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Dangerous Epilogue
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Epilogue

“You must tell him, Constance.”

The Dowager Countess of Lyndham set her teacup back in its saucer, and sent her granddaughter-in-law a stern look. Constance briefly met the woman’s eyes then averted her gaze.

“I can’t, not yet.” She shook her head before she rose from her chair and moved to stand at the window overlooking the Keep’s garden. The gray winter day only worsened the bleak feeling inside her.

For more than a week, she’d been struggling between despair and uncertainty. In the beginning, she’d easily dismissed her nausea. Jamie had been ill, and her natural instinct was to deny the truth by telling herself she’d caught something from her son. She’d recognized the fallacy of her thinking from the beginning. Only she’d refused to believe it.

Even more painful had been Lucien’s tender concern for her. If he’d known the real reason for her illness, his reaction would have mostly likely been one of grim regret. He’d made his feelings quite clear. He wouldn’t want

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the child, and the knowledge made her heart ache with an intensity that was almost physical. Worse, she wasn't even certain how she felt. Loving the baby would be easy, but if she passed on her gift, just as she had to Jamie, what sort of a life would the child have?

"He deserves to know, my dear girl." A gentle rebuke filled the dowager's voice, pulling her out of her thoughts.

"And I would tell him if it weren't for what he said not more than a month ago." She glanced down at her hand pressed against her belly and winced. "He doesn't want any children."

"The boy actually said that?" Lady Lyndham's voice held an incredulous note and Constance turned her head to see the old woman's look of dismay.

"Not in those exact words, but I know it's what he meant."

"I'm surprised the doctor didn't say anything when Lucien summoned him to the keep more than a week ago."

"I asked him not to." She winced at the way she was deceiving her husband. "I told him I wanted to surprise Lucien."

"Well, you won't be able to wait too much longer to surprise the boy." The Dowager eyed her critically. "He's bound to notice something any day now, and *then* where will you be?"

"I know," Constance said with a troubled sigh. "I just can't tell him yet."

"Can't tell me what?"

The sound of Lucien's deep voice echoed behind her, and Constance whirled around to see her husband standing in the salon doorway. Startled by

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his unexpected arrival, she simply stared at him. He wasn't wearing a jacket, and he'd rolled his shirtsleeves up past his elbows. He looked as if he'd been crawling through spider webs.

Deliberately ignoring his question, she shook her head. "Whatever have you been up to? You're covered in dust." Despite the misery of her predicament, the sight of him still filled her with happiness.

The dirt covering his face emphasized the scar on his cheek, and he looked just as wickedly dangerous now as he had the night they'd first met. The memory of that sinful night at the Clarendon made her breath hitch, and her eyes met his piercing blue gaze. Almost as if he could read her mind, a wicked grin curved his sensual lips.

God, he had only to smile at her and she was little more than butter melting in his hands. Even now, after almost two years of marriage, he still had the power to make her tremble. But this time she trembled with more than just desire.

He slapped dust off his hands as he winked at her. "Jamie, Gene and I have been searching for the Seth statue."

"Lucien, really," Constance exclaimed. "Must you use that horrendous nickname for Imogene? She's becoming a hoyden."

"I think it suits her," Lucien said with a roguish grin and crossed the room to kiss her cheek. "Now, then, what secrets are you hiding from me, *yâ sabāha?*"

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“If I told you, it wouldn’t be a secret any longer.” Unable to help herself, she laughed at his playful manner.

A flash of devilment darkened his gaze. She’d seen that look many times since their wedding night. It meant he intended to use any method at his disposal to get his way. And the man would do it in ways so pleasurable she’d be unable to keep her secret from him. Trepidation spiraled through her as he leaned forward to press his mouth to her ear.

“I confess I rather like the idea of you having secrets, my sweet. It will be infinitely more gratifying to extract your confessions in bed,” he murmured. As always, the deep, husky note of his voice made her legs go weak.

He straightened and grinned wickedly at her. It was an open invitation to sin, and any other time it was one she would have been eager to accept. But now, she was too worried. Aurora was right. She needed to tell him about the baby, but she just didn’t know how.

“Stop teasing your wife, Lucien.” The dowager sniffed inelegantly. “A woman is entitled to the occasional secret.”

“I can wait, *yâ sabāha*.” Lucien chuckled softly and kissed Constance on her brow before he took a step back from her. “So, do you want to hear my news?”

