



# Don't You Forget About Me

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**Category:** Historical

**Description:** A woman who's forgotten who she is...

When Marjorie regains consciousness in a cold, sea-drenched cave with no memory of who she is or how she got there, panic sets in. She barely escapes the rising water and stumbles onto a beach—deserted except for one man who calls out to her. He says he's her husband. That her name is Marjorie. That they're honeymooning in Cornwall.

At first, she has no reason to doubt the handsome stranger. In fact, she's thrilled to be married to a man she desires and who seems kind and caring. But as the days unfold, cracks in his story begin to show and Marjorie fears her husband may not be at all who he claims. In fact, she suspects he is her enemy and a traitor to England.

A man who desperately needs her to remember.

The last thing Simon Burrows expected was for Marjorie to go missing. When he finds her wet and shivering on the beach at dawn, she remembers absolutely nothing—not who she is, not who he is, and, most importantly, not the vital information only she possesses.

Simon hopes her memory will come back to her with a bit of rest and care, but as the hours and days tick by, he's running out of time. Added to his dilemma, Marjorie seems to want him as much as he's always wanted her. It hasn't been easy keeping his hands to himself. And when she reaches for him with raw passion, he finds himself caught between duty and desire. Because if Marjorie ever remembers the truth, he may lose the one woman he's never stopped wanting...forever.

**Total Pages (Source):** 17

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 9:50 am*

She opened her eyes to darkness. Not the inky blackness of night, but the brushed charcoal that was a harbinger of dawn.

For a long moment, she did not move. Something was.

.. wrong. Beneath her cheek was not the softness of a pillow but a damp, gritty surface.

Her feet were cold. Well, all of her was cold, but her feet especially.

She wiggled her toes and realized they were wet.

She was wet.

Her gown—not a nightgown, as she could feel the restriction of her stays tied beneath the soggy fabric—was a heavy weight on her legs. In the distance, she heard...waves?

Slowly, and with great effort, she sat. Her head throbbed. She touched the locus of the pain, her fingers gingerly passing over a swollen knot on the back of her head. Her fingers came away wet. From blood or—she touched her tongue to her lips—saltwater?

She tried to remember where she was.

Blackness.

She closed her eyes and pressed a finger to her temple. The blackness did not recede.

Suddenly, a rush of cold water swept in around her, rising almost to her waist. She jumped up, regretted the action immediately as it made her world spin, and reached out for something to take hold of. Her bare hand landed on cold, slick rock. A cave? Was that where she was? A sea cave?

The water swirling about her ankles receded, but it would be back.

The tide was coming in, and she had no idea if this cave would flood.

She had to get out. Tentatively, she turned her head one way and then the other.

She lifted her cumbersome skirts and began to move toward the watery gray light.

Her hands clutched at the wall of the cave, until she was thrown back against it as another wave of seawater washed in.

Now that she was standing, the icy water reached to her knees.

The sea withdrew again, sucking her with it.

She welcomed the momentum as, somehow, she knew the tide would lead her out.

Two more waves crashed inside, the second wetting her hips, before she finally emerged from the cave.

Outside, the sky was the pale blue of dawn with a hint of orange on the horizon.

She tripped once, fell to her knees on the rocks outside the cave, then limped to the beach further inland.

Out of breath, her head pounding, she sat down on the soft, dry sand and watched as

the waves filled the cave where she'd been. ..what had she been doing there?

She looked about the empty stretch of beach and spotted nothing but gulls picking at crabs and the odd patch of seaweed. Where had she come from? Where was she now? She had a bed and a home somewhere, but the name was trapped in the blackness inside her mind.

And then she realized that her own name was trapped in that blackness. She tried to push through the murkiness, but it felt impenetrable.

Either that, or nothing was behind it...just a great void of emptiness.

Panic began to rise in her chest, constricting her lungs and making it difficult to draw in air. Her heart pounded as she closed her eyes and tried, in vain, to remember who she was. What was wrong with her? Even the smallest child knew his or her own name. Why could she not recall?

She clenched her hands into fists and attempted to slow her breathing.

Opening her eyes, she said all the words she could think of.

“Beach. Ocean. Dress. Hands. Legs. Feet. Gull. Shell. Sand. Boots. Sky. Clouds. Sun.” She knew more words, but her throat was ragged, and she realized she was thirsty.

How could she know what thirst was, know all the words for her surroundings, and yet not know where she was or who she was?

Dread threatened to overwhelm her again.

She was shivering from wet and cold. She was hungry and thirsty.

The throbbing in her head was all but unbearable.

She wanted to go home, but she didn't know where home was.

She heard a voice on the wind and turned to see if she could place which direction it came from. But she saw no one. She wrapped her arms about her waist. Calm down, she told herself. Take a breath. You are not allowed to go mad .

Her arms tightened. There was that voice again.

This time she looked to the south. She didn't know how she knew that direction was south, but she did.

Rocky cliffs jutted out that way with no clear path to the summit.

Beneath the cliffs was a narrow strip of beach not yet covered by the rising tide.

A person walked along that strip. A man, she decided, seeing the way his dark greatcoat whipped about in the wind.

She hadn't seen him before because his form had blended in with the landscape, but as he moved closer, she could discern his form more clearly.

He wore no hat, and his dark hair whipped about his tan face.

"Marjorie!" he called.

She turned to look behind her, to see if anyone else was present. Was she Marjorie?

"Marjorie!" He was walking quickly now, his long strides eating up the distance between them.

She stared as his facial features became more apparent.

Under dark brows he had light eyes, crinkled with concern.

His nose was straight and slightly red from the cold.

His cheeks, prominent with subtle hollows beneath, were also pink from the cold.

He did not have a beard, but he was not exactly clean-shaven.

She could not remember the word for the dark stubble on his jaw.

Stubble , perhaps that was the word, though her mind reached for another, more accurate.

“What the devil, Marjorie?” he said as he reached her and put his hands on her shoulders. “I’ve been up all night, pacing until I wore grooves in the floor. What happened?”

His hands, encased in dark gloves, were warm, and the heat seeped through her wet sleeves.

She looked up at him, as he was a few inches taller than she, and recognized that same warmth of concern in his blue eyes—sea-blue eyes, she thought, eyes that almost matched the lighter color of the shallow water near the shore.

He bent his head to look into her eyes. “Marjorie? Are you well?”

“I don’t know,” she said, her voice sounding like it came from far away. At first, she wasn’t even certain she’d said the words aloud.

“What happened?”

“I don’t know,” she said.

He blew out a breath then released her and unfastened his coat.

“You’re freezing. Let’s get you inside.” He dropped his coat over her shoulders, and she was immediately embraced by warmth and an oddly familiar scent.

She picked out the smell of old books and ink, but there was something else there she couldn’t identify.

Under his greatcoat, he was dressed in dark breeches and black boots, a silk scarlet waistcoat, and a blue coat of superfine.

He looked as though he’d just left his club, not dressed for a walk on the beach.

He put an arm about her and began to guide her the way he’d come.

She hesitated, unsure she should trust him.

But she knew his scent. Surely, he was someone she was accustomed to, someone she could trust.

“Where are we going?” she asked, giving in to the light pressure of his hand on her back. He gave her a sharp look as though she should know that.

“Back to the cottage.”

The cottage . That sounded nice and warm.

“You’re hurt,” he said after she’d taken a few steps.

She waved a hand. “I scraped my knee. I’m fine.”

His arm about her tightened. “You’re fortunate that’s all that happened to you. You’ve been out all night.”

“I have?”

He halted and moved to face her. “What are you not telling me?” he demanded. “You’re not behaving at all like yourself.”

She stared up at him, into those lovely blue eyes. They looked familiar as well. She must have gazed into them many times. Her attention dipped to his lips as he spoke again.

“What happened last night?” he asked.

She shook her head. She didn’t know how to tell him about the darkness, about how she couldn’t penetrate it.

“Never mind. We’ll discuss it later.” And then he did something she would have never predicted. He lifted her up and carried her.

“What are you doing?” she demanded. Was this something he did often? Did she like to be carried about like a baby?

“You’re pale as a specter and trembling violently from the cold,” he said as he walked briskly. He was moving much faster carrying her than they had been a moment before. “For once, don’t argue with me.”



For once . She was an argumentative person?

She must have been because even now she had to bite her tongue to keep from telling him to put her down.

She did not like being treated as though she were helpless.

And yet, he was warm and strong, and he smelled very good.

She had the sense that she enjoyed libraries and reading and books.

Those scents were appealing, but it was the scent underneath those—perhaps his personal scent—that made her want to lean in and sniff.

She liked the way he smelled and the way his arms felt about her, and yet, she had the sense that she did not want to like it.

Did not want to admit how much she liked his touch, how much she liked him .

None of these feelings made any sense, and with her head pounding as it was, she couldn't begin to unravel them. Much easier to rest that hammering head against his chest, close her eyes, and let him carry her.

She must have drifted off because when she opened her eyes again, he was stepping through a doorway and into a cottage. The vestibule had wooden floors and a table against the wall. Above the table was a mirror, and as they passed it, she caught a glimpse of a woman being carried by a man.

She gasped as she realized that woman was her. "Put me down," she said.

"We're almost to the sitting—"

“Put me down!”

He complied immediately, setting her gently on her feet and taking hold of her arm to keep her steady.

She lurched toward the mirror, keen to have another look at herself.

She stepped in front of it and put her hands on the table.

A stranger stared back at her. She had no idea whatsoever who the woman in the mirror could be.

She touched her cheek, and the woman in the mirror touched her cheek. She licked her lips, and the woman in the mirror did the same. “What is happening?” the woman in the mirror said.

“Marjorie?”

“Stop calling me that,” she told the man who was standing at her side. She met his eyes in the mirror. “Is this what I look like?”

He paused—as anyone would at what must be an odd question. “You’re a bit worse for your exploits last night, but yes. That is your image. Are you feeling—”

She didn’t hear whatever else he said. She was too busy staring at herself.

She had dark hair, long and disheveled and crusted with sand.

As the man had claimed, she was very pale.

Dark shadows smudged the skin beneath her eyes.

Her eyes were an amber brown fringed with thick, dark lashes and dark brows.

Sand still stuck to one side of her face, and her lips were almost blue from cold and trembling.

Her expression was so serious, so intense. Did she always wear that expression?

Glancing down, she saw she wore a modest gown of gray with long sleeves and a high collar.

The material was wet and torn at one shoulder.

Even if the gown had been perfectly clean and neat, it would have been an ugly gown and exactly the wrong color to suit her.

She didn't know how she should know this—any of this—and not recognize herself in the mirror.

"I'm not feeling well," she said, answering the man's question, though she'd barely heard it. "My head—"

"I thought I saw blood. Come into the sitting room. I'll take a look."

Yes, the knot she'd felt earlier. That was why her head throbbed.

But that wasn't what she'd been about to say.

She'd wanted to say something about the blackness in her mind, how she couldn't penetrate whatever was behind it—the part that knew her name, her face, her life.

The part that knew who the man beside her was.

She turned away from the mirror and looked at him.

He was as much a stranger to her as her own face had been, and yet, he seemed to know her.

“Who are you?” she asked. His eyes widened and he visibly started with the shock of her question.

“No.” She held up a hand. “I should ask the other question first. Who am I ?”

He stared at her for a long, long moment. His throat moved as he swallowed, and then he took a breath and drew himself up. “You are Marjorie...Burrows. Marjorie Burrows.”

At this point, she didn't expect to recognize her name, and she didn't. “And who are you?” she asked again.

“Simon,” he said.

“Simon what?”

He cleared his throat. “Burrows. Marjorie, I'm your husband.”

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 9:50 am*

She didn't remember how she ended up in the sitting room before the fire.

She simply took the hot mug of tea pressed into her hands and sipped it, feeling the warmth of the beverage thawing her insides as the fire did the same to her frozen body.

Her name was Marjorie Burrows, and she was married.

The revelation had not shaken free any memories clawing at the locked door of her mind.

What about her parents or siblings? Oh, God. Did she have children she'd forgotten?

Her hands shook, rattling the cup against the saucer and Mr. Simon Burrows—her husband—took it from her hands. "You're still shivering. You should remove those wet clothes."

Marjorie nodded and rose. She peered down at the dress, trying to remember how to remove it.

"I'll—I'll fetch you a blanket," Mr. Burrows said, moving out of the room and into another in the back of the cottage. Was that their bedchamber? Did she sleep with this man every night? Why had she been out last night?

Though her mind couldn't recall how to manage the gown, her fingers seemed to have a memory all their own.

She began unhooking the fastenings and small buttons.

Clearly, this gown was made so that the wearer did not require a maid to help her undress.

Were they too poor for a maid? A glance about the cottage told her it was modest but well-furnished.

Marjorie tried to concentrate on the gown.

She was able, with great effort, to unfasten the material at her neckline, but her cold hands were clumsy and her fingers raw from scraping along the rough rocks of the cave.

She fumbled with the fastenings mid-chest as the wet material stretched tight as it dried.

Mr. Burrows returned holding a dark blanket, and she gave him a look of frustration.

“I cannot seem to manage. Could you assist me?” Her cheeks colored as she said the words, though surely, as her husband, he had seen her in far less than the stays and chemise under this gown.

His gaze went to her breasts and then quickly to her face. “Perhaps if you warm your hands by the fire for longer?”

In answer, she held out her hands, palms up, to show him the cuts and abrasions, which were now beginning to swell.

He swallowed. “Very well. I’ll...undress you, er—dear.” He laid the blanket on a chair and approached. She couldn’t help but notice his hands shook slightly as they

reached for the fabric. Was he apprehensive? Why? As her husband, he must touch her regularly.

Then he took hold of the fabric of the gown and began to open it. He moved efficiently, his large hands surprisingly gentle and competent. Soon enough he was able to untie the sleeves and remove the bodice. From there, it was easy to loosen the skirts and step out of them.

She was colder now, but she felt free. The wet fabric had been heavier than she realized.

She reached for the hooks and eyes of her front-fastening stays, but her fingers could not curl about the small closures.

She looked up at Mr. Burrows. His eyes were locked somewhere above her head, so he hadn't noticed her struggles.

"I apologize for asking again," she said, "but could you assist with the stays?"

"Of course." He took a breath, seemed to steel himself, and glanced down. His hands hovered just an inch from the stays, and she looked into his eyes. His gaze met hers. He cleared his throat. "With your permission?"

"Yes."

Something was very strange. Somehow she knew that wives were the property of their husbands.

Why would her husband ask permission to touch her?

She did not remember him at present, but he was acting as though he hardly knew her

.

And then an answer occurred to her. “Mr. Burrows, how long have we been married?”

His hands dropped, almost as though he were relieved not to have to touch her. “Not long. Er—just a few days now.”

“So this is our honeymoon?” She looked about the cottage. “We wanted to stay near the sea?”

“Yes, we both like to walk along the beaches of Cornwall.”

Cornwall...something about the name shot a glimmer of light into the darkness clouding her mind. She took a shaky breath as her body began to shiver again.

“I apologize. I should work faster.” All deliberate speed now, Mr. Burrows took hold of the material of the stays and began to loosen it.

She looked down at his hands, trying to recover any memory of him touching her like this before.

Perhaps it was because their marriage was so new that she couldn’t recall.

His fingers were within one side of the sturdy fabric to keep it in place as he dealt with the fastenings.

As his hand slid down, she felt those fingers brush the curve of her breast. Heat shot through her at his touch, and her nipple hardened.

She inhaled sharply, and he glanced up at her.



Her gaze locked with those sea-blue eyes of his, and she desperately wished she could remember their marriage—more precisely, the time spent in the marriage bed.

Did she always feel like this when he touched her, this slow heat spiraling through her, making every inch of her come alive?

Heat flooded her lower belly, and she pressed her thighs together at the rush of need that coalesced there.

“My hands must be freezing,” he said.

She nodded, her mind too jumbled to form coherent speech.

His hands were not cold, though. He must know that was not the reason for her reaction.

His gaze lowered as he returned his attention to her stays.

Marjorie closed her eyes and imagined what it would feel like if he’d slid his hand to the side and cupped her breast.

“There.” Her stays opened, and she slid the straps off her shoulders and dropped them on the floor.

“I’ll let you...” He fetched the blanket again and handed it to her, then turned to give her privacy as she removed the rest of her wet clothing.

Was she shy? Was that why he was overly courteous?

Or was it just that they were newly married?

She was glad of his solicitousness. She didn't want a stranger watching her undress—at least, that's what she said in her head. Her body had other ideas.

She wrapped the blanket about her body and sat down by the fire.

Mr. Burrows gathered her wet clothes. "I'll leave these for the servant girl to launder.

Once you're warm, we should get you in the bath.

I would have done that first, but I have to draw the water, and it will take time to heat it.

"He reached for her tea, and she took it and sipped.

"I'm feeling much better now," she said. "I can almost feel my toes again."

"Is everything coming back to you?" he asked.

She shook her head. "No. I—I try to remember, but...the only way I can begin to describe it is as a black cloud in my mind. I can't see past it.

Somehow, I know things like how to unfasten my gown or what everything is called—but I don't have any memory of who I am or who you are. I don't remember this place at all."

"And you have no memory of last night?"

"None. I woke up in a cave as the tide came in. When you found me, I'd only just stumbled out. I think I hit my head. I have a knot the size of my fist, and my head is pounding."

“Allow me?” At her nod, he rose on his knees and parted her hair. He blew out a breath. “You are fortunate that didn’t split your skull.”

