

**The  
Migration  
of Connor  
Boland**

**By Katy O'Reilly**

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## **Dedication**

Dedicated to the memory of my grandparents;  
Grandpa Boland who followed his heart and told the  
most wonderful tales of Ireland and his ancestors,  
and Grandma, who was the inspiration for Ellen.





## Chapter One

The November morning dawned gray and cold over Cork. The walls of stone held the cold and dampness from the night before. Connor Boland shivered under his one thin blanket on the cot. He had not slept but fitfully all night. Today, his 20th birthday, was the day he would be shipped off, away from his family, his country and his life. A big price to pay for being a rebel, but a rebel he was and would remain so. He had fought and lost.

The trial was still fresh in his mind. The robed judges looking so dour, the presentation of the charges, and the final bang of the gavel: guilty of all charges! Sentenced to banishment to the penal colonies of Australia for 15 years. It was a heavy sentence for a lad of 20. For fighting for his freedom and the freedom of his country from the English despots, he considered it a very unfair sentence. He promised himself somehow... some way... he would be free. He would not be banished to a far land not of his choosing. But how could he escape? He was under guard night and day and was sure he would be shackled and chained for transport to the ship.

"Jesus, Mary, Joseph and St. Patrick, I ask ye to be finding me a way to freedom. I cannot be spending the next 15 years wasting away in a hot foreign English colony. I will be free, dammit, I will be." Connor paced his cell wishing he could say goodbye to his mother and younger brothers and sisters. His Da had died fighting for the cause and he had been the oldest and in charge of the family. The memory of his Mother sitting in the courtroom crying wrenched his soul. That and the memory of his grim faced younger brother, Liam, holding on to her. Liam would now be responsible for the care of the family. Connor knew that was a hard task for a lad of 17, the care of a mother and four younger siblings. "Dammit, I should be taking care of them. Damn these English, they are robbing us of our lives and country. Someday, somehow I will revenge me

Da and all the others they have killed. On my Father's grave, I will not be taking this lying down. I will fight with all me might till the end wherever that may be."

As those thoughts were racing around his brain, the jailor came and tossed his breakfast into the cell. "Eat hardy lad, ye not be getting another meal good as this for quite a while. Ye are assigned to The Bees, the worst ship in the fleet. Ye'll be lucky to be alive when ye reach Australia." Sneering, he left Connor to his oatmeal and bread. The sound of the steel door slamming echoed through the cell.

Soon after Connor finished his breakfast, the jailor was back and tossed in some clean clothes.

"Here, ye be needing to change, 'tis one a the rules. All ye scum get clean clothes before ye leave our fine establishment. Kind a like our farewell present to ye. It's the last thing ye ever will get from Ireland me lad. Now be changing quick cause ye are leaving soon." The sound of the cell door slamming once again reverberated around the cell, mixing with the evil chuckle of the retreating guard.

Connor changed to the new clothes, but his thoughts had not changed. He would be alert for the slightest chance to escape and be free. He would not go quietly.

An hour later, he was led with a group of other prisoners out of the prison walls and toward the dock. To Connor's amazement, they were not chained or shackled, merely bound by their hands with rope. Guards walked along side of them to keep them in line. People lined the streets alternating cheers and insults at the prisoners. Connor did not see one friendly face he knew. He had thought that perhaps Liam at least would come to see him off.

"It's probably for the best that he did not come. I do not know that I could stand to see his face in sadness one more time." Connor's thoughts were racing. He was lost in his thoughts when the guards suddenly called, "Halt! Stay where ye be." The line

stopped and Connor glanced ahead. There appeared to be some sort of a disturbance in the street up there. The two guards flanking Connor kept to their posts, but cocked their muskets and directed their attention forward, wanting to know the cause of the confusion, but knowing better than to run forward to see what was the matter.

Conner realized that this might be his only opportunity for escape, no matter what the cause of the commotion might be. His guards were still too close for him to risk making a run for it, yet, but his soldier's instincts had alerted him to the possibility.

Then he realized that he, himself, was the cause of the commotion when a wiry ragamuffin that he recognized as one of "The Lads" who had fought by his side earlier, broke from the throng of onlookers and thrust a long dagger between the ribs of the guard at his right elbow. The guard screamed in agony and fell to his knees, dropping his musket, which discharged into the crowd.

Almost simultaneously, the guard to his left swung his musket to bear on the lad who had now retrieved his blade and was attempting to cut Connor's bonds with it. Seeing that the muzzle of the weapon was directly in front of his face and that his rescuer, who had both hands engaged, was about to have his head blown off, Conner jerked away from him and threw himself on the guard, knocking the barrel of the musket downward. The weapon discharged into the pavement, spraying the crowd with shards of lead ball and cobblestone.

Bedlam broke out then, because it appeared to the Irishmen present that the English guards had opened fire on the crowd and they attacked the nearest guard or English sympathizer with fists, cudgels, and knives. Less intrepid souls, many of them women and children, added to the general confusion by running in all directions seeking a place of safety.

It took scant seconds for all that to happen, but Connor managed to get a death-grip on the musket



barrel with both hands to keep the guard from using it as a club, even though his wrists were still bound. When his compatriot turned his attention on the guard and quickly dispatched him with the dagger, Connor was left still clutching the weapon, yelling, "Cut me loose, so I can fight!"

"Connor, are ye daft, man? Throw that damned thing down and make for the alley, or all this is for naught!" His friend pointed the bloody dagger toward a nearby alley for an instant, then disappeared into the crowd to rejoin the battle.

Connor wasted no time and ran for the alley. He had barely reached it, when a hand pulled him into an open door. Stunned Connor looked and recognized his brother Liam. Liam cut the bounds on his arms and hugged him. "Connor, its good to see ye free, but we must be hurrying. The Lads will not be able to hold the army off forever."

"Liam, how did ye manage this? Ye cannot be a part of this! I do not want ye to risk yourself here. Now go off and I will find me own way!" Connor was still stunned at seeing Liam.

Liam shook his head. "Connor, I am part of this fight as much as ye! No male can stand and watch them beat us back. We must fight, each and every one a us. It's the only way! We will someday all be free, but till then fight we must."

Liam opened the door and peered down the alley. There was no one in sight and he could still hear the commotion in the street beyond. Quickly he motioned Connor and they ran down the alley away from the commotion. A wagon was waiting on the next street and Connor and Liam climbed in the back. They were quickly driven out of the city to a cottage in the countryside.

A family that had migrated to America had abandoned the cottage. The rebels had taken over the cottage and kept it looking lived in. Few people and none of the authorities realized that the owners had left. It would be unlikely that they would think of looking for Connor here.

Soon after they entered the cottage, they were joined by some of the other rebels that were part of Connor's band. Hugging and clapping Connor on the back, they were all in good spirits. Connor changed into the clothes they brought and burned the ones given at the prison. He would now be a bit less recognizable. After this was done Connor called them all to the table.

"I want to thank all of ye from the bottom of me heart for rescuing me, but we cannot stay here together. They will soon be hunting for me and for those they know might of helped me. Ye best all be getting back to your homes and fixing your excuses as to where ye where.

Liam, especially you, they will surely come to the house to see if I am there. They will be scaring Ma and the girls. Ye best take off quick and I don't want ye coming back and putting yourself in harm's way, ye hear?" Connor was looking sternly at his younger brother.

"Aye Connor, I be seeing your point, but I not will stay out of this, any more than ye could. I will stay away till the hunt dies down, but I will be back." Liam hugged his brother and left.

After he was gone, Connor turned to the other men. "I cannot stay here. Eventually I would be found and ye would be caught as well. They would probably be hanging the entire lot of us. I need papers to get on a ship to America. Ye know who to see to arrange that. I also be needing passage, I think the treasury should have enough for that."

"Aye Connor, we will take care a things for ye. We may not be able to return for a few days, but ye should be safe for that long. If we hear any word a trouble, we will be getting someone here to help. But there is a trap door to a cellar hidden under the rug. If it is necessary, ye can hide there. We be leaving ye a gun and bullets too, jest in case ye be needing em." The men shook hands and departed leaving Connor alone.

After they left, Connor sat and formulated some plans. He was educated, which a lot of the men were not. If he could get passage on a ship to America, he could get a job possibly as a tutor or teacher. He could then save his money and try and bring his family over. It would do no good for him to stay. Eventually they would find him and this time would surely hang him.

Connor figured it would take about a week for the necessary papers and arrangements to be made. He used his time to putter in the long neglected garden. He had no idea how long it would be before he would be able to feel earth in his hands. He had not yet left his land, but already missed it. He was watchful for any soldiers riding his way. The cottage was up on a hill and he could easily see in plenty of time to hide. Since there were no cottages close by, no one would notice anything different going on here. At night, he sat and reminisced about his family and friends. Back to times that were gentler before his Da had been killed and the bloody English had tried to overtake them. Truth be told the English had been a thorn in their sides for many a year, but lately were more ruthless and harsh than ever.

His Da had been so proud of his family, always talking about having the prettiest gal in Cork as his bride. His Mary was the light of his life and his eyes lit every time he looked at her. Connor only hoped that one day he, too, would find a girl he could love as much. So far, he had not had much time to think of courtship. Oh, he had known a few, but none meant much to him. There had been the cheap inn girls that he and the boys had spent a few pleasurable hours with, the same girls who taught them how to please a woman. But he wanted a girl like his Ma to settle and have children and a family with. There was one, Noreen, who was a bit more special than the rest, but now there would be no time to pursue that further. She was a pretty lass with golden hair and bright blue eyes. A figure with

a full bosom, tapering to a slim waist and then rounding out to full hips and a pert bottom; a very beautiful girl indeed. Normally gentle and sweet, Noreen had a temper and a feisty side as well. His thoughts drifted to their last meeting before he left on the raid that landed him in jail. They had attended a church social and were sitting in the shed behind his house. This was the usual place they went to be alone. She was talking about some outing she and her friends were going on. Connor did not think it was a safe thing for them to do and told her so. Her temper flared and she pulled away from him and haughtily told him, "Connor Boland, ye have no right to tell me what I can and can't be doing. Ye are not my Da and I will do what I please!" Connor could feel his temper rise. Had one of his sisters talked to him like that she would be over his knee for a spanking to straighten her out. He leveled a stare at her and turned her to face him. "Noreen O'Malley, I may not be yer Da, but if ye are foolish enough to do what ye say, and if ye ever speak that way to me again, I will personally put you over my knee and paddle you. Do you understand?"

Noreen was horrified, but changed her attitude at once. In fact, the rest of the evening had proved most pleasant. Connor sighed at the memory. Noreen would soon forget him. He would never know if he would have had to spank her or not. He was sure if the relationship had continued, there would have arisen an occasion. It would take a strong man to wed and tame that one.

The next few nights he thought about his family, his brothers, and sisters. He worried about Liam bearing the burden of taking care of them. The lad was but 17 and Connor knew from experience how hard it would be to assume the role as head of the house. He wished he would not have gotten involved with the cause, but he knew in his heart Liam could no more stay out of it than he could. It

was born in their blood. But if something happened to him, what would become of the rest.

At thirteen, Lizzie was just becoming a handful. A beautiful girl, she would take watching around the boys. Eleven year old Maggie and Bridey, nine, were still little girls and needed a strong hand at times. When he thought of Tommy, the baby at 7, he had to laugh. That little lad had all the spunk and courage of ten his age. He hoped he would be able to bring them all to America with him soon. They would never be safe here, as long as the English were in control.

He also thought of his mother. It pained him to have to leave her knowing how sad this all made her. Connor hoped she would be able to handle all the burdens alone. He truly wished things could have been different.

