought him tea and gave him a pointed look. “Although I a
I ask so that you married my lass, Mister Campbell, I hope you realize it was b
unconventional means.”

I never “I do, Marta. I promise to make her happy.”

all her “I must also inform you that I plan to remain by her side to ensure
Henry nodded. “I would expect no less.”

do not “Are you to move in then?” Marta seemed to realize she overstep
iother.” do not mean to be disrespectful, just that I wish to ensure all is prepare

ur first “No.” Henry met her gaze. “We will all move to a house I r
purchased. You, the new housekeeper, and Silas, can begin packing
er theysure my wife will give instructions about what she wishes to take.”

tel, and Hannah appeared moments later, and his breath caught. She’d c
discuss into a soft cream-colored dress that accentuated her coloring and love
neck. Her hair had been brushed up and with a ribbon that matched th
of your weaved into it.

A simple pearl necklace decorated her throat and she’d donne
Evan’s colored gloves.

uss our “I am ready,” she said, meeting his gaze. Upon noting his admirati
cheeks pinkened.

ie ship. “You are breathtaking,” Henry said, taking her hand. “I cannot
woman, you are my wife.”

“I could say the same about you,” she replied. “The most handsom
in Scotland is now my husband.”

ore, are



with you

IT WAS APPARENT that his parents were not surprised at their announcement. His mother gave her husband an accusatory look, telling how well they were getting on with one another.

“Well it is done now.” His mother first looked at him, her expression stoic, but remarkably, it softened upon looking to Hannah. “Welcome to the family, dear.”

Hannah’s soft gasp made his chest tighten. When a tear slid down her face, he could not take it and grasped her hand.

“Thank you,” she replied, her voice almost a whisper.

As expected, there was a gleam in his father’s eyes when he stepped forward. He pulled a cord for a servant to come. Upon the butler’s appearance, he smiled broadly.

“Horace, bring bottles of the best champagne and ask the staff to join us. We have something grand to celebrate.”

While they waited, his mother inquired about where they would live. “I certainly expected that upon marrying, you would bring your bride to live here,” Mrs. Campbell protested when Henry told her about the house he’d purchased.

“That house is practical, but not a place where the future Captain should live. Goodness, Henry, if you do not wish to live here, at the very least, move into the Ravenscraig house.”

Hannah turned to him. “Where is that house?”

The second family home had remained empty since his grandparents died. Although a beautiful structure where they stayed on occasion, he thought his father had sold it.

“It stands empty, with only a minimal staff. I use it when someone from the Highlands or England comes for business. A hosting place, as it were,” his father explained. “Some people I prefer not to stay here.”

“The house is in Bishopbriggs.” Lady Campbell answered Henry’s question. It is almost as large as this house, but in a way, statelier. The reason we did not move into it was because I fell in love with this estate.

Hannah looked to Henry. “I would like to see it.”

Although he’d not considered the house, upon thinking about it, he

good place to raise a family and begin life with Hannah. Upon remaining the sole heir, his father now insisted he return to the fold, and had to entertain, the Ravenscraig house was better suited for it.

The staff appeared and his father led the toast, announcing the marriage. The news would run through the town and upon people learning of the celebration and how his parents pleased. The toast was the first of what would be different ways that his parents would begin the process of Hannah's entrance into society.

By the look of happiness on Hannah's face, she was unaware of what was set in motion, and for it he was glad. His mother gave him a knowing smile and he smiled in return and mouthed, "thank you."

Once the toast was done, the staff took turns congratulating them as quickly as they came.

"Should I prepare a room for you and your new bride?" the housekeeper inquired.

Henry considered what was best for the situation.

"No, they are to honeymoon alone," his mother replied with a practiced neutral expression. "I will inform you when a room is required."

Once they were alone again, Hannah looked to his parents. "Thank you very much for making me feel welcome. I know this is not what you may have wished. However, I must tell you that I love your son with all my heart and will strive to make him happy, always."

There was a beat of silence and his mother sighed. "It is done now, I am glad to know how you feel. I do wish you every happiness. Straightened. "There is much work to be done in the days ahead."

"Mrs. Murray would like to be involved," Hannah suggested. "It would please her greatly."

"Good."



Hannah's
he only
le."

AFTER WALKING THROUGH the house Henry had purchased, they decided along with Hannah's, it would be sold.