“My mother always said I was hard-headed.” Marjorie put a hand to her mouth, and Mr. Burrows grabbed her shoulders.

“Your mother? You remember her?”

She closed her eyes, trying to conjure her mother’s face. An image floated before her for an instant, but it was vague and blurry. She sighed and opened her eyes. “I cannot remember her.”

“But you knew what she used to say to you. The knowledge is in there,” he said, tapping her forehead lightly. “You just can’t access it at present. I’m sure it’s a temporary effect of the blow to your head. In a few hours, everything will come back.”

Marjorie wanted to believe him. In fact, she prayed he was correct. But something he’d said struck her as odd. “Blow to my head? You think I was struck?”

“I didn’t say that. You said you hit your head.”

“I meant I was probably exploring the cave and hit my head on a low overhang. But a blow to the head is something else. A blow to the head is a deliberate act.”

He gave her a long look. “You might not remember who you are, but you haven’t changed much. You were always good with details.”

“So you think I was struck by someone?”

“No. I think it’s exactly as you say. You were exploring the cave and knocked your

head on a low-hanging rock.

” He ran his hands up and down her arms, which was a reassuring feeling.

She trusted this man. She could feel it in the way her body relaxed at his touch and the sound of his voice.

But something about his eyes made her think he wasn’t being completely honest with her.

“Why was I exploring the cave alone?” she asked. “You said—before—I was out all night. How long was I lost?”

“We can talk about that later. Right now you should eat. The landlord sent soup and bread for supper last night. I’ll warm what’s left and make you another cup of tea—perhaps add a splash of brandy to it.”

She reached up to touch the raised, tender spot on her head. “Should we call for the doctor?”

“No,” he said quickly. “I’m sure with food and rest you will be yourself again in no time. I’ll ask the servant girl if the landlord has any feverfew. That’s good for an aching head.”

She nodded, though she didn’t agree she would recover so easily.

Shouldn’t a doctor be consulted if one lost one’s memory?

She might have argued if something inside her hadn’t rebelled at the idea of involving a doctor.

She didn't know why, but her belly tensed, and her chest tightened at the thought of the doctor.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 9:50 am*

Her husband retreated to a room in the front of the house, and she heard the clink of pots and pans and the opening and closing of cupboards.

When he returned, she did her best to swallow some of the soup and bread, but her aching head made her feel slightly nauseous.

She was able to sip her tea, and the brandy warmed her and made her drowsy.

But she started awake at the sound of a door closing.

“Barbara?” her husband called. “Is that you?”

“Yes, Mr. Burrows. I’ve brought some provisions and will start on the washing,” a feminine voice said as it neared. Then a tall girl of perhaps sixteen or seventeen peeked her head into the sitting room. She wore a dark blue dress with a white apron and a white cap over her pale blond hair.

As soon as she spotted Marjorie, her eyes crinkled in concern. “Is anything amiss, missus?”

“My wife fell and bumped her head while walking on the beach this morning,” Burrows said. “Could you heat water for her bath?”

“Of course, sir.”

“I’ll help you draw it.” He rose, and Marjorie heard him tell the servant quietly, “Do you mind assisting with her bath? She hit her head quite hard.”

“Of course, sir.”

A quarter-hour later, a large round tub had been placed near the stove in the kitchen, and Marjorie watched as Barbara poured the last bucket of hot water into it.

The steam rose in the already warm kitchen, and for the first time since she'd awakened in the cave, Marjorie didn't feel chilled.

“Here we are then,” Barbara said. “Towels, washing cloths, soap. Can I help you into the bath, missus?”

“Thank you.” Marjorie dropped her blanket and took Barbara's hand. She stepped into the tub, sank down, and drew her knees up. The water was blissfully warm, and she felt the headache that had plagued her since waking begin to ease.

“Do you want help with washing, missus?”

What Marjorie really wanted was to have a few moments alone. “No. I have everything I need right here.” Indeed, Barbara had placed the towels and soap within easy reach. “Go ahead and start on your washing.”

Barbara looked out the window. “But Mr. Burrows—”

“I'll be fine. Go ahead. I know you've seen the dark clouds, and I'm sure you want to get the clothes on the line before a rain shower.”

Barbara nodded. “I'll be just outside, missus.”

“I'll call if I need you.”

The servant girl stepped outside and a moment later, Marjorie heard the slosh of

clothing being dunked in washwater.

She closed her eyes and scrunched down so she might lean her neck against the edge of the bath.

Gently, because she did not want her headache to return full force, she pushed at the blackness in her mind.

The middle of the fog was too thick and dense, but she tried the edges, which were a bit grayer.

She prodded for any memory of her name or her wedding or her favorite color—anything.

But though that gray had given her a blurry image of her mother before, it yielded nothing now.

Her hands on the edge of the tub clenched in frustration, but she forced herself to open them and relax.

Panic and fear would not help her and might, in fact, hinder her memory.

She had no idea how she knew this or if it was even accurate, but she was learning to trust these unbidden thoughts that came to her.

Clearly, she'd had some education and life experience.

How old was she anyway? She tried to remember the way she'd looked in the mirror.

She wasn't particularly young, like Barbara, but she also hadn't seen lines or wrinkles.



Mr. Burrows looked to be in his late twenties or early thirties, which meant she was probably the same age or younger.

Four and thirty.

Marjorie opened her eyes. The number had come to her as a given, not from the murkiness in her mind—which was frustrating—but simply appearing as though she had always known it. Clearly, pushing at the void in her head would not yield results. Information would come as it chose and when it chose.

She would ask Burrows—her husband, that was—if she was indeed thirty-four.

In the meantime, the water had begun to cool, so she picked up the soap and a cloth and worked at removing the sand that clung to every part of her that had been exposed.

Washing her hair was difficult as her head was so very tender where she'd been hit.

She did her best, though, and when she finally stood to reach for the bowl with the clean water to do a final rinse of her hair, she was proud of herself for having accomplished this one thing.

Except that, as she bent over and emptied the warm water over her, a wave of dizziness hit her hard.

She gripped the edges of the tub and tried to call for the maid.

“Barbara,” she said, but she couldn't manage to raise her voice.

She sank to her knees in the tub to keep from falling.

That action jolted her already injured knee, and she cried out in pain.

“Barbara!” she called louder, but the girl didn’t come.

Instead, the inner door burst open, and her husband’s voice boomed in the small kitchen. “What happened? Where’s that girl?” His footsteps thudded on the wooden planks as he crossed the room and snatched up a towel, sending the soap flying. “Never mind. I have you.”

A moment later, she was once again lifted into his arms. She was wet and slippery, but he didn’t seem to mind that his fine coat and silk waistcoat were absorbing most of the water. She pushed her hair out of her eyes and looked up at him. His jaw was set, and his gaze straight ahead.

“Where are you carrying me?” she asked.

“To bed.”

Heat shot through her again, and she couldn’t help but notice the feel of his hand on her upper thigh.

That arm supported her legs while his other was under her back.

The towel he’d grabbed was slung over his shoulder.

He could have looked down at her and had an unobstructed view of her nudity, but he seemed to be determined to look everywhere but at her.

Marjorie didn’t know if it was the dizziness or the brandy or simply exhaustion that caused her to lift her arms and wrap them about his neck.

He did glance down at her then, but his gaze flicked right back up as he carried her through a doorway and into what was presumably their bedchamber.

She was beginning to get used to being carried by this man. She was beginning to like it. Was that why she'd married him? Was he a gallant gentleman who had swept her off her feet—literally and figuratively? Was that what made her fall in love with him?

He set her on the bed, and she didn't immediately release her arms about his neck, which forced him to bend down with her.

His face was very close to hers, and she decided that most likely what had started her falling for him were his eyes.

They were so lovely and when he looked at her, there was a softness in them that made her feel.

..the word mushy came to mind. Yes, she felt mushy inside.

“You'll catch your death of cold if I don't cover you,” he said, gently pulling back.

Still, without looking at her body, he took the towel from his shoulder and placed it over her.

“Dry off while I look for something for you to wear.” She dried off as directed then wrapped the towel about her body.

A large window was opposite the bed, and she had a view of the ocean with the sun sparkling golden on the blue expanse.

The window framed a truly lovely picture.

Meanwhile, Burrows stood looking down at the contents of a large portmanteau on the luggage stand in the corner. “I don’t see a nightgown,” he said.

“What about a robe?” she asked. “Do I wear a robe?”

“I don’t know.”

Marjorie frowned. “You don’t know what I wear to bed?”

He went stiff, and she felt fear shoot through her at the idea that he might not be who he said he was.

But then he turned, and his smile was twisted up at the corner—a rather rakish smile, if she were to describe it.

“I’m afraid I don’t pay much attention to what it is you’re wearing.

I’m more concerned with how quickly I can remove it. ”

Her cheeks heated at his tone and the warm look in his eyes. She averted her gaze, feeling suddenly shy, and that was when she spotted the robe on a peg on the wall. “There,” she said, pointing. “I believe that must be my robe.”

“Ah, yes. This does look familiar.” He took it down and brought it to her, holding it out so she might put her arms through it and cinch it at the waist. Once she was dressed, she sat on the edge of the bed and used the towel to dry the ends of her hair.

He pulled the drapes closed on the window, took the damp towel, and helped her slide under the covers. “Comfortable?” he asked.

She nodded.

“Try and rest,” he said. She knew he was about to leave her, and she reached for his hand before he could escape.

“Simon?”

His hand in hers clenched.

“I apologize. Do I not call you Simon?”

“Of course, you do. We’re so newly married, I’m used to you being more formal. But I like when you use my name. What is it?”

“What if...” She swallowed the lump in her throat. “What if I don’t ever remember who I am? What if my memory doesn’t return?” She whispered the last few words as the thought was too horrible to speak aloud.

Simon placed his other hand around hers, cupping it warmly. He made to sit on the bed beside her, and she scooted over to make room. “I’m certain that won’t happen.”

“I’m not,” she said. “I still don’t recall anything really.

I’m afraid I never will.” She hadn’t meant to start crying, but a tear managed to slip down her cheek.

She felt mortified as they continued to glide down her cheeks.

She couldn’t seem to make them stop. Oh, God.

Was she the sort of woman who wept all the time? She dearly hoped not.

Simon’s eyes widened. Clearly, he was surprised by her tears—in fact, he looked

almost stunned.

But he recovered quickly, gathering her in his arms and soothing her by rubbing her back and stroking her hair.

Finally, she ceased weeping and rested her head on his shoulder.

He held her lightly, still patting her back.

No wonder she loved him. He was patient and caring.

“Will you lie with me?” she asked.

His entire body went rigid, so rigid that she pulled back to look at him. He released her and put his hands out between them. “Marjorie, you’re injured and exhausted. Now might not be the time—”

“I meant, just lie next to me in bed. I don’t want to be alone.”

“Ah—er, of course.” Awkwardly, he stood, removed his boots and coat and lay down on top of the covers on the other side of the bed.

His arms were at his side, and he looked almost afraid to touch her.

Once again, she had the niggling feeling that something was not right.

But then he turned to her and opened his arms, and that seemed real.

She slid over and let him embrace her, closing her eyes as his scent enveloped her.

“Don’t worry about anything,” he murmured. “I’ll take care of you.”

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 9:50 am*

What the devil was Simon supposed to do now?

He was lying in bed with her when he had ten thousand other things he should be seeing to, especially given that everything was falling apart.

Not that he minded holding her in his arms—no, he didn't mind that at all—but this wasn't the way he wanted her.

She didn't even know who he was. Or who she was!

If he'd envisioned a nightmare scenario, it couldn't have been much worse than this.

Simon gently untangled her from his arms. She made a soft sound, and he looked down at her in the shadowy room. She didn't open her eyes. Her breath came soft and even, indicating she was finally asleep.

Holy hell, but she was beautiful with her dark hair splayed across the pillow and her sooty lashes a shadow against her too-pale skin.

Her pink mouth, usually pursed with annoyance or concentration, was soft and full in sleep.

As much as he'd wanted to kiss that mouth before, he was desperate to kiss it now.

But he was a gentleman. He would not take advantage of her. She had no idea who he was, and even if she thought she wanted him, she couldn't know what she really wanted in her current condition.

Simon rose, gathered his coat, boots, and her portmanteau and tiptoed out of her room.

He closed the door quietly then went to his own chamber.

A quick look in the mirror showed him his shirt was wrinkled, his cravat a limp wreck, and his waistcoat still damp from her bathwater.

No. He would not think about baths or bathwater or soft feminine curves dripping with said water.

Part of him wished she never remembered who she was because once she did, she would have his head.

Not only had he seen her naked—and holy hell, but what a glorious sight that had been—he'd touched her when he'd carried her.

Not that he'd had any choice. She'd been about to fall over.

What was he meant to do? But she wouldn't see it like that.

She'd blame him for everything. Simon removed his untidy waistcoat and pulled his wrinkled shirt over his head.

Well, when they got back to London, he'd defend himself by pointing out that she was the one who had gone out in the middle of the night without a word. She was lucky to be alive.

He went through his valise and found a clean shirt and neckcloth and set about tying it in a simple but stylish knot.



He took a bit more time choosing his waistcoat, settling on a green one with simple stripes in a darker green color.

He brushed his coat and hung it to dry then donned another.

He felt better now that he was dressed properly, but he still had a pit in his belly.

Would that he could call a doctor to have a look at her and do something—whatever that might be—to make her remember.

Had she been hit on the head deliberately last night?

If so, had she been left for dead in that cave?

He needed to know and preferably before tonight.

What was he supposed to tell the smugglers if she couldn't remember her name, much less the information they'd been summoned to receive?

He could hope for a miracle—that she'd wake with her memory completely restored. Or he could hope she'd been careless enough to bring documents or papers that might tell him the information he required. Surely, she had a map. With that in mind, he opened her luggage and began to go through it.

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T HE ACHE IN HER HEAD woke her. She adjusted position so as not to put pressure on the bump on her skull, but she didn't fall completely back asleep.

She lay in a sort of half-sleep—her weary body attempting to slip back into oblivion, but her mind remained just active enough so that she didn't drop off.

Her first thoughts were things like how her feet were cold or how she liked the sound of the waves, but gradually other thoughts became clearer.

She still couldn't remember anything about her life before she'd awakened in that cave.

Simon had found her on the beach, and clearly, she'd married well based on the way he'd treated her.

Thinking of Simon, she opened her eyes to see his side of the bed was empty.

She was sprawled across most of the bed, and she had a clear view of the bedside table on his side.

She remembered seeing a lamp, a book, and a brush on her table when she'd donned the robe before falling asleep.

But Simon's table was bare. He hadn't placed anything there.

Pushing her hair out of her eyes, she sat up, careful to move slowly in case pain lanced her skull, and she had to lie back down.

When she was sitting, she looked about the room.

Her portmanteau was on the luggage stand, but hers was the only luggage in the room.

His hat didn't hang on a peg. His robe was not draped over a chair.

There was no sign at all he had been occupying this chamber.

Surely many married couples of a certain social standing could afford separate chambers—and how she knew this was another of those mysteries she didn't yet understand—but would they want to sleep separately so soon after their wedding?

Was her marriage more of a business arrangement without any accompanying feelings on either side?

Perhaps...except that she didn't feel like the sort of person who would marry for money or status alone.

And then there was the way she'd felt when being held by Simon Burrows.

She'd liked the way he touched her. She hadn't wanted him to stop.

So obviously there was some attraction. Was it purely one-sided? Was—

The sound of voices made her turn her head quickly, which sent a sharp slice of pain through her brain. She pressed her hands to her temples and winced, waiting for the agony to subside. Gradually, the discomfort lessened enough that she could focus on the voices again.

“—come back? Wot's this all about, Burrows?” A deep male voice she didn't recognize spoke the words. They were coming from the direction of the sitting room.

Simon answered the man, his voice too low for her to make out the words.

“Oi, this was not the agreement,” another voice said. Someone—probably Simon—made a shh sound, and she couldn't hear the next words. Marjorie gathered up her robe, slid off the bed, and padded silently to the bedchamber door. She pressed her ear to it.

“I don’t ‘ave to tell you, Mr. Burrows, that time is o’ the essence. No telling ‘ow long the fair weather will last, and if’n I ‘ave to run the blockade, I’d rather not do it in a gale.” That was the first man’s voice again. Run the blockade ? What did that mean?

“Captain,” Simon said, “I’m asking for one more day. I think for what we’re paying you, you can give me that.”

“Wot good’s blunt if we’re hanged?” another man said. His voice was slightly higher. “I got a hull full of guns and powder. I don’t want to sit about waiting for one of them gunships to sail by and decide to take a peek under me hatches.”

Marjorie took a shaky breath. Simon was speaking to smugglers.

England was at war with France. She knew this, though the black mist in her mind threatened to spread when she tried to remember the names of battles or generals.

She almost recalled the name of the French leader, but she couldn’t snatch the information from the darkness.

Very well. She couldn’t remember particulars, but she did understand generalities.

Simon was meeting with at least three smugglers who had weapons they’d been paid to smuggle past the British blockade.

But if they needed to run the blockade, that meant the weapons were for the French. Simon was a French sympathizer. A traitor.

“Captain, if I could give you the information tonight, I would. I assure you I will have it tomorrow. That’s still enough time to reach the rendezvous.”

“Tell us the rendezvous point, and we’ll be the judge o’ that.”

“Tomorrow.” Simon sounded extremely patient. “Come at sundown, and you can sail with the tide.”

Marjorie heard the grumbling of the smugglers and then their heavy footfalls as they shuffled out of the house.