She didn’t know where to laugh or cry. Relief won as she studied her husband’s look of supreme satisfaction. Lucien’s expression reminded her of Jamie when he’d done something that made him very proud. It was impossible to resist his exuberant manner, and with a smile she nodded at him.

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“We found it.”

The words rang through the room with a rush of almost boyish excitement. Aurora gasped loudly, and Constance’s hand flew to her throat at the flush of exhilaration on his face.

“Do you mean...?” Her question died on her lips the moment he nodded.

“The Seth statue is in the library as we speak.”

“And the map?” She barely breathed the question as she met his triumphant gaze.

“How soon can you be ready to leave for Cairo?”

Aware how much finding the artifact and the map meant to him, Constance rushed forward to fling her arms around his neck and kiss his cheek. “Oh darling, that’s wonderful. I know how frustrating a search it’s been for you.”

“I never would have found it without Jamie’s help.” Lucien shook his head as amazement swept across his face. “It was hidden in a secret niche in the tower’s upper chamber.”

“You went back to that terrible room?” Her voice echoed with dismay, and disappointment tightened his mouth into a frown. Immediately she regretted her question. Lucien and Jamie had grown close, and she knew he would never have asked her son to go back to the tower.

“No,” he said in a flat voice. “The boy went there without my permission.”

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“I’m sorry, my love. That was unfair of me,” she said softly as she pressed her palm to his cheek. “I know you’ve ordered both the children to stay out of labyrinth unless someone is with them. I just...”

The moment her voice trailed away, he nodded with understanding. He knew how much the room still frightened her. The memory of Oliver and his attempt to kill the boy still haunted her and there were nights when her nightmares made her toss and turn in her sleep. Lucien turned his head to kiss her palm in a silent gesture of forgiveness. There wasn’t anything he wouldn’t do for her. She’d rescued him from the depths of hell with a love that continued to amaze him.

His eyes met hers and he arched his eyebrows. “I’m of the opinion that Jamie is destined for political greatness. When I asked him why he’d disobeyed orders, the scamp had the cheek to say that he hadn’t disobeyed us because he wasn’t alone.”

“You encourage their adventuresome natures too much, Lucien. The boy could have been hurt.” Aurora snapped. “Who the devil did the child say he was with?”

“Someone named Isabel.”

Brittle and sharp, the sound of china crashing against the floor startled him and before he could move, Constance hurried forward.

“Are you hurt, Grandmother?” He followed Constance as she knelt at the older woman’s side. The dowager’s gray complexion made him frown with

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concern. She looked as if she'd seen one of the ghosts that still roamed the Keep.

With quick movements Constance used a napkin to dab at the tea soaking its way into his grandmother's gown. Obviously shaken, the old woman's hand trembled as she took the table linen from Constance. She shook her head and turned her attention to the skirt of her dress, leaving Constance to pick up the pieces of the shattered cup and saucer.

"I'm quite all right, my dear."

"You don't look it." Lucien frowned at his grandmother and rested his hand on her shoulder in a gesture of concern. "In fact, I'm inclined to have someone fetch Dr. Coburn."

"There's no need for that." Aurora appeared to have regained her strength, and she waved her hand at him in a dismissive manner. "It was simply a shock to hear her name."

"I take it you know who Isabel is." Lucien eyed her in a way that said he wanted the truth from her.

He briefly looked in Constance's direction and saw her hand shake as she laid several pieces of broken china on the tea tray. The dismay darkening her lovely features made his heart ache. She'd realized the truth. Jamie hadn't been with one of the living. He'd been talking with the dead.

Over the past few months, he'd noticed the boy's abilities seemed to have strengthened, but he'd not mentioned it to Constance. She believed passing on

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her gift to her son had cursed him. It was the reason he'd told her he was glad they didn't have any children.

He didn't want her to carry the burden of thinking she might pass on her gift to another child. Although he'd come to think of Jamie as his own, the thought of seeing Constance round with their baby was something he longed for more than he'd ever expected to.

"She was my sister." His grandmother's quiet words jerked him out of his contemplation.

"Your sister?" Lucien stared at the dowager in astonishment. "You've never mentioned you had a sister."

"She died at a young age." A slight quaver echoed in the dowager's voice. Reaching for her cane, Aurora rose to her feet. "I think I'll retire until supper."

"That's all you have to say?" he exclaimed in a dumbfounded voice.