Although Hannah liked the townhouse, it was imperative to know

ning as family happy. Living in Ravenscraig would be affirmation that the marriage was accepted and approved by the Campbells and be another stepping stone to stopping some of the rumors and any social damage.

Although Henry understood that Hannah did not care about the class's social rules, she did care about the effect on his family, and she seemed agreeable to do as much as possible to keep his mother happy.

"I hope you like the house," Henry said to her as they sat in the townhouse's dining room sharing a meal with their friends.

Somehow between Marta and the new housekeeper, they'd managed to produce a four-course meal along with a delicious bread pudding for dessert.

"You must show me the house," Felicity told Hannah. "If you are tired and left shortly, perhaps I can help find someone to purchase it."

"We have two houses to sell," Hannah replied. "Hopefully they will sell easily."

Grant cleared his throat. "I would be interested in purchasing the townhouse. It is accessible to many things, and it is time I move into a well-of my own."

There was an awkward silence, as no one wished to bring up the topic of money. Of course being Grant's sister, Felicity had no such compunctions.

"How exactly will you pay for it, brother?" She gave him a pointed look. "If you can afford this house, then you must be hiding something from me."

He, along with Evan and Miles, avoided looking at each other. Unfortunately, it only made the women more curious.

"What are you hiding?" Hannah asked, looking around the table.

Felicity's eyes narrowed. "I will find out even if you do not dare tell me, Grant."

"If you wish to purchase the house, be sure to let me know before you contact an agent," Henry said, ignoring both Hannah and Felicity's questioning looks.

"About your family home. You may wish to wait," Evan told Hannah. "There have been many changes right away. I advise that you wait and see how you feel about selling it after a few weeks have passed."

"What would I do with it until then?" Hannah asked. "I have no other options and although it could bring me rental income, I am not sure to wish to be involved with having to oversee it."

As the conversation whirled around them, no one seeming to be able to

marriage leave, Henry relaxed and considered that in the present moment, he was experiencing the most perfect day of his life.

Finally, it was decided both the townhouse and Hannah's family home would be placed on the market.

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leave, Henry relaxed and considered that in the present moment, he was experiencing the most perfect day of his life.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

AT FIRST SIGHT, Hannah considered Ravenscraig to be an underwhelming house. It was square with a four-poster portico over the door. There were five large windows on the second floor and two on each side of the front door on the first floor. Admittedly, the grounds were neat and well maintained.

Upon entering, the house became more appealing. Just inside the front doors was a sitting room with chairs for visitors to be ushered into. Veering straight forward, the entryway opened to a splendid foyer from which Hannah could spot a large parlor to the right and to the left, a dining room and a large open space, which could be used for hosting a ball.

Straight ahead was the staircase, a beautiful creation with ornate bannisters that widened as it cascaded onto the floor, creating the air of a grand welcome.

The house was bright with sunlight at the moment, but from the shadows cast by the intricate sconces and candelabra set on different surfaces, the evenings here would prove magical.

There was already a staff of four at the house, who'd been hired by the late Mr. Campbell. By their earnest expressions, they were eager to bring service and prove their worth. Soon there would be a pecking order of who would do what and Hannah looked forward to seeing to it.

No sooner had she and Henry walked through the house and seen the room in which their bedchamber would be theirs did Marta appear from the back of the house.

"A pair of wagons has arrived," Marta said, hurrying past her to the front door. Once opening the door, she called out for the men to round the house up at the back."

Marta gave Hannah a happy smile. "Where would you like the trunk for your bedroom and your father's desk to be placed?"

"The desk and bookshelf in the empty room at the top of the stair

left. Have them put my trunk in our bedroom, please.”

When Marta went to see about the delivery, there were knocks at the door. Hannah considered that she’d have to see about hiring a butler. She hurried past to the front door.

Moments later, the same maid came to where she sat in the parlor to her list of things to do.

rather “A Mrs. Macleod and Mrs. Murray here to see you, Mrs. Campbell

the front “Please show them in. From now on when they come, they are
on each shown in promptly.”

re large The maid curtsied. “Yes, Madam.”

the front She, Felicity, and her mother spent the afternoon walking through
Valking house and adding items to be done to Hannah’s already long list.

ich one “I cannot wait to see how much this house will blossom,” Felicity
a large mother exclaimed when they finally sat in a small sitting room from
beautiful home.” they could look out through the large windows to the front lawn.

marble “I agree,” Hannah said with a sigh. “There is so much to do
 allure of weekend is an intimate family gathering when I am to meet the extended
the large family. Then the wedding gala at the estate will be held next Saturday
s would course, I have to help Mrs. Campbell, which will leave me little time
house.”

by Mrs. “You have all the time in the world, and we will be helping with the
ice and and of course with the house,” Felicity said with a wide grin. “Mother
ould do just finished my house, so we have plenty of experience.”