She raced to her window and parted the curtains slightly.

While she’d been sleeping the day had slipped away.

Dusk had fallen and a sliver of moon was rising over the water.

She craned her neck, hoping to see the men she’d heard as they left, but they must have retreated by a different path.

She saw no one and nothing, not even a ship out on the water.

Dropping the curtain back into place, Marjorie tried to take a deep breath.

What should she do? If Simon was a traitor, she owed it to her country to turn him in.

But what if she was also a traitor? What if informing on him doomed her too?

No one would believe she had no memory of her perfidy.

She’d face the consequences just as he would.

There was nothing for that, she decided, moving toward her portmanteau.

Her country was more important than herself.

She would dress, slip out, and find the nearest magistrate.

Once she was before him, she could explain everything.

She reached for the tie of her robe then stilled her hands.

If she went now, Simon would know she had discovered his treachery and run.

He would call off the meeting tomorrow at dusk.

She had to go to the magistrate in secret.

Then soldiers could come at dusk tomorrow and arrest all the traitors.

She'd have to wait until Simon went to sleep and sneak out then.

Marjorie put a hand to her lips. What if that was what she'd been trying to do last night?

She'd been on her way to find a magistrate and then hit her head.

Or perhaps someone had hit her on the head.

Someone hadn't wanted her mission to succeed.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 9:50 am*

She heard Simon's step and turned and leapt back into bed.

She didn't want him to know she'd been awake and overheard the conversation.

She lay down and pulled the covers up, closing her eyes just as he opened the door.

A shaft of light illuminated the chamber, but she kept her eyes closed and forced her breathing to slow.

She hoped Simon might close the door and leave her alone, but he stepped into the room.

"Marjorie?" he murmured. She didn't stir.

Simon came to stand beside the bed, setting a lamp on the table, and looking down at her.

"Marjorie," he whispered. Perhaps if she continued to pretend to sleep, he would leave her alone, but then he bent and placed a hand on her cheek.

His touch was gentle, though his hands were roughened.

She couldn't keep her eyes closed with him touching her, so she opened them and found herself looking into his eyes.

His face was close to hers, and her breath caught in her chest. Those sea-blue eyes were just as stunning as she remembered.

“I’m sorry to wake you,” he said, “but you’ve been sleeping all day.”

“Have I?” she asked, trying to sound sleepy.

His hand moved, smoothing the hair back from her temple.

She wanted to turn her head and enjoy the feel of his touch.

She wanted to reach up and touch his face, smooth her fingertips over his prominent cheekbones, and run her fingers through his dark, wavy hair.

She realized, too late, she was looking at him when their eyes met.

For a moment, she thought he might kiss her.

She hoped he might kiss her. His gaze dipped to her lips, and she parted them in anticipation.

But instead of kissing her, he withdrew his hand and stood.

Why on earth was she disappointed? Did she want to kiss a turncoat?

What kind of person had she been before she’d lost her memory?

Obviously some of her wickedness ran deep enough that she couldn’t shake it.

Either that or whatever she had felt for him before she lost her memory was still alive and well somewhere within her.

She couldn’t help but find him attractive, and though she fought it, she couldn’t deny she wanted him to touch her.



But she couldn't allow her emotions to interfere with her duty to her country. Marjorie knew almost nothing about herself, but she knew she did not want to betray England.

"I'm almost afraid to ask, but have you remembered anything else?" he asked. "I thought with quiet and rest, you might recover some of your memory."

"I had hoped the same, but nothing has changed." Except she'd remembered there was a war between England and France, but it was probably best not to mention that, all things considered.

"You just need a little more time," he said, sounding as though he was trying to convince himself. "Barbara left stew and fresh bread for dinner. I've kept it warm. Would you like it now?"

Her stomach rumbled. "I'll take that as a yes," he said. "And I found your nightgown among the washing Barbara brought in from the line. The storm we'd expected moved inland, so your clothing is clean and dry."

Perfect. She could do it later and sneak out when he was asleep.

"Do you want me to help you dress?"

Her throat went dry as she imagined his hands opening the tie on her robe and sliding inside to touch her bare skin. The garment would slide off her shoulders, and he'd dip his mouth to the peak of one nipple.

"Did you hear me?" he asked. She blinked the image away.

"I'll stay in my robe for now," she said.

“I’ll build up the fire in the sitting room and bring the stew there. There’s a small table by the window where we have been dining.”

At his words, an image of the table rose up in her mind. But she didn’t see it as she had this afternoon or even with bowls or plates on it. She saw it covered with papers and folders, an inkwell and quill at the ready, her own ink-stained hands lifting a piece of parchment...

“Are you certain you don’t require help?” he asked.

“I’m fine. I’d like a moment alone and then I’ll join you.”

He seemed to interpret this as she’d intended as he glanced at the screen in the corner, behind which lay the chamber pot, and left her.

As soon as the door closed, she sat quickly and put her hand beside the lamp.

No sign of ink on her fingers. Had she imagined the papers and the hand that had been writing or had the ink washed away?

She smoothed her hair down and blew out a frustrated breath.

Her head would begin to ache again if she continued to prod at her memory.

Instead, she found her brush, tried to comb through the long, thick mass, and ended up plaiting it and tying it with a simple ribbon.

She heard the clink of silverware and plates, so she made sure her robe was securely closed and joined her husband in the sitting room.

The drapes had been closed and a fire crackled in the hearth.

If she listened, she could hear the distant crash of the waves on the shore.

Several lamps had been lit, illuminating watercolors on the walls.

Most depicted the shoreline. On the table were two plates, two wine glasses, and forks and spoons.

Simon came through the kitchen with a basket of bread.

He smiled at her as he set it on the table.

“You’re looking better already. I’ll be back with the stew. ”

Marjorie took her seat at the table, the smell of the fresh bread making her belly rumble again.

Did he always serve her like this? It seemed a rare thing in a man, though that was all the knowledge her mind would allow.

Marjorie wished she could remember her parents or some other couples to test this theory.

Simon came through the door again, carrying two bowls filled with stew.

He set one before her then put his own down on the plate across from her.

Finally, he lifted a bottle of red wine and poured them both half a glass.

“You probably shouldn’t have too much of that,” he cautioned as he took his seat.

Marjorie lifted her glass. “At this point, I’m willing to try anything. Perhaps I might

remember more drunk than sober.” She sipped the wine, which tasted of blackberries and oak.

“I’m not a doctor, but I suspect a head injury and an overindulgence in wine might not be a good mix.”

“You’re right. My skull hurts enough as it is.”

He cocked his head. He looked rather handsome when he did that, his brown hair falling over his forehead in a manner that made her want to run a hand through it.

“It’s strange how you seem to know that drinking too much will cause a headache, but you can’t remember why you were out last night or where we are. ”

She rather thought she knew why she was out last night—to seek out a magistrate. “Perhaps I might begin to remember if we talk about it. Where are we? I think we are in England, yes?”

“So you know countries. Do you know any of the counties? Herefordshire? Dorset? Sussex? We’re in Cornwall. Is that at all familiar?”

“Vaguely.” Marjorie set down her spoon and dabbed her napkin at her mouth. “Cornwall seems familiar, but I couldn’t say why. The name Westminster keeps coming to mind. Is that a county?”

“No, that’s a part of London. You’re frequently in Westminster, so it makes sense you’d remember that.”

“Why am I in Westminster? Is that where I live?”

“You could say that.”

Was it her imagination or was he being deliberately ambiguous? Was there something about Westminster he didn't want her to know?

"How did we meet?" she asked. Surely their love story would jog something in her brain.

"Good question," he said then lifted his wine glass and drained it. "Would you like more?" he asked, lifting the bottle. She'd barely touched hers.

"No, thank you." She waited for him to proceed with the story of their first meeting, but he was concentrating on his meal. "Do you not remember how we first met?"

"Oh, I remember," he said with a small shake of his head. "We have a mutual acquaintance who introduced us. Lord Melbourne." He raised his brows at her, obviously hoping the name would be familiar.

She shook her head. Interesting. She had acquaintances in the peerage. "Go on," she said. "Where were we?"

"In his offices. You were meeting with him when I arrived."

"Was it love at first sight?" she asked.

He stared at her for a long moment. "Er—no. In fact, I don't think you liked me at all."

"Why not?" Except for the fact that the man was a traitor, she couldn't see why anyone wouldn't like Simon Burrows. He was considerate, attentive, attractive, and he dressed far better than any other man she knew—not that she could remember those men at present, but she had a feeling.

“No idea, but I won you over—slowly and surely over the years.”

“We’ve known each other for years?”

“About four.”

“But we’ve only just married?”

“Just a few days ago.”

“How do I know this Lord Melbourne?”

Simon sat back. “If I talk, will you eat? You’ve taken maybe three bites.”

“Fine.” She lifted her spoon.

“Your father is a friend of Melbourne’s. They went to school together—and before you ask, your father is a professor at Oxford. His research is focused on ancient languages. I know Melbourne because I work for the Foreign Office, as does Melbourne.”

“You work for the Foreign Office?” This was worse than she thought. If he worked for the Foreign Office, he must have access to even more sensitive information than she could imagine.

“I do. You remember what the Foreign Office is?” He was watching her closely now, his blue eyes narrowed.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 9:50 am*

Marjorie blinked. She'd thought she knew what it was, but when she tried to focus on it to answer his question, she couldn't seem to define it.

"I have a feeling about it," she said. "I seem to know things about it, but I don't know how I know them.

" She put a hand to her temple as though pressing against her mind would free the information.

Instead, she realized how much her head had begun to ache again.

"You look pale," he said. "We can talk of it later. Clearly, you haven't forgotten everything."

"No, I haven't. I just can't seem to find it. It's as though all the information I gathered was dumped in a dark well, and I can't reach it. Sometimes some little fragment bubbles up to the surface, but I can't see through the darkness to understand the context or what it means."

"Sounds as though your brain box was shaken up when you bumped your head. It may take a few days for things to set themselves to rights."

She didn't have a few days. She had to find a magistrate tonight if she was to prevent Burrows from betraying England. Had she suspected he was a traitor before? Was that why she hadn't liked him at first? Why had she changed her mind?

"It's been a long day. You should rest."

She nodded. Although she'd done little but sleep all day, she was quite tired. Besides, the sooner she retired, the sooner he would retire, and she could escape.

Unless...what if she was wrong about their separate chambers? What if he came to lie beside her? That would make sneaking out much more difficult, but if she waited until he was deep in sleep, she thought she could still manage.

Marjorie rose from the table and went back to the bedchamber.

She closed the door and looked through the wardrobe until she found another set of linens.

She stuffed one of the pillowcases with clothing and shoes.

She heard Simon's steps coming nearer and shoved the pillowcase under the bed then quickly climbed under the covers. He tapped on the door. "May I come in?"

"Yes." She tried to look as though she were about to fall asleep.

He opened the door a crack. "Do you need anything?"

"No."

"Then I'll say goodnight." He began to close the door.

"Is this how you usually say goodnight?" she asked. Devil take her! Why had she asked that? She'd wanted him to leave, and now he was opening the door again.

"No, but nothing about this situation is usual. You don't remember who I am. I wouldn't want to make you uncomfortable."



And for some reason, she felt guilty. No, she didn't remember falling in love with him or marrying him, but his memories hadn't been altered. He can't have imagined their honeymoon would play out like this. "You must be disappointed in...this turn of events." She gestured to her head.

"I'm certain it's only temporary," he said with a sad smile. "You'll remember soon enough."

"I hope that's true. And, this might be quite forward"—his brows went up—"but I wouldn't be uncomfortable with a goodnight kiss."

He stared at her. "Are you certain?"

She nodded. This would be a goodnight and a goodbye kiss. She probably shouldn't kiss him, but she was about to turn him in for treason. If she kissed him now, he'd be less likely to suspect her of having figured out his secret.

At least that was what she told herself.

The truth was this was her last chance to kiss him, and she really wanted to know what it felt like. "We've no doubt kissed many times. Perhaps a kiss will spark a memory." She rather hoped it did, and she hoped that memory was why she had married a turncoat.

"I hadn't thought of that."

She looked at him, waiting. He seemed uncertain of what to do. Odd, considering he should be familiar with kissing her. Had she been too bold in suggesting the kiss? Perhaps he didn't care for boldness in women.

Finally, he seemed to come to some sort of decision and crossed the room.

He bent down and put a hand on her shoulder.

With the other, he cupped her cheek. His hand was warm and large, and it smelled of the bread they'd been eating.

Slowly, she lifted her eyes and looked into his.

Her heart was pounding now, and she could hear his breaths coming a little quicker.

In this moment—whenever he touched her—she didn't have any questions as to why she'd married him.

There was an obvious attraction between them.

Simon moved closer and pressed his lips to hers.

The kiss was chaste and innocent, and she wanted much, much more.

She let her eyes drift closed and kissed him back in the same innocent manner.

He inhaled and the hand on her shoulder tightened.

She opened her eyes again and gazed into the dark pools of his.

"Sleep well," he murmured.

"Goodnight," she said.

He withdrew, and it took all her willpower not to pull him back.

She had to keep repeating to herself that she wanted him to go.

Finally, he closed the door, and she heard his footsteps retreat.

She blew out the lamp, but she didn't lie down.

She remained sitting so she didn't risk falling asleep.

She had to wait until the house was quiet and then she could make her move.

She didn't have a clock in the chamber, so she wasn't certain how long she sat and waited.

It seemed hours passed before the only sound she heard was the settling of the house and the persistent crash of the waves on the shore.

Carefully and quietly, she eased out of bed and knelt at its side.

She fished out the pillowcase and emptied the contents on the bed.

Using touch, she found the garments she wanted and donned them as best she could.

She didn't have everything tied and laced perfectly, but it wouldn't matter.

Simon had hung his greatcoat on a peg by the front door.

She'd put that over her dress on the way out.

Then all she had to do was make her way inland, toward whatever village was nearby, and ask the first person she encountered where the magistrate lived.

Was she terrified?

Yes.

Was she an idiot?

Probably.

Did she have confidence she would succeed?

Absolutely. In fact, she felt more in her own skin now than she had since she'd awakened in the cave. Clearly, this sort of subterfuge was not something new to her.

Marjorie went to her bedchamber door and eased it open. Thankfully, all was blackness, and she relied on the map of it in her mind to make her way into the sitting room. The entryway lay to her left. Just a few steps and she'd grasp the coat, open the door, and be away.

She turned left. Behind her something scraped, and a shaft of light appeared on the wooden floor. Marjorie froze.

“Where do you think you’re going?”

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 9:50 am*

Marjorie halted, uncertain whether she should run or try and devise some sort of excuse. Sleepwalking?

Simon rose from the couch behind her. "I bloody well knew you would do something like this," he said.

"What?" she said. "Where am I?"

"Do not pretend to be sleepwalking. You don't remember me, Marjorie, but I know you. Very well."

She turned to see him coming around the couch, where he'd obviously been sleeping.

He wore loose black trousers, and his white linen shirt was untucked.

But nothing was rumpled or wrinkled. Even his hair was still in place.

Still, seeing him in shirtsleeves seemed incredibly intimate.

She might have been tempted to kiss him again if not for the scowl on his face.

She took a step back. "From all accounts, I slipped out last night. You don't have to be an astute observer to assume I might try it again. But perhaps ask yourself why I want to get away from you so much."

"I can't speak to your motives tonight, but last night had nothing to do with me. Of that, I'm sure. I'll ask again, where were you going?" Those lovely blue eyes were

filled with a mixture of anger and concern. He was obviously annoyed, but he wasn't threatening. She wasn't afraid of him.

Perhaps she should have been.

"I was going to the village."

"The village? Why? You don't even know how to get there—unless your amnesia is some sort of ploy I don't know about—in which case, you must be the most skilled actress in the world because your entire personality has changed. Not to mention, you allowed me to kiss you."

He wasn't making any sense. She allowed him to kiss her? She'd wanted him to kiss her.

"The village, Marjorie. Why?" he demanded, coming even nearer.

"To fetch a magistrate," she shot back.

All the anger in his expression fell, replaced by confusion. "Why?" he asked, seeming truly not to know. Oh, now who was the actor?

"Because I love my country, and you, sir, are a traitor."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about that meeting with the smugglers this afternoon. I overheard your conversation, and I know you want to help them run the British blockade and deliver weapons to the French."

He took a step back, leaning on the back of the couch and raking a hand through his

hair. “No, I don’t.”

“I heard you, Simon.” Let him try and explain this away.

“You misunderstood. Those smugglers are working for our side—the British side. They have weapons, yes, but they’ve been hired to run the French blockade of Spain and Portugal and deliver these weapons to our troops fighting in Spain. Redcoats under the command of General Wellesley.”

Marjorie put a hand to her head, which had begun to throb. Her mind was going back over the conversation from earlier. “They work for England?” She hadn’t thought of that.

“Yes. The captains came here to find out the rendezvous point in Europe. They’ll meet our counterparts there who will take possession of the arms and transport them to the battlefields.”

“Our counterparts?”

“That’s right. I told you earlier I work for the Foreign Office. So do you.”

She shook her head. Women did not work in the government. Did they?

“It’s true. In fact, you’re one of the best agents out there.

Which is why Melbourne entrusted the location of the rendezvous point to you.

And only you. Now you understand why I had to put off the captains earlier tonight.

I can’t exactly tell them the spy with the information they need can’t even remember her own name, much less the location they need if they’re to have a chance in hell of

successfully delivering their cargo. ”

“I should—”

“Sit down?” He took her elbow and led her to the couch.