Connor had been at the cottage five days when he was awakened in the night at the sound of horses. He quickly jumped from the bed and grabbed his gun. Peering out of the window to look for soldiers, he breathed a sigh of relief when he recognized Jamie and Liam.

He opened the door and ushered them in. "Ye near took a year off me life scaring me like that. Do ye have news?"

Liam and Jamie sat at the table and emptied their pouches. "Ye must ride with us now. I packed your clothes and we have your papers and passage on a ship that leaves at sunrise. The soldiers have been scouring the countryside looking for all of the prisoners. They have found all but you and three others. Right now, they are on the other side of the county but will be this way shortly. We must get ye out now. The ship sails for Boston. It isn't New York, but will have to do. There is a family of Irish-Americans who were visiting and are now returning to their home. The father is a banker and well to do. He is looking for someone to help tutor his children. Jamie has spoken to him and he wants to talk to you. If you can travel as their tutor, your trip would

be easier and ye would be more protected in case ye are stopped. But we must get ye on board as fast as we can."

Connor's mind was racing. He thought he would have a bit more time to prepare for this departure. Suddenly within 24 hours, he could be on the high seas away from the tyranny, and free, but also without a homeland and family. It tore at his gut, it did, the thought of it. The only way to freedom and to help his family was to leave now and the sooner the better. Connor jumped up and grabbed his coat, "Then let's be off, and get to this ship as fast as we can."

The three rode fast until they reached the harbor. The ship was large and much better looking than *The Bees*. This was a luxury liner compared to the other. Liam hugged Connor goodbye. "It's best I be off and not be seen with ye now. Write when ye can and let us know ye are all right."

Connor was choked with emotion. "Take care a Ma and the kids. I will try and send for all of ye soon as I can."

Liam mounted and rode off and left Jamie to get Connor on board. Jamie and Connor walked up the ramp to the deck and asked the sailor on duty to direct them to Mr. McMahon. The sailor motioned to a deckhand to show them the way. When they reached the cabin door; Jamie knocked and waited to enter.

A voice bid them enter. Mr. McMahon was sitting behind a desk. He was a large man in his forties with a florid and smiling face. "Hello, Jamie, this must be the lad you told me about. One who is educated and could tutor my girls."

Connor stepped forward and shook his hand. "I am Connor Boland, and I would be most interested in tutoring your children on this trip. I am educated and have tutored some a the village children."

Mr. McMahon looked him up and down. He indeed was a young strong lad, well spoken and polite. He had a hunch Connor might be one of the

escaped prisoners and was fleeing certain imprisonment and possibly even hanging. That didn't matter to him as he was a staunch supporter of the cause and had helped several young men in his position in the past.

"Tell me Mr. Boland, what subjects have you been educated in? What schooling have you had?" He rose from his desk and walked around to the front of it.

"Sir, I have completed the basic grades and have 3 years under the brothers. I could not afford to go any further with my education. I am well versed in the Classics and Latin and Greek. I also am trained in mathematics, history and geography."

This was far more experience and training than Michael McMahon had expected to find in a tutor.

"Son, I think you will do fine as a tutor. My name is Michael, but everyone calls me Mick so you may as well. I will pay for your accommodations and a small salary too. You may keep your passage-money, as you will probably need it when we get to Boston. I will see that you get a cabin next to my family's and have your things loaded. I understand the sailing time is five this afternoon. So if you will meet me in the Salon at 6:00, I will introduce you to my family and your new students."

"Thank you Sir, I will be a good tutor fer your children. I will not disappoint ye." Connor shook hands with him and followed the deckhand out the door to his cabin.

When Connor entered his cabin, he was shocked at the spaciousness of it. "Jamie, it's much nicer than any room I have ever been in. It must be a turn of luck, an omen that things will be all right. How can I ever repay all of ye for this?" Connor was choked with emotion.

Jamie hugged him, "Just pray we win, Connor and try and get your family free too. When we finally have a free Ireland come back and see us. May the saints be with ye on your travels." Jamie turned and left his friend.

Connor was now truly alone and embarking on a new adventure. He hoped that the McMahon children would be good students and well behaved. He had not paid much attention when Mick had said "girls"; he had no idea that the children were three very spoiled young ladies who were between the ages of 12 and 17. They did not want a tutor and had successfully chased every other one away.

Connor's trunk arrived and he began unpacking. He was surprised to find the best of shirts and a suit that was freshly sponged and pressed. His books were also there and a note from his Ma.

*Dear Son,  
I do not know when I may see ye  
again, if I do. Please know that I  
will pray for ye every day of my  
life. I am so sorry that our lives  
have come to this.*

*I sent ye your Da's suit and some  
of his finest clothes. Also, ye will  
find his watch that he wanted ye  
to have, and his grandma's ring.  
It's for ye to give your bride when  
ye find her.*

*Please take care and write us  
often.*

*May the saints and Jesus, Mary  
and Joseph watch over ye.*

*Love Ma.*

Connor had tears in his eyes as he finished the letter. Sure enough, the watch and ring were wrapped carefully in cloth at the bottom of the trunk. He would treasure these always.

He finished unpacking and went up to the deck to watch the departure. They were barely away from the dock when he spied soldiers riding hard into the town. He breathed a sigh of relief. He had escaped, but barely. His hands were tight on the



rails and his knuckles white as he watched them ride up to the pier the ocean liner had just left..

A hand squeezed his shoulder. "You don't have to worry son, you are under my protection now. No one who works for Michael McMahon will be harmed by the likes of them."

Connor wheeled around surprised that Mick was standing there. "How did ye know?"

"Connor, I have helped many a lad like you to escape from the likes of them. My own father fled from here with a price on his head. You seem to be a good man and you will be under my protection from now on. Now I think it is time for a drink and then I will introduce my family." Mick patted him on the back and turned into the Salon.

Connor followed him in somewhat of a daze. This was indeed turning out to be a strange and wonderful day.

Under gentle probing from Mick, Connor told him about the last skirmish that resulted in his capture, trial, and sentence to banishment in the penal colonies.

Mick shook his head in full understanding. "And how pray tell did you get free and escape? The English are most upset. No one has ever done that before."

Connor laughed for the first time in days. "My lads and brother Liam arranged a distraction for them. We prisoners were not bound together so we all fled. The lads were waiting for me and smuggled me out of the city to a cottage in the countryside. I owe them my life and I think I owe you for it as well."

Mick laughed and ordered them another ale. "You will pay that debt ten times over when you meet your students. They are a bit spoiled I am afraid, and I do not have the heart to undo it now. But you may use whatever disciplinary means you wish to control them. I have never given anyone permission to do that before. They have chased away many good tutors and as a result are very

unlearned. It is time they be brought under control. So Connor, I want you to see that they learn not only books, but discipline and manners as well. Their mother, God rest her soul, died shortly after the birth of the last one. So, they have gotten a bit out of control. I am relying on you to change that. Ah here they come now." Mick and Connor stood as three young ladies walked into the room.

Connor was in shock. Three girls? He had hoped for at least one boy.

Mick introduced each one. "Connor this is Ellen the oldest. She is 17. Maureen is 15 and our baby Nora, is 12. Girls, this is Connor Boland your new tutor. I expect you to behave for Mr. Boland. I have given him complete authority over your studies and deportment. I repeat ... you are expected to behave."

Ellen, the oldest, had the most beautiful red hair and green eyes that Connor had ever seen. Her skin was fair and slightly dotted with freckles. Maureen had blue eyes and jet-black hair. Nora was still a bit babyish looking with blonde hair and gray eyes. For all of their differences, the three did indeed look like sisters.

Ellen assumed the role of spokeswoman. "It is nice to meet you Mr. Boland, but I fear we are not much for studies. You needn't spend much time trying to teach us, for I don't think we will want to study on this trip. There are too many other things for us to do. Papa has wasted your time and his money by hiring you."

The other two nodded in agreement. Connor looked at Mick to see what his reaction would be. He just shrugged his shoulders at Connor and whispered, "It's your problem now."

Connor addressed all of them. "I think ye *will* be studying and I expect to see ye here at 8:00 am sharp with your books and tablets. I do not suggest ye be late. There will be plenty of time for play, but study ye will!"

They looked at him and one another but said nothing. As they left for dinner, Ellen whispered to Maureen. "We shall be there in the morning and see how long he lasts. He is rather cute though, don't you think?"

Maureen giggled behind her hand. She knew only too well the trouble her sister could cause.

After a pleasant dinner, Connor bade goodnight to Mick and turned to the girls. "Goodnight Ladies, I will see you at 8 sharp tomorrow morning."

Connor readied himself for bed and fell into a sound sleep. He had no idea what a challenge laid ahead of him.

## Chapter Two

The first night at sea was calm and peaceful. Connor fell into a sound sleep for the first time since his escape from prison. When he left the McMahon girls, he assumed they would be returning to their cabins. Mick it seemed was totally unable to control them at all, so surely they would have a female guardian or governess of some sort traveling with them and watching over them. He would be shocked the next day to find that the girls were really on their own, with little or no supervision at all.

At 6:00 a.m., Connor rose and dressed carefully for his first day as tutor. He was a bit nervous about the McMahon girls, but decided he would take charge from the beginning.

At 7:00 a.m. sharp, he was in the dining room for breakfast. He was sure that he would see his pupils there as well, but they were nowhere to be seen. He certainly hoped they weren't going to challenge him on his first day as their tutor. He was not prepared to have to take strict measures so soon.

He finished his breakfast and they were still not present. He proceeded to the lounge they were going to use as their classroom and moved the chairs and tables around to suit him.

He had a head table set up in the front of the lounge to serve as his desk. He pushed two smaller tables together with three chairs behind them for the girls. He had prepared some lessons in his head the night before. While he was waiting for them, he jotted down some notes on the general curriculum that he would follow.

Eight o'clock came and there were still no pupils. Connor was beginning to get angry. He knew he must control that anger and not let them know he was upset. At eight-thirty, they sauntered in. Nora was giggling and hiding behind Maureen. Ellen in front just tossed her curls and looked at Connor.

"So Mr. Boland, where would you like us to sit? Or have you realized that we really aren't serious about this. You may as well just relax and enjoy your voyage. Father will pay you whether we learn a thing or not. Why don't you just give up now and we will all be happier. We can all go on deck and enjoy the day."

Connor's jaw was clenched; a sign of his anger that was totally lost on Ellen.

"Ladies, I believe I told ye to be here at 8:00 a.m. sharp, tis' now 40 minutes past that time. Ye will each take a seat and before we get started, will write 400 times, I will not be late for class. If ye make any mistakes, ye will repeat all 400 lines. Our classes will last 6 hours a day, with a break for lunch. Our time today will not start till the last one has successfully completed all her lines correctly. Start please." Connor sat at his desk and watched them.

Ellen looked at Maureen and Nora who had obediently taken their seats and started writing.

"Don't tell me you two are going to actually do this? That is absurd! Well, you two can play school with Mr. Boland all you want. I am going on deck and enjoy myself."

Ellen turned and started for the door. Before she could reach the door Connor was there and had a hold of her arm.

"I believe ye were told to sit and write lines. Now, I suggest that ye do it right now, or ye will do it in a few minutes, but ye won't be sitting quite so comfortably. Your choice."

Ellen looked at him wide eyed. "You are threatening me? I will tell papa about this."

"Ye may certainly tell your father about it, but it will be after the fact. He has given me permission to correct ye in any way I see fit. I suggest Miss Ellen, that ye take your seat while I am still inclined to let ye do it comfortably. I have sisters myself, and correcting them is not foreign to me. I would suggest ye not try my patience any further." Connor

turned her toward the table and swatted her several times.

