

Epilogue

“I pronounce that they be man and wife together.”

With the marriage ceremony complete, Grey escorted his radiant bride down the aisle of his family’s parish church accompanied by jubilant organ music. Indeed, wedding once was good and twice was even better.

Père Laurent had married them first in the Boyer farmhouse the morning after the raid. Grey hadn’t really thought that Cassie would change her mind, but he didn’t want to take any chances.

After sharing danger, the Boyers and Duvals felt like family, and Grey had thought he couldn’t be happier than when Père Laurent had pronounced him and Cassie man and wife. Cassie had glowed and Grey had beamed like the summer sun. The regular breakfast was easily converted into a wedding breakfast with the addition of a bottle of fine wine the Boyers had been saving for a special occasion.

The bride and groom stepped out onto the church porch. As guests tossed handfuls of flower petals, Cassie leaned up to whisper, “This wedding is even better because we have our natural hair colors.”

Laughing, he brushed a kiss on her shining dark copper

hair. In the fortnight since their return to England, spring had arrived in full force and the air was filled with birdsong and the scent of blossoms. "You smell of roses," he murmured.

Cassie's Aunt Patience had stepped into the role of mother of the bride and helped with a trousseau, starting with a bronze gown that emphasized Cassie's coloring with breathtaking richness. Grey took care of the special license. With a baby on the way, the sooner the better. Besides, he hated having to sneak around the house to spend nights with Cassie.

Lady Kiri Mackenzie was the matron of honor, and exotic dark-haired Kiri and gloriously red-haired Cassie made a pair dazzling enough to make any man swoon. Peter was Grey's best man, and there had been some hushed female remarks about how striking the pair of them looked side by side.

Since Grey was no longer available and had zero interest in any other woman, speculative female gazes were evaluating Peter, not that it would do them any good. After Peter was accepted into Mr. Burke's theater company, Lord and Lady Costain had resigned themselves to his choice. Now he was more interested in acting than marriage. Before the service, Peter urged Grey to be sure that he produced a male heir so his brother would never have to worry about inheriting.

Guests were lining up on the porch to offer personal best wishes, and Grey was delighted to see that two of his old classmates had made it in time for the ceremony. "Ashton! Randall! I'm so glad you're here."

Smiling widely, the Duke of Ashton shook Grey's hand with both of his. "Randall and I were delayed by a broken carriage wheel, but we were determined to make it even

if we had to ride the post horses. I never thought I'd see this day!"

"Nor I." Randall, lean and blond and military, clapped a hand on Grey's shoulder. "Frankly, I'd given you up for lost, Wyndham."

"And good riddance, I'm sure." Grey grinned as he took Randall's hand. "I hear you've taken on a foster son who's one of Lady Agnes's students. How do you like fatherhood?"

Randall responded with a smile far happier than any he'd had as a boy. "I recommend it, especially if you can start with a twelve-year-old like Benjamin. That way you skip the messy stages."

Lady Agnes, General Rawlings, and Miss Emily had come from the Westerfield Academy to celebrate. Everyone in the Summerhill community was there, of course. They liked knowing that the next generation of Costains was secure.

The St. Iveses were present in full force, including George, the youngest son, down from Oxford. They couldn't have been happier if Cassie really was their daughter and sister. Her uncle had walked her down the aisle, though there had been no nonsense about him "giving" her to Grey. She'd been her own woman for too many years.

Last in line was Kirkland, his handsome, saturnine face relaxed. "Remember those lists I always made in school to keep track of everything I needed to do?"

Grey laughed. "Who could forget? You were fear-somely organized even then."

Kirkland pulled a worn piece of paper from his breast pocket along with a pencil and held it up for Grey to see. The name "Wyndham" was written in the middle of a list where everything else had been crossed off. With a flour-

ish, Kirkland drew a line through the name. "I now have one less thing to worry about!"

Grey laughed, then turned serious. "I'll never be able to thank you for everything you've done. You gave me freedom, and Cassie." Grey put an arm around his wife. "All I need to make my happiness complete is Régine."

Kirkland grinned. "I trust Cassie isn't upset by the implied comparison."

As he moved away, Cassie nestled comfortably against Grey's side. "In another fortnight or so, Lady Agnes will allow you to have her."

"Only because Lady Agnes is keeping a puppy to spoil."

Cassie glanced up. He could happily drown in those deep blue pools of patience and wisdom. She asked, "Is the crowd bothering you?"

He knew better than to lie to Cassie, since she could see through him. "A little," he admitted. "But this is home and these are friends, and during the wedding breakfast I can slip away for a few minutes when I need to. Will you slip away with me?"

She grinned. "Of course. People will notice and enjoy thinking scandalous thoughts."

The Costain carriage pulled up in front of the church to take Grey and Cassie to Summerhill for the wedding breakfast. The Costains and Cassie's aunt and uncle had already been taken in another carriage while other guests were walking along the lane that led to the great house. There would be an indoor feast for close friends and relatives, and an outdoor festival for the community. Inevitably the two groups would mingle.

Grey helped Cassie into the carriage, then followed. As soon as the door was closed, he pulled her into his arms

for a smoldering kiss that would have been scandalous in the church.

By the time they came up for air, her flowered chaplet had fallen and left a trail of pale pink petals on her lovely bare shoulder. Cassie smiled at him with a tenderness that turned his heart inside out. "Tonight we sleep in our cottage by the sea, my golden lord. Even if it is really a farmhouse."

"It was worth ten years in prison to have found you, my one and only love," he said softly.

Cassie cupped his cheek. "I never believed fortune would bring me to such happiness." Her gravity dissolved into laughter. "Along the way I was warned by several people that you'd never, ever marry me. I always agreed with them wholeheartedly."

He joined her laughter. "That's a good reason to have two weddings." He kissed one of the delicate petals on her throat. "So there is no mistaking the fact that we are well and truly married, now and forever more." Abandoning seriousness, he added, "Any time you want me to marry you again, just ask!"