"It's all I intend to say, Lucien." His grandmother straightened to her full height, her hands braced against the silver wolf's head of her cane. "We'll not speak of this again."

Not waiting for his response, Aurora walked past him with an unreadable expression on her face. He shook his head in amazed disbelief at the way his grandmother was signaling a retreat. It was unlike her in every respect.

He'd never known her to be afraid of anything, but she was definitely afraid now. When he took a step after her, Constance quickly rose to her feet and touched his arm. He looked down at her and grimaced an

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acknowledgement of his wife's silent plea to let his grandmother go for the moment.

"She needs a little time to collect herself," Constance said softly. "I think she must have cared for her sister very much."

"Then why hasn't she ever mentioned her before?" Lucien frowned at the empty doorway of the salon. "It doesn't make sense."

"Perhaps after she's had time to think on it, she'll explain things."

Lucien heard the distracted note in his wife's voice, and forgetting his grandmother for the moment he turned his head to see Constance staring at the floor. In a quick move, he wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close. As she looked up at him, he kissed her gently.

"You're not to worry, *yâ sabāha*."

"I know. I'm certain she'll be all right."

"I *meant* you're not to worry about Jamie." He slid his thumb across her plump lower lip. "The lad is far more comfortable with his gift than you give him credit for."

"I wish I could believe that." A bleak expression crossed her face as she leaned into him and pressed her cheek against his chest.

"You can." He hugged her tight. "He's got a good head on his shoulders. The devil himself would find it difficult to outwit the boy."

A soft laugh warmed his bare arm, and he smiled with relief. She'd been distracted for over a week now, and her laughter was a welcome sound. Her recent illness had made her more than a little despondent, but it didn't

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account for the strained look on her features whenever she thought he wasn't watching her.

"He is something of a charmer, isn't he?" Constance lifted her head to meet his gaze with a smile.

"Like his mother," he murmured as a familiar need tugged at him.

He brushed his mouth over hers, savoring the sweet remnants of almond butter cookies on her lips. She returned his kiss, but drew back seconds later. The anguish darkening her hazel eyes vanished almost as quickly as it flashed in her gaze.

In the blink of an eye, her pain disappeared behind a composed expression. That was precisely what bothered him the most. She'd suddenly and easily put emotional distance between them. And it wasn't the first time either. He didn't like it. Not one bit. Whatever troubled her, it was time for them to resolve the issue. When they were finished, he'd find a way to convince his grandmother to share her secrets as well.

"Don't you think it's time you tell me what's really troubling you?" His quiet question caused her to stiffen in his arms.

"What makes you think there's something wrong?" She glanced away from him. "I'm simply worried about your grandmother, and I confess that it's difficult not to be concerned about Jamie."

"Stop lying to me, Constance," he said through clenched teeth.

She knew he hated being lied to, and yet she was doing just that. With a shove at his chest, she broke free of his embrace. This time the distance

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between them became a physical one. He narrowed his gaze at her when she sent him a look of annoyance.

“Don’t be ridiculous.” Despite her irritated denial, he heard the fear in her voice.

“Then stop playing games, and tell me what the hell is wrong with you.”

His angry growl hung in the air between them, and he realized it was the first time since they were married that he’d directed his anger at her.

Frustration gnawed at him like an angry beast. She was afraid and yet she refused to tell him why.

How could he help her if she didn’t talk to him? Had she suddenly realized she didn’t love him after all? The thought alarmed him as he frantically tried to think of any possible reason that would explain her odd behavior.

No, he’d stake his life that she still loved him. Then what could make her so frightened that she’d hide it from him? Watching her closely, he saw the way her pulse fluttered frantically on the side of her neck, and he folded his arms across his chest.

“Well?”

“Well, what?” she snapped. “Really, Lucien, one would think you suspected me of having an illicit liaison.”

His heart slammed into his chest wall like a sledge hammer. Sweet Jesus, was that it? Had she been unfaithful? It was the perfect explanation for her odd behavior over the past week or so. Fury welled up inside him at the thought.

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“Are you?” he snarled then immediately realized the folly of the question. Her mouth fell open in shocked disbelief before her expression darkened with an anger that matched his own. God, he was fool to have even thought such a thing.

“I. Am. *Not.*” She spat out the words with furious indignation as she sailed toward the salon door.