Ellen glared at him, but walked toward her seat rubbing her bottom. She sat and picked up her slate and started writing. Maureen and Nora were giggling at her.

"Ladies, if either of ye think that is funny, I will demonstrate the same for each of ye. Now I want quiet and lines finished." Connor could not help suppress a grin as he watched the three heads bowed writing furiously.

1 hour later the lines were finished. Connor noticed that they were all three shaking their hands. He had made an impression on them.

"Ladies, I now want to determine where ye are in your studies. I am going to ask ye some questions in various subjects. I expect that due to your age differences ye are at various levels and this will help me adjust the subject matter to your level of learning."

Connor proceeded to examine each one in mathematics, reading, history, and geography.

When he was finished, he was appalled. Ellen the oldest knew no more than Nora, the youngest did. They were barely literate. They could manage to read simple things and understand them and do basic sums and write a little.

"Ladies, it appears that your education has been sorely lacking. I shall have to start with each of ye at a very basic level. We have much to accomplish here. By the time we reach Boston, I will see to it that ye are much farther along in your studies. This will require much studying on your part. Ye will be required to spend several hours a day in studying outside of this class. Now let us get started."

Connor pretended to ignore the look of shock on Ellen and Maureen's face. This was surely not something they had planned on. The next few hours until lunch were tedious for teacher and students alike. The only one who seemed to remotely try and grasp what Connor was teaching was Nora. Perhaps

it was her age, but he felt the two older ones were intentionally trying not to concentrate and learn a thing. This was shaping up to be a contest of wills. One he was determined to win.

When the bells sounded for lunch, Connor dismissed them. "I expect ye to be back here in exactly one hour. Remember there are penalties for being late. Next time it will be more painful than writing lines."

The three girls left in a hurry, and Connor followed in a few minutes. At lunch, he ran into Mick.

"So Connor, how are my little ladies doing? Perfect students?" Mick clapped Connor on the shoulder and laughed.

"Son, the look on your face is priceless. Running you around already are they? Don't worry about it they are pretty stubborn. I would be surprised if you get anywhere with them to tell you the truth. The best I can hope for is that I can marry them off well, and not have to worry about their futures."

Connor was appalled at the attitude Mick took. "I appreciate your feelings Mick, but I have a stubborn streak in me. I think they are actually fairly bright girls and I intend to see to it that they do learn. Who is the governess or female companion traveling with them? I think I need to be coordinating some lessons in propriety and manners with her as well."

"Connor, you are on your own with this one. The last governess I hired for the girls lasted exactly one week. I have never succeeded in keeping one. Ellen feels she is too old for a governess or traveling companion. She feels she can watch over the other two, so I haven't challenged her. I know they are not as polite and courteous as they should be at times. That comes I'm afraid from Ellen. She is very stubborn and bull headed; determined to do everything her own way. So, you are on your own with them. I think you will have a battle on your

hands."" Mick found the whole discussion humorous.

Connor smiled back at Mick; "I will have to make sure that I teach them basic manners and courtesy as well then. I am going to win this battle, and a battle it seems it will be. Do I still have your permission to use whatever means I deem fair in guiding them in their lessons?"

"Son, you have my permission to do whatever you think necessary. Personally, I think a few good sessions over a knee would do them good; at least Ellen and Maureen. I just waited a bit too long and don't feel up to correcting them now. Well, back to work for me. I have some business to attend to." Mick rose and left Connor to his thoughts.

In precisely one hour, Connor was back in the classroom. He was not surprised that the only pupil waiting for him was Nora. She was actually sitting working on some of the lessons from the morning.

"Good Afternoon Nora, where are your sisters?" Connor sat down behind his table.

"Uh, I don't know. They didn't eat lunch with me. I'm not sure where they are." Nora was blushing and lowered her head.

Connor looked at the young girl with a frown and stern look. "Nora, I don't want ye to lie to me. That will not be tolerated. Now if ye don't want to be finding out the punishment for lying, I suggest ye tell me where your sisters are."

Nora looked up at Connor. "I don't think they are coming. Ellen didn't want to. They have some boys they wanted to see."

"Thank ye Nora, continue with your work. I will be back in a bit." Connor was on his way out the door, when Maureen came flying in.

"I believe Miss Maureen, that ye are 5 minutes late. Where is your sister?" Connor stopped her in her tracks with a stern glare.

"I didn't mean to be late. Ellen has the vapors and had to lie down. I wanted to make sure she was



all right before I left her." Maureen started past Connor to take her seat.

"Not so fast young lady. I told all of ye there would be penalties for being late. Obviously writing lines and extended your class day has made no impression on ye. So, I will resort to other more traditional measures. Please go to my table in front please." Connor took Maureen's arm and steered her toward his table.

When she was standing in front of the table, Connor walked around to the other side. He grabbed a sturdy ruler from the desk and walked back to Maureen's side. Her eyes were wide at the sight of the ruler.

"Now Miss, bend over the table and grab the other side." Connor tapped the table with the ruler.

"I shall do NO SUCH THING! You cannot be serious! You are not going to get away with striking me." Maureen was red faced.

Connor said nothing but reached over and grabbed a chair. Before Maureen knew what had happened, he had sat down and grabbed her wrist and pulled her over his knee. He quickly flipped up her skirts revealing her bloomers.

Nora sat at her desk in shock. She couldn't believe Connor was actually going to spank her sister. But she was fascinated at the thought.

Maureen was also shocked and immediately tried to get up, but Connor had her pinned tight. "If ye fight me girl, it will go harder on ye. I will leave your bloomers up this time to protect your modesty, but if I have to do this again, it will be on your bare bottom. Now you were five minutes late. That is five strokes for each minute. And ye defied me that is a penalty of 10. Now tell me how many swats for ye is that?

Maureen was the poorest of the three in math. She was trying to figure it out but was too slow for Connor. He raised his hand and swatted her hard. "Ouch!" Maureen tried to get up again.

"Maureen, ye best come up with an answer fast. The swats aren't going to count until you give me an answer." Connor started swatting her spacing the spanks apart.

"Please, I can't figure it out! Ouch, you are hurting me." Maureen was starting to cry.

Connor took no pity on her. "What is 5 times 5?"

Maureen couldn't answer him. He tried a different method, while still spanking her. "What is 5 plus 5?"

Maureen knew that answer, "Ten."

"Good, now what is ten plus ten?" Connor was slowly spanking her, but she was squirming and making small ouches.

"Twenty?" Maureen wasn't sure.

"Yes, twenty. Now what is twenty plus 5?"

"Twenty Five." Oh please, stop, I won't be late again. Ouch! Ouch!" Maureen was really squirming.

"Ye haven't finished figuring out how many spanks ye have coming yet. Your spanking for being late hasn't even started. Now what is 25 plus 10?" Connor stopped spanking and waited for an answer.

Maureen thought for one second. "Thirty Five."

"Good. That is how many spanks ye have coming. Five times five is twenty-five. That is for being late. Twenty-five plus the ten for resisting is thirty-five. Now miss ye will be feeling what a real spanking is." Connor started spanking her much harder and counting the spanks out loud.

When he reached fifteen, he switched to the ruler. The first swat of the ruler had Maureen crying out loud. "Oh, Oh, please, please stop. It hurts too much! Ouch, I won't be late again."

Connor ignored her pleas and continued spanking her. By the time he reached thirty-five she was sobbing over his knee. He set her on her feet, and her hands immediately went to her bottom.

"Now take your seat Maureen." Connor motioned to her chair.

He walked back to his table and looked at the two girls in front of him. "I want ye to understand

that I am serious about ye learning. I will not abide defiance or lying from any of ye. Any further lateness or blatant defiance will get ye a spanking. Now do you understand me?"

Maureen was still sniffing, but she and Nora both answered. "Yes."

"You will address me as Sir in the future. The correct answer is 'Yes Sir', now let's try that again."

Nora and Maureen looked at each other and answered, "Yes Sir!"

Connor smiled, "Good, now I want the truth about Ellen. Where is she?"

Maureen shifted uncomfortably in her seat. Nora just looked at Connor innocently.

"Maureen, I think ye should be answering that question. I don't believe Nora knows the answer." Connor tapped the ruler against his hand looking at Maureen."

Maureen was afraid not to answer him. She didn't want to test him. She didn't want to risk a bare bottom spanking from him. "She just didn't want to come to class. She is somewhere on deck looking for some of the young men to flirt with."

Connor's jaw set when he heard that little piece of news. "I want both of ye to read in your primers for the next hour. I will be back with your sister shortly. I will then question ye on what ye have read."

Connor waited until they started reading and then left the room. He wasn't sure where to start looking, as he hadn't had much of a chance to explore the ship as yet. He decided to start in the lower parlor and work his way up.

When Connor left, Nora turned to Maureen, "Did it really hurt Mo? It looked awful."

"Yes you idiot, of course it hurt. It's all Ellen's fault. She said he would never follow through and would believe me. She better hope she can charm him, or she will be very sorry. I hate him! I can't believe that papa actually is letting him spank us. It

is barbaric." Maureen stood and rubbed her bottom for a few minutes.

Nora looked at her sympathetically. "I kind of like him myself. I want to learn. I for one intend to study and do what he says. I'm going to do my reading now." Maureen sighed and sat down. "You are such a goody two shoes. Ellen won't like it if you cooperate and don't stick with us."

"I don't care. I am not going to get spanked like you did." Nora just put her head down and started reading.

While her sisters were facing Connor in the classroom, Ellen was having a good time strolling the deck and flirting with all the deckhands and young men. There were quite a few traveling to Boston on this voyage. She really wasn't interested in finding anyone in particular at this time, but if the right man came along, she intended to be there. She had enjoyed a privileged life and an especially spoiled one. Her mother had been sickly most of her life and not prone to disciplining her children. Her father just doted on his little girls and did not have the heart to do it. He would yell at them and send them to their rooms and threaten, but they all knew he would never apply corporal discipline. Ellen grew up getting to do pretty much whatever she wanted. She intended to keep things as they were. Mister Connor Boland was just going to have to get used to that idea. She still smarted at the thought of those smacks he gave her this morning and making her write lines. She was just far too old and mature for that nonsense. No, she would not be attending any more classes and when she saw her father, she would make sure he understood that, and tell Mister Boland as much.

"Ellen, how nice to see you this afternoon. Would you care to stroll with me a bit?" Henry Harrison, Jr. approached Ellen and took her hand.

Henry was not bad looking but was not one of Ellen's favorites. Still he was fun and good company and would do for now. "Thank you Henry, that

would be lovely." Ellen tucked her arm in his and they strolled down the deck. They chatted pleasantly and after a bit stopped by the railing and looked down at the sea. It was a nice calm day and sunny. Henry was very taken with Ellen and so glad she had decided to walk with him. He would be the envy of several of the other young men he knew on board. He wanted to get much closer to Ellen McMahon.

"Look, is that a whale there?" He pointed out to sea. Ellen leaned over to look and Henry took that opportunity to put his arm around her waist and hold her to him.

Ellen was aware of what he was doing but decided it was harmless. "Why Henry, I don't see a thing. Where was it?"

Connor had finally made his way up to the top deck. He had been searching for over a half hour for Ellen. He had run into Mick in one of the salons and asked if he had seen her. Mick said as far as he knew she was in class. His eyes twinkled with merriment at the look on Connor's face. *"Oh yes, his little Ellen was meeting her match in stubbornness that was for sure. This was going to be a most interesting voyage."*

Connor left Mick and continued on his mission. He rounded the corner and saw Ellen leaning against Henry looking out at the sea. Not only was he furious at her flagrant dismissal of classes, but he did not care for her to be alone with a man who was so boldly holding her without her father's permission.