“True,” Mrs. Murray agreed.

By the time her friend and her mother left, Hannah was calm. “
selected She walked to find her. “I am going to my family home to walk through
of the more. Someone has already offered to purchase it.”

“Should I accompany you?” Marta said, but by her expression,
not wish to.

the front “No. Silas is there. I will be fine.”

house to Upon arriving at the house, it was as if a sense of peace came over
lk from The familiar did that, she supposed. Since she’d decided to leave most
furnishings, upon entering it was as if she still lived there.

s to the Barks sounded and Betty raced to her, entire body wagging side
Hannah lowered to pick her up. “I have been neglecting you, little one

pressed a kiss to the furry head as the dog wiggled in excitement.

he front “She has been well taken care of,” Silas said, appearing from the door. A maid of the kitchen. “Do you notice she’s fat now, Miss...er Mrs. Hannah?”

The pup was indeed quite plump. “I am afraid she’s become adding attached to you than to me,” Hannah replied with a smile. “Thank you for caring after her. I am going to walk through one last time. Mr. Callahan informed me this morning that someone has already offered to take care of her to be housed.”

Taking a notepad and pencil from her bag, she walked into the parlor. The small table in the back of the room had remained, as they’d decided it was best to leave it in the room. When Hannah turned to the front, she pictured the times she and her parents had spent in the space. Most times, they’d each been doing their own thing: Hannah reading, her mother sewing, and her father going over figures in the ledger he brought from his study. If only she’d realized how precious those times were, that in a blink of an eye, they’d disappear, never to happen again.

Above the fireplace there was a painting, a floral depiction of a vase of lavender flowers. The day it had been hung, her mother had cried. It had been a wedding anniversary gift from her father. She noted that it would go to the new house.

for the “Hello, Hannah.” A man’s voice made her jump and Hannah who had been looking for Jules had entered. “The front door was open.” Despite everything, she was glad to see him. “I am in the process of moving out.” She studied her half-brother for a long moment. “Why are you here?”

“I saw the carriage and decided to stop. I hoped it was you with Marta.” here.”

gh once “Why?” She looked to the doorway where Silas stood and waved him away. “I am fine.”

she did Jules’s gaze moved to where Silas had stood. “I am glad to see you. I need someone to keep you safe.”

They would perhaps never get to know each other in a way lost to time. Hannah wasn’t sure how she felt about Jules. A part of her wished for a different relationship, but then she wondered how detrimental it would be to the family.

to side. “I am here to go through one last time and ensure to take what I need.” Sheam torn about some things, as I know they will be out of place in my new home.

home.”

He came and stood next to her to study the painting. “Like this?”

“No, I am taking this one. Father gifted it to my...our mother more anniversary. It will be displayed at my house. It is small items like this you formed to a black and white sketch of two hands, fingers intertwined. I never understood why this was so special to mother.”

“I do,” Jules said, walking closer to it. He pointed to a scribble bottom right and Hannah neared.

The initials instantly stood out. “*H.B.*”

“Oh.” Hannah’s mouth fell open. Through all this, her mother had something from her first relationship.

“Father was artistic,” Jules said, still looking at the sketch. “I have seen in pieces he did. Most of them like this, devoid of color.”

“Why so stark?” Hannah asked.

“He was colorblind.”

In that moment, Hannah realized she wanted to know more about her mother’s life prior to marrying her father.

“Would you like to go with me to visit Mother?” Hannah wasn’t sure she’d asked and if it was the wise thing to do. What she did know was that perhaps, them coming together to see her would ease the burden and help her mother recover.

Jules let out a long breath and seemed to consider it.

“I believe it would help her. She is not well, is overburdened with work. Instead of a reply, he walked to the French doors. “I have always had a garden. Not sure if I can keep it as nice as in its current state.”

“You are who offered to buy the house.”