“I didn’t want to dump all this on you. I kept hoping your memory would come back to you, and I wouldn’t have to.

I should have known you’d leave me little choice.

” He put a pillow behind her back then crossed to the drinks cart and poured her a glass of wine, taking a brandy for himself.

“You might not remember who you are, but you still have the same instincts. I knew I wouldn’t be able to keep anything from you for long. ”

She sipped the wine and tried to take in everything he was saying. She possessed knowledge about a rendezvous point? She was integral to the war effort?

“I’m sure you have a dozen questions,” he said, sitting beside her.

“Hundreds.”

“I’ll answer as many as I can, but now that you know the stakes, the real question is how we can retrieve that memory about the rendezvous point.

There’s only a short window of time in which the scheme will work.

We can’t let our men in Europe wait too long or they risk capture.



And we don't want the smugglers arriving too late or all these weapons will fall into enemy hands.

So if there is the name of a Portuguese or Spanish location floating in your head somewhere, now would be a good time to mention it. ”

Marjorie closed her eyes, praying the black cloud that hovered there would be gone.

But her mind was dark. She could shed light on the information she'd gained in the last eighteen hours but nothing more.

She gingerly pushed on the darkness for anything Spanish or Portuguese.

She tried to picture the countries on a map or conjure the names of cities or capitals.

Absolutely nothing was there, and her head began to hurt more than before.

She opened her eyes, and she must have looked as defeated as she felt because Simon blew out a breath of frustration.

“Perhaps if I was shown a map,” she said. “I might see the name of a place that would shake something loose.”

“That's a good idea. We'll go into the village first thing in the morning. They're sure to have a shop with maps and navigation tools for the ships that come into the small port. It will be mostly fishing vessels, but this is Cornwall and pirates and smugglers aren't unheard of.”

“Did this Melbourne send me with any papers or documents? Perhaps I should search my portmanteau. I might have hidden something in it.” She began to rise, but Simon put a hand on her arm.

His hand was warm, and the frisson that passed through her body at his touch reminded her of the flash of heat from their earlier kiss.

“I already thought of that,” he said. “While you were sleeping, I searched all your belongings. I even cut open the top of your luggage. There was nothing. I didn’t expect there to be.

You’re careful, and leaving important documents in a piece of luggage that might be lost or stolen is a mistake you’d never make. ”

He sounded as though he respected her, even admired her work. Marjorie couldn’t imagine that she was the sort of person who would ever be so cunning. She probably should be offended that he’d searched her things, but they didn’t feel like her things. She didn’t remember any of them.

“Have you had any other ideas?” she asked.

He looked over at her in surprise, and she wondered if she didn’t usually ask for his input. But given that he was her husband and, apparently, her fellow agent, why wouldn’t she?

“Yes,” he said. “Most of them I’ve discarded, but a few I’ve been turning about in my mind.”

“Go ahead,” she said, sensing he needed encouragement to keep speaking. Was she his superior? He was treating her with deference the more they discussed work.

“I’ve been thinking about memory, how we form memories and what triggers memories.

In books I’ve read, the author will sometimes have a character enter a space and that

physical place will bring back a memory.

It might be a literary convention, but I know from experience that when I walk into my childhood home and see, for example, the wooden chair where I was told to sit if I misbehaved, it reminds me of those misdeeds. ”

“Were you guilty of many misdeeds?” she asked.

“Enough that I can remember many days in the corner with my spine against the hard back of that chair. My father was a vicar, and he had a mild temper. A less patient man would have beaten me and my brothers until we couldn’t sit for days.”

“He sounds like a good man, and your theory has weight. Unfortunately, it seems time is of the essence. I imagine London is more than a few hours’ ride.”

“My theory didn’t end there. The more I thought of my childhood home, the more I considered the role scent might also have in memory. Each place has a unique scent, but some scents like fresh bread or roses or the incense in a church evoke memory. Taste is much the same.”

She was nodding now. “Perhaps when walking about the village, I might encounter a scent that will evoke a memory.”

“Or if we go to a public house, you might taste something that brings a memory back. I am hopeful memory is like dominoes. When one falls, then the rest fall too.”

“Dominoes?”

“Yes.” He stood and went to a shelf that held a few porcelain figures and a couple of books filled with sermons.

He took a small wooden box and set it on the floor before the couch.

Marjorie rose and knelt beside him as he lifted out rectangular white tiles with black dots on one side. “Do these look familiar?” he asked.

She shook her head.

“I doubt you were ever one for games,” he said.

“My friend had a set like this when I was young. Before we knew how to play and calculate, we would line them up on the floor of his home like this.” Simon began setting the tiles upright, one behind the other until a long line of them snaked about the floor.

“Now, knock that first one down,” he said when he was finished.

Marjorie touched it with her finger, and it toppled, striking all the others so they fell too, making a clatter on the wooden planks.

Simon moved beside her and began to arrange the dominoes again, lifting the first. “This initial domino is a key memory. Once it is uncovered, all the rest will be revealed as well.”

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“If that is true,” she said, watching him rebuild his line of tiles, “then when I remember something like Westminster, why don’t I remember everything else?”

“You didn’t remember Westminster. It was a word that seemed familiar, not a memory. If you had remembered Melbourne’s office or the drawing room in your flat or the name of your dog when you were a child, that might have set something in motion.”

Marjorie stared at the dominoes, considering. “If we subscribe to this theory, then I need a key memory,” she said. She scooted toward the end of the line of tiles. “This memory”—she touched one about five from the end of the line—“is the name of my childhood dog. Did I have a childhood dog?”

“I don’t know.”

“Let’s suppose I did. If I remember his name, it might only trigger the memories that came before it.

” She pushed the domino over, and it toppled those behind it, but the dominoes before it remained standing.

She moved to the first domino. “This is a more recent memory, and this”—she tapped the second domino—“is the location of the rendezvous. I need to trigger this memory, to recover all of these.” She flicked the first domino, and the rest fell over in a neat line.

“That’s it exactly, but the question is, how do we trigger that first memory? Nothing

at this cottage is familiar to you. We only arrived two days ago, so our only chance is the village.”

“We should go first thing in the morning.”

“I’d planned to propose that myself, but for what seems like the second night in a row, you were determined to sneak out of the cottage without me. If I hadn’t stopped you, whoever tried to kill you last night might have succeeded tonight.”

She jolted violently. “What did you say?”

He put a hand on her arm, and his touch was reassuring. “Marjorie, you didn’t hit your head on a cave. You are the most graceful person I’ve ever met, notwithstanding a ballerina or two.”

A sudden shot of heat ricocheted through her chest, and she pulled her arm away from his hand. Was this jealousy she felt?

“I don’t know what you were doing on the beach last night, but whoever was waiting for you tried to kill you. He hit you and either thought you were dead or left you for dead in that cave. If you hadn’t climbed out on your own, I don’t think I would have found you in time.”

“But why wouldn’t I have told you my plans? I know I trust you.” Despite that ballerina comment. “I don’t need my memories to tell me I trust you. I can feel it.” She put a hand to her chest. “Here.”

“I wish I knew. I’m worried you held information you didn’t share and now, whatever that was, I can’t protect either of us from it.”

She reached for his hand and held it. “You’re very good for wanting to protect me. I

don't remember much about why I fell in love with you, but I know that must be one of the qualities I admire. Added to that, you're attentive and astonishingly clever—"

"Marjorie—"

"But I have a feeling that the main reason I fell in love with you is this." She put a hand on his cheek, and his eyes widened.

"I fear I am a very shallow woman because I cannot seem to stop looking at your face. You're terribly handsome.

" That was an understatement. The contrast between his dark hair and light eyes mesmerized her.

But there was more to her attraction than his appearance.

Some sort of invisible force pulled her toward him, made her want to touch him, hold him. .. "I want to kiss you."

"Marjorie, that's very kind, but—"

"I'm not being kind. Your eyes are beautiful. I can't seem to look away from them, and then there are these sculpted cheeks and this razor-edge of a jaw. And your lips." She allowed her fingers to skate over to his lips, brushing the pads of his fingers over them. "I do like your lips, Simon."

His eyes met hers, and she leaned forward and kissed him.

She'd expected him to kiss her back as he had before—gently and carefully—but this kiss held neither of those qualities.

He pulled her into his arms, one hand cradling her head, and kissed her with a thoroughness that left her completely breathless.

His mouth met hers as though he had not eaten in weeks and she was a plate of all his favorite foods.

He tasted and teased and devoured her. She felt hot all over and couldn't catch her breath.

Parts of her she hadn't known existed began to tingle and ache for the feel of his touch.

She couldn't get close enough and, not breaking the kiss, she rose on her knees and moved into his lap.

She would have crawled inside him if she'd been able.

Her hands slid down his chest and under the hem of his shirt.

She touched the warm flesh of his abdomen, and suddenly he pulled back.

"Marjorie." He was as breathless as she, and the huskiness in his voice only made her want him more.

She slid her hands up the muscles of his body to where his heart thudded so hard she could feel it against her palm.

He put his hand over hers, trapping hers under the garment.

"I need to tell you something."



“Tell me later.” She leaned in to kiss him again, and he hesitated then kissed her back. But just as she was sinking into the feel of his lips and his tongue, he pulled back again.

“I must tell you now. But I’ll never say it with you like this.” He lifted her off his lap and onto the floor then stood and moved away from her. He put a hand to his forehead and took a breath. Whatever he had to say was serious, and Marjorie felt her belly tighten with unease.

“Whatever it is, just say it.”

He lowered his hand, and his blue eyes met hers. “We did not come here on our honeymoon. We made up a story about being newly married so everyone would leave us alone and not make friendly calls. If you’re newly married, no one questions why you want to be alone.”

“I see.” She rose and moved toward him, but he took a step away, backing into the mantel of the hearth. Marjorie placed her hands on his shoulders and leaned forward.

He caught her head in his hands. “I’m trying to tell you this isn’t our honeymoon.”

“I understand.” She turned her head to kiss his palm.

“No, you don’t.” His voice wavered slightly, and she knew the feel of her lips on the sensitive skin of his palm affected him. His breath hitched. “I’m not your husband.”

Marjorie ceased kissing his hand. She turned her head to look at him, and he dropped his hands from her face.

“We aren’t truly married,” he said. He took her hands from his shoulders and put them at her sides.

“In fact, you don’t remember this, but you don’t even like me.

No”—he shook his head—“that’s too mild. You hate , loathe , and despise me.

” He moved away from her, putting some distance between them.

“In short, the absolute last thing you would ever want to do, Marjorie, is kiss me.”

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Simon took another step back, anticipating her wrath. He'd seen her angry more times than he could count, and he didn't disregard the prospect of violence if her memory chose to return now. She would tear his head off—and he couldn't blame her.

"I loathe you? No, I don't think so," she said, shaking her head.

So much for her memory returning.

"That's not at all how I feel about you. If I hated you, I would be able to tell. When I look at you, I have a feeling—and that feeling is..." She seemed to be looking for the right words. "Warm. I feel warm when I look at you."

"It might be the heat of your hatred," he said. "You once told me you loathed me with the intensity of ten thousand suns."

She raised her brows. "Poetic, but not very nice."

"You aren't particularly nice. You're intelligent, graceful, and the best agent I've ever met. But you aren't nice."

She sank down to the floor. "Not even to you?"

"Especially not to me, not that I'm complaining. I've learned a lot from you. It's an honor to work with you. When I was assigned to this mission, I was thrilled."

"You look up to me?"

“Everyone does. You’re practically a legend in the Foreign Office. All of us junior agents are terrified of you, but we’d give anything to work with you.”

She put a hand to her chest. He tried not to stare at it. She hadn’t been able to fasten her gown all the way on her own, and the bodice was loose. The tops of her rounded breasts were visible just above the edge of her chemise. “Is this some sort of hoax?”

“Not at all.” He reached down, and she put her hands in his.

He led her to the couch and then took a seat on the edge farthest from her.

“You really are one of the best agents for the Foreign Office. That’s why you were given the location of the rendezvous and sent to Cornwall.

I was sent with you to pose as your husband and provide support. ”

“I know this mission is very important,” she said. “Was there no safeguard? Did I say nothing to you of the rendezvous or give you any indication of where it might be?”

“You haven’t said more than a dozen words to me since we left London.”

“We don’t know each other?”

“We’ve known each other for five years, since I was new to the Foreign Office.

You’d already been there about a decade.

At first, you ignored me. There was no need for you to take notice of me.

But over the years we worked together maybe ten or eleven times.

” This was the eleventh time, but she didn’t need to know he kept track.

“I thought we made a good team. Melbourne must have thought so as well, since he paired us on this mission, despite your protests.”

“I didn’t want this mission?”

“You didn’t want me on this mission with you. You asked for someone else.”

“Who?”

“You said”—he cleared his throat—“Melbourne, I will work with literally anyone else. I’d work with Old Boney himself.”

“Who is Old Boney?”

“Napoleon Bonaparte, our—”

She waved a hand. “I know who he is. Why would I say that? I don’t like Napoleon. I feel cold and stiff when I think of him.” She shuddered.

“I think you were trying to make a point.”

“And I said this in front of you?”

“I’m used to it.”

“Simon.” She reached over and took his hand.

He wasn’t sure if he should allow her to hold onto it.

But now he'd told her that she hated him, she knew the truth.

So he didn't pull away. "I am so sorry I treated you like that. I can't think what came over me.

I can see you're a capable person. I'd be an idiot not to want your assistance.

" Her expression was one of sorrow, but it turned quite suddenly to horror.

She pulled her hand out of his. "But you must hate me . You must have despised having to pretend to be married to me, especially when I didn't know the truth.

And then I all but threw myself at you." Her cheeks turned from pink to scarlet.

"I don't hate you."

She covered her eyes with a hand. "I made you lie in bed beside me, and I put my hands on you and crawled into your lap. And—oh, my God—the bath."

He'd been trying not to think about the bath ever since it had happened.

The sight of her naked had been the fulfillment of every fantasy he'd invented since he'd first laid eyes on her.

And she hadn't disappointed. Her waist was as trim as he'd imagined, her hips as flared, her breasts as round and pert.

And the feel of her wet, naked body in his arms had made him so hard it hurt to walk.

But he was a professional, and he'd been trained well. He averted his eyes as best he could and did his duty. She was injured and dizzy, and she believed he was her

husband. The last thing he'd wanted was to take advantage of her.

But he had. "I apologize. I shouldn't have allowed any of that to happen.

I should have told you about this ruse all along, but when I realized you'd lost your memory, I was afraid you might say something or do something to give us away.

Considering you were attacked last night, we can't trust anyone.

I kept hoping your memory would return."

"I'm just sorry for throwing myself at you. I'm mortified."

"No need for apology."

"No, there is. You must have been horrified, and I'm so sorry for putting you in that position."

"I wasn't horrified."

"Well, disgusted then. Oh, my God. Are you married in truth? Was I trying to seduce a married man?" Her face was pale and her eyes so large they were practically saucers.

"I'm not married."

"You're not?" She seemed to sag with some relief.

"And I wasn't remotely horrified or disgusted by anything between us. In fact—well, that doesn't matter."

But he should have known an agent as good as Marjorie Clawson—that was her true surname—would never let something go unsaid. “Go on. What doesn’t matter?”

“I’d rather not say.”

“And I’d rather you would. Am I your superior? Can I give you orders?”

He couldn’t stop a grin. “I don’t report to you, no. But on this mission, I suppose I’m expected to defer to you.”

She gave him a satisfied smile.

“But this isn’t related to the mission.”

Her smile fell. Then it reappeared, and as lovely as her smile was, it made him uneasy. “I confess I don’t recall anything about being an agent. But I must have good instincts if I’m as good as you say, and do you know what my instincts are telling me, Simon?”

“I’d prefer not knowing—”

“I think you rather liked kissing me,” she said, ignoring him.

“Maybe even as much as I liked kissing you. Because whatever I might have felt for you before, I don’t feel that way now.

I don’t even believe I ever felt that way.

I must have been attracted to you—perhaps I saw that as a liability and tried to keep my distance.



I don't know what I thought or why I behaved so badly.

But I can't deny the way I feel about you now. ”

Simon's mouth felt dry, and he swallowed. “And how do you feel?” he asked, his voice little more than a whisper.

“I like you.”

“I like you too.” And he did. He'd never particularly cared for her abrasive personality, but that hadn't stopped him from lusting after her.

But her personality seemed to have changed with that blow to the head.

He liked this new Marjorie quite a lot. God, he hoped she wouldn't return completely to her old self when her memory returned.

“And I did enjoy kissing you.” Holy hell, but he'd wanted to do a lot more than kiss her.

“But that isn't why we're here.” Was he telling her or himself?

“We're expected to keep everything above board here and complete our mission. ”

She nodded, and he was disappointed she agreed so readily. He wouldn't have minded being persuaded to break the rules.

“Thank you for telling me the truth,” she said.

She didn't add finally , but he heard the echo of the word.

“Everything makes more sense now. Of course, I’m even more terrified I won’t be able to remember who I am and the information I hold, but there’s nothing for that, I suppose.

Clearly, this mission is crucial to the war effort else someone wouldn’t have attempted to kill me and ensure the smugglers can never reach the rendezvous. ”

“That’s the other reason I’m sleeping on the couch,” he said.

He’d expected her to try and sneak out again, but that hadn’t been his most pressing concern.