Barely controlling his anger, Connor strode up and took Ellen by arm, pulling her away from Henry. "All right Miss, ye and I are going to have a discussion about your behavior. Ye were due in class over an hour ago. Come with me." Connor turned and started half dragging her after him.

Henry was stunned "Sir, unhand her! Who are you? She is with me. You have no right to treat her that way, unhand her instantly!"

Connor stopped and looked at Henry coldly. "My name is Connor Boland, Sir. I am this young woman's guardian and tutor on this trip. She is in my care and right now, she is not where she is supposed to be. I will thank ye kindly to step out of the way. If you wish to see Miss McMahon in the future, ye will be asking my permission or her father's.

Connor did not wait for a reply but continued walking with Ellen in tow.

Ellen was furious at being treated this way. "Stop this instant! I am not attending your silly classes. Now I will see my father and he will straighten you out." Ellen dug in her heels and refused to budge.

Connor had enough. "Young lady, I have spoken to your father. I am in charge now. Not only are ye attending my classes ye are going to obey me. Ye can either walk calmly beside me the rest of the way to the classroom, or I will throw ye over my shoulder and carry ye like a sack of potatoes. Now what is it to be?"

Ellen's face flushed bright red at the thought of being carried so ignominiously across the decks. "I will walk with you, but I will not be staying for any silly classes anymore, and there is nothing you can do to make me, so there! I will marry a well to do man and not have to worry about stupid book learning." Ellen turned and stomped off ahead of Connor.

Connor's anger was at a boiling point but he almost had to laugh at the retreating figure, so much a grown woman, and still such a little spoiled brat. There was something about her that appealed to him. He would have to put those thoughts out of his mind. She would learn he meant what he said. She would learn her lessons and obey him. He hurried and caught up with her and tucked her arm in his. She tried to free it but he held tight.

Soon they reached the classroom. He opened the door and found Nora and Maureen doing as they

were instructed. "Ladies, it seems your sister is indeed joining us. Her illness seems to have passed rather quickly. She seems well enough to me to have been here in the first place. Maureen ye have already found out the penalty for lateness and deceit. I think it is now your sister's turn. Ellen ye will go to the front of the room please." Connor let go of her arm and propelled her toward the front.

Ellen looked at him like he was crazy. "Surely you jest, Sir! I am not about to stay here or be punished by you in any way." She quickly turned and started to leave.

Connor grabbed her around the waist and carried her to the front of the room. Without another word, he pulled the chair out, sat, and plunked her over his lap. He flipped up her skirts and started smacking her bloomer-covered bottom hard. "Ye are going to learn that I mean what I say. Ye will be attending class and ye will obey me. Next time I have to do this, I will not preserve your modesty, it will be on the bare." Connor continued spanking until Ellen was crying and begging him to stop.

"Please no more, I will behave, I will attend class please stop!" Ellen was crying and squirming to get free.

Connor ignored all her pleas and calmly picked up the ruler off the desk. He raised his arm and brought it down full force on her right cheek. He alternated cheeks spanking right then left. When he had landed almost 50 smacks, Ellen was sobbing and collapsed over his knee. He put the ruler down and set her on her feet. Her hands immediately flew to her bottom.

Connor took her hands and looked her in the eye. "Ye will take your seat and we will proceed with lessons till dinner time. After dinner ye all will retire to your cabins and complete the lessons I assign. Is that clear?"

Ellen nodded her head and Nora and Maureen quietly said yes Sir.

Connor released Ellen's hands and told her to take her seat. She did so reluctantly and sat very gingerly.

Connor looked at the three. He felt he finally had their attention. "Now ladies we shall start our studies."

The rest of the afternoon passed quickly. The girls left with their assignments without much to say. Connor reminded them when they were almost out the door. "Remember right after dinner ye are to retire to your cabins and study."

The girls nodded and left. As soon as they were out of the room Maureen asked Ellen,

"Are you going to stay away from the dance tonight?"

Ellen looked at her and thought about her spanking. "Maybe, I haven't decided yet. The man is a brute. I am going to talk to Papa about him."

Connor knew his battles were not over. He gathered his papers and retired to his cabin to prepare for dinner. *"Yes, this is going to be interesting. I intend to get to know Miss Ellen a bit better, and she will be obeying me."* Connor chuckled for the first time that day at the thought.



## Chapter Three

Ellen wasted no time in seeking out her father. He was sitting at his desk in his cabin.

"Papa, you must do something about that brute you hired! He is awful. Do you know that he beat Maureen and I today? You must fire him immediately! We can not have him beating us every time he feels like it." Ellen stood angrily glaring at her father.

Mick had been expecting a protest from Ellen, but didn't think it would be quite this soon. So, Connor was a man of his word. That pleased him immensely.

"Daughter, I doubt very much that Mr. Boland 'beat' you. I would rather imagine that he paddled your bottoms for you. That is something I fear I should have done a long time ago. But alas, I didn't and he has my blessing to do so now. Whatever it takes to teach the three of you manners and deportment and to have an intelligent thought in your brain. Now I suggest you get yourself ready for dinner. I will hear no more complaints about Connor."

Mick motioned with his hand for his daughter to leave. Ellen turned about and stormed from the room. She went to her cabin and slammed the door as hard as she could. Connor was just coming along the passageway when he saw her storm in and heard the door slam. Smiling, he knocked on the door.

Ellen opened the door expecting it to be one of her sisters. Her face was still crimson with anger. "What do you want? Classes are over. Remember? I don't wish to speak with you now." Ellen tried to close the door on him.

Connor was too fast. He pushed open the door and entered her cabin. "I will remind you that I am in charge of you 24 hours a day. I also am responsible for teaching you ladylike behavior. Slamming of doors and temper tantrums will NOT

be tolerated. Now you go back out and re-enter without slamming the door."

Ellen was astounded. She could barely speak. "You---You---can't be serious? I am not a child to be ordered about. I will not go out and come in again. If I feel like slamming a door, I will damn well do so. Now get out!"

Connor calmly looked at her. "Ellen, I suggest that you change your tone right now. I will not be tolerating swearing and yelling from ye. Now do as you are told or I will be demonstrating a bare bottom spanking for you. What shall it be?"

Ellen did not want to push him that far. She flounced her head and went out the door and calmly came back in and shut it, sneering at him. "There -- - are you happy now?"

Connors eyes had grown cold; a sign that Ellen did not know to look for yet. He grabbed her by the wrist and sat down on the nearest chair. He pulled her to him without saying one word, and flipped her over his knee.

It happened so fast that Ellen hadn't time to protest. Quickly he lifted her skirt and this time lowered her bloomers.

"I meant it when I said I would not tolerate your behavior young lady. You have asked for this and now you will receive it."

Ellen was trying to push off his lap and pull up her bloomers at the same time. "You can't do this. Stop. I will scream!"

Connor had a tight grip on her and answered by raising his hand and bringing it down hard on her bottom. "You may scream all you want. I have a feeling you are angry cause your Father told you I was in charge and could spank you as I saw necessary. Well you have soundly earned this one."

Connor spanked from cheek to cheek until Ellen was sobbing over his knee and apologizing. When he felt she had enough he pulled her bloomers up and stood her in front of him.

"Now I will do this each and every time you sass or disobey me. If I hear you swearing again, you will get your mouth washed out as well. Do you understand me?"

Ellen quietly shook her head. She was the picture of a very chastised sorry young lady.

"Good, now get ready for dinner. I will see you then." He stood up and briefly hugged her to him. "I don't want to have to spank you all the time. It will be far easier if you cooperate and behave."

Ellen just wiped her tears and didn't reply. Connor let himself out and closed the door.

Ellen lay down on her bed and cried. After she had calmed down, she thought back through the day. As awful as the spankings were, she felt strangely comforted by that last one. And she really liked it when he hugged her. "I must be nuts." She thought to herself. Shaking the thoughts from her head, she rose and dressed for dinner.

Connor was at the same time changing his clothes for dinner. He couldn't help but smile when he thought of Ellen and how lovely she really was. Even more so squirming over his knee. When he was ready, he went to the salon. Mick was there and motioned him over for a drink.

"Well Connor, I hear you have had to mete out some discipline to my two eldest today?"

"Yes, and just a bit ago Ellen had a reminder about good manners and temper tantrums. I really hope she settles down. I don't want to have to keep spanking her every day. But I will if that is what it takes." Connor took the ale offered and sat down with Mick.

"Well she is a stubborn one. As I told you, they aren't used to having rules set for them. You are the best thing that has happened to them. I feel very fortunate that our paths crossed."

Mick and Connor enjoyed their drinks till dinner was called. As they went into dinner, they saw the girls had already arrived and were seated at the

table. Mick sat at one end and Connor at the other. Ellen happened to be seated to Connor's right.

Connor smiled at all the girls. "Good evening, I trust you rested after class?" Ellen blushed when he looked at her. Maureen hung her head so as not to look at either him or Ellen. Nora on the other hand beamed back at him. "I rested a bit but then started studying so I would be all ready for tomorrow."

"Good for you Nora, I think that is wonderful." Connor was pleased that at least one of them was taking this seriously.

Maureen jabbed Nora in the ribs and whispered to her. "Quit trying to be the teacher's pet!"

"Ouch!" Nora glared back at her. "Stop it, that hurts!"

Connor looked at Mick to see what he would say or do. He said nothing. Connor however, was not going to let that pass.

"Maureen, would you care to share with the rest of us why you are poking your sister and what it is that you had to say? There will be no secrets or fighting at this table." Connor looked sternly at her.

Maureen blushed but did not answer him. "Maureen, you best answer me, or you can leave the table and you and I will discuss this privately after dinner."

Maureen did not want to miss dinner. She looked at her father for help. "Papa?"

"You best do as he says Maureen." Mick was not going to help her.

Connor was starting to rise to escort Maureen out when she blurted out. "I just told her to stop trying to be your pet. It is annoying."

"I think you and Ellen should follow her lead. Doing her homework and studying is not trying to be my pet. It is what is expected of all of you. I thought that was made clear in class today. Now no more of this." Connor finished his lecture just as dinner was served.

The rest of dinner was fairly quiet. Ellen had little to say and could not meet Connor's glance. As

soon as dinner was over, the girls excused themselves and left.

When they reached their sitting area, they gathered round Ellen. She was really annoyed with Nora and furious with Connor. She had not had an opportunity to tell either of them what had happened that afternoon. Shutting the door so no one could hear, she told both about the afternoon, leaving out the part about the hug.

"I talked to Papa. He is fully backing Connor. He actually said he should have spanked us himself years ago. He is glad that Connor is spanking us; said that he is in charge of us. That is why Papa wouldn't help tonight, Maureen. He is going to let that beast do whatever he wants to."

Maureen was horrified. "Surely Papa can't mean that."

"Yes he does. I was furious that he just dismissed me saying that was fine with him.

I went to my room and slammed the door. Mr. Know it all heard it and made me go out and come in again and close it properly. Then because I wasn't gracious about it, he put me over his knee and bared me and spanked me. It really hurts too." Ellen looked at her sisters for sympathy. "So what are we going to do about him?"

Maureen plunked down on the sofa. "I don't know. If Papa is backing him, there is nothing we can do. We may just have to make the best of it and pray that we get home soon."

"I like him! I want to learn, so I am not doing anything about him. I am going to study now." Nora started out of the room.

