



THE LADY OF BOLTON HILL BY AUTHOR ELIZABETH CAMDEN

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Bonus Content – Deleted Scenes

Chapter Three

The Reverend Lloyd Endicott held a letter from Aunt Helen in his hands as he peered at Clara across his immense black walnut desk.

“To summarize, your aunt says she’d be very pleased to have you stay with her while she is in London. And it is well known that the music instruction in England is superior to anything I can provide for you here in Baltimore. What do you say, Clara?”

How on earth did one respond to such an offer? The way her Father described London made it sound like an intellectual paradise brimming with artists and musicians around every corner. Aunt Helen’s success as a poet meant she was going to be received by the queen. Her aunt planned on settling in London for several years while she mingled with other famous writers like Lord Tennyson and Charles Dickens. All the while Clara would be provided with lessons from the great musical masters in England and be able to attend performances and symphonies of the world’s renowned composers.

Clara could feel her father’s expectant gaze on her. “It sounds wonderful, but I never imagined such a thing.” What kind of teenaged girl had the audacity to contemplate being in the same room as Liszt or Brahms? It was true that there were limits on how far she could advance here in Baltimore. She had already surpassed her instructors in

technical skill, but she had always assumed her father would send her somewhere north to hone her musical abilities, someplace like Boston or New York. But London...

"I need to ask Daniel what he thinks."

Clara didn't expect the flash of annoyance in her father's eyes, but she supposed her comment did sound horribly ungracious. Her father expected her to be growing into an independent woman capable of making her own decisions, not someone who needed help making such basic choices.

But England was so far away, something she had never before contemplated, and she couldn't commit to the trip without talking to Daniel first.

She dreaded telling him. The time they spent playing music together was the most important thing in their world, and to have it ripped away would leave a gaping void. She depended on those hours as Daniel had clung to music the night of his father's funeral. That night he had begged her to meet him, pleaded with her to continue, even after he had broken down in tears. Where would he get access to instruments after she left? He couldn't afford membership fees in the Music Conservatory, and no one else had a cello he could use.

Which was why she was so surprised at how delighted Daniel seemed to be when he came the next day to the Music Conservatory and she told him about her father's plan.

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The stab of anguish clawed at him, but Daniel kept the pain from his face and forced excitement into his voice when he spoke to Clara. They sat in one of the tiny practice rooms in the old Music Conservatory.

"Don't you realize what an opportunity this is?" He held the cello loosely between his knees. Clara had the makings of a brilliant composer if she could only shed the self-doubt that plagued her every waking hour. The gift she had been offered was staggering, but she was too sheltered to even appreciate its magnificence. "If you had a brain the size of a mosquito you would hop on the next ship bound for London," he said. "What a chance to even be in the same room with someone like Liszt and soak up some of that brilliance. There's no price tag you can put on something like that."

Daniel was proud of the enthusiasm he was able to inject into his voice. It wasn't that he was jealous of Clara...that was too mild a word for the voracious, soul-devouring lust for an education he had harbored ever since he first learned to read. For a few glorious weeks he thought he might have a chance for a scholarship to Yale, but that fantasy was flushed away and would never come again. Even if a scholarship for college magically appeared, he had a mother and three sisters to support, so college was never going to happen for him. In his new job he had been relegated to a table where he tinkered with clocks and signaling devices in a train station, when by rights he should be sitting in a lecture hall at Yale. The only thing that made his job bearable was knowing that for a few hours each week he could steal away to Clara and revel in the music of Chopin and Beethoven and Schubert.

Another wave of pain rolled through him at the thought of her leaving. How had this frilly girl bedecked with ribbons and lace slipped beneath every last defense and woven herself into his every waking thought? But that's what Clara had done. She meant more to him than his sisters or his job or any of the far-flung fantasies of professional success he dreamed about.

And that was why he was going to ensure she would get the education a person like her deserved. Clara was the best person he had ever met, and the magic that poured from her tiny hands when she played the piano ought to be heard around the world. "You have to go, Clara. You will always wonder what you missed if you chicken out and stay here in Baltimore."

Her nervous fingers fiddled with the ridiculous pink lace dripping from her sleeve. "I'm just kind of worried about going that far away. You know what a sissy I am."

"I also know that you have too much talent to turn away from an opportunity like this. Reach out for it, Clara. Grab it. Search out every brilliant musician in London and don't let them out of your sight until you've learned everything you can." And maybe, just maybe when she came back she would still remember him and be willing to share just a glimmer of what she had learned.

"I would be gone at least two years," she said. "That's an awfully long time to be gone, and what if no one wants to be my friend over there?"