Jules nodded, his gaze sliding to her as if to ascertain if she was or not.

“Did you have my father killed?” Hannah’s throat constricted.

“I did not wish it to happen. It is my fault that it did.”

A tear trickled down her cheek and she brushed them away. “I need to be sure if I can ever forgive you.”

“I understand,” Jules replied. “Know that I am so very sorry.”

They stood next to each other looking out, not speaking.

“I will go with you if it helps our mother.” Jules finally replied to assure her what happened was not her fault.”

Hannah wanted to hit him, to demand that he turn himself in. He she knew he would not. Instead, she nodded. "Good."

er one
s." She
ined. "I



"I WILL NEVER forget the look on Mother's face upon realizing who h on the Hannah told Henry days later. "It was as if a veil fell, and she co clearly. She cried, well, we all cried. I thought Jules would be unmove she begged for his forgiveness for abandoning him. But instead, he cr ad kept immediately. He'd held so much pain and resentment toward her, bu she explained how she feared Horace would kill her, and in turn hin several understood why she felt forced to give him up. I felt like a thir watching a play. It was beautiful and quite sad at the same time. So years wasted. My father's life the price."

"I am glad you went." Henry took her hand and led her from the p: it Jules. the stairs.

"How did Horace Brown come to find Jules?"

ire why "When he was about ten, my mother's sister brought him to Glasg vas that left him with an anonymous note at Horace's house."

help her Henry looked at her. "Are you planning to see him again?"

"No," Hannah said with a sigh. "Father died because of him."

"We need to get some rest. There is much to do tomorrow," guilt." reminded her.

wanted "Ah yes, the gala event of the year." Hannah shivered. "Sc emotions in a matter of days. I am not sure how to withstand it, exc we are together and that gives me strength to face anything."

pleased The bedroom was one of the first rooms to have been redecor colors of green and soft mauve. The plush bedding was one of H: favorite things, and the beautiful deep green drapes that cascaded fr windows to the floors gave the room a soft elegance that invited a pe am not linger.

Behind a screen, she removed her gown and donned a nightgown. down before a mirror, she brushed out her hair while watching undress.

ed. "To He'd sat to remove his boots and stockings, then stood and unbutto

However, shirt, pulling it up over his head.

“Your valet has been most put out that you do not require him at
Hannah said with a smile, watching as he folded the shirt carefully
placed it over the back of a chair.

“In the morning is good enough,” Henry replied, bending to set his
e was,” next to the same chair. Hannah smiled, noting he did just as his valet would see
It was hard not to admire the expanse of exposed chest and wide
d when The way his muscles flexed with every movement was mesmerizing.

umbled “Would you like some brandy?” Henry asked.

it when “Yes.”

n, Jules Her fingers did the nimble work as she raked the hair back and b
d party braid it in a single plait. All the while she kept an eye on the handsome
o many who poured brandy into small glasses.

Hannah stood and met him halfway to take the glass. Their eyes
arlor up they swallowed, the fiery liquid racing down from her throat to her chest.

The heady mixture of the drink and anticipation of Henry’s touch
her eager to get into bed.

ow and “Come to me,” Henry said, extending his hand out to her. “I cannot
to hold you again.”

Her stomach tumbled and she inhaled. The room smelled of burnt
lavender, and brandy.

Henry “I love the smell of your hair,” Henry said, his cheek pressed to
“The taste of you.”

o many Of their own volition, her eyes closed, and she wrapped her arms
ept that this midsection. How had she possibly thought that it was possible to
this man? When she’d expected he’d marry someone else, her heart had
ated in shattered. It was only now that not only was it repaired, but full of love
annah’s He lifted her and carried her to the bed from where she watched
om the finish undressing. Since Henry preferred to undress her, she did not
erson to her gown.

Finally, he joined her in the bed and took her mouth with eager lips.
Sitting Hannah reveled in each kiss, every touch of his hands on different parts
Henry her body. The discovery of sensations sent her reeling.

“Roll over,” Henry whispered, helping her to do so, all the while
ned his mouth pressing kisses to her shoulders and neck. “I want to show
something different.”

On her stomach, she gasped as his lips trailed slowly down from her shoulders to the small of her back. His hands caressed the orbs of her breasts and buttocks, fingers tracing circular patterns on her skin. All the while, he kissed and nipped at the same time.