Ellen grabbed her by the arm digging her nails in. "You had best stick with us and not be telling him anything, you hear?"

Nora pulled away from her. "Let me go!" She ran out of the room and smack into Connor.

Connor caught her and set her on her feet. "Whoa, where are ye off to in such a hurry?"

Nora bit her lip. She was about to get even with her sisters. "I am going to study. I didn't want to hear anymore about the dance."

Connor looked at her. He doubted that was the whole truth, but he knew nothing about this dance. "What dance is that Nora?"

Nora smiled, "There is a dance tonight. Everyone is invited. I am too young to go but Maureen and Ellen aren't."

Connor smiled back at her. "Ok, on your way." Nora ran off again to her cabin.

Connor thought for a minute. *"If those two think they are going to a dance tonight they have another thought coming."* He opened the door and went into the living room.

"Well ladies shouldn't you two be studying? I certainly hope you weren't planning on dancing tonight. I shall be there and it would not be good for either of you to show up. I believe it is past time for you to start studying." Connor stood and looked from one to the other.

Both of them glared at him, but rose and left for their cabins. Connor could hear them muttering as they went.

Maureen was really disappointed. "I guess that takes care of this dance for us."

Ellen was furious. "I guess so, but there will be others. He can not be keeping us from all fun on this trip."

Connor attended the dance as he had said. He was very pleased that neither of his charges showed up. He really did want to get along with them and not have to be correcting them all the time. If they behaved, he would allow them to attend the next dance, under his supervision of course. He enjoyed the music but declined to dance with any of the young ladies. He didn't feel he had the time to socialize just now. However, he did think how nice it could be to dance with Ellen if she would behave. He was attracted to her, but for now, he would have to push those thoughts from his head.

The next day the girls were all in class punctually. The day progressed slowly but there were no major problems. Connor kept the classes lively and did manage to keep their attention. At lunch, they all sat together and the conversation for the first time was somewhat friendly.

Mick stopped Connor briefly after lunch, "I can see a difference already. I think they are beginning to respect your authority. I am very pleased."

"Thank you sir, but that is what you hired me to do, and I always do what I put my mind to." Connor left him and returned to his classroom.

Close to stopping time, Connor rose and called them to attention. "You have made good progress today. I have written each of your assignments out for you to work on tonight. Since it is a nice evening, I will allow you to spend an hour after dinner socializing on deck. I do want you to spend some time now working on your assignments and then you may finish them later this evening. However, I will be there also and you are not to leave my sight without permission. Do you all understand this?"

Ellen looked at him and half smiled. "You mean you are going to be our chaperone now as well?"

"Yes that is exactly what I mean. It is either that way or you will have to stay in your cabins. It is not proper for young ladies of your age to be left alone unescorted."

Nora and Maureen quickly agreed. Ellen sat quiet for a minute. "All right, but I am allowed to have a private conversation aren't I?"

Connor almost laughed at the concern etched on her face. "Yes you may have a private conversation. I have no intention of interfering in your lives, other than to make sure you are safe and behaving properly."

After handing out the assignments, Connor dismissed them.

Maureen and Nora were chatting together but Ellen didn't join in with them. When they reached

the door to Ellen's cabin Maureen stopped and looked at her. "Are you all right Ellen, you haven't said a thing since we left?"

"Oh I am fine. I am just thinking that I have found the perfect way to get around Mister Boland. We only have to behave in class and do a bit of the work, and then we can have some free time. If you noticed he did not even look at the work, we turned in from last night. So, I intend to enjoy myself thoroughly tonight and not worry about studying much at all. Then we shall see from there what can be done." Bidding good-bye to her sisters Ellen went in and rested before dinner.

Lying on her bed she formulated a plan that she was sure would guarantee her all the fun she wanted on the remainder of the trip.

Dinner was a cheery affair, much better than the previous days. The girls were all happy that they would be allowed time to socialize that evening. Mick himself was very happy that things were going so well. He really expected Ellen to be more stubborn and rebellious than she seemed to be.

Ellen even directed some of her conversation toward Connor. "What was the town you grew up in like? You didn't come from the city did you?"

Connor proceeded to tell them of his small village. Most of the residents were farmers. There was of course the local church and school, the usual pub and inn and stores. He had attended school in the village and when he was finished, he had gone to the monastery to be further instructed by the brothers. He had stayed there learning until his father had died and he returned to take care of his family. He ended the story there; he did not wish to talk about what had transpired to bring him to this ship.

"Do you think you will ever go back?" Maureen asked. "Won't you miss your family a lot?"

"Yes, I will and I hope someday to go back or bring them over to be with me." Connor had a wistful look on his face.



Ellen had a devious smile. She knew he was running from something and intended to pry further. "Why did you leave? You said you had your mother and brothers and sisters to care for. Seems odd that you just left them. Were you in trouble?"

Connor looked at her sharply, he was not about to answer that question. He was about to say something when Mick interrupted. "ELLEN! That is a rude question. The man's business is his, and none of yours. If you do not wish to really anger me further, you will be quiet."

Connor and Ellen both looked at him stunned. Connor smiled but said nothing. Ellen blushed to the roots of her hair. She was sure the surrounding tables had heard her father yell at her. "I am sorry Papa. May I be excused now?"

Before Mick could answer, Connor spoke up. "Where are you going to be? If you wish to return to your cabin ... fine. Otherwise if you intend to stay on deck, you will have to wait for the rest of us to finish our meal."

Ellen just bowed her head. "I will wait. I am sorry I was rude."

Mick reached over and patted her small hand. "That's all right daughter-- you are forgiven. Now let's see your pretty smile again."

Ellen stayed through the dinner but was quiet. She was determined to find out exactly why Connor had left his home. It might be a bargaining tool to use against him. She was intrigued by him, but wanted to have him out of her hair also.

## Chapter Four

Connor watched Ellen with interest throughout the rest of dinner. She was abnormally quiet and subdued. He had an uncomfortable feeling that she was up to something. He was disturbed at her prying into his life. He wouldn't feel totally safe till he was in America. The owners of this shipping line were English, and he wasn't sure what his status would be if they knew he was wanted in Ireland, with a price on his head no doubt.

When dinner was finished, Connor and Mick rose and escorted the girls onto the deck. It was a beautiful and fair evening. The sea was calm and the stars shone brightly. Connor sat on a deck chair and looked up at the sky. There seemed to be thousands and thousands of stars in the sky. He thought about those same stars shining down on his homeland. He wondered how his Mother and family were faring. He prayed that the British were not hounding them because of him. He also worried about Liam. If something were to happen to him, his family would be in terrible trouble. He let out an audible sigh. While Connor was thinking, Mick sat down next to him.

"Don't worry lad, everything will be fine, you'll see. I am sorry about Ellen's rudeness tonight. She normally really isn't that nosy and rude. I don't know what got into her. But you needn't tell anyone a thing you don't want to. I personally owe you a debt of gratitude and will see things are fine for you when we reach Boston. We have time to talk about that over the next week." Mick motioned a waiter and ordered a brandy for the two of them.

Connor was watching the girls as they talked. He really had no idea what Mick had in mind, but he liked and respected him. He did not want to remain a tutor for all his life, though. He wanted to make some money and bring his family over as soon as he could.

Nora was playing with some girls her age and was fine. Maureen was talking with some other girls and a few young men. Ellen, however, was the one who held his interest. She was once again with Henry Harrison, Jr. Connor disliked that man. His manner was overbearing, and he was hovering far too close to Ellen, and taking liberties he did not like. However, she hadn't done anything to warrant his interfering.

Mick was watching him watch Ellen and smiled to himself. Just as he thought, Connor was interested in his Ellen. Nothing could have pleased him more. He intended to see that Connor was well settled in Boston. Ellen and he would make a perfect match. He just prayed that things worked out. It would be the answer to all his prayers.

They were both sitting and sipping their brandies, lost in their own thoughts, when Connor noticed that Ellen was not in sight. He placed his glass on the table and rose to look for her. He found her around the corner with Mr. Harrison. His arms had trapped her against the wall, and he was pressing into her, trying to kiss her. Ellen was resisting, and trying to push him away.

"Please, Henry, you are too forward! Now let me be. I am not supposed to be here. Go away, I don't like you!" Ellen was trying to push him away.

"Oh Ellen, don't be a tease, darling, I know you want this. I have taken quite a liking to you. I think we need to get much better acquainted." Henry tried once more to kiss her.

He had just lowered his head when he felt himself being pulled forcibly back. He turned in astonishment and rage to see Connor. "Sir, you unhand me this instant! What right have you to interfere?"

Connor grabbed his shirt tighter and drew him into his face. "I, as Miss McMahon's guardian, have every right. Now, I heard the lady tell you to leave her alone, and I insist that you do. Now go, while

you can walk!" Connor pushed him forcibly away propelling him down the deck.

Henry left, but looked back over his shoulder. "You will be sorry one day for this, Ellen."

Connor looked at Ellen. She was a bit white, but all right. "What were you doing leaving my sight? Weren't you told to stay in sight?"

"I didn't want to, but he grabbed me and pulled me here. I didn't mean to. I am thankful that you found me though. He was scaring me." Ellen all of a sudden started to cry.

Connor pulled her into his arms and hugged her. "It's okay. Ye are safe. But do not leave my sight again. Yell if ye must. Now, I think it is time to call it a night. Let's go get your sisters." Connor hugged her tighter one more time then took her arm and led her back.

They found Maureen and Nora. "Come girls, time for you to go back and study." Connor walked them to their cabins and made sure they were in. Then, he returned to the deck.

Mick was still there, and Connor told him what had happened. Mick was not pleased at all.

"I don't like the Harrison family at all, and young Henry is trouble. He drinks too much and will never amount to anything. Again, I owe you for saving Ellen."

"Mick, I am the one that be owing you. Ye saved me when I really needed it." Connor was amazed that Mick thought he owed him.

"Well then let's just say we are both in each others debt and gratitude." Mick rose and motioned to Connor, "Come lets go to the salon and see what's going on." Mick had plans for him that Connor could never imagine.

While the men were enjoying the evening, the girls were studying, all but Ellen. She was laying on her bed thinking. She had been so glad to see Connor when he arrived and sent Henry flying. Again, that hug had sent shivers through her. She couldn't be starting to like him; she just couldn't.

Well, she wasn't doing anymore studying, that was for sure. He never looked at it, anyway. Tomorrow night she would look at some of the other young men, and find someone who took her fancy for the rest of the trip. She felt that Connor was probably in his cabin preparing boring lessons. She would even be able to sneak back out if she wanted to. Not tonight, but maybe one of the next few nights. She got up and prepared for bed and crawled under the sheets. Her dreams all night, though, were of Connor.

After Connor and Mick parted company, Connor returned to his cabin and looked at the papers the girls had turned in from the night before. He hadn't had time during the day, because he wanted to cover a lot of material quickly to start with.

Nora's papers were fine. She was turning into a great student. Maureen's were fairly good, except for math. She was going to need a lot of help in that area. Ellen's, on the other hand, showed little effort to even complete the assignment. He knew she had a brain but was stubbornly refusing to try and use it. Well, she would receive extra work until she improved, maybe even some individual tutoring. That would keep her away from the other young men on board, as well. Connor smiled to himself at the thought.

Putting the papers away, he prepared for bed. His last thoughts were a prayer for his family and thoughts of Ellen.

The next morning, Connor greeted the girls warmly and then handed back their work from the first night, and collected the homework from the night before. He thought he detected Ellen pale a bit, but didn't comment on it.