“By now whoever tried to kill you is probably aware the attempt was unsuccessful. I expect they’ll try again, and since they can’t be sure I don’t also know the rendezvous, they may try to kill both of us. ”

She rose to her feet. “You think someone will come here tonight and try to kill us?”

“It’s a possibility. I won’t let it happen. I have my pistol right there.” He indicated a cloth in which he’d wrapped the pistol, so she wouldn’t see it. “If anyone tries to get in, I won’t hesitate to shoot.”

Her gaze lingered on the cloth then slid to the front door and then the back. He knew her well enough to know what she was thinking. “I’ve barred the doors and locked the windows. I plan to keep watch all night. You can go to bed. You’ll be safe.”

“You are always trying to send me to bed,” she said. “Not this time. Even if I try to sleep, I won’t be able to. I rather think there would be something wrong with me if I could sleep while knowing someone might be lurking outside, waiting for the chance to murder me. We’ll keep watch in shifts.”

If he didn't know better, he would have thought the old Marjorie was back again. She gave the order as though it was second nature.

“You have a head injury. You should rest.”

“I can rest on the couch as well as in my bed chamber. Besides, you've done nothing but take care of me. It's time you rested.”

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As exhausted as he was, he could not allow her to keep watch on her own. She was injured and not herself. Probably best not to argue with her, though. A compromise? “Why don’t we work together? One of us can sleep on the couch while the other keeps watch in the chair. After two hours, we switch.”

“Very well. The person keeping watch wakes the other immediately if anything suspicious occurs.”

“Agreed. The only matter to settle is who keeps watch first. I’ll take the first watch and wake you about half past two.” Except if the night was uneventful and she was sleeping, he wouldn’t wake her. She needed her sleep.

“I don’t think so. You’ve already been on watch. I’ll take the first one and you rest.”

“I’d rather—”

“If you don’t trust me then just lie on the couch with one eye open. But you’d be smarter to sleep so you are fresh for your shift.”

“Fine.” He knew he was beaten and would rather not waste more time arguing about the matter. He stretched out on the couch, his feet dangling over the end, and pulled the crocheted blanket draped over the back to cover him. She went to a chair to the right of his head and sat.

“Should I close the shutter on the lamp?” she asked.

“No. If they think we’re awake, they may not attempt to break in.”

“But don’t we want to catch them?”

Simon did want to catch whoever hit Marjorie on the back of the head and left her for dead, but not while she was injured and more of a liability than an asset. “When your memory comes back, we’ll lay a trap for your attacker. Until then, we should avoid confrontation.”

“I hate to agree, but I do. I can’t remember the first thing about firing a pistol. I couldn’t even tell you if I’ve ever held one. I don’t think I’d be much help if we were attacked.”

“Wake me at half two,” he said, and closed his eyes, though he had no intention of sleeping.

With only the sound of the ticking clock on the bookshelf, Simon allowed his thoughts to drift.

Of course, they went right back to how he’d felt holding Marjorie in his arms. How her hands on him had aroused him.

How her lips had been sweeter than he’d dreamed.

She’d probably hate him even more once her memory returned.

She’d blame him for what passed between them, and he couldn’t even argue that she’d been the one who kissed him, the one that crawled into his lap.

She’d say she hadn’t been herself, and that was true.

That was why he’d stopped her, even when every fiber of his being had told him to take her to bed.

He wanted Marjorie, not only her body or half her mind.

He wanted all of her, and that included her flaws.

Not that he was under any illusion he'd ever have her. But he could always remember tonight.

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A T HALF-PAST TWO, THE clock chimed, and Simon sat up.

Marjorie had known he wasn't sleeping. His breathing wasn't deep or regular.

But he was resting. Meanwhile, she had listened for any unusual creak or scrape.

The ticking of the clock, the settling of the house, and the constant crash of the waves on the rocks were the only sounds she heard.

She told him as much when he asked if she'd heard anything.

"Good. I'll wake you at half four, but if they haven't come by then, they won't try tonight."

They traded places, she sinking into the couch cushions, which were still warm from his body. She pulled the blanket about her and the faintest scent of him wafted past her nose. That scent was so familiar and so comforting. She really could not believe she had hated him before.

"Simon?" she said, looking over at the chair where he sat with one leg crossed over the other.

“Hmm?”

“You said my name was Marjorie Burrows. If we’re not married, is that my name?”

“No. I should have told you before. I simply forgot. You’re Marjorie Clawson.”

Marjorie Clawson. She’d hoped hearing her true full name would stir something in her, but it sounded like that of a stranger. “You’re sure? Do people call me Margie or—”

“God, no. Another agent tried it one time, and you all but took her head off. In fact, we don’t usually use Christian names when speaking. You call me Burrows and I call you Clawson or Agent Clawson.”

“Burrows.” Saying it was pleasant and not foreign. “Burrows,” she tried again. She glanced up at him. “Is that how I say it?”

“No. You say it like, Burrows! ”

“I do not bark like that.”

“You do. It’s practically one syllable when you speak it.”

She sighed and closed her eyes. “I really am quite insufferable, aren’t I?”

He shrugged. “You just don’t have time for social niceties.”

“Don’t say that.”

“I’m afraid I’m quoting you.”

She pulled the blanket over her head, which did not help as it only brought his smell closer to her nose.

All the while she'd been keeping watch, she'd had to force her eyes not to slide over to him.

But how could she not want to look at him?

In the lamplight, she could see the planes of his face and imagine how warm she would be if she climbed under the blanket with him.

But instead of doing what she wanted, she'd risen and built up the fire in the hearth. Now, under the blanket, she was almost too warm. "Simon?" she said, still under the blanket.

"Yes?"

"Don't ever quote me again."

"Noted."

She closed her eyes and tried to picture herself marching about barking people's names and telling everyone she had no time for social niceties.

She didn't like that image very much and decided to imagine herself as Agent Clawson.

What did agents do? Could she fire a gun?

Punch enemies of the state? Decode secret messages?



She thought about asking Simon— Burrows —but instead she drifted off.

When she woke, the sun was streaming through the open windows and the sea breeze tickled her face. The sound of gulls calling as they dove for food was familiar. She didn't have a direct view of the ocean, but she could imagine it was dark blue under a vibrant azure sky.

“It's not half four,” she said.

“No, missus,” came the voice of a girl. Marjorie looked over the back of the couch and saw the maidservant Barbara carrying an armful of linens from her bedchamber.

“It's almost eight. I didn't want to disturb you, but Mr. Burrows said I could change the bedchamber linens as you were sleeping out here.

If I might ask, missus, is there anything amiss with the bed? ”

“No, not at all. I'm sleeping on the couch because.

..” Oh, no. Now she had to think of a lie.

She couldn't tell the girl she was in the sitting room to keep watch for intruders.

But even before she could turn possibilities over in her mind, a lie came out of her mouth.

“Mr. Burrows snores. I couldn't sleep with all that noise. ”

“Oh, I understand, missus. My father snores. Sometimes it feels like the whole house is shaking with his snoring. I'll just take these out to the washing tub.” She indicated the sheets in her arms. “There's tea and toast in the kitchen. Mr. Burrows said you

were going into the village for dinner.”

“That’s right. Don’t let me keep you.” She waited until she heard the back door close behind the servant girl before she stood up. She didn’t want to have to explain why Mr. Burrows’s snoring caused her to sleep fully dressed.

Just then the door to his chamber opened, and he emerged.

The scent of shaving soap proceeded him, and her gaze went right to his clean-shaven jaw.

How was it possible that he looked even more handsome with his stubble shaven?

And how was it possible that he should be so well-dressed even without the help of a manservant?

He wore a navy coat, a dove-gray waistcoat, and navy breeches with riding boots so polished she thought she would see her reflection in them if she bent over to inspect them.

Meanwhile, she was standing in her wrinkled, drab dress from the day before, hair still mussed from sleep.

“You’re awake,” he said, smiling at her, his gaze appreciative, as though she didn’t look like she’d never seen a hairbrush in her life.

“I am, and according to Barbara, it’s eight o’clock, not half four, as it should be.”

He winced. “You were sleeping so soundly that I couldn’t bear to wake you. Anything come back to you this morning?”

Her anger faded as she looked down and turned her thoughts inward.

“My head doesn’t ache as much,” she said, though it was still incredibly tender if she touched the spot where she’d been hit.

She was able to remember her name—Clawson, not Burrows—and the nature of her mission.

She recalled everything they’d spoken of the night before and what had happened since she’d opened her eyes in that cave by the sea.

But if she pushed to recall anything before that, the dark mist swirled about and obscured everything. She clenched her hands. “No.”

He was before her instantly, taking her hands in his. “It’s fine. You will remember.”

“And if I don’t?”

His expression said everything. The troops waiting for those weapons might as well be lost if she didn’t remember.

“It’s just so frustrating,” she said. “I know there’s something there, but I can’t grasp at it.

It’s like when I dangle a string before Tabby and snatch it away before he can pounce on it. I almost have it.”

“You have a cat named Tabby?”

She waved a hand. “That’s not important. We should focus.”

But he grabbed her by the shoulders. “Marjorie, you remembered something. You have a cat named Tabby . What else do you remember about the cat?”

A cat! “Simon, I have a cat!”

“Quick. What does the cat look like? How old? Does she live with you now or was she a childhood pet? Don’t think; just answer.”

She understood his reasoning. She seemed to remember more when she wasn’t trying.

Unfortunately, she couldn’t not try. And as soon as she pushed on the darkness in her mind, it seemed to grow thicker and close in.

She blew out a breath. “I don’t know. When I think of cats, there’s just..

.nothing. I mean, I know what a cat is, but I don’t have a picture in my mind or any reference. ”

“Don’t worry.” He rubbed his hands up and down her arms. “It will come to you. Are you ready for our jaunt to the village? Something there may very well topple that key domino.”

She took her time changing into a high-waisted green dress with cream sleeves.

She added a matching green spencer with a cream collar and piping.

Clearly, she’d packed this outfit with some intention.

Was it in case Simon took her into the village?

But he said she’d hated him, so perhaps she would have gone into the village alone.

What an idiot she must have been. She would much rather have Simon's company than go alone.

She started putting her hair up, almost as though it was something she did without thinking, but as soon as she tried to run a brush through it to gather the loose pieces, she winced with pain.

Better to finger comb her long, brown hair into a tail, which she secured with a green ribbon.

Then she gingerly placed a straw hat on her head and tied the green and white-striped ribbon under her chin.

A quick glance at the mirror told her she looked much improved.

Her brown eyes were clear and there was a bit of color in her cheeks.

She stepped out of her chamber, and Simon turned from the bookshelf.

The book he'd been holding dropped to the floor, but he didn't even look down.

"You dropped your book," she said, pointing.

"Did I?"

Marjorie looked down at her dress. "Is this a poor wardrobe choice?"

"No. It's just—I've never seen you wear anything like that. You always dress so—well, never mind."

"You can say it. Drab." She thought back to the gray dress she'd been wearing the

morning she woke on the beach. “I looked through my wardrobe, and this was the only garment that wasn’t hideous. I always dress badly, I take it.”

“I always assumed you didn’t want to call attention to yourself. Either that or you wanted the male agents to appreciate your mind, not your pretty face. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have—”

“You think I’m pretty?” she asked. She’d looked at herself in the mirror, but her face was that of a stranger and she couldn’t remember any other faces to compare it with.

“No, not pretty. Beautiful. The first time I saw you, I made a complete arse of myself because I couldn’t manage to speak a coherent word. You were the most beautiful woman I’d ever seen. No wonder you thought I was an idiot.”

“I’m sure I didn’t think that,” she said, looking down to hide the blush that heated her cheeks.

“I’m confident you did. You’re different now. You seem more patient and more open, but it’s more than that. Your mannerisms have changed. I wouldn’t think you the same person if I didn’t see those little glimpses of your old self in there.”

“Do you think when I remember everything, I’ll start to hate you again and be awful to everyone?”

“I don’t know, but if you do, please forget about this conversation. I’d rather you didn’t convince Melbourne to send me to Blackfriars to sit in a rat-infested flat and keep watch on some local gang leader.”

“I give you my word, I won’t allow you to be sent to Blackfriars. It sounds awful.”

He proffered his arm, and she took it without thinking. Once again, her instincts were

stronger than her memory.

“Shall we, wife?”

She'd forgotten they were supposed to be married, but of course, outside of the cottage they would have to keep up the ruse. She rather thought she'd enjoy pretending to be Simon Burrows's wife.

“I'm ready for anything.”

## Page 11

*Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 9:50 am*

Simon had never expected to enjoy an outing with Marjorie Clawson.

He expected cold silence and deathly stares from her.

But she chattered happily on the short walk to the village, pointing out flowers and birds she found interesting.

She didn't always remember their names, but when she did, he held his breath, wondering what other knowledge her locked brain would allow to escape.

The village was about a mile from the cottage, across a rocky expanse covered with waving grass this time of year.

They walked along the carriage path, moving aside when a cart passed.

The man driving it waved at them. The village was set on a C-shaped cove.

The houses and businesses lined the white beaches and sat amid the rocks and boulders.

Marjorie gasped as soon as the village came into sight.

"The water," she said. "It's so lovely."

The color was nothing short of breathtaking.

He'd never seen that shade of blue anywhere else in England.



The white houses and colorful fishing boats bobbing in the cove made for a charming picture.

The scene was completely different than the view of foggy streets and coal-blackened stone he saw every day in London.

“I thought the view from the bed chamber was pretty, but this...” She gestured to the scene before them, her words seeming to escape her. He rather liked her childlike wonder and could not imagine the Marjorie Clawson of two days ago expressing such full-throated appreciation.

“The walk has made me hungry,” he said. “Shall we find a public house?”

“I’d love that.” She smiled up at him, and he wished such simple gestures like that wouldn’t make his heart tighten in his chest as though she’d caught hold of it and squeezed.

They entered the village and were greeted by everyone they passed with a smile or a welcome.

A woman swept the stoop of a white-washed home with pink flowers in the window box.

A blue sign hung above another white building with the word Bookshoppe in white letters.

“Oh, a bookshop!” Marjorie’s hand tightened on his arm. “Let’s go inside.”

Simon opened the door for her and followed her into a dark shop that smelled of ancient books, lemon furniture polish, and candlewax.

The walls were lined with shelves of books so high the ladders on either side would be needed to reach the uppermost. At the back of the shop, a white-haired man in spectacles lowered the book he'd been reading and looked up.

“Good morning” he said and began to rise. “What may I help you find?”

“Please don't stand on my account, sir,” Marjorie said. “We just came in to browse.”

“I see.” He settled back in his chair. “There's no better way to spend a morning. I just brewed some tea. Would you like a cup?”

“None for me. And you, dear?”

Simon knew this was just an act. He was not really married to her, but when she smiled up at him, he almost wished she were his wife in truth. “No, thank you, sir. Actually, I was interested in seeing some maps. Do you have any for sale?”

“I carry a few maps of the area, walking paths and some of the coastline. To go with those, we have quite a selection of books on pirate lore and the Cornwall flora and fauna,” he said.

“Visitors tend to like those books.” He pointed to an area in the front of the store, and Marjorie headed that way.

Simon followed, though he had little interest in stories of the Barbary pirates who used to terrorize this coast. A map of this area wouldn't be particularly helpful either, but any map might trigger her memory.

When Marjorie picked up an illustrated book of local plants, Simon pulled a book about smugglers from the shelf.

The first chapter seemed to tell the stories of several famous smugglers from the area.

Might be good reading if he had to spend another long night on watch.

Anything was better than forcing himself not to stare at Marjorie while she slept just a few feet away.

He found a small selection of maps and held one out to her. She opened it, turned it this way and that then shook her head. He gave her another but she simply shrugged her shoulders. Simon sighed. The plan didn't seem to be working.

They browsed for a while longer, Simon still holding the book on smugglers. Marjorie picked up this and that. At one point she whispered to him, "I have no idea if I've read any of these books or what I even like. I must enjoy reading, though. I was unexpectedly excited when I saw this shop."

"I have seen you with a book more than once," he said, "but I don't think I ever noted the titles."

"Too bad. Perhaps it would have been helpful to see if reading something I have already read jogs my memory."

"Good idea. Everyone has read the Bible. We might try reading some of the more familiar passages back at the cottage. There's a copy on the shelf in the sitting room."

"I'd like that." Her gaze flicked down to his book. "Will you purchase that?"

"I think I will." He brought the book to the bookseller who glanced at it and nodded.

When Simon had paid for the volume, he tucked it in the pocket of his coat and escorted Marjorie back outside.

They walked a little further and came upon a small group of children standing before a painted wooden board with a square cut out of the top to make a crude stage.

A hand puppet dressed in a dark gown and a white cap gripped a small stick and beat another puppet dressed in a red suit, crying “Fool! Fool! Fool!”

The children burst into laughter as the female puppet pounded the male puppet over the head.

“What is this?” Marjorie asked, pausing to watch.

“Punch and Judy,” he said. “It’s a puppet show.”

“How could you forget the baby?” the female puppet screeched. Obviously, the actor hiding behind the painted stage was a man pretending to be a woman.

“I remember now, woman!” Punch answered, grabbing her stick and tossing it away. “I promise this time I will not lose the baby while you’re away.”

The female puppet addressed the audience. “Now, children, I need your help. I have asked Mr. Punch to watch the baby while I’m away, but I want you to watch Mr. Punch and report back to me if he misbehaves. Can you do that?”

The children cried, “Yes!” Simon smiled when Marjorie answered as well.