He shot out his hand to grasp her arm the minute she tried to pass him. “This conversation isn’t finished, *yâ sabāha.*”

“It is as far as I’m concerned,” she said in an icy tone as she attempted to shake off his inflexible grasp.

“Damn it, Constance, I know you wouldn’t betray me. It was dull-witted of me to even suggest such a thing.” He tugged her against him, and his body responded to her lush curves just as it did every time he was near her. “I love you, sweetheart. Your happiness is all that matters to me.”

She remained silent in his arms, her face averted from his gaze. For the first time, he realized she’d lost weight, her face wasn’t quite so full, and there were shadows under her eyes. Had her illness taken a greater toll on her than he’d realized? A slim thread of fear whispered through him.

“*Yâ sabāha*, whatever it is that’s troubling you, wouldn’t it be easier if we faced it together?” Slowly, she turned her head to meet his gaze, her eyes glistening with unshed tears. The misery in her face made his chest grow tight, and he pulled her deeper into his embrace. “Do you remember what I told you the day we were married?”

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She didn't speak, she simply nodded. Capturing her chin, he forced her to look at him. "I told you that I would do everything in my power to keep you safe and make you happy. But I can't do that if you won't tell me what's wrong."

"This is different," she whispered with a note of anguish in her voice. "I just don't—"

"Aunt Constance. Uncle Lucien." Imogene burst through the salon doorway, her panic evident in her shrill cry. "Come quick. It's Grandmother. She fainted and fell in her room."

A jolt of fear slid through him at his niece's words, and he quickly released Constance to race out of the salon. He took the stairs two at a time, vaguely noting the sound of Constance's and Imogene's footsteps close behind him. The instant he reached the second floor, he charged down the hallway to his grandmother's room. Lily, his grandmother's lady's maid, stood in the open doorway waving him to a halt.

"It's all right, my lord, she'll be fine. A bit bruised perhaps, but no broken bones."

"Have you sent for Dr. Coburn?"

"No she hasn't," Aurora snapped with the air of an irritated empress from inside her room. "There's no need. I simply need to rest my weary bones."

Over the top of Lily's gray head, he saw his grandmother propped up in her bed amongst several pillows. At that moment, Constance and Imogene

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came to a halt beside him. With a dismissive gesture, the dowager sniffed with annoyance.

“Lily, stop standing guard like a watchdog and let them in. I’m far from being on my deathbed.”

“Not yet you aren’t, but you’re not a young bride newly arrived at the keep either.” The lady’s maid glared at her mistress.

“Stop being impertinent and fetch me some tea.” Beneath her irate tone of voice was a note of deep affection for the other woman.

“Impertinent am I?” Lily muttered as she stepped out of the doorway to let everyone pass into the room. “Try to look after her and what does she do? Calls me impertinent.”

The lady’s maid disappeared from the room as Lucien went to his grandmother’s side. Taking her hand in his, he scowled at her. “I’m going to send for Dr. Coburn. One doesn’t faint without a reason.”

“There was a reason,” Aurora said quietly as she turned her head toward Jamie, who stood near the window with his head bowed. Extending her hand to him, she smiled. “Come here, lad. It wasn’t your fault.”

Jamie hesitated for a long moment before he slowly moved forward to take her hand. Guilt furrowed the boy’s brow and Lucien knew that whatever had happened Jamie somehow believed he was responsible.

“Tell me what happened.” Lucien sent the two of them a stern look. When Jamie paled considerably, he immediately regretted his harsh command.

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“He saw her again,” Imogene exclaimed as she circled the bed to stand at Jamie’s side. Her hand slipped into her friend’s free hand in a gesture of support. “He saw Isabel standing next to Grandmother.”

Behind him, he heard Constance utter a soft noise, and he turned his head toward her. Although her face was devoid of color, she remained stiff and unmoving. Satisfied she wouldn’t slide to the floor in a faint as his grandmother had done, he turned back to Aurora.

“An explanation, if you please, Grandmother.” The reticence on her face made him clear his throat in a noise of ruthless demand. She looked up at him then released a sigh of acquiescence.

“Very well.” Aurora nodded. “Isabel was older than me by four years. I adored her. She was smart, witty and she was as good a shot and rider as our brothers.”

“I followed her and my brothers everywhere they would let me. When I was nine, Isabel, Frank and Robert allowed me to go ice skating with them at the pond below the manor. Father had told us we couldn’t go, but we sneaked out anyway.” Aurora paused and closed her eyes for a long moment.