Although Hannah wasn't sure what he was about to do, she was crazed with passion to care. All that mattered was that he did not stop. Hands on her hips, he lifted her to her knees, pressed himself against her back, and then he slid into her. With excruciating slowness, his thickness filled and stretched her sex. When he was fully contained, he reached around and ran his fingers between the folds of her nether lips, sending heat up and down her body.

"Oh!" Hannah exclaimed, pushing back against him, urging Henry to take complete control and do as he pleased. "Yes."

Once again, he took her by the hips and began driving in and out.

"Tell me how you feel," Henry urged. "Am I hurting you?" His voice was deep and gravelly.

Hannah looked over her shoulder to see that he held back, the muscles of his neck and shoulders tense.

"I want more. It feels wonderful." She clutched the bedding, expectation and Hannah was not disappointed in the least.

With each thrust, Henry seemed to drive deeper. The sounds of his body against skin were so erotic to her ears that she could not keep from a passion to overtake.

"Yes! Ahhh!" Her cries floated overhead, mixing with Henry's groans. He continued to take her so hard that the bed rocked beneath them.

Minutes later, Hannah collapsed onto the bed, and Henry covered her, wrapping his arms around her body as he continued to plunge into her. He lost control.

First to climax, Hannah's body shattered, stars forming in the darkness, floating around as she lost control.

Still Henry continued, his body seeming to have a mind of its own, refusing to stop until the ultimate climax. He plunged into her body, bringing her back to reality. But all she could do was endure his moment, her body too weak from her own release to move.

His rod was still hard, body tense, and suddenly, he shuddered with a husky cry as he spilled.

between They lay joined for a long moment, both struggling to regain their
of herBasking in the intimacy and beauty of the moment, Hannah took I
e lickedhand and lifted it to her lips.

The kiss on the back of his hand almost brought tears to her ey
vas too could not imagine loving anyone more than the man she lay with.

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They lay joined for a long moment, both struggling to regain their breath. Basking in the intimacy and beauty of the moment, Hannah took Henry's hand and lifted it to her lips.

The kiss on the back of his hand almost brought tears to her eyes. She could not imagine loving anyone more than the man she lay with.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

UPON ENTERING THE grand ballroom at the marriage celebration, even immediately searched for the woman who'd captured one of the most men in Glasgow. Henry looked on as one by one each person sighted and were unable to find fault.

Standing next to his mother, Hannah was resplendent. She creation in shades of green that emphasized her flawless olive skin. Upon her head, she wore a tiara nestled in the burnished brown waves that had swept up into an elegant style. From her ears hung emerald earrings that had been gifted to her by his mother. Around her neck, a diamond and emerald necklace that had been her mother's. The simple design effectively complemented her long graceful neck.

She wore elbow-length gloves in the palest green that matched one of the shades of her gown.

Once guests approached and were introduced, they'd find that no other member of the Campbell clan to have flawless manners and was quite adept at maintaining a conversation.

Noting the expressions of each person upon moving away from him, Henry could barely contain the pride that filled him.

Lord and Lady Wilshire arrived, and he excused himself from the group to speak to her. Of anyone in their social circle, this woman had the power to influence. If she disapproved, however, it would be hard to convince her or whoever she deemed inappropriate to ever gain the good graces of society.

The couple waited to be introduced, Lady Wilshire's shrewd eyes instantly taking Hannah in.

"Lord and Lady Wilshire, my daughter-in-law, Hannah Kerr Campbell. As his mother said as she'd not noticed him approach.

Upon Hannah's head bow and light curtsey, Lord Wilshire turned to her. "Henry has impeccable taste. Very pretty." He patted Hannah's shoulder and turned to his wife.

Lady Wilshire's soft smile hid whatever she truly thought. "I am
you are both happy," she remarked, looking from Hannah to him.

"Very much indeed," Henry said. "Every marriage should be
match in my opinion."

"Is that so?" Lady Wilshire replied, her gaze sliding to Hannah. "
agree, young lady?"

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smiled.
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Hannah looked to Henry, her gaze soft. "I wish it was that every
find who they love. However, even arranged marriages can prove suc
Love helps in the beginning; however, it is trust and friendship that r
marriage successful over time."

"Well said," Lady Wilshire replied. "I hear you moved to Raven
Do you plan to entertain soon? I wish to see the house."