Judy brought a small doll dressed as a baby out and much hilarity ensued as the baby clearly preferred her to Mr. Punch and cried every time she tried to hand him the baby.

Then Judy departed, leaving Punch with the baby, and he was as inept as always.

He tossed the baby in the air and dropped the baby, and the children laughed and laughed.

Simon had seen this sort of play too many times to count, but it seemed new to Marjorie.

He found himself laughing along with her, enjoying the way her eyes sparkled when Judy returned and the children told on Mr. Punch.

“Oh, no!” Marjorie cried when Judy went behind the curtain and returned with the long stick again. She grabbed Simon’s arm as she laughed at the way Judy beat Punch.

Then the play was over, and she was still chuckling as Simon led her across the square to a public house.

“I had no idea you were such a lover of theater,” he said.

“That was hardly theater,” she said as they entered the busy establishment and found an empty table near the window.

“You prefer Shakespeare then.” He said it casually, hoping it might spur some memory.

She shrugged. “I don’t know what I prefer. I have a feeling I wasn’t the sort of person who often went to the theater.”

“I couldn’t say.” He ordered them coffee and two plates when the server passed by. When he looked back at her, she was staring out the window.

“What is it?”

“I haven’t recalled anything yet. Surely, I’ve been in a public house before, but nothing at all seems familiar. Not the smells or the sounds.”

“The food will arrive in a few minutes. Perhaps that will taste familiar.”

She looked dubious. “What was the book you purchased at the bookshop? Something about smugglers?”

He pulled it from his coat pocket and handed it to her. “I thought I might read it while on watch tonight. Something to pass the time.”

She turned it over and opened a page and then looked up at the sound of a violin. Simon turned his head. “Ah, looks like they’ll have some music,” he said. “This is excellent. Music is a powerful conveyor of memory.”

A man took a seat on a stool before a drum and nodded to the woman who finished tuning her violin.

Another man joined them, and he held a fife.

A fourth carried a tambourine and he stood in the middle and counted.

Suddenly, the group launched into “Early One Morning” with the tambourine player singing.

The song was quiet and pretty and required no tambourine.

Many of the house’s patrons turned to watch and a few sang along.

Simon glanced at Marjorie. She looked intrigued by the song but wasn’t singing.

“Have you heard this?” he asked. “Thank you,” he told the serving maid as she set down their coffee and what looked like some sort of hearty soup and a crust of bread.

“It’s a very pretty song, and it seems familiar.” Marjorie was still watching the musicians. “Oh, don’t deceive me. Oh, never leave me,” she sang along.

“You do know it.”

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Marjorie cut her gaze to him. “She sang that part earlier. I can’t tell if I remember it or just learned it quickly.

” She tasted her soup and drank some coffee.

Simon wanted to bang his head on the table when she didn’t suddenly gasp as her memory rushed back.

He’d been so certain this trip to the village would rouse something in her.

What the devil was he supposed to tell the smugglers when they came tonight?

He couldn’t ask them to wait another night.

Their window to make the rendezvous would be incredibly slim, leaving no margin for error.

He was running out of time. England was running out of time.

The singer launched into “Barbara Allen,” which was an old ballad.

“You must know this,” Simon said.

Marjorie shook her head and pushed her soup aside. “It’s hopeless, Simon. If we return to London now, could Melbourne send someone else to give the rendezvous point in time?”



“No. The captains must be away tonight for the best chance at making the rendezvous. If they go with the tide in the morning, they might still have a chance, but every moment that passes that chance is slimmer.”

She put her head in her hands. “I’m sorry. I wish—”

He reached over and took her hand. “This isn’t your fault.”

“But it is my fault. Why did I go out that night? Why didn’t I share the information I held so I wasn’t the only one who knew?”

“We still have a few more hours. Try not to think about it. You seem to remember more when you aren’t so focused on it.”

She scowled at him, which was familiar. Except this time her eyes weren’t cold and hard. “How am I supposed to not think about the one thing that will save countless soldiers from dying and possibly save England from falling into the hands of a ruthless French emperor?”

“I don’t—” But even as he began the singer spoke.

“Now for something a bit livelier.”

The violinist stepped forward and began to play the “Sailor’s Hornpipe.” Almost without thinking, he began to tap his foot. Several people rose and began to dance in the small area before the dais. Inspiration striking, Simon rose and held his hand out to Marjorie. “Dance with me.”

She shrank back. “I don’t know how to dance.”

“I’ll lead you. Come on. It will get your mind on something else.”

She looked at the musicians and then at him.

She would surely refuse. He could not imagine Marjorie Clawson dancing.

But then she took his hand and rose, and he was pulling her to join the other revelers.

The song was quick and lively, and they joined the group of dancers.

The crowd not dancing began clapping as the dancers skipped in a circle and then the men grabbed the women and twirled them about.

A few men knew more complicated footwork, and they were invited onto the dais to show off their quick feet.

The music sped up, and Marjorie laughed as Simon twirled her faster, dancing her about the crowded space.

She was graceful, as always, and followed his lead.

A few dancers stepped away as the tempo increased even further, and then the few remaining tried to keep up.

Simon was warm now, his breath coming hard as he tried to keep time with the music.

Marjorie was laughing, her face pink, and her eyes shining.

Her hat hung down her back, and her hair had come loose.

Every time he spun her, he caught the scent of her hair, and it made him want to pull her closer.

Finally, the music ended, and Marjorie fell into his arms, laughing. Another song began, but Simon hardly heard it. He couldn't look away from her dark eyes or her plump mouth.

"Let's go back home," she said.

"A walk would do me good." He needed to cool down, dampen his desire, and remember they were supposed to be completing a mission not falling into bed.

Back at the table, he dropped some coins on the wood and slipped his book back into his pocket.

Marjorie tucked her hair back under her hat, and they began the walk back to the cottage.

On the way to the village, she'd had her hand tucked in his arm and he'd not thought much of it. But now even that innocent touch felt as though it was burning his skin through the wool of the coat and the linen of his shirt.

He should probably make some sort of conversation, but he couldn't stop thinking about how it had felt to have his hand on her waist and to hear her laughing.

The walk back to the cottage was not nearly long enough.

He spotted it too soon, and Marjorie released his hand and hurried to the front door.

Simon tried to catch his breath and calm his racing heart.

"You are not here to ravish her," he reminded himself outside.

When he opened the door, he found a trail of clothing.

Marjorie's hat lay nearest the door then her gloves then her spencer.

He followed the path to the sitting room where she stood with her hands on the back of the couch and her back to him.

He swallowed, trying to think of something to say.

"Should we..." he began but didn't know how to continue.

She spun around, her eyes dark and her lips moist. "We should," she said.

Later he wouldn't be able to say who had moved first. Perhaps they moved at the same time.

Suddenly, she was in his arms, her mouth on his.

His hands were in her hair, his legs propelling them into the bed chamber.

The curtains were open, giving him a view of the waves crashing on the beach and the rocks.

He felt as though every emotion inside him was tumbling about like a fish caught in the swell.

He didn't allow himself to think because if he did, he'd stop this.

And he desperately did not want to stop kissing her, touching her, hearing those small, satisfied sounds coming from her throat.

Her hands parted his coat and pushed it off his shoulders.

He let it drop to the floor then grabbed at his neckcloth, tearing it off.

He didn't even care that his clothing was becoming wrinkled on the floor.

She began unpinning her bodice, and he had to pause because he couldn't concentrate on the buttons of his shirt once her bodice gaped open.

She let her garment fall to the floor then reached for his shirt, finishing unfastening the buttons.

She yanked the tail out of his breeches, and he pulled it over his head, realizing too late he hadn't unfastened the cuffs.

When he was finally rid of the shirt, he looked up again and saw she'd discarded her skirt and petticoats and was unhooking her stays.

They plunged to her feet, and she stood in her shift and stockings.

One strap of her shift slipped off her shoulders, and the garment dipped to reveal the swell of her breast.

Simon couldn't stop himself from reaching for her.

He pulled her hard against him. Her warm mouth met his, her tongue teasing his lips apart and delving inside.

He slid his hands to her bottom, ruching up her shift until he felt the velvety soft skin of her arse.

Then he pulled her shift higher, breaking the kiss to strip her of it.

She stepped back, and now he had a view of her naked body. He didn't have to look away this time. She wasn't helpless as he carried her from a bath. She was letting him look his fill, and he knew he'd never tire of this view. She was all curves and slopes and soft dips.

"Take off your boots," she said before sitting on the bed to deal with her garters and stockings.

He hated to look away from her, but he strode to the boot jack in the corner and removed one then the other.

He should gather his discarded clothing, place it over the back of a chair.

But when he turned back, she was lying on the bed.

Naked.

The late afternoon light meant he could see every inch of her lush body from her slim shoulders to the indent of her waist to the chestnut brown curls between her thighs.

He opened the fall of his breeches, and her gaze dipped to see his straining member spring free.

She bit her lip and held out her hand to him.

He stepped out of his breeches then took her outstretched hand, covering her as she wrapped her legs about him and took his mouth with hers.

The feel of her beneath him was better than anything he'd ever imagined, and he had imagined doing this with her an embarrassing number of times. But this time when he felt a hand on his cock, it wasn't his own. She wrapped her fingers around him and

slid them up and down.

His breath hitched, and he grabbed her wrist, afraid this would end too soon if he allowed her to continue.

Instead, he dipped his head to kiss her breast, taking the turgid point in his mouth as his hand slid down her curves and between her legs.

She was damp with need and groaned as his fingers stroked her.

So this was what she sounded like when she was pleased.

And now he wondered what she would taste like.

He'd never even allowed himself to imagine that.

He was half afraid, even now, that he would wake up and find all of this was a dream.

Her hands raked through his hair, pulling on it lightly, a reminder this was really happening.

He moved down her body and settled between her legs, parting them to reveal the pink of her sex.

He stroked it with one finger and watched her legs tremble.

He turned his head to kiss her inner thigh, and she moaned his name.

That was all the encouragement he needed to run his tongue over her seam, part her folds, and find the small nub that would give her the most pleasure.

He swirled her with his tongue, lapping up the taste of her.

No matter what happened, he would never forget the way she tasted and smelled or the sound of her ragged breaths as she neared climax.

His own cock was painfully hard, but he ignored his own desires.

He'd wanted her so long that if this was all she allowed, he'd be content.

"Simon!" she cried, and he closed his eyes.

He loved her use of his Christian name. He loved how desperate she sounded for him. He was in no doubt that she wanted him.

Her hips bucked as she climaxed, and he worked his way back up her body, kissing her belly and the underside of her breast. She opened her eyes as he levered over her and smiled at him. "You're very good at that."

He kissed her lightly. "I ought to be, considering how many times I've imagined doing it to you."

Her look was tender as she cupped his face. "Did I really have no idea how you felt about me?"

"Considering how much you disliked me, I wasn't about to tell you."

"Well, I like you now, Simon Burrows. I like you very much." Her arms went about him, and she put her legs about his waist so his cock was nestled pleasantly near her sex. "I'm not quite done liking you," she said, arching her hips.

"Are you certain?" he said through gritted teeth. It was taking all his willpower not to



drive into her and find his own pleasure. “In a day or so your memory might come back, and you might regret all of this. You’ll remember how much you despise me and hate me for taking advantage of you.”

Her legs dropped, and she pushed him back and sat. “You think you’re taking advantage of me?”

“Marjorie, you must know by now that I’ve been half in love with you for years. You’ve never shown any indication that you felt the same. Now suddenly you seem to want me as much as I want you. I don’t know if either of us should trust your feelings when you’re not fully... you .”

She nodded and looked down at her bare leg for a long moment.

“You’re a good man, Simon,” she said. “If I truly didn’t like you, I was an idiot.

I am not an idiot now, and in this moment, I want your hands on me more than I want to take the next breath.

” Her amber-brown eyes lifted and met his.

At her words, his heart all but stopped in his chest. He put a hand to his sternum, afraid it might not begin beating again.

“The only thing I will regret is not having you inside me.” She rose on her knees and kissed him, then pushed him back and crawled over him.

Her hands explored his body, while her lips nipped at his mouth, his jaw, and she suckled at his neck.

He couldn’t manage a deep breath, and when she straddled him, and he looked up at

the glorious sight of her naked, he thought he had died and entered Paradise.

And then she took him inside her.

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He was hard and thick, and when she sheathed him, she groaned with pleasure.

She leaned back, savoring the feel of him, never wanting this to end.

Somehow she knew how to move, how to angle her hips to give herself the most pleasure.

Judging by the way his head was thrown back, he was enjoying this as well.

She didn't deserve this man—not based on what he'd told her of her behavior before she'd been hit on the head.

But she could spend as long as he'd allow her making up for that bad behavior.

Not that it was any punishment. He was undeniably handsome, and she enjoyed running her hands over his broad chest and the hard muscles of his abdomen.

And the way he looked at her.

She loved how, when his eyes swept over her, they darkened with appreciation. Her entire body warmed at the obvious desire in his gaze. What woman didn't want to be gazed at like that?

She'd already climaxed once, but she could feel the pleasure rising again.

She undulated faster, racing to meet it, and Simon's hands took hold of her hips as though she was his last grip on sanity.

She certainly felt mad in this moment, and then she felt drunk, elated, and ready to take flight as the orgasm crashed through her.

She cried out, clenching her legs around his hips, and collapsing on top of him.

She hardly knew what happened when he rolled her over and added to her pleasure by thrusting inside her several more times before pulling out and groaning as he spilled his seed on the coverlet.

Now Barbara would have to wash it again.

He collapsed beside her and pulled her into his arms, kissing her temple, her hair, and the top of her head. She wrapped one leg about him, feeling safe in his embrace. His heart thundered against her ear then slowed gradually, but she dozed off before the beating returned to normal.

When she woke, the room was dark. Simon had closed the drapes and built up the fire. He'd also covered her with the crocheted blanket from the sitting room. She pushed her hair out of her face and sat, spotting him standing near her portmanteau, using a small mirror on the wall to tie his cravat.

"Why are you dressed?" she asked.

He turned, and his gaze dropped to her naked breasts. She hadn't bothered to pull the blanket up to cover her nudity. That would defeat the point. "Come back to bed," she said.

"You have no idea how much I'd like that, but we have company arriving soon."

"Who? Barbara can come back later."

He grabbed his coat from where it hung on the screen and pulled it on, no small feat considering how form-fitting the tailor had made it. Simon Burrows was a bit of a dandy, no doubt. “Not Barbara,” he said. “The smugglers.”

She sighed. “They’re coming for the rendezvous point.”

“I don’t suppose you’ve remembered it.”

She shook her head. “Still nothing.”

“I’ll tell them to come back before the morning tide then. Nothing else to do.”

“And if I don’t remember by morning?”

“I have no idea. Melbourne didn’t prepare me for that eventuality. I’ll have to write to him and ask. He’ll want the arms back. Perhaps another attempt can be made to re-supply the soldiers in a few weeks.”

Marjorie tossed the blanket aside and climbed out of bed.

“What are you doing?”

“I’ll dress and join your meeting with the smugglers.”

“I’m not sure that’s wise.”

She tossed a look over her shoulder, and he held both hands up in surrender. “Never mind. Might I offer one word of advice?”

She bent and retrieved her shift. “Go on.”

“Don’t tell them you have amnesia or that you were the one with the knowledge of the rendezvous point. It’s better if they think neither of us have the information and can’t give it to them because we haven’t received some secret missive or other.”

“I can do that.” She picked up her stays and began to fasten them in the front. “Don’t you trust these men?”

“Not any more than I have to.”

“I’ll keep that in mind. Could you help me with all these fastenings? Otherwise, it will take me all night.”

He raised his brows. “I’ll do my best.”

“I’m not concerned. You seem to know your way around women’s clothing.”

“I’m no saint.” He began gathering her clothes from the floor.

“Based on what happened earlier, I don’t think I am either.”

He looked up grinning. “I’ll add that to the list of things I like about you.”

By the time a knock sounded on the door, she was dressed—barely. His hands tended to roam, and then she wanted to kiss him, and they almost ended up in bed again.

But now she smoothed her green skirts as he went to open the door and admit four smugglers.

She didn’t know what she’d expected to see, perhaps dashing young gentlemen.

But these four were grizzled old men with taut weathered faces and shaggy white or

salt and pepper hair.

They dressed in simple clothing and walked gingerly, almost as though they expected the floor beneath them to shift as a vessel might do out on the water.

The men removed their caps when they entered the sitting room and spotted her.

She gave them a brief curtsy and watched as they looked to Simon to begin the meeting.

She could feel in the way her body tensed that the sailors' deference to Simon—the man—annoyed her.

She was the one with the information they sought.

Except that information was locked away in her mind, and she hadn't yet managed to find the key.

Better to allow Simon to take charge and stand back and observe.

Simon thanked them for coming and then cut straight to the point. "I'm afraid I have bad news for you."

"Oi, not again," the shortest of the men said. He held his cap in both hands and twisted it when he spoke. "I don't expect a landlubber like you to understand, but the sea is an unpredictable mistress. If'n I don't sail tonight, I won't guarantee you I'll reach the Continent in time."

"I'm afraid I have no choice but to take that risk. I don't have the information yet."

"Wot's this now? You said you'd 'ave it tonight." This was from the man who stood

behind the others. He was taller and sunburned. She remembered hearing his voice that first day when she'd thought Simon a traitor.

"I hope I shall have it by the time the tide comes in tomorrow morning."

"Tomorrow morning?" A third captain said. He was the shortest and the one with the higher voice. Again, she recognized that voice from before.