“I don’t know how many times I wished afterwards that we’d not disobeyed. I was bigger than Isabel, but not as strong. We hadn’t been on the ice long when I heard a loud crack.” A shudder wracked his grandmother’s body, and Lucien leaned forward to take her hand. She drew in a deep breath and looked up at him with tears in her eyes. “The ice gave way beneath me,

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and I went into the water. The others were at the other end of the pond, but Isabel was the first to reach me.

“I was so frightened. Frightened and cold,” Aurora whispered. “When Isabel tried to pull me out of the water, I fought her, not really knowing what I was doing. She fell in with me, and went under, but she never came back up. Frank pulled me out of the water, while Robert went into the water to find her. He would have died too if the estate manager hadn’t been out inspecting the property. He heard us screaming, and he was the one to pull Robert out of the water.”

“It wasn’t your fault,” Lucien said gruffly, wishing he could ease the pain and guilt in his grandmother’s voice. He leaned forward and pressed a kiss to her forehead. “Even if you’d stayed home, your sister could have fallen through the ice.”

Aurora closed her eyes again. “But I didn’t. I’m responsible for her death.”

“No.” Jamie’s voice was strong and vehement. “Isabel said to tell you that’s not true. She said her skirt got caught on something in the water and she couldn’t free herself.”

“Is she here, child?”

At the tremulous sound of Aurora’s question, Jamie shifted uncomfortably. His gaze flew toward Constance who was studying him with consternation. Aware the boy didn’t want to upset his mother, Lucien sent his

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wife a look of reassurance. Her hand pressed to her stomach, she swallowed hard before sending her son a nod to continue.

“Yes, Grandmother,” Jamie said quietly. “She’s standing between Mother and his lordship.”

“I don’t understand. Why is she here? The keep wasn’t her home, Foxbury Manor was home.”

“She said this is going to be her new home.” Jamie leaned forward and kissed the dowager’s cheek. “She asked me to give you a kiss until she can do it herself next year.”

“Next year?”

Startled, Aurora stared at her adopted grandson in amazement, and behind him Lucien heard Constance release a soft cry that she immediately strangled into silence. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw her sway on her feet.

“Bloody hell,” he growled. Lunging forward, he wrapped his arm around Constance’s and ushered her to a nearby chair. “You’re not well. You should be in bed.”

“I’ll be fine. It was just a dizzy spell.”

She didn’t look at him as she spoke. Instead she stared at Jamie for a long moment before shifting her gaze to Lady Lyndham’s astonished expression. The look the two women exchanged made Lucien straighten slowly.

“Jamie,” he murmured as he studied Constance’s expression with an odd sensation in the pit of his stomach. “Exactly what does Isabel mean when she says this is going to be her new home?”

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His question made Constance's face pale further, and she jerked her gaze upward to meet his. He didn't look away from her as he waited for the boy's answer. Silence filled the room until Constance shook her head in a gesture of defeat. She stood up with an unsteady lurch, and he grasped her waist to keep her from falling. What the hell did it mean that Isabel wanted a new home? Once again he noticed how drawn Constance's features were. He'd have to send for Dr. Coburn to ensure she didn't have a relapse. His thoughts came to an abrupt halt. Sweet Jesus. She was pregnant.

"You're with child," he rasped.

His hands biting into her shoulders, he struggled with the knowledge that she was carrying his child and hadn't told him. *This* was her secret. Why hadn't she told him? The answer sucked all the air out of his lungs as if he were drowning. She carried a child she didn't want. Beneath his fingers he felt her shudder, and he released her as if he'd been burnt. He didn't know what to say to her. Hell, he didn't even know what to feel. Air. He needed fresh air. Suddenly feeling trapped, he wheeled about on his heel and strode from the room. He heard his grandmother's angry cry and Constance's soft sob, but he ignored the sounds. She'd hidden the truth from him, and that wasn't something he could easily accept without some time to gather his thoughts.

* * *

Constance sat in the window seat of her bedroom looking out over the rolling landscape that surrounded the Keep. Lucien had stormed from his grandmother's room over two hours ago. Lady Lyndham had ordered her to go

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after him, but it had taken her several moments to gather the nerve to follow him. When she'd reached the main hall, Jacobs had informed her Lucien had already headed toward the stables.