"We do," Hannah replied. "However, you do not have to wait for
event to visit for tea. I am not experienced enough to presume to kno
to decorate and value any opinion you would have, Lady Wilshire. Pl
come for tea."

The woman seemed taken aback. So much so she was speechless
long moment. The entire time, Hannah continue to be at ease, a sligh
to her lips when she looked to him.

"I am flattered," Lady Wilshire replied.

"We shall come and visit together," his mother interjected. "I ma
some ideas."

Hannah clapped her hands and smiled. "I am so very glad."

As Lady Wilshire walked past him to greet other guests, she whisp
him, "Magnificent."

As the night progressed, people danced to the music played by
known string quartet. Champagne flowed and trays with app
continually passed by servants wearing black suits.

Upon hearing loud, angry voices, Henry hurried to stop w
happened. Just outside the doors that led to vast gardens, Grant stood r
nose with a man he didn't recognize.

"Stay away from my mother," the man said, fists clenched. "I kn
kind of man you are. A lowly scoundrel out to divest women o
fortunes."

Grant swung, his fist hitting the man's jaw. Although this was
time for a scandal, Henry did not blame Grant for it. Nonetheless, he

hopeful put a stop to it. He could not allow anything to spoil the night. He motioned Evan forward and they went to where the men squared off.

already the guests began to whisper and watch, which of course was the theme of the next day's gossip.

"I must ask you to leave, sir," Henry said to the man who rubbed his hands and glared at Grant. "I do not believe that you were invited."

"My mother was," the man replied. "Lady Roberts."

The man was short with small eyes and wild red hair. He looked to be in his thirties. "Tom Roberts?" Henry asked.

Tom nodded. "Yes, we went to school together."

"I am sorry to see you again under these circumstances. I must ask you to leave. I cannot have my wedding celebration ruined."

Henry looked to Grant. "Perhaps you should go as well."

Grant grunted, turned, and went back inside. As he passed, a woman patted his shoulder and Henry wondered if it was Tom's mother. He pressed his lips together to keep from smiling. It could be his friend was about to lose the money he counted on for the ship sponsorship.

Grant remained for only a short while and then left with Miles, escorted his sister. The young woman was beautiful and gaining attention from suitors. It was comical to watch Miles' expression each time a female came near her.

That night, he and Hannah opted to remain at his parents' home with Felicity and Evan, whom his mother had insisted stay as well.

The bedroom suite they'd been given was large enough that both he and Hannah's new companion, Emma, could be there at the same time and well-they prepare for bed.

As his coat, vest, and boots were removed, Henry watched across the room to where Hannah's hair was being brushed out.

"Leave it down tonight," he said. Hannah met his gaze in the mirror, her nose-to-cheeks turning pink, and nodded.

Once the valet left, Hannah was assisted out of her gown. Moments later she slid a nightgown over her arms, the fabric falling to the ground.

The young woman excused herself and left.

"You were magnificent tonight," Henry said, approaching Hannah with a glass of brandy. "Lady Wilshire's words."

Her eyes rounded. "Truly?"

otioned “Yes. That is what she whispered to me. You made a very
impression on every single guest. No one will be able to gossip ton
ould bewhich I’m sure is quite off-putting.”

Her soft chuckle was heartwarming. “You are wrong, dear h
his jawGrant Murray and Tom Roberts’s brawl will be buzzing on everyone
The reason for their argument and why Grant hit the man.” Nearing t
she turned to him. “Who was that man? What happened? Tell me.”

to be in “Very well.” Henry waited until they climbed in bed and Hannah
in the crook of his arm, her head on his shoulder.

Despite the fact Hannah knew about the ship sponsorship, he was
ask thatif she knew the details of how each of them were to come up with the

It was not his place to say anything about his friend’s plans. He con
that once married, the urge to share everything was strong. Yet, he
womanhave to learn the boundaries of it.

had to “It seems Grant traveled with a woman called Lady Roberts. Th
is aboutwith whom he argued with was Tom Roberts, the woman’s son, who i
all pleased.”

who’d Hannah traced lazy circles on his chest. “I can understand. Grant i
; muchmuch younger.”

1 time a “I am sure that plays into it. Also, Lady Roberts is very wealthy
means she paid for everything.”