"Now Ladies, you will notice I have made comments on your papers. There are areas you need to work harder in. I will be gearing your assignments toward those areas in the future. Now shall we begin, today?"

They all mumbled, "Yes Sir." The morning passed quickly and when it was time for lunch Connor dispersed them. "I will be a few minutes in joining you, so please go ahead without me."

They left and Connor sat and looked briefly at the work from the night before. He again could see Nora was doing fine. Maureen was trying, but Ellen's was incomplete and gibberish at best. Well, that was going to change this afternoon for sure. He was not pleased as he left to join them for lunch. Miss Ellen McMahon was going to find out once and for all that he was taking this seriously, and she best also.

When Connor joined them for lunch, he noticed Ellen look down. She was quiet and would not meet his gaze. A sure sign that she was feeling guilty about something. Connor said nothing about classes during lunch, but kept the conversation light. After lunch was finished, the girls excused themselves to freshen up, and Connor returned to the classroom. He separated out a table and chair on the other side of the room from the other two. Miss Ellen was going to be receiving specialized attention. Some of which she wasn't going to like at all. He also took something else out of his desk and placed it on top. He was sure that would get their attention the moment they came in.

When they returned they looked at the change in the room and looked up at Connor, questioningly. Nora spoke up, "How come there are only two chairs here and one over there? Where are we supposed to sit?"

"Good question, Nora. You and Maureen take the chairs you were occupying this morning. Ellen, you are to sit over there."

Ellen looked at him and blushed, but she was also beginning to get a bit angry. "Why do I have to sit over there? I was perfectly comfortable here."

"Ellen, do as I say. Now take your seat!" Connor motioned her to sit.

With a huff, Ellen walked over and sat. Maureen and Nora were already seated at their table.

Connor glared at her back, but said nothing. When they were all seated, he faced them. "I have reviewed your work from last night. For the most part, I can see you are trying. As I said this morning, I will gear your assignments according to your progress in the future. However, Ellen, you didn't even make an attempt. Did you think that I wouldn't notice? Did you do any work after you returned to your cabin last night?"

Ellen just sat and stared at him. She couldn't believe he actually caught her. She was sure he would never catch on.

"Ellen, I asked you a question and I expect an answer. NOW!" Connor walked over and leaned down, looking at her.

As he did this, there was a collective gasp from Nora and Maureen. They had just seen what was on his desk.

Ellen looked up at Connor. She knew he was angry. Strangely, she felt bad that she had caused him to be angry with her. "No Sir, I didn't. I didn't think you would check."

Ellen once again hung her head. "Well I did check, and you deliberately disobeyed me. You were given a privilege with an understanding of what you were to do. You didn't do it or even attempt to do it." Connor walked over and picked up the object from his desk.

He returned to Ellen and laid it on the table in front of her. Turning to the other two, he gave them instructions on what they were to study.

"Now, Ellen, please stand and come over here. You may also bring the object I laid on your table. That is a paddle. Something you are about to become acquainted with." Connor moved a chair into the middle of the room and started rolling up his shirtsleeves.

He sat on the chair and looked at Ellen who was sitting motionless staring at him.

ELLEN! Come here. If I come and get you, I promise ye it will be far worse." Connor waited for her to move.

Ellen forced herself to rise and pick up the paddle. Slowly, she walked over to him. Connor took the paddle from her hand and glanced at Nora and Maureen. Both were staring wide-eyed at what was happening.

"Ladies, ye were told to study. If you don't want to partake in this yourself, I suggest ye do it." Both girls quickly buried their noses in their books.

Turning back to Ellen, Connor just looked at her. She was trembling a bit. "Do you know what is about to happen, Ellen?"

Ellen nodded. Connor took her wrist and drew her closer to his thigh. "Now, Miss, tell me why you are getting a spanking!"

Ellen was ashamed, but anger and stubbornness were also setting in. She said nothing, just turned up her nose, and looked at the ceiling.

Connor knew one sure way to take care of that attitude. He pulled her over his knee and picked up the paddle and swatted her over her dress 15 times. Ellen was yelping by the time he was done. He stood her back up and looked at her sternly. "Now, do you care to tell me why you are getting a spanking?"

Ellen was wiping tears from her eyes. She mumbled through sobs. "Cause I didn't do my work as you told me to."

"Correct, and now we will start your spanking. The paddles before were for your attitude and don't count toward this punishment." Connor drew her back over his knee and lifted her skirt over her head. He lowered her bloomers to her knees, baring her bottom. It was already pink from the previous paddling. He raised his hand and brought it down soundly on her right cheek. He alternated steadily till she was evenly red. Then picking up the paddle he proceeded to paddle her cheeks and thighs.



Ellen was frantically trying to escape the burning pain of the paddle. "Pleeeeeeeassssssseee, I promise I will do my work. I won't disobey you again. Pleassssssssseeeeeeee! It hurts!"

Connor ignored her pleas till she was quietly sobbing over his knee. He let her lay there for a minute and rubbed her back. Then pulling up her bloomers he stood her on her feet facing him. "Now, the next time you disobey me, it will be twice as hard and long. Do you understand?"

A very contrite tearful Ellen answered, "Yes Sir, I am sorry." Connor stood and hugged her briefly and whispered in her ear. "Now ye are forgiven, go sit down and do your work."

Ellen hurried back to her chair rubbing her bottom. Gingerly she sat down and started working. It was very uncomfortable sitting. She tried her best to concentrate but the burning in her bottom and the feelings the hug had aroused once again, were making it difficult.

Connor walked back to his desk. He noticed the quick movement of two heads returning to their books. He wondered how much they had seen.

Connor continued teaching the rest of the afternoon as though nothing unusual has transpired. After he had given them their assignments, there was a hush in the room. Maureen raised her hand. "Yes Maureen, what is it?"

"Are we to be allowed to stay on deck for a while after dinner tonight?" Maureen was almost afraid of the answer. She feared Ellen had ruined it for all of them.

"Yes, you and Nora will be allowed to stay with the same rules as last night. However, Ellen is going to her cabin to study. You and Nora may be dismissed now. Ellen has some make up work to attend to before dinner." Connor waited for them to leave the room, then walked over and pulled a chair up next to Ellen.

"Why do I have to stay?" Ellen asked quietly.

"Because you obviously are not able to study alone and I am going to give you extra attention." Connor sat back and looked at the sheepish expression on her face.

"Ellen, you are going to learn so you may as well stop fighting it. You're a bright girl; you should start using your brain for things other than foolishness. It will only add to your beauty." Connor took a book and placed it in front of her

"Now, lets start with these problems and work through them one by one." Connor worked with her for another hour and then walked her back to her cabin to prepare for dinner.

"I will see you at dinner, and then after you will return here and study. I will look in on you when I bring Nora and Maureen back." Connor left her and went to his own cabin.

Ellen was full of mixed emotions. He had told her she was beautiful and smart, but had also spanked her like a little girl. But then hugged her and held her and told her she was forgiven. She didn't know what to think anymore.

She was not alone long with her thoughts though. Nora and Maureen came running in. "Ellen, are you okay? That was a terrible looking paddle. Did it really hurt a lot? How come he hugged you? What did he say?"

They both waited for her to answer.

Ellen looked at the two of them. She didn't want to share her feelings right now, as she didn't understand them herself. "I don't want to talk about it, but yes it hurt. I wouldn't recommend either of you crossing him. Now go on and let me get ready for dinner."

They left giggling. Nora was snickering to Maureen. "I think Ellen likes Connor!"

Ellen pushed them out and shut the door. Sitting on her bed, she wondered. "What has come over me?" Dinnertime was almost here and she had to get ready. For the first time in days, she carefully selected what she considered one of her prettiest

dresses and spent extra time on her hair before going to the dining room.

Ellen left for dinner and as she entered the dining room, she ran into Henry. He grabbed her arm and pulled her aside. "My we look nice tonight. Dressing up for your 'guardian'?" He sneered at her.

"Henry, leave me be." Ellen pulled loose and started on her way. Henry pulled her back. "I will find out about him and make both of you pay. You will be mine whether you like it or not."

Ellen was trying to pull away when Connor appeared and took her arm. "Mr. Harrison, if I see you touching her one more time, I will see to it that you spend the remainder of your trip in sick bay. Now leave her alone!"

Connor felt Ellen tremble. Henry pulled himself together and turned and left. "What did he say that upset you so, Ellen?"

Ellen didn't know what to say. "He said he would make us pay. That he would have me." She was desperately trying not to cry.

Connor took her hand under his arm. "Don't worry. He is harmless. I won't let him harm you. Come dinner is waiting. You do look lovely tonight."

Mick watched them walking to the table and noticed Ellen's blush. He hadn't seen the exchange with Henry, but thought they made a wonderful looking couple. Oh how he hoped things would work out.

## Chapter Five

Connor seated Ellen at the table and took his seat. He could barely take his eyes off of her the entire meal. She really did look lovely. Maybe he should spank her more often and spend time alone with her, if it had this effect.

Nora and Maureen noticed and spent half the meal jabbing each other and giggling. For once Connor did not even notice. The dinner and conversation were both pleasant. When dinner was over, Connor stood. "Nora and Maureen, you stay with your father for a bit, while I take Ellen back to her cabin."

Connor did not understand why this statement should cause them to giggle. He was just beginning to be aware that they had actually been giggling all through dinner. He felt it must just be some girl thing.

When they were out of the dining room, Ellen turned to him. "You don't really have to escort me back. You can trust me to return to my cabin."

"I trust you Ellen; I don't trust that Henry Harrison. I don't want ye to have anymore encounters with him." Connor stopped her when they reached the cabin door. "Now remember, I want ye studying. I will check in on you and help you a bit later if ye need it." Connor opened her door and closed it after her. He had to suppress the urge to hug her again. He really couldn't let himself get involved right now.

Connor sat down next to Mick on deck. Mick had a brandy waiting for him. "Ellen safely in her cabin? The other two seem to be behaving."

Connor looked over at them. Yes, they were both behaving fine. "Yes, she is studying tonight I hope. She had another lesson today in obedience."

Mick chuckled. "I wondered what came over her. I really wish I had started this years ago, would have saved me a ton of grief. I have never seen the three of them this well behaved before."

Connor chuckled along with Mick. "Mick, I have something I need to tell ye. Tonight on the way in to dinner, Henry grabbed Ellen's arm and made threats to her. Told her he would find out about me and make us pay. That she would be his. I sent him on his way, but I think he may be trouble."

Mick's face flushed in anger. "That no good---scum." He paused to control himself. "Don't you worry about it, Connor, I will see that nothing happens to you or Ellen. Trust me on that. Henry Harrison Jr. may have some problems coming his way, though."

The two men continued talking and enjoying the night air. They noticed that the sea was beginning to pick up a bit and was not as smooth as it had been. Just as they were commenting on it, the purser came by and stopped in front of them. "Good evening gentlemen, the Captain wishes me to inform you that we may be encountering some rough weather later this evening and possibly for the next day or two. We will be putting up ropes for aids in walking on deck, but it may be advisable to stay inside as much as possible."

Connor looked at Mick, "Since I have never been at sea before, how bad can this get?"

"It can be bad, but usually doesn't last too long. I get used to the tossing but some people get quite sea sick. We best get the girls to their cabins and have them tie down any loose things that could fly about."

Connor rose and called to Nora and Maureen. "Come, time to head back." They joined him, but Maureen was pouting. "It has not been hardly 20 minutes. You said we could have an hour. I am not ready to go back yet!"

"Maureen, do as I say, unless you want to have a lesson like your sister this afternoon, now come." Connor was looking sternly at her.