This was exactly what she'd feared would happen. He didn't want the child. She understood why he would find the thought of a child alarming. For years he'd believed he would go insane. Then to suddenly be told another family member was to blame for so many murders had been an enormous relief. But it had still left niggling doubts about his family's bloodline.

She stretched out her hand and pressed it against the cool glass. He'd been so angry when he'd left. His scar had stood out a stark white against the darkness of his anger before he'd left his grandmother's room. The memory made her flinch. He despised deception, and she'd deceived him in the worst possible way. She should have listened to Lady Lyndham over a week ago when the dowager had voiced her own suspicions.

Now Constance had only made matters worse. She'd erected a wall between herself and Lucien. One that would require time to remove. And how could she blame him for feeling the way he did, especially when she'd questioned her own feelings about the baby? But in those moments when Jamie was telling them about Isabel, she'd come to realize her fears were unfounded.

Growing up, she'd viewed her gift as something to hide, and she'd been teaching the same thing to her son. She should have known better. Instead of

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denying her son's gift, she should have been teaching him that if one used discretion the gift they possessed could help others.

The fact she'd helped numerous people with Lucien's blessing since their marriage only made her denial of Jamie's gift that much more foolish. She should have been showing him how to use his gift wisely. But then Jamie already seemed to know that. He'd helped the dowager by reassuring her that she wasn't to blame for Isabel's death. She looked down at her stomach and pressed her hand against her belly. The sudden sensation of a fish flopping over in her stomach made her gasp.

Isabel.

Warmth spread its way outward from her belly into every part of her body. It was a comforting sensation that told her everything would be all right. She smiled slowly. Somehow she'd make Lucien see that this child would help them overcome their fears. Isabel's birth would only serve to bring them closer together. She leaned back against the window frame, longing for Lucien to come home. She needed to feel his arms around her. Needed his love.

The quiet sound of the bedroom door opening made her scramble to her feet. Heart pounding, she watched as Lucien entered the room. For a long moment, his gaze met hers before he looked away from her.

"You should have told me." The flat statement was devoid of emotion and it sent her heart plummeting to her stomach.

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“I...didn’t...know how.” She took a quick step toward him then stopped as he turned to look at her. The expression of betrayal in his blue eyes sent a physical ache pulsing through her.

“How long have you known?”

She hesitated for a moment then averted her gaze. “Almost two weeks. Dr. Jacobs mentioned it was a possibility when I started feeling unwell after Jamie’s illness.”

“And you couldn’t tell me?” he bit out sharply. “You had to keep it a secret from me? Your husband?”

“I know. I was wrong not to tell you.”

“Then why didn’t you? Why *didn’t* you tell me about the baby?” His harsh words scraped across her heart until it bled, and she spread her hands in a gesture of despair as she turned to face him.

“I couldn’t. I didn’t know what to say,” she cried out in anguish.

“Bloody hell, Constance, when have I ever done anything that would make you think you couldn’t tell me something? There are no secrets between us—at least there weren’t until now.”

“You told me you didn’t want any children,” she whispered in the lull of his roar.

“What?” He sent her an incredulous look and her heart skipped a beat. Had she misunderstood him?

“You said you were glad we didn’t have any children, that a baby would only make things difficult for us.” She watched his amazement slowly change to

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pained regret and she took a step closer to him. “You’ve never said it, but I thought you were worried Oliver’s madness was a trait you might pass on to our child. I thought a baby would drive a wedge between us.”

In two giant strides, he closed the distance between them and gathered her up into his arms. “Never, *yâ sabāha*, I would never let anything come between us. I love you more than I ever thought possible to love someone. Nothing will ever change that.”

He kissed her hard, before pulling her tight against him to hold her in the quiet. With their arms wrapped around each other they stood in a silent embrace for a long time. She was certain he’d been as fearful of losing her as she had him. Although he never mentioned it directly, she knew Lucien had never forgotten how she’d left the keep the month after Oliver’s death. She knew because whenever she left him, he was reluctant to part, and always demanded to know when she’d return. Lucien’s grasp eased slightly, and with one hand, he lifted her head to stare down at her.

“I adore you, Constance,” he whispered in a voice filled with emotion. He cupped the side of her face with his hand, and she covered it with her smaller one. “I said what I did because I knew how much it upset you that Jamie inherited your gift. I didn’t want you to carry that burden with our child.”