"You 'ope?" The first captain crossed his arms over his chest. "Are we doing this, Burrows, or nay?"

The fourth captain hadn't said anything, and Marjorie watched him while Simon tried to placate the men.

This captain was very still, and almost as though he felt her eyes on his back, he turned slightly to look at her.

He was a big man, probably three stone heavier than each of the others.

He also looked younger or perhaps that was because his face wasn't as weathered.

He turned back to face Simon, and she studied his back.

He stood straight, and his faded blue coat reminded her of those Navy officers wore.

The other captains were arguing as Simon reiterated that they should return in the morning, but the fourth captain said nothing.

The dull pain in the back of her head seemed to move to the front, and she put her fingers on her forehead to ease it away.



She tried to focus on Simon, but every time she caught a look at that fourth captain, the hammer in her forehead took another swing.

She reached for the back of a chair to steady herself as the room had begun to spin, and Simon was suddenly beside her. “Are you unwell?”

“Just a headache,” she said as he helped lower her onto the chair cushion.

“Sit here a moment. I’ll bring you a cup of tea shortly.”

Then he was walking away, his voice full of command. “That’s that, captains. Come back an hour before high tide. I’ll have the rendezvous point then and you can depart.”

“Will be a bleedin’ miracle if we can make it in time,” the short man said, but he followed the others as they clomped out. Marjorie looked up just in time to see the silent captain glance back at her before stepping out of the room.

She took a breath, and her headache had tapered by the time Simon returned from closing and locking the door. “I’m fine now,” she said.

“Your color is coming back.” He took her shoulders and looked at her critically. “What happened?”

“I don’t know. Usually, it’s the back of my head that hurts, concentrated on that knot.

But the front began to pound. It’s passed now.

” She sighed. “Those captains will be furious in the morning when we have nothing to tell them.” She paced away from him and stared at a decorative bowl on the table where they’d eaten last night.

“There’s nothing for it. We’ll arrange to take possession of the arms, and the Foreign Office will try again in a few weeks. They’ll be out the second half of their payment, but if he can, Melbourne will use them for the next attempt.”

“And what about the soldiers waiting on the Continent for the weapons? They’ve put themselves at risk by leaving their regiments behind and for what? No ships with arms will arrive. They will have been counting on those to help them defeat the French.”

“It’s not your fault.”

She rounded on him. “It is my fault! Men may die because of me.” She pressed the heel of her hand to her forehead. “Why can’t I remember?” She slammed her hands on the table and reached for the bowl. Simon moved quicker than she expected and plucked it from her hands.

“Let’s not throw anything breakable.” He set the bowl on the table again, and she paced away, but he caught her hand when she paced back. “You’re frustrated.”

“Of course I’m frustrated!” She snatched her hand away and turned to pace again.

“You want to hit something.”

“I’d tear this room apart if I didn’t know I’d feel worse afterward.”

“Hit me.”

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She stopped and looked at him over her shoulder. "Pardon?"

"You're frustrated and want to hit something." He strode to her and took up a wide-legged stance before her. "Hit me." He pointed to his jaw. "Right here. Go on. I can take it."

"I'm not hitting you."

"You'll feel better."

"I won't."

"Just hit me, Marjorie. Take your best shot. I won't even flinch."

A red haze clouded her vision. Who knew she had such a temper? "I promise if I hit you, Burrows, you will flinch."

"Doubtful."

She knew what he was doing. He was goading her, and she was falling for it because he was correct. She would feel better if she hit something. And he was just standing there...

Before she even knew what she was about to do, she raised her fist and swung at him. The arc of her arm, the way she brought her fist up to connect under his jaw, felt natural and almost second-nature. She'd done this before. She'd hit a man before just like this.

And then something went wrong.

Simon caught her fist. She couldn't process what had happened at first. It seemed impossible that he'd moved so quickly.

But her smaller fist was caught in his hand, and before she could pull away, he yanked her to him.

Her nostrils flared as she caught the scent of him, mingled with her own scent that still clung to him from their earlier lovemaking.

She brought her free hand up, thinking she might take a shot with that one.

Instead, she grabbed the back of his neck and brought his mouth down to hers. Hard.

He didn't pull away but kissed her back with a passion she hadn't been expecting.

His fervor only added fuel to hers. She freed her other hand from his grip, put a palm on his chest, and shoved him until his back hit the wall.

A table with a lamp rattled, but she ignored it.

She was yanking at his cravat and freeing him from his coat.

His mouth was on her neck, his hands on her breasts, and then he forcibly shifted positions so her back was against the wall.

His coat fell to the floor and she all but ripped his shirt over his head.

When he was free, his bare chest gleaming in the low lamplight, he yanked open her bodice and kissed the exposed flesh above her breasts.

She moaned and pulled him closer, her hands skating down his bare back.

He was so warm, his muscles bunching as she tested them.

She couldn't get close enough, and she all but cried yes when his hands went under her buttocks to lift her.

She locked her legs around his waist as he pushed her skirts aside so she could feel how hard he was under his trousers.

And then, holding her with one hand, he unfastened the fall of his trousers, and she felt him between her thighs.

"Simon, please ," she said just before he drove into her.

Her back rammed against the wall. It wasn't painful—in fact, the feel of him inside her was glorious—but the lamp on the table rattled again.

Her mouth met his as he moved inside her.

He'd slowed his thrusts, and she loved him for that.

He wanted to pleasure her. But in this moment, she wanted fast and hard.

"Harder," she whispered against his lips. "Faster."

"You'll be the death of me," he groaned, but he gave her what she wanted.

When her head threatened to bang against the wall, he cupped the back of it to cover her injury with his hand.

That tender gesture, coupled with the hard thrust of his cock, caused her body to draw inward as pleasure exploded and spread through her.

She dug her heels into his buttocks, and ground against him, her breath so ragged she couldn't seem to draw in air.

And then he was pulling away, setting her down and holding a handkerchief to his member as he too climaxed. The lamp on the table teetered on the edge, and Marjorie reached out a hand and caught it midair. Then she slumped onto the floor and closed her eyes in bliss.

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S HE WAS STILL FRUSTRATED but somehow after an orgasm like he'd given her, that frustration was manageable.

She was not tired, however, and she offered to take the first watch.

He didn't argue, merely raked a hand through his already mussed hair and collapsed on the couch, his breathing deep and regular within moments.

Marjorie went to the bed chamber to clean herself and returned with the blanket, covering him.

Poor man. She'd worn him out these last few days.

He'd taken on the double duty of caring for her and leading this mission.

She could hardly blame him for finally succumbing to exhaustion.

She started for the chair where she'd spent her watch last night, then spotted his coat

and shirt on the floor.

Simon would not like his clothing to wrinkle.

She bent to pick them up, intending to drape them over the back of a chair, but when she lifted the coat, the book Simon had purchased dropped out.

She put the small volume on the table as she hung his clothing then took it with her to the chair.

She wore her shift with her robe over it, and she tucked her bare feet under her as she sat.

The lamp beside her flickered as she opened the book and read the first page.

The author—she had never heard of him—did not have a way with words.

She tried another page, but it was as dry as the first. She flipped forward, thinking perhaps the volume might be more interesting a few chapters in, but it was full of descriptions of shorelines and dimensions of smuggling vessels, and she had absolutely no interest whatsoever in either of those.

She was about to set it on the table and succumb to ogling Simon's handsome face like some sort of degenerate when her hand slipped.

She caught the book in time to keep it from dropping with a loud thud on the floor, but as she did so, it opened to a page toward the end.

This page held no words. Instead, it was full of lines and shapes.

It was bound into the book but folded, and when she unfolded it, her mind rearranged

the shapes and lines into a map of the coast.

The British coast. Xes were marked throughout—she didn't know what they signified, perhaps safe havens for smugglers—but she found herself unable to breathe. She couldn't stop staring at those Xes and the rough drawing of the coastline.

And then abruptly she was on the floor, clutching her head.

She felt as though someone had taken a cleaver and split it in two.

She gasped and reached for Simon, but she couldn't make her hand close on his arm, though it was just a few feet away.

The room was spinning, and she was grasping at air.

She'd seen those maps at the bookshop and nothing had happened, but now she couldn't catch her breath.

Nausea bubbled up. At first, she tried closing her eyes and forcing the queasiness back down. She took a shallow breath, sat up, and her gaze caught the map again. The nausea washed back over her. On hands and knees, she crawled to the table, pulled the bowl down, and was violently ill.

“Marjorie!”

She didn't dare move away from the bowl where she was hunched, but she felt Simon's arms come around her from behind.

“What can I do?” He scraped her hair back and lifted it, cooling her neck.

She struggled to tamp down the nausea and the pain in her skull.



After a few minutes, Simon moved away and returned with another bowl.

Then he dropped the blanket over her shoulders, causing her to realize she had begun to shiver.

“I put the kettle on. Should I send for the doctor?”

She shook her head. “No.” She leaned her head back against the table. “I remembered something.” She opened her eyes, and he was staring at her with a mixture of hope and concern. “Give me a moment.”

He crouched before her and took her hand. His was so warm against her freezing flesh. “There’s a map,” she said slowly. “In the cave.”

“The cave at the beach.”

The kettle began to whistle, but they both ignored it. “I hid it there.” She pressed her hand to her forehead as a slice of pain cut through her. She must have sat there for several moments because when the pain had passed, Simon had silenced the kettle and was sitting cross-legged before her.

“Take your time,” he said.

She nodded. “When we first arrived, I hid the map in the cave.”

“It’s a map with the rendezvous point marked?”

“Yes. I didn’t want it here.”

“I understand. Anyone looking for such a map would search here first.” He put a hand on her knee. “Did you suspect someone was after it?”

“I don’t know. No. I think just...protocol?” She took a shaky breath then looked up at him, and he nodded.

“Is the map still in the cave?”

“I don’t know. I went to—oh, God.” The bowl was in her hands again, and she emptied the scant remains in her stomach. When she’d finished, Simon took the bowl and handed her a damp cloth. She rubbed her face with it.

“Just breathe,” he said. He’d moved beside her and rubbed her back.

“It’s my head,” she said through gasps. “Every time something comes back to me, I feel as though my head is splitting in two.”

“You’re very pale. Do you want to lie down?”

“No—yes. Simon, I don’t know if the map is still in the cave, but that’s why I was there that night. I was retrieving it before our meeting.”

“I’ve already come to that conclusion.” He lifted her up and carried her to the couch, holding her until she ceased shaking. Gradually, her headache began to fade and then the room began to fade.

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He'd come to several conclusions. First, Marjorie had hidden the map with the rendezvous point marked in the cave without telling him.

Secondly, she had gone in the middle of the night to fetch it so she would have it at the ready when they met with the smugglers.

She'd been attacked on that foray. His third conclusion was that she was right to hide the map because someone was obviously watching them and waiting for the opportunity to steal the map or kill them or both.

What he didn't know was whether whoever had attacked her had done so before she'd collected the map or after.

If she'd had the map in her possession before she'd been struck, then the map was in enemy hands, and he had to warn Melbourne as soon as possible.

It was probably too late to stop the British troops from journeying to the rendezvous point on the Continent, but if there was any chance of warning them, he had to take it.

If the map was not compromised, however, then they had mere hours to find it and send the ships with the arms on their way.

Simon glanced down at Marjorie. A little color had come back to her cheeks, but she still looked wan and surprisingly small.

He'd looked up to her as an agent and, at times, a mentor.

In his mind, she'd always been impossibly robust, staggeringly beautiful, and unbelievably competent.

Now she looked frail and delicate, her skin almost translucent so he could see a blue vein in her temple.

He wanted to let her sleep. His conscience told him to carry her to the bed and sit by her side all night, watching over her. If men's lives and the fate of the country didn't hang in the balance, he would have wanted nothing more than to watch her sleep.

But neither of them had that luxury. He couldn't give her more than an hour or two at most. Then they'd have to return to that cave.

He allowed himself to enjoy holding her, hearing her breathe, feeling her skin thaw until they were both pleasantly warm.

And then he set her down and went to the kitchen, returning with tea and toast. She hadn't moved, and he hated himself when he shook her gently. "Marjorie."

"Hmm." Her eyes fluttered but she didn't open them.

"You must wake. I need you to sit, drink this tea, and eat a few bites of toast."

She pushed his hand off her cheek. "Not hungry."

"I know, sweetheart. I'm sorry, but it will be dawn in a couple of hours. Time is running out, and I need you to take me to that cave and show me where you hid the map."

Her eyes fluttered open, her pupils large and the irises more amber than brown in this light. "We should go the cave."

He offered his arm, supporting her as she rose. “Sit at the table and take tea and toast.”

“What time is it?”

“Quarter past two.”

“There’s no time—”

“I won’t have you faint on the walk to the beach. You must eat something.”

She scowled at him. “I have never fainted in my life.”

There was the Marjorie he knew. The steel in her voice heartened him and made him a bit sad. Now that her memories were returning, would she remember how she hated him? Would she treat him with scorn and disgust again?

“But you’re right. I’ll eat.” Her gaze swept over his bare chest. “You should dress.”

“I will.” Once she was seated at the table, he pulled his shirt over his head and donned his boots and a coat. She rose when he offered her his greatcoat. Already, she looked steadier on her feet. When she was ready, he took the lamp from the table.

“Keep it shuttered until we’re in the cave,” she said.

“Can you make it down the path without any light?”

“I’ll have to. We can’t risk someone who’s watching the house seeing a light.”

“Let me go first then.” To his surprise, she nodded her agreement and took his hand.

He led them out of the house, along the path to the beach, and then picked his way carefully down the rocky path to the beach below.

The way was wide and worn and allowed those who traversed it to make a gradual descent.

Still, all it took was one loose rock to twist an ankle or cause a fall, and they might both tumble down.

It was just like her to make this trek down by herself under cover of darkness to hide the map in the first place.

She was lucky she hadn't broken her neck.

When they finally reached the beach, the crescent moon was high overhead.

The weak light was enough to see the rocky outcrop where he'd found her.

Still holding hands, they trudged over the sand until they reached the spot where large rocks jutted from the soft ground.

"The cave is just there," she said, pointing to the rocks.

"The entrance is on the other side of that arch."

"How did you find it?" he asked.

Her eyes narrowed, and he saw the pain that came from remembering flood into them. "Another agent told me about it. He said it was an old pirate cave. They could hide contraband here before coming ashore."

“Can you show me the way in the dark?”

“I’ll try. I want the lamp dark as long as possible.”

He agreed. Anyone looking out from the bluffs above would spot the lamp even from a great distance.

She started for the arch, a rocky structure that must have been hollowed out from centuries or perhaps millennia of waves washing through it.

The large boulders at the base were slippery and jagged.

Ahead of him, Marjorie had one hand on the interior walls of the arch to keep her balance.

Despite everything, she moved gracefully, and he felt like a lumbering giant following her.

Then they were on the other side, and he saw the opening that was hidden from the beach, but which was visible from the ocean.

“I can see why this cave would be popular with pirates and smugglers,” he said, following her inside.

“The only problem is it floods at high tide. No good for hiding arms or anything sensitive to water.”

He opened a shutter on the lamp until he could see her clearly.

Her cheeks were pink with the brisk ocean air, and her eyes were wide with—if he was not mistaken—excitement.

He felt it too. This was why he'd gone into the service.

He'd wanted these clandestine moments, and to have them with her was icing on the cake.

She smiled at him, and he dared to hope she felt the same way he did.

"The moment of truth," she said, indicating the dark cave beyond.

"You remember where you hid the map?"

"Yes. I slid it in a corked bottle and put that high atop an outcrop. It's just back here. Hand me the lamp."

He did so, and she led him the first few steps.

He heard her gasp and then the lantern swayed as she braced herself with a hand on the wall of the cave.

The space they occupied was narrow and compact.

They were both slightly hunched to keep from hitting their heads.

Simon put a hand on her shoulder. "What is it?"

"Take the lamp," she said through what sounded like clenched teeth. He took it and lifted it to see her face. Her eyes were scrunched closed in pain. He started to ask if she had remembered something else, but decided against it and kept quiet until she put a hand on his arm.

"I knew I recognized him," she said.



“Who?”

“That smuggler. The one who didn’t speak when he was at the house.”

Simon shook his head, wishing for the first time he’d been able to take the men’s names. Obviously, the use of names was forbidden. Anonymity was best. “Which one was that?”

“He was a bit heavier than the others and wore a blue coat that reminded me of a naval officer. I didn’t like him, and I didn’t know why until now.”

Simon’s belly tightened. “Go on.”

“I’d seen him before.” She pointed at the ground. “Here. He confronted me with a knife and demanded the map. I told him I didn’t know what he was talking about, and he slapped me across the face.”

“I will kill him.”

“If anyone kills him, it will be me, but we need him. We need to find out who he’s working for and how he discovered our plan.”

“What happened after he slapped you?”

“I’m not sure. I think he hit me with a rock or the handle of the knife.

I don’t remember, but if I had to guess he hadn’t meant to knock me unconscious.

He probably thought I was either dead or he’d make sure I didn’t survive to reveal he was a traitor.

I woke up in the back of the cave with the water rising fast.”

Simon took a breath and tried to calm his thudding heart by letting it out slowly. If she hadn’t awakened when she had...

“He found me. Now we see if he also found the map,” she said. “I have to think not or he would have gone back to whoever hired him with it. Can you lift the lamp?”

He held it higher as she looked up toward the roof of the cave. They moved deeper into it, and then she whispered, “Here.”