Maureen did not have the nerve to disobey him. She and Nora went with him back to the cabins. He

told them of the approaching storm and asked them to secure all they could.

"Now I do not want you to leave your cabins tomorrow, until your father or I come for you. Do you understand?"

Maureen and Nora both nodded in agreement.

Connor proceeded to Ellen's cabin and knocked. She opened the door and let him in. He could see the books open on her desk. She had indeed been doing her work.

"Ellen, there is a storm coming. Ye need to be securing your things. It may last for a few days. I want ye to stay inside, until your father or I come for you tomorrow."

Ellen agreed with him. "We had a storm on the way over. It wasn't too bad though. I will be fine. But Maureen and Nora get scared easily; will they be alone?"

"Your father or I will get them in the morning. If it should get really bad during the night I will make sure they are okay."

"Thank you, that puts my mind at ease about them."

Connor was pleased at the change in her tone and behavior. Something definitely had happened. He was becoming very strongly attracted to her. He pushed his feelings out of his mind and picked up her work.

"This is very good Ellen, you have made progress, already. Do you need some help? I will stay and work with you a bit." Connor set the papers back down and looked at her.

Ellen did not really want him to leave just yet. "Yes I could use some help with some of the math problems."

Connor pulled a chair up and sat down next to her and worked through several more of the problems. They must have worked an hour or more and, finally, all was finished. He noticed that the ship was definitely beginning to rock more.

"Ellen, I think I better get back to my cabin and secure my things and you need to do the same. I will see you in the morning." Connor could not resist and hugged her briefly to him, then quickly left.

Ellen stood there, stunned. She enjoyed her evening with him, even though it had been studying. She felt like her insides were turning to mush with that hug. She sat down on her bench and looked in the mirror. *"Ellen McMahon, I think you are daft, but you are falling for Connor Boland. You are supposed to hate him. What has gotten into you?"*

Ellen proceeded to secure her belongings and get ready for bed. She climbed in and fell asleep despite the rocking of the boat. She was not one to get seasick.

Connor was surprised when he left Ellen's cabin at the sway of the boat. It was most definitely a lot rougher than it had been. He walked the short distance to his cabin and secured what he needed to. He was surprised that the rocking motion did not bother him at all. He fell sound asleep, quickly.

He awoke sometime shortly before dawn. The boat was really rocking and swaying much worse than the night before. He rose and quickly dressed. He left and headed for the deck. When he got there, he was shocked. Waves were cresting over the decks, and the sky was an angry purple. Deckhands in slickers were stringing ropes for people to hold on to. Connor approached one and questioned him about the storm.

"Aye sir this is the season for the big ones. I think we have hit the edge of one. I imagine things will be awfully rough, today. I doubt that many will leave their cabins; they will most likely be too sick too eat. If you do come up top, be sure to hang onto the ropes; you never know when the boat will sway." The man went back to tying ropes.

Connor watched the waves for a bit and then headed back to the girls' cabins. As he approached Nora's, he could hear her moaning and crying. He

gently opened the door, and she was sitting in bed crying. She had been sick and looked terrible.

"Nora, it's okay. Don't be scared. I will take care of you." Connor gathered her up in his arms. He took her to the washbasin and cleaned her up as best he could.

"Nora, see if you can change into clean clothes. I am going to get Maureen and will be right back." Connor left and went to Maureen's cabin. He knocked and there was no answer. Surely she hadn't left her cabin.

Connor knocked again and this time the door finally opened. Maureen was white and trembling. "Oh Connor, I am so scared. I thought we were going to sink." Connor hugged her to him.

"Sssshh, Maureen, it is all right; we are not going to sink." Connor held her till she calmed down.

Since Maureen was already dressed, Connor took her hand, "Come we have to get Nora, she is sick. I will take the two of you to the Salon and then get Ellen. We will meet your father there."

Maureen and Connor went and got Nora. She had managed to get dressed but was still looking sick. Connor picked her up and carried her. When they got to the salon, it was empty. Mick had not yet arrived. Connor left the two girls holding on to each other and made his way to Ellen's.

As soon as his hand knocked, she opened the door. She also was dressed but looked terrified. She had been crying. "Connor, I am scared! This storm is much worse than the other one." Connor pulled her into his arms and hugged her tight. This hug was much different than the hugs for Nora and Maureen. He could feel her heart pounding and his as well. "It will be all right. Come, I have Nora and Maureen in the salon. Nora has been sick and isn't feeling well. Maureen is as scared as ye are. But don't worry, I'll take care of ye."

Connor took her hand, and they made their way to the salon. Mick still hadn't arrived, but Connor didn't want to leave the girls right now to look for



him. "Let's all settle down here and wait a bit. Then, I will go and see about your Father, and getting us something to eat. I don't want you on deck; it is too treacherous."

The girls huddled together on the couch. Ellen hugged Nora and rubbed her back. She soon fell asleep, as did Maureen. Neither girl had slept much during the night. Connor felt bad that he had slept so soundly and not checked on them. After an hour had passed, Connor rose and whispered to Ellen. "I am going to look for your father. Stay here and I will be back." Ellen nodded. She really didn't want him to leave, but knew he had to.

Connor made his way to Mick's cabin and knocked. He heard a moan and Mick call out.

He opened the door, and Mick was in bed. "Connor, I was hoping you would come. I have a bit of the sickness this morning. I am going to ride it out here. Can you take care of the girls? Are they all right?"

"Yes, Nora is a bit sick but the other two are fine, just scared. I have them together in the Salon. Do ye need me to get you anything?" Connor was a bit concerned about Mick.

"No, I shall be fine. I have some brandy here. I will be fine as soon as the storm passes." Mick moaned again. "Just take care of the girls."

"That I will, Sir, and I will check on you later." Mick was so glad Connor was here. It wasn't the storm making him sick, but for now it would convince everyone. He wasn't ready to reveal his secret as yet.

Connor left him moaning and went on deck. Holding onto the ropes, he made his way to the dining room. There were very few passengers there. He found a waiter and asked for a jug of tea and some scones and butter. He doubted that they would feel like eating much more than that. Soon he had his food. He proceeded very carefully holding on with one hand and carrying the food with

the other. When he got back to the Salon, Nora and Maureen were still sleeping and Ellen was dozing.

He set the food and tea down and poured a cup for himself. The smell of the food and tea roused Ellen, and she came and sat with him. "Do you want something to eat Ellen?" Connor offered her a scone.

"No, I don't think I could handle that just now. Maybe just some tea." Ellen poured some tea for herself. "How long do you think this will last Connor?"

"I don't know, but the deck hand felt for maybe another day. But this is the worst part of it now, he thinks." Connor patted her hand. "Don't worry, everything will be fine."

"Where is Papa? Is he not coming?"

"He is a bit under the weather, like Nora, but I will check on him later. We will just camp out here till it is over. I don't want you girls to be alone." Connor looked at the other two. Maureen was starting to wake up. She yawned and sat up straight.

"Come have some tea and scones if you want. Will make ye feel better." Connor motioned her to join them. Nora was still soundly sleeping, and that was probably best for her.

Maureen came and sat with them. "I am hungry." She ate a scone and drank some tea.

Color was returning to her face, slowly. But the scared look was still there.

Connor didn't quite know what to do with them. He knew they were scared, but he had to get their minds off the storm. "How about if I read you a story from one of the books here?"

The girls cuddled up on the couch once more and he sat in a chair and started reading. They passed the rest of the morning like this. His voice reading the story did seem to calm them, even though the ship continued to toss in the waves. He could see through the portholes that at times the waves covered most of the ship.

Nora woke and had some tea, and seemed to be feeling a little better. She didn't want any food, though. Connor looked at his watch. He should check on Mick and see about some lunch and maybe extras for dinner. He didn't think he wanted to make another trip today in these conditions.

"Ladies, I am going to check on your father now, and see about some more food and tea, I will be back as soon as I can." Connor started for the door. Ellen came up to him. "Could I go with you? I would like to see my father and I could help you. I don't feel sick at all."

Connor looked down at the small girl standing there. He didn't want to put her at any risk, but could understand the need to see her father. "All right. But you must stay right with me and hold on to me. When we get on deck I want you to hold onto the ropes and me."

Connor looked at the other two. "Will you be all right till we get back?"

"Yes, we will be okay, but please hurry!" Maureen still had a nervous edge in her voice.

Connor and Ellen knocked on Mick's door. He didn't answer, so Connor opened it and looked in. He was peacefully sleeping. He let Ellen in, and she fussed over him a bit and straightened his covers. Mick woke and started to sit up. Ellen pushed him back down.

"You just stay there and rest. Would you like some food?"

"NO, I can't even think of food right now. You two go back to the girls. I will be fine."

Mick lay back down, wincing in pain.

Connor noticed his grimace but said nothing. He knew something was not quite right here. As Connor and Ellen were leaving, Connor spied Mick's belt hung on the end of the bed. He could use that to secure Ellen to him when they went on deck.

When they reached the deck, Connor stopped and wrapped the belt around his arm and Ellen's.

"Now remember, hold on to the ropes, and don't let go."

They proceeded on deck, carefully. It was worse than this morning. The waves were crashing over them, and both were drenched. They made it to the dining room and sought out a waiter. There were only two brave souls there. Connor asked for them to wrap up some meat and bread and cheese. He ordered more tea. When all was ready, they proceeded back on deck. They were almost to the passageway when Connor felt something push at him from the back. Ellen was in front of him and it caused him to bump into her. "Ellen hold on tight!" She did, but looked back at Connor, just in time to see Henry behind him, pushing him.

"Connor! Watch out! Henry is pushing you!" Ellen screamed at him over the roar of the ocean.

Connor was well aware of what was happening. With one mighty shove, he propelled Ellen and himself into the passageway. Quickly undoing the belt, he started back on deck. He was going to see to Henry right now. His fists balled in anger, he told Ellen to stay put.

"Connor! Don't go out there. Please!" Ellen was screaming in fear as Connor opened the door and returned to the deck to seek his revenge.

## Chapter Six

Connor heard Ellen screaming at him to stop, but he was angry and determined to take care of Henry once and for all. As he came out on deck, the ship swayed badly and he almost lost his footing. The storm had definitely increased; the winds were howling and waves cresting over the ship. Even though it was mid day the sky was so dark it was hard to see.

Connor held onto the ropes and looked around. Henry had vanished. There was no one in sight. Connor realized even if he found him he would not be able to fight him under these conditions, they would both be overboard. He stood there for a few minutes and then turned to return to the passageway. His heart leapt into his throat when he saw Ellen standing there on deck.

Connor made his way to her and grabbed her arm. "Ellen, I told you to stay put. Ye should not be out here. It isn't safe." Connor quickly got both of them back inside. He was now angry that she hadn't listened to him.

"What possessed you Ellen McMahon? I told you to stay put and I meant it. It is not safe out there." Connor had her by the shoulders and was gently shaking her.

"I was scared. I didn't want you to get hurt. I thought maybe I could help." Ellen was almost ready to cry.

Connor said nothing just picked up the packages and took her hand and walked to her cabin. Opening the door, he pulled her inside.

"Connor, why are we here? Please don't make me stay here alone!" Ellen was now terrified.

"You aren't staying alone, we are returning to the Salon after I take care of your disobedience." Without saying another word, he sat on her dressing stool and pulled her over his knee, quickly lifting her skirts and baring her bottom. His hand cracked down on her bottom time after time. When

she was red, he reached over and picked up her brush and continued paddling till she was sobbing and pleading with him to stop. When he finally stopped, he grabbed her up and into his arms. Holding her and rubbing her back to quiet her, he spoke softly to her. "Ellen, do not ever risk yourself that way again. I give orders for a reason. I would not have been able to live if ye had been injured or swept overboard."