; along “Whatever Grant is seeking, he will not find by continuing courtin
women.” Hannah pressed a kiss to his jaw. “Why does he?”

his valet “Grant is not ready to settle. I believe he enjoys the company c
to helpwomen and not worrying about the possibility of being tied down and
to marry.”

oss the As they fell asleep, Henry looked forward to speaking to Grant
what exactly occurred.

ror, her



ts later,

THE LOBBY OF the Grant Hotel was busy when Henry and Evan wal
Luckily, Miles had arrived early and procured a table in the far corne
1 with atthey could have a bit of privacy. As he passed, several men noc
greeting; two approached separately to congratulate him on the marria;

By the hearty congratulatory expressions, Hannah's approval was universal, and it pleased him.

"There you are," Grant said as they neared and sat. "I was worried when the rest of you would come and join Miles in telling me how to live."

It was apparent that Grant was not in a good mood, so neither Evan commented. Instead, Evan ordered drinks for all four when they settled.

"I must congratulate you on your wife's successful entry into Grant's society," Miles said, holding up his glass when theirs was delivered. "I proved me wrong."

They toasted. "I am glad to prove you wrong in this instance, although there is yet the matter of her half-brother. His purchase of her family may cause curiosity."

"It is not known that they are related," Miles replied.

"It will be seen as him wishing to start a more respectable life," Evan countered. "I do not think there will be a problem."

At Grant's grunt, they looked to the front door. Tom Roberts was with another man.

"Am I to assume his mother is cross with you for hitting him?" she asked.

Grant shrugged. "She assures me our relationship has not changed. I have to see."

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IT WAS LATE when Henry arrived home. The house was dark except for a lantern on a table in the foyer. Upstairs, he spotted more lights and a Hannah probably was in the sitting room or in their bedroom.

Entering the kitchen, he was surprised to find his wife standing by the stove. She turned to him, startled. "I am making toast and warming up the tea at Lady Wilshire's was a disappointment."

"Why?" He neared and kissed her. "She is well-known for her spreads."

"The theme was foreign delicacies. No matter how garnished, I've

al was eat a snail.” Hannah shuddered. “Or frog’s legs.”

He walked closer and peered at the simmering pot. “It smells good
ndering “You’ve already eaten.” Hannah gave him a menacing look. “I
run my sharing.”

While she ate, he told her about the men who congratulated him
he nor when she smiled at the news.

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“This is our home, yours as much as mine. You can invite whoe
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The sound of her laughter filled the room. “I cannot imagine the
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When her gaze moved from his eyes to focus on his mouth,
Henry rounded the table and leaned down to press a kiss to the side of his
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“You’ve already eaten.” Hannah gave him a menacing look. “I am not sharing.”

While she ate, he told her about the men who congratulated him, liking when she smiled at the news.

“Hannah, feel free to invite any friends that you wish here. I do not want to be exclusive like my parents.”

She smiled. “I do have a few people from Father’s office I would like to have for tea.”

“This is our home, yours as much as mine. You can invite whoever you wish.”

There was a softness in her expression when she looked at him that made Henry feel like a hero.

“Stop looking at me like that or I will ravish you here in the kitchen. Our bedroom is much too far.”

The sound of her laughter filled the room. “I cannot imagine the look on Marta’s face if she were to walk in upon us.”

When her gaze moved from his eyes to focus on his mouth, Henry rounded the table and leaned down to press a kiss to the side of his wife’s neck. “We may have to find out.”



CHAPTER NINETEEN

“GRANT.” HIS SISTER waved to him across the new coffee shop that opened in the same location where the previous owner had been killed. It seemed morbid to him, but then again it was a prime location.

Along with her companion, Felicity sat at a table near a window, looking lowered across from her.

“Why don’t you go to the market, Ana?” Felicity said. “I will stay with my brother until you return. Take your time.”

When a woman at another table slid a look in his direction and then started talking to the other three with her, he ignored it. Long ago, he’d stopped caring about society’s rules and what people should or should not do.

His sister looked around and lowered her voice. “You have no home. I wished to speak to you about the other night.” She then whispered, “Where have you been?”

“I’ve been staying at Miles’s house.”

“Miles?” Felicity replied, looking uncertain. “His family is hosting a party.”

He shook his head. “Not that you should concern yourself, but no one has been his guest at the townhouse in town.”

“You should repair things with Father. Then you can purchase a house of your own. Are you seriously considering purchasing Henry’s townhouse?”