There was that gut-wrenching insecurity again. Clara would have to learn to toughen up since he couldn't be there to protect her from all the slights that might come her way from those fancy European snobs. "Clara-bell, there are plenty of people right here in Baltimore who don't want to be your friend, so why should that bother you in London?"

She smiled. "I suppose if I'm to be a howling misfit, I can do it just as easily in London as in Baltimore."

"Precisely," he said with a straight face. "And you can do it on a grander stage in London." Anyone who didn't snap at the chance to befriend Clara Endicott wasn't worthy of her anyway. Daniel set the cello aside and began toying with a little tune by Schubert on the piano, using just a single hand to whirl out a string of notes. "So, two years, do you think?"

"At least two years."

He shifted the tune to a lower octave. "That means you'll be almost seventeen when you get back. I'll be twenty-one."

"Wow, so good-looking and he can do math, too."

"Shut up, mouse," he growled, but the effect was completely ruined by the grin he could not suppress. When she came at him with those wickedly clever one-liners he wanted to haul her into a bear hug. And that would be completely wrong. For months his thoughts had been straying straight into the gutter when Clara was around, and it was getting more difficult each time he saw her. Thanks to the joyfully uninhibited nature of Nellie Wilkerson, he knew exactly what a girl looked like beneath all those layers of lace and corsets, and it was getting hard not to think about Clara like that, too. She would probably be horrified if she could get a tiny peek inside his mind and see the kind of thoughts he was having a harder time forcing away. Clara was the type of girl to marry, to adore and cherish. If he ever could figure out a way to come into a grand fortune, he would fall over himself to court a person like Clara Endicott. He would lay diamonds at her feet and compose symphonies that would shake the rafters for her.

He shifted octaves again and it gave him an excuse to move closer to her on the bench as his hand traveled down the keyboard. "I'm just thinking that those aren't such bad ages," he said. "Twenty-one and seventeen. Nineteen and fourteen is a little tough."

“Tough for what?”

He wondered if she could possibly be as innocent as she sounded, and he could not risk this conversation veering in the direction it was headed. Daniel scooted back to the center of the bench and used both hands to launch into a full-bodied rendition of Beethoven’s *Fantasia for Piano*. Both hands were flying as the music poured forth and he ignored her question. She would never understand, anyway. How would a person like Clara know what it felt like to have every door he had ever wanted to walk through be slammed in his face? No matter how badly he wanted to become a brilliant composer, or a famous engineer, or magnificent novelist...at every turn he was crammed back down into the rut he had been born into.

And now Clara was going to be torn away from him, too. The one glimmer of sunlight in his life was walking away from him, going on to a future filled with learning and training and experiences beyond Daniel’s wildest fantasies. She deserved all of it, and he ought to be boiled in oil for resenting the years she would spend away from him. Who else in his world cared about music? Or literature? Who else in the world cared about what happened to him, other than the worried faces at home who only needed him for what he could earn?

His fingers hit a clumsy note and he abruptly stopped playing to turn toward her. “We never did finish that duet for cello and piano, did we?”

They’d written dozens of duets together, but their best one was begun just before his father’s accident and remained unfinished. “I’ve still got it, if you want to work on it,” Clara said.

All Daniel wanted in the world was to sit beside Clara and write music with her. When their fingers were exhausted from playing, he wanted to hold her and talk about things far outside his gritty world in Baltimore’s working end.

“Daniel?” she asked quizzically. “Should I go get the music? I have it in my canvas bag.”

If they finished that composition, it would be like the end of their friendship. It would be closing the chapter on the best piece of music they had ever composed together just before she went off to greatness in London and he returned to tinkering with timing devices at a grubby railroad station.

“No,” he finally said. “Let’s work on it once you are in London. Finish the sonata section for the piano, then send the whole thing back to me. I’ll write the cello response. We can compose across the Atlantic.”

Her eyes widened and a splendid smile lit her face. Clara could still be a part of his life if they continued to write music together. He could listen to her compositions and know precisely Clara’s thoughts and emotions by reading the lines of music she wrote. She wouldn’t seem so horribly far away if they could still communicate through the sonatas and serenades and duets they made together.

She threw her arms around his shoulders. “Daniel, I think even if I went to live on the Moon, we’d figure out a way to stay best friends.”

He squeezed his eyes closed as another stab of pain ripped through him. He wanted so much more than just being Clara’s best friend. He wanted her spirit and the endless joy she took in everything she did.

He only hoped their bond would be strong enough to endure across the thousands of miles of ocean.

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