

## THE LADY OF BOLTON HILL BY AUTHOR ELIZABETH CAMDEN

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## Chapter Four Six years later London, 1873

Clara's heart pounded for a solid five minutes after reading the review of her debut performance at Covent Gardens. The final line summed up the review perfectly: "Miss Clara Endicott is a startling talent, and displayed virtuoso skill in coaxing the keyboard into soaring heights of grandeur and exquisite phrasing, a performance that was marred only by the workmanlike quality of her original composition."

Workmanlike.

The *Times of London* thought her piano concerto was workmanlike.

The word probably would not have stung so much if there was room to argue, but it was true, for surely no other composition in the nineteenth century had been labored over as intensely as Clara had overworked that concerto. She struggled over every line of that composition, fiddling with variations of the melody, adding and deleting flourishes until the piece had gone through more incarnations than she could remember.

"Darling," her aunt Helen purred, "soaring heights of grandeur and exquisite phrasing...what a stupendous compliment. I would have described it differently...something along the lines of 'moody opulence touched with glimpses of joy breaking through the melancholia.' Or I'd scrap the poetic nonsense altogether and simply say that for sheer genius, you have earned a place among the pantheon of great pianists."

The review only confirmed what Clara already knew about herself. She was dazzling at the keyboard, but merely good as a composer. And no musician gained international renown by being merely 'good' at composition. She had never met a person who could rival her for artistic expression on the keyboard, but in the eyes of the musical elite, she was parroting other composers' works. And that was not the sort of thing that would ever catapult her to the kind of fame her father wanted for her.

Clara closed the newspaper, folding it into a perfect stack before sliding it to the end of the morning table. She never wanted to see the review again, for every line was already seared into her mind as though branded with a white-hot iron. But there was no need to distress Aunt Helen with her sour mood. Not when Aunt Helen had spent years accompanying her throughout London, Paris, and Berlin in search of musical inspiration. "It was a lovely review," Clara said. "Especially since I believe it will be the first and last review I ever receive. I simply don't believe I'm cut out to be a composer."

Understanding bloomed on Aunt Helen's face, but she was the easy one to deal with. It was the thought of disappointing her father that made Clara cringe. He was so convinced she would rival Handel and Bach for penning compositions to the greater glory of God. Who could hear the *Hallelujah Chorus* and not wish to celebrate the gift of Jesus? Or want to sing for joy when hearing the grand, robust orchestrations of Bach? She had no doubt that the Reverend Lloyd Endicott was eagerly awaiting the day his daughter would begin adding her masterpieces alongside the great religious composers of the ages, and she didn't know how to tell him it would never happen.

Aunt Helen peeled the first section away from the rest of the *Times*, flipped it open to the page featuring her review, and with an enormous pair of cutting sheers, began slicing the review from the paper. "I'll send this to your father," she said. "My brother certainly understands the meaning of the word *workmanlike*. Even if he won't accept it."

Clara watched the sheers slice through the page. She'd spent so many years pursuing her father's ambition for her, although what on earth she was supposed to do with the rest of her life was a gigantic mystery. In all of her twenty years, Clara had never given a second thought to becoming anything other than a composer. She folded the tattered remains of the newspaper page

and set it before her. She could hear Aunt Helen folding the review into a packet small enough to fit into an envelope, and stared sightlessly at the newspaper before her.

And straight at Daniel Tremain's name.

It was a tiny article, not even two paragraphs long, but Daniel's name leapt off the page and snagged her attention as though it was shouting her name. Her eyes devoured the story:

Mr. Daniel Tremain, a twenty-two year old inventor from the United States has succeeded in developing a process for the manufacture of steel that yields a stronger, more durable product. Through use of a process of blending iron and manganese into an alloy, the young inventor has created a product with superior malleability which will prove of great worth to the railroad industry.