Simon stepped toward the wall of the cave and spotted a slight natural ledge in the rock at about the height of his eyes. Marjorie reached up on tiptoe and felt behind the ledge.

“There you are!” she whispered as she pulled down an old brown bottle. She removed the cork and dipped a finger inside, pulling it out along with a rolled paper. “The rendezvous point,” she said.

“I’ll take that.”

They both whirled in the direction of the voice behind them.

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Marjorie didn't know if it was a product of her amnesia or actual déjà vu, but the sense of familiarity struck her hard as she looked at the man who had now threatened her for the second time in a week.

"Hand it over," he said, gesturing with his pistol.

Over my dead body. No doubt he really would have killed her this time, but she had Simon with her, and that gave them an advantage.

Bits and bobs of memory were trickling back to her now.

Thank God the rush had tapered to a drip, and her aching head no longer felt as though it was being torn asunder.

She didn't need much of her memory right now, though.

Dealing with this turncoat would require instinct and training more than anything else.

She cut her gaze at Simon, who was still holding the lamp outstretched.

His hand was steady, and he was looking at her.

She gave him the slightest nod, and he lowered his eyes to acknowledge he understood.

But, of course, he'd understood. He could handle this. He was one of the best.

“How did you find us?” Simon asked the traitor.

“Just hand me that bottle,” he said.

“We kept the lamp dark all the way down.”

That’s right, Simon, talk to him while I form a plan . She hadn’t pulled the map all the way out of the bottle and now she let it slip back inside. Could she hit the conspirator with the bottle? Probably not without being shot first.

“I didn’t need a lamp to see you. I’ve been sitting down here every night. Once I saw she was still alive, I knew she’d come back. Have to admit, I thought I was done for when you saw me earlier, but then I started thinking maybe you didn’t get a good look the first time.”

“I’m getting a good look now,” she said.

“Won’t matter. Give me the bottle with the map.”

“Why should we give you the map when you’ll just kill us anyway?”

“I’ll shoot you in the head if you give me the bottle and shoot you in the belly if you don’t. I don’t have to tell you how long it takes to die of a belly wound. You’d probably drown first.”

“You can have the map and the bottle,” Marjorie said, adding a touch of fear in her voice. “Just don’t kill us. Take it and go. Please.” She wasn’t certain if he believed her act, but he lowered his pistol slightly.

“Hand it over,” he said.

Marjorie looked at Simon again, pretending to be afraid.

But she held his gaze a second longer than necessary.

Now was the moment. She moved forward slowly, crouched, and placed the bottle with the map on the damp sand between them.

She'd made sure to place it far enough away from the traitor, so he'd have to reach for it.

As soon as she backed away, the turncoat bent to retrieve it with his free hand.

He kept his gaze on them, dropping it only at the last minute to locate the bottle.

Simon kicked out, knocking the pistol from the traitor's hand so it clattered on a rock behind him and bounced silently on the sand.

The conspirator jerked up in surprise, and Marjorie landed a kick in his abdomen, sending him sprawling. "Simon!"

But he'd already put his boot on the traitor's throat. "I have him."

Marjorie snatched the bottle with the map back and jerked the turncoat onto his stomach. Simon pinned his hands behind him and pushed him to his feet.

"We make a good team," she said.

"I've always thought so."

Marjorie cocked her head. "Have we done this before?"

“I thought your memory was coming back.”

“In pieces. Not completely.” She gestured to the traitor, struggling futilely to free himself from Simon’s grip. “What should we do with him?”

“Tie him up and gag him back at the cottage. There’s no time to bring in a magistrate before the tide comes in. Besides, Melbourne will want him questioned, see who he’s working for.”

“We need something to tie him.” She lifted the hem of his greatcoat.

“Don’t even think about it,” he said.

“I was moving it aside to rip my petticoat. I know how you feel about your coats, Burrows.” She winced.

“I heard how I barked your name that time. I’ll work on it.

” She tore a long strip off her petticoat and used it to bind the traitor’s hands tightly.

Then she stuck her handkerchief in his mouth and bound that too.

By the time they returned to the cottage, the smugglers were due to arrive any moment.

The turncoat had made the return trek to the house as difficult as possible.

Simon secured him in his bedchamber and closed the door just as a knock sounded at the front door.

Marjorie had smoothed the map on the table, and when Simon let the smugglers in,

she gestured to them to gather around.

“This is your rendezvous point, captains.” She gestured to the X on the map, a cove a few miles from one of the Portuguese ports.

“The English troops have orders to wait for your arrival for two days. I know we are shaving it close.”

"Very close," the tall captain muttered.

“Can you manage it?” Simon asked. “If we need to call it off, now is the time.”

“I can manage it,” said the shorter captain with the higher voice.

“Oi, I’ll get there faster than either of ye,” said the third captain.

“Where’s the other man?” the tall captain asked.

“He won’t be traveling on this mission,” Marjorie said. The other captains exchanged looks. Marjorie narrowed her eyes. “You had your doubts about him?”

“Not seen ‘im before. ‘Adn’t ‘eard of ‘is ship.”

“You might have mentioned that at some point,” Simon drawled.

“Yer supposed to be the spy.”

“Good luck to you,” Simon said, leaving it and shaking each of their hands. “Your King and country are counting on you.”

The captains tipped their hats and were gone. Marjorie went to the fire and tossed the

map into it, watching it burn. “I hope they make it,” she said.

He came to stand beside her. “So do I.” He let out a sigh. “I suppose I’d better go make arrangements for our return to London. Can’t say I’ll enjoy having to travel with our prisoner.” He gestured to the closed door of the bedchamber.

Marjorie reached out and stopped him with a hand on his arm. “Simon, I—”

He shook his head. “We can discuss it when we’ve seen this through. I’d rather things not be awkward between us these next few days.”

“Why would—”

“Please,” he said. “Do me this one courtesy.”

She nodded, and he gathered up his greatcoat and departed for the village.

He’d be back in an hour or so with the coach, outriders, and horses.

She could best use that time to change and pack.

But as soon as she stepped into her bedchamber, she inhaled his scent and closed her eyes.

She could all but feel his hands on her, his lips caressing hers, the warmth of his body.

Somehow she had to give that up and go back to what their lives had been like before.

She couldn’t yet remember everything about her life in London.



A few things, like Tabby's purr and the rooms in her flat, had come back to her.

But she couldn't remember her friends or walking in Hyde Park or visiting the British Museum.

Her strongest memory was of a small, dark office.

The room was only large enough for a desk, a chair, and a bookshelf.

No window brought in natural light, and yet, from what she remembered, she spent all her time there.

Stacks of papers were piled high, and she sat, hour after hour, her candle burning down, as she read and studied the missives.

She was the best. But she was not happy.

Simon had been happy. He had an office in Westminster as well, just down the corridor from hers.

She often heard him pass by her door, laughing and speaking with the other agents.

Sometimes she heard them inviting each other to dinner or discussing the tavern they'd gone to the night before.

She wasn't included. She was a woman and couldn't be included.

She told herself she didn't care, but she did care.

She resented being left out.

And she resented Simon Burrows.

She'd never thought about why she should resent Simon more than, say, Roger McCreary or Tom Score or George Mallory.

She'd worked with all those agents as much as, if not more often, than Simon.

They were all good agents, but none made her feel hot and prickly when they walked into a room.

None of the others made her belly tighten or her breath catch in her throat.

None of the others were heart-stoppingly handsome like Simon or remotely as clever.

She didn't even think she was as clever as Simon in some aspects of the job.

At first, she'd been able to push her feelings for him into a compartment and ignore them. He was younger than her, a junior agent, and she wasn't often asked to train agents. But once he had been trained, she'd had to work with him, and every time she did, she liked him more and more.

Over time, she began to realize he liked her too.

He'd recently said that surely she hadn't been oblivious to his feelings for her.

She wouldn't have been an agent worth her mettle if she hadn't realized he felt more than professional courtesy for her.

The heat in his eyes at times could be scorching.

But she hadn't dared acknowledge her own feelings for him. And, in trying to hide

them, she'd gone too far in the opposite direction and treated him with coldness and often outright hostility.

Was she a child of ten? That was how she'd been acting. Yes, there was the real fear that she'd be less respected at the Foreign Office if she began an affair with another agent. But by the time Simon had been there a year or so, her reputation was solid. That fear was just an excuse.

No. The real fear was of being vulnerable with him—with anyone. She'd always liked being a spy because the job allowed her to hide from everyone, including herself.

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But these past few days, without her memory, she'd felt more like herself than ever before.

What had she been so afraid of? Would Simon ever be able to forgive her for her treatment of him?

Was he already thinking about how to distance himself from her when they returned to London?

Why else would he speak of awkwardness and courtesy?

Now that she had begun to remember who she was, he wouldn't want her anymore.

Marjorie opened her portmanteau and tossed in several items of clothing. She didn't feel like packing. She couldn't imagine not having Simon in her life. How could she convince him that she'd changed? She wasn't the cold, rude person she'd been. She didn't want to ever be that person again.

But how could she expect him to believe that? She hoped she could show him and that, when the rest of her memory returned, she wouldn't revert to her old ways.

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S IMON STEPPED INTO his flat and dropped his greatcoat on the floor.

Of course, he immediately picked it up and hung it on the coat rack, but his exhaustion was such that he had thought, just for an instant , about leaving the

garment on the floor.

From the minute he and Marjorie—Agent Clawson—had retrieved the map, he had not had an hour to think.

He and Clawson had to transport the traitor back to London over several days.

Then, after delivering him to the Foreign Office for questioning, they'd had to endure their own questioning by the minister of this department or the deputy of that office.

He hadn't seen Marjorie since they'd been taken to separate rooms for debriefing.

Simon strode into his drawing room and found his decanter of brandy. He paused, turned over two clean glasses, and filled both with three fingers. Lifting one, he sipped it.

He didn't know what he'd say when he saw Marjorie—Agent Clawson—again. He rather wished he wouldn't see her. Then she couldn't end things between them. She wouldn't be able to tell him that now that she had her memory back, she remembered how much she hated him and never wanted to see him again.

She'd hidden her loathing for him remarkably well on the journey back, but they'd both been consumed by work and hadn't had a moment to speak privately.

They'd taken turns sleeping, and he couldn't help but glance at her on occasion when she was unaware, just to convince himself that everything that had happened between them wasn't a dream.

Instead, he was reminded of how beautiful she was and how, after months and months of infatuation, he'd fallen in love with her.

Perfect. He'd fallen in love with the one woman who hated him more than all else.

His snifter was empty, so he lifted the decanter to pour another.

“Pour one for me as well,” a familiar voice said. Simon stilled. He knew that voice.

“Already did.” He lifted the second snifter. “I was wondering when you’d show yourself.”

Marjorie stepped into the drawing room. She was still wearing a cream-colored pelisse, but her hat hung by its pink ribbons down her back. “I was wondering the same. I’ve been waiting a half hour.” She strode forward and took the snifter of brandy.

“I apologize.” They spoke so formally now. He hated it. “I suppose you’ve come to discuss what happened in Cornwall.”

She took a small sip of brandy. “Not at all. I feel as though I’ve done nothing but speak about Cornwall.”

“I didn’t mean the mission.”

“I know what you meant. My memory is clear. In fact, more and more of it has been returning since that last night.”

He nodded. That was as it should be. He wouldn’t wish permanent memory loss on her even if that was the only way he’d ever have her.

She set her snifter on the drinks cart beside him. “I owe you an apology,” she said.

Simon blinked. “What are you talking about?”

“I don’t like to apologize, Simon, so it would help if you were quiet during this.”

“Of course.”

She gave him an impatient look, and he put a finger to his lips. Then he downed the rest of his brandy. He was afraid he’d need it.

“As I said, my memory has been returning. A few years are still fuzzy and even some details of specific events are muddy. Melbourne had me see Farrar about the bump on my head.”

Simon was relieved to hear it. Farrar was one of the best surgeons they had.

“He can’t promise all my memory will return. He also said that a blow to the head wouldn’t account for the change in my personality. He commented several times that I seemed far more amiable of late.”

“Did you throttle him?”

“No. I apologized to him as I am about to apologize to you because it doesn’t matter if I was the greatest spy in British history, I didn’t have the right to treat you as I did.”

“Agent Clawson—”

“Won’t you call me Marjorie?”

Yes, yes he would.

“If you’ll permit me.”

“Then I’ll call you Simon, if you’ll permit me .”

“Of course.”

“Good.” She took a breath. “Simon, I did not treat you well. I didn’t treat most people well, and what I realized as my memory came back to me was that I was a rude, cold person.

Don’t try and deny it. I remember much of it perfectly, and I’m ashamed of how I behaved.

I’m deeply sorry for how I treated you, and there’s no excuse.

” She blinked and Simon wondered if she was holding back tears.

Marjorie Clawson crying? He did not want to be the cause of that.

He grasped her hand. “Clearly, you have changed. I forgive you, and I only hope we can be friends.”

She looked up at him. “I was hoping we might be more than friends.”

He didn’t dare take a breath. He didn’t dare move a fraction of an inch lest this dream would diffuse, and he’d wake.

“I remembered something else, Simon. I remembered why I behaved as I did. I always felt left out because I was a woman and almost every other agent was a man. I felt I had to act aloof and arrogant to be respected.”

“I can’t argue with that logic. Most of the male agents only grudgingly respect you, and even they would say the Foreign Office is no place for a woman.”

“I’ve heard all of that, and it made me defensive and angry.

And then I met you.” She squeezed his hand.



“You were so young and so handsome, and I liked you right away. At first, I was simply smitten by your good looks. Yes, even I can be smitten. But as I came to know you and work with you, I liked you even more. You’re not like the others.

You’re patient and kind and completely ruthless when you need to be.

You’re an excellent agent, but you’re an even better man. ”

His head was spinning, and he wanted— needed —to sit, but he feared any slight change might break this spell.

She took a breath. “I knew you had a tendre for me. As you said, you weren’t very good at hiding it.

Unfortunately, the fact that you reciprocated my feelings scared me.

I was afraid if you knew I felt the same—well, I don’t know what I thought might happen.

But for so many years I’d trained myself not to show any vulnerability to the other agents, so I refused to show you any.

I think I believed the only way to hide my feelings was to behave as though I couldn’t stand you. ”

“You’d make a good actress,” he whispered.

She gave him a sad smile. “Yes, but underneath all that acting, I was falling in love with you.”

He drew in a slow breath.

“I know you don’t feel the same. I’m not a fresh-faced debutante.

I know the difference between love and lust. What happened in Cornwall was lust. I don’t expect anything more from you.

But I wanted to apologize nonetheless, and I promise you that, going forward, I’ll treat you with respect.

I hope we can still work together. I value you as a partner.

” She released his hand and stepped back.

Simon stared down at his empty hand and then at her. She was backing away.

“No,” he said.

“No?” Her eyes widened, and she swallowed audibly. “I understand.”

He realized she thought he meant he couldn’t still work with her. “I mean, yes, I would be honored to work with you and be your partner whenever Melbourne pairs us, but you have what happened in Cornwall all wrong.”

“I do?”

“That wasn’t lust—well, it was lust. Quite a lot of lust, actually, but it was more than that for me.

All these years I’ve been infatuated with you, but over those few days, I fell in love with you, Marjorie.

And I’ve been scared out of my mind that once your memory returned, you’d recall how much you despised me. ”

She was shaking her head.

“I thought I would lose you,” he said.

“No.”

“I thought you came to end things between us.”

“I told you I wished for us to be more than friends.”

“There’s nothing I could want more.” He reached for her, but she held up a hand. Simon tensed because now was the moment when she demolished all his hopes. But instead, she sank to her knees.

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M ARJORIE KNELT BEFORE Simon, her heart thudding in her chest. She couldn’t catch her breath, a bead of sweat trickled down her back, and her hands shook as though she’d stepped out into a blizzard naked. The comparison was apt as she’d never felt more exposed than she did now.

“What’s this?” he asked. “Stand up.”

“I can’t. This is the tradition. I must kneel when I ask you to marry me.”

His eyes went wide. “Is that what you’re doing?”

She nodded and waited for him to object. She waited for him to say, don’t do it . Instead, he stared at her with those striking sea-blue eyes. “Simon David Burrows,” she began. “Would you do me the honor of becoming my husband?”

He sank to the floor before her. “Marjorie Anne Clawson, I thought you’d never ask.

” His hands went to her face, cupping her cheeks so he might kiss her tenderly.

She’d been missing his kisses, missing his touch.

She wrapped her arms about him, catching her knee on her skirts, and sent them both tumbling to the floor.

Simon rolled so she fell on him, and he took the brunt of the tumble.

And that was why she loved him. Even in something small like a stumble, he was there to catch her.

“I love you, Simon,” she said, kissing him again.

It was a long time before he was able to answer.

By then they were in his bedchamber which boasted two wardrobes— two!

—the man had more clothes than she did. Lying with her head on his naked chest, his voice rumbled in her ear.

“That wasn’t exactly tradition,” he said. “I’m supposed to ask you to marry me.”

She propped her chin on her elbow. “Well, I couldn’t wait around for you to figure that out.”

“I see you lost some of your patience when your memory began returning.”

“I was extremely impatient to be right here.”

“In my bed?”

“In your bed, in your arms, wherever you are.”

He smiled, and her breath caught. He really was the most handsome man. “I love you, Marjorie. Will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?”

“You’re supposed to kneel.”

He gave her a wicked grin. “If you insist.” He rose over her and slid down her body, kneeling between her legs. A few moments later, he asked her again.

She said yes. Several times.