A woman approached and poured tea. “Is there anything you would like to eat?” she asked pleasantly, her voice just above a whisper.

Grant wanted to lean in and hear her speak more. If he were to marry, he would be someone who worked for a living. Someone who did not depend on anything from family or had to sleep with someone in order to have the woman more valuable than him.

“Two scones please,” Felicity replied, as he’d remained silent.

The woman looked at him; there was kindness in her eyes as she looked at him and nodded.

What had he been thinking? He did not deserve a woman like that.

ack. He “Not a good week for us. I’ve probably lost the money by fighting that idiot Tom Roberts.”

Miles had plans to one-up him and it was curious that he seemed to have forgotten it at the moment. Something about the evening had affected him in an unexpected way. Either he’d fallen in love with the widow Louisa or the young daughter of the hostess had made an impression.

“What happened?” Grant asked as he stood to prepare for bed. “I don’t want to see that man woo the widow away from the man she came with.”

When Miles did not reply, Grant turned. “What happened?” he repeated. “Why?” “I am to escort the young woman to a social party at Louisa’s father’s home.”

At this, Grant could not help but laugh. “Ah. Just out of curiosity, what is the young chit you have to parade with?”

“Freya Sinclair.”

Grant stopped at the bottom step and gawked at his friend. “She is so amazingly beautiful. Every gentleman of suitable age has tried to marry her. Why would her mother ask you to?”

It was comical when Miles gave him a droll look.

“Ah yes, that’s right,” Grant said. “You are titled, wealthy, and from what I hear, quite handsome. You are what is considered the perfect catch.”

Miles paced to the window to peer out into the darkness. “I do not want to marry anytime soon, and therefore, must find a way to ensure not to lose the opportunity to find a husband. To be rejected by me would ruin her.”

“Then ensure she rejects you.”

His friend turned to look at him, his lips curving. “Perfect idea.”

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“What happened?” Grant asked as he stood to prepare for bed. “Perhaps you can woo the widow away from the man she came with.”

When Miles did not reply, Grant turned. “What happened?” he repeated.

“I am to escort the young woman to a social party at Louisa Kent’s home.”

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CHAPTER TWENTY

WHEN THEIR GUESTS arrived, Hannah could barely breathe. It was the first time that she and Henry hosted, and she'd fretted all day over every detail.

Thankfully, both Felicity and her mother had come early that morning to help, giving her time to ensure the food was done to perfection.

Marta had been overly excited and had accidentally burned her hair. Now as the food was served, she remained in the kitchen with her hair wrapped, still barking out orders.

The main rooms of the house were ready for company, there still was much work to do, but with gleaming floors and bright candlelight, the view, the house would impress.

It was not a large gathering: Henry's parents, her parents, Felicity and Grant. Miles arrived with his sister, both stunningly attractive. Henry immediately loved Penelope who, unlike her brother, was lively and talkative.

Henry's sister Alana, having just given birth, was absent.

As the guests arrived, Hannah could barely keep from shivering. Mrs. Campbell neared and handed her a glass. "Drink it. Stop fretting, everything is perfect."

Was it? Never in her wildest dreams did she expect to end up here with this lavish dinner to which such highly esteemed people would attend. And she was in such a grand house with the most handsome man she'd ever met was it really a fairytale come true.

The Campbells arrived; her mother-in-law took in the space and looked at her. "What you have done in such a short time is impressive. I am not sure you require my assistance with décor."

The compliment made her chest expand with pride. "There is much more to be done but the flowers and paintings are good at covering up certain things."

To her surprise, she and Mrs. Campbell were becoming quite close. The young woman was disappointed if ever Hannah could not come and have a drink. She turned out Henry's mother had a quick wit and was quite funny.

Felicity's parents arrived, followed by Felicity and Evan, who with Grant.

When the bell rang for everyone to go into the dining room, he approached her, and she slipped her hand through the crook of his arm

"You are flawless," he whispered into her ear as he assisted her.

She turned to him, their lips a hair's breadth apart. "I love you."

"And I adore you."

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entire face had turned a bright red. She had never been happier.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Most days USA Today Bestseller Hildie McQueen can be found in her tight leggings and green hoodie, holding a cup of British black tea stalking her hunky lawn guy. Author of Medieval Highlander and Ar Historical romance, she writes something every reader can enjoy.

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