Railroad tracks made primarily of iron cannot withstand long-term stress and must be replaced every two years. It is believed the alloy created by Mr. Tremain will produce a higher grade metal that can last up to six years before requiring replacement. Mr. Tremain has filed for a patent with the United States Patent Office and all major European nations.

A smile blazed across Clara's face.

She *knew* Daniel would make a success someday! It was inevitable. Never had a person had a greater combination of talent, ambition, and raw intellectual genius just waiting to burst upon the world. Now she had proof of it. Even though it was only a tiny article, Daniel's name appeared in the London *Times*, the most important newspaper in all of Europe.

"Something has certainly cheered you up. It looks like the sun just rose behind your eyes."

Clara could feel the heat on her face. "It's nothing," she stammered. "Someone I once knew accomplished something."

To call Daniel "someone she once knew" made him seem so insignificant. Once Daniel had been the other half of her soul. She still thought of him with a fondness that would never die, even though after she came to London their friendship came to a painful and inexplicitly abrupt end.

They once had such buoyant plans to continue composing music together after Clara moved to London. She had completed her segment of the sonata while onboard the ship, and her first day in London she had sent it to Daniel for his contribution. She knew it would take at least six weeks to hear back from him. Two weeks for her letter to reach him, another two weeks for him to compose something, and then the return service. But of course Daniel always composed much more quickly than she, so at four weeks she began awaiting each afternoon's mail delivery like Odysseus's wife waiting for his return. Then two months had passed. And then four months.

It was possible that her letter had gone astray, so she carefully wrote out another copy of her piano composition from the version she had saved and sent it to him. When she did not receive a reply, she tried a third time.

She never did hear back from Daniel.

Not that she could hold it against him. When she left five years ago, he had just begun a new job, and her father told her later that Daniel picked up an additional job delivering milk to earn extra income because his new job was not paying enough. How could Daniel spend his precious time doing something as frivolous as composing music? And then Daniel's mother had died, leaving him in charge of three young sisters. Little Katie could not have been more than three years old when Mrs. Tremain died, and Lorna was not much older. Daniel was shouldered with the burden of two jobs and three little sisters...how could she have expected him to have the free time to compose music?

Aunt Helen leaned over her shoulder and scanned the article. "Oh, yes, that name sounds familiar. Your father once mentioned him."

Clara devoured the article again, scrutinizing each word for added significance. Daniel had patented the invention, so that must mean it was worth something, right? Certainly, if he was bothering to get the invention patented in other countries, it was probably worth a lot of money. Anything to do with the railroads had the potential to make millions.

She remembered how desperately Daniel had craved that scholarship to Yale, how he only had access to a cello because she was able to get him into the Music Conservatory. Daniel was always hungry for an education, but he couldn't even afford books, let alone the sort of expensive schooling she had always taken for granted. Now he could probably afford all the books and sheet music he wanted.

Her finger traced the edge of the story. "I'm really glad for you, Daniel," she murmured softly. "It is long past time something good happened to you."

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There had been no byline on the story about Daniel, but surely the reporter who wrote it could shed more light for her. Settling for a paltry few words about her dearest friend would simply not do. The next day Clara took a carriage ride to the editorial offices of the *Times* in search of more information, where she was directed to the editor in charge of business and technology, Mr. Horatio Benjamin.

Mr. Benjamin was a man so physically tiny she doubted he had the strength to stand up against a good, stiff wind. When sitting at the swivel chair of his enormous desk he looked the size of a child, but he had sharp, intelligent eyes behind a pair of round spectacles. He seemed taken aback when she requested more information on the story he had ran the previous day.

"There is not much information contained in a patent application," the man said. "Name and address of the inventor, the purpose of the invention, and notation of the process. I just used common sense about the value of the patent to the railroad industry. That's all I know."

"But when did he file for the patent? And are there any other patents that compete with what he has? How does one find out about such things?"

"You go to the Patent Office."