“So you’re not unhappy about the baby?” She bit her lip as she searched his expression for any hint of regret or resignation.

“No, of course not,” he exclaimed softly. “And you? How do *you* feel about the baby?”

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She saw his eyes darken with concern and she slowly shook her head. “I didn’t know how I felt about it until just a little while ago. But Isabel made me see how much I want this baby.”

“Isabel.” Lucien frowned. “Something tells me I already know the answer, but what does she have to do with this?”

“She’s chosen us, Lucien. She wants to come back.”

“I see.” A disconcerted look furrowed his brow, and he looked decidedly uncomfortable.

“It will be all right, Lucien. It’s the way things work. Some spirits cross over, others choose to return and live again.” She lightly stroked his face with her fingers.

“Well, it’s a damned bit unsettling,” he growled.

“I’m afraid you’re going to find it a great deal more unnerving trying to make her toe the line. Something tells me she’ll have your grandmother’s iron will. Not to mention her talent for thievery.”

“What?” His scowl deepened, and she laughed.

“When you left the keep, I returned to your grandmother’s room. Jamie said Isabel has been taking personal items from us for some time now.”

“Exactly how greedy is she?” he asked with a hint of irritation. His response tugged another laugh from her. The man had no idea how fast he would lose his heart to their child.

“Do you remember the hairbrush and brooch that went missing before we were married?” When he nodded, her smile widened as she eyed him with

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mischief. “Then there’s the diamond bracelet you gave me for our first month anniversary, and apparently the gold pen you lost several months ago is something she’s particularly fond of as well.”

“Damnation, do you mean to tell me the imp took my favorite pen?” His deep growl reflected intense exasperation.

“I’m afraid so,” she murmured with more than a hint of amusement.

“So what do we do now?”

The disgruntled expression on his face made her smile. “We let nature take its course.”

“And what about the possibility she might be born with your gift?”

“I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it. Jamie’s survived quite well with his unique ability, and something tells me Isabel will be up to the task as well.”

“You sound remarkably sure of yourself,” he muttered with an expression that reflected his reluctant acceptance of Isabel’s presence in their lives.

“I’m not sure of anything except my love for you.”

His cerulean eyes grew dark with hunger as he lowered his head to capture her lips with his. She reveled in the kiss, matching his passion with her own. The fervor with which his firm mouth plundered hers was an expression of his relief born out of desperation. Their misunderstanding had put a huge chasm between them, and she didn’t want to think about how terrifying such a rift would have been if they’d let it go unchecked.

Dangerous

Lucien's mouth slid off hers and blazed a trail across the lower portion of her jaw. Her heart lighter than it had been in days, she breathed in the scent of leather and fresh air off his skin. She loved him so much.

"It seems Cairo will have to wait."

Although she didn't hear the slightest hint of disappointment in his voice, she knew searching for Sefu's treasure was something he'd dreamed of for a long time. She shook her head and sniffed with amused disgust.

"I'm far from an invalid, Lucien."

"Perhaps, but I don't wish to take any chances where you're concerned."

"I thought living dangerously appealed to you." She pressed her body into his with an intimate swivel of her hips. "Have you forgotten all the dangerous moments we've enjoyed since we first met?"

"No," he groaned softly as she brushed her hand over his quickly growing erection.

"Then take me to Cairo, and I promise you more danger than you can possibly imagine."

"I can imagine quite a lot," he rasped as he swept her off her feet and into his arms. Striding to the bed, he kissed her hard before he laid her gently on the mattress.

"And Cairo?" she whispered as she stretched out her hand to press against his chest.

"Do you really think I can deny you anything, *yâ sabâha*? If you have your heart set on coming with me to Cairo, then so be it."

Dangerous

Love and passion made his handsome features all the more striking, and his ardent display of emotion filled her heart with happiness. Wickedly handsome, his expression brought to mind that fateful night at the Clarendon. No sooner did the memory of their first meeting flit through her head than another collection of images swirled through her consciousness.

The sight of Lucien striding through the sand toward her was quickly followed by a vision of him holding an infant in his arms. The visions sent a pulse of joy through her, but it was the sight of their bodies entwined in passion that made her heart race. Like that night in the Clarendon, Isis would not be denied her lover.

“I love you, Lucien,” she whispered, her gaze locking with his. “And the only thing my heart is set on at the moment is having my husband show me how dangerously wicked he can be.”

The End