Clara felt foolish about such an obvious question, but a bit of humor crinkled Mr. Benjamin's eyes. "Look, I only make it down to the Patent Office every couple of months," he said. "One of the patent clerks shows me the ones he thinks look interesting. You're free to go down there yourself if you are curious. It is all a matter of public record."

And that was all the inspiration Clara needed. After catching her first glimpse of Daniel in years, she was like a bloodhound on the scent of a crucial trail. Piecing together what Daniel had been doing for the last six years would be like reaching back in time to touch base with a long-lost friend.

When she arrived at the London Patent Office, she discovered that Daniel had filed a total of nine patents in the past three years.

Nine patents!

On everything from new railroad timing switches to pressure valves in steel manufacturing. The interesting thing was that he had filed for the patents using a number of different corporate names. Some were jointly filed with a man named Ian Carr, while others were listed under Carr Railroad Inc. The steel patent was filed under a company named Carr & Tremain Polytechnic. She sat in the tiny public reading room of the Patent Office, surrounded by stacks of papers as she pored through the documents, each containing complex drawings and cutaways of the various pieces of equipment. There must be hundreds of pages here, documenting inventions that made railroads safer, more efficient, and more profitable. The timing switch he invented would greatly reduce the chance of collisions on train tracks and would certainly save lives. Better safety valves in the iron foundries would reduce the risk of catastrophic accidents like the one that had killed Daniel's father. Better steel tracks meant railroads could slash their prices and more people could afford to take advantage of the transportation.

And while Daniel had been producing these brilliant contributions to American industry, Clara had written one "workmanlike" composition.

Clara knew very little about business or industry, but it appeared, even to her uneducated eyes, that Daniel had the basis for an empire. No one in her family knew much about industry, and all of her contacts in London were musicians, writers, and other intellectuals that populated the salons of London's artistic set.

The only person she knew who had the least bit of insight into industry was Mr. Horatio Benjamin at the *Times*. Clara showed him the notes she had made from studying the various patents filed by Daniel.

She feared he would be dismissive, but the way in which Mr. Benjamin straightened the spectacles atop his thin nose and poured through her notes told a different story. "Very interesting," he murmured as he flipped through Clara's notes. "It looks like this young man is amassing a monopoly on technological innovations within the railroad industry. By filing under different corporate names, he has avoided the attention he would have received had it all been done under one corporate entity."

"Is that a bad thing?"

Mr. Benjamin shrugged. "It's perfectly legal, if that's what you're asking. He won't escape notice forever, though."

"I noticed that on all of his patents he reserves the right of refusal to license the technology to companies, and insists on oversight of the companies to whom he grants a license. That seems a bit unusual, doesn't it? I looked at patents filed by other inventors and never saw such a statement. I should think most businessmen would be happy to license their invention to anyone who pays the fee."

Mr. Benjamin took an extraordinary amount of time scrutinizing Clara's notes, then he tossed them down on his desk and swiveled in his chair to pierce her with his dark eyes. "Young lady, you have the makings of a very clever reporter." Clara would not have been more surprised if he had said she had the makings for a very clever Tooth Fairy. Her mouth gaped open at the unconventional thought, but Mr. Benjamin continued. "With the amount of patents being filed on a daily basis, I am completely incapable of keeping up with notable developments in the field. Your observations here are proof of that. How would you like a job?"

With the impending demise of her music career looming, the opportunity to throw herself into a new endeavor was tantalizing. The past few days piecing together the puzzle of Daniel's business machinations had been exhilarating, demanding ruthless attention to detail and tenacity for identifying relevant facts among the enormous piles of information. It was like searching for a few glimmering threads of gold among the proverbial haystack, and it had been a fascinating task.

She was enough of her father's daughter not to let excitement sweep her away. "Will you pay me?"

"The going rate for all junior reporters."

Clara straightened her shoulders. This was an impulsive move, but one that felt immediately right. "Then you've got a deal."

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