Ellen quieted and snuggled into his chest. Her heart was pounding and she could feel his heart pounding as well. Her feelings were in turmoil. She didn't know what to think, no one had ever affected her this way before. She listened to what he said and was comforted. "I'm sorry Connor, I won't do it again. I was scared."

"It's okay, I forgive you, but I don't want you hurt. Now we best get back to your sisters. I think the storm is worsening." Connor set her up and she straightened her clothing and they gathered up the packages and made their way to the salon. The ship was rocking violently now and it was hard to make their way through the passageway.

As soon as they entered the salon, Maureen and Nora ran and hugged Ellen. "We were so scared. It is getting worse. Are we going to sink?" Maureen and Nora were both sobbing.

Connor sat on the sofa and pulled them down with him. "Ellen why don't you pour some tea and set the food out." Turning back to the two girls, he hugged them to him. "The storm is a bad one, but we are safe. Just be calm. It will be over tomorrow. This is the worst part and it will get better now."

He held them till they quieted and then joined Ellen at the table. "I think we will all feel a bit better if we have something in our stomachs. Nora, do you feel you can eat?"

Nora came over to the table. "I think maybe some bread and cheese and tea." She sat down and started to eat. Maureen joined them and for the first time that day, they chatted somewhat normally.

Ellen was quiet and twitching on her seat. Her spanking had left her very sore.

Connor watched her and made sure she was eating. When they were finished, he picked up the book, "Would ye like to be hearing more of the story now?"

The girls all agreed and once more snuggled into the sofa. Connor picked up the reading where he left off. He read for the rest of the afternoon and it was soon dark.

"I think we best have a bit more to eat and then light the lamps. Would ye like to stay here for the night?"

Nora smiled at that. "Oh yes I don't want to be alone." Maureen and Ellen agreed.

"You girls light the lights and prepare for dinner then. I will go and get some pillows and blankets and be right back." Connor was almost out the door when he turned around.

"I don't want any of you to leave this room, do you understand?" He looked pointedly at Ellen.

She blushed, "No Connor, we won't leave this room."

Connor smiled and went on his errand. He went to his room and gathered some other reading materials and blankets and pillows. He did likewise in the girl's rooms. It was going to be a long night.

He returned to the salon and put the pillows and blankets on the sofa. The girls were seated at the table. The tea was no longer warm, but he wasn't going to go back for more. It was far too bad on deck to risk it.

They ate and tried to ignore the rocking of the boat. After dinner was finished, they once again snuggled on the couch. Maureen and Nora were yawning and both sleepy. Ellen made beds for them on the floor and they both soon were sound asleep. Connor joined Ellen on the couch and tucked a blanket around her. "You can sleep here, I will sleep in the chair over there. When you are tired let me know."

"Connor, are we going to be all right? I am really scared. It seems the ship is groaning so it might break up." Ellen was trembling with fear.

Connor hugged her to him. "It will all be over soon. I know the ship sounds like an old lady with aching bones, but it will be fine."

Ellen snuggled up to him; she really liked it when he held her. "Connor I am sorry I was prying the other night, but can you tell me more about your family and Ireland. You don't have to tell me anything you don't want to."

Connor could still feel her trembling a little. He wasn't sure how much he could really tell her. Once they were safely in America he wouldn't mind, but right now, he didn't feel totally safe.

"I am going to get some brandy and I think it wouldn't hurt for ye to have a wee bit to settle your nerves." Connor rose and got the brandy from the cabinet and two glasses.

He returned to the couch and poured a small amount in a glass for Ellen and handed it to her. "Now sip it, it is strong."

He poured himself a glass and sat back down on the couch next to Ellen. She immediately snuggled up against him. It was only natural that he put his arm around her.

Neither was aware that Maureen was not sleeping and lay there watching them and listening.

"There really isn't much to tell Ellen. As you know, Ireland has been under the English thumb for many years now. They are not fair or kind rulers. We are wanting our independence and willing to fight them for it. Unfortunately many a man and boy has been killed or sent to penal colonies fighting for justice. The English hung my father for being a so-called traitor. For that reason I was left as the oldest to care for the rest of the family. I had to leave them in the care of my younger brother Liam for reasons I can not say now, but I do miss them so and will see to it they are safe as soon as I



can." Connor felt that was all he could safely say at this time.

"Does my father know of any of your troubles? Maybe he could help. He has helped others I know." Ellen snuggled in closer and sipped her brandy.

"Aye, he knows and he is a great man. I owe him much. But will be up to me to see to my family." Connor looked down at her on his chest and wanted so much to kiss her.

"Connor, do you have anyone special waiting for you? Are you betrothed to anyone?" Ellen didn't want to hear that he was, she knew that she was falling in love with him.

"No Ellen, I am not free to ask anyone to wait for me, and have no one I am beholden to in any way. I want someday to have a wife and family, but must first pursue a career and make a standing for myself. I have nothing to offer a woman now." Connor was becoming painfully aware of his desire for Ellen. Feelings that had not stirred in a long time were reawakening. He couldn't take the chance of falling in love right now.

"Ellen, I think it is time for some sleep. Lay down and I will be over here in the chair." Connor rose and took a pillow and blanket with him. He dimmed the lights except for the one nearest his chair and picked up a book. He watched the girls and made sure they were quiet and peaceful. He knew he should try and rest but his thoughts were a jumble.

Finally, he rose and poured another brandy and settled back down. He thought for a bit and decided that no matter that he felt he was in love with Ellen; he could not let her see it. He was in no position to ask for her hand. He had nothing to offer, and he knew that Mick was looking for someone to care for her. He could only hope that she would still be available after he was situated and able to support her.

Connor finally fell into a fitful sleep. He was aware of the rocking and moaning of the ship and

the crashing of the waves. There were occasionally shouts from the crew that penetrated to the cabin. Finally, somewhere near dawn the storm lessened. He woke and looked over toward the girls. Nora was softly moaning and Maureen was sound asleep. Ellen was asleep as well. He got up and went to Nora. "Are ye ok? " Connor reached down and touched her hand.

"I am not sick anymore just scared." Nora looked up at Connor with tears in her eyes. Connor picked her up and carried her back to his chair. He sat and wrapped his blanket around her and held her. "Tis all right, the worst of the storm has gone. Feel how much less we are rocking." He held her tight and she finally fell back asleep. He, himself, fell asleep too.

It was several hours later that Ellen woke and sat up. Maureen was still asleep and she noticed Connor holding Nora. Nora was holding on to his neck and sound asleep against his chest. For just a second Ellen felt a huge pang of jealousy. She wished she had spent the night in his arms. She remembered what he had said the night before. She knew it was pointless to be in love with him. His honor would never permit him to court her when he had no position or standing behind him as yet. With a sigh, she rose and stretched. Maureen then roused and got up. The two of them quietly looked to see what provisions they had left. They did not know if it would be possible to get more this morning or not.

Their stirring and whispering woke Connor and Nora. He hugged her and set her on her feet. Rising he stretched out the kinks from sitting in the chair all night. "Good morning ladies how are ye this morning?"

"Fine Connor, are you hungry?" Ellen asked him setting out the remains from the day before.

"I am. But I think I will see if we can get fresh supplies. I think the storm has abated. Now the

three of you stay here and I will return shortly. Plus I am going to check on your Father."

Connor went first to Mick's cabin. He knocked and Mick himself opened the door. Connor thought he looked much better this morning. "How are you feeling today?"

Mick smiled at him, "Much better, how are the girls?"

"They are fine, a bit scared and shaken, but fine." Connor looked at Mick suspiciously, his color was ashy, and he really didn't think it was seasickness that had affected Mick, but didn't feel he could pry.

"I am going to see about breakfast, do you feel up to coming with me?"

"Yes, I think the worst of the storm is past, I could do with some air." Mick and Connor made their way on deck. It was much better than the day before. The waves were nowhere near as strong and the boat was not rocking as much either. The ropes were still up as a precaution though. They went to the dining room and motioned to a waiter. Mick noticed a few people were seated. "Are you going to be serving a regular meal today?"

"Yes sir, we should be clear of the last of the storm mid day. Will you and your family be joining us today?"

Mick nodded to him. "Yes we shall be here shortly for breakfast if you would be so kind as to prepare our table."

When Mick and Connor entered the salon, the girls all ran to greet their father. "Papa, are you all right, we were so worried about you."

Mick hugged each one. "I am just fine, now did Connor take good care of you?"

All three answered at once. "Oh Yes, he let us stay here last night together so we wouldn't be frightened."

Mick looked at Connor and smiled. "Thanks Lad, I really am grateful you are here."

Mick clapped his hands to get their attention. "Who wants to go and sit in the dining room for breakfast?"

They all did and started for the door. Connor called to them, "Wait a minute, you have to be careful on deck. As Ellen knows from yesterday, it can be very slippery. There are ropes to hold onto. I want you all to be sure to hold on to those ropes. Do not let go till we reach the dining room."

The little group proceeded out on deck and safely made their way to the dining room. It was still raining, but nothing like the day before. The sea was still rough and there were not as many diners as normal. Mick was starving though and made short work of eggs and bacon and oatmeal. Connor himself was hungry and ate well. The girls were still a bit uneasy with the sea and stuck to scones and tea.

They spent a leisurely amount of time eating. When they were done Connor told the girls they could return to their cabins and freshen up, then come back to the salon. They really wouldn't have class today, but they could spend several hours working on some reading and problems he would give them. He felt they needed to get some normal routine started again.

"Oh Connor do we have to? Can't we just play today?" Maureen was definitely pouting.

Nora and Ellen also looked at him expectantly but said nothing.

"You will have plenty of time to play. I want you to get some studying done today. Now lets go and get ready and I will meet you in one hour." Connor rose and waited for them to also.

"You go ahead Connor, I am going to stay out here for awhile." Mick sat back in his chair and poured more tea.

Connor escorted the girls to the passageway and then all went their own way. Maureen was still complaining about having to study. " I really don't

want to have to study today after yesterday. I am still tired. I want to rest and go see my friends."

Ellen calmly told her, "Maureen it won't do any good to fight him on this. You know when he says something he means it and doesn't back down. Do you want to risk being taken over his knee for disobeying him?"

"I can see that you aren't any fun anymore. What is the matter with you Ellen, are you in love with him? I saw the way you were cuddling last night. You know that Papa will never allow you to be with him. He is a nothing and has nothing." Maureen was getting angry with her sister.

Ellen was shocked that Maureen had eavesdropped last night. Her temper got the better of her. She slapped Maureen hard in the face. "You have no right saying that! I don't care what you think, you just better be in class!" She turned and fled down the passageway, leaving a stunned Nora and a crying Maureen.

Maureen fled into her cabin and slammed the door. Nora was confused she didn't know what to do. She finally just went to her own cabin.

Maureen flung herself on the bed crying. She didn't know what got into Ellen. Last week she hated Connor now she acted like she was in love with him. She didn't want her sister to be in love. She wasn't ready to lose her yet. She really didn't want to go to class but was afraid to disobey also. Maybe she would have Nora tell him she was really sick. That breakfast didn't agree with her. She went to Nora's cabin and knocked on the door.

When Nora answered, Maureen slipped in quickly. "Nora, you have to help me. I just am too upset with Ellen to go to class. Would you tell Connor that I am sick, that my breakfast upset me? Please, I just can not face her right now."

Nora didn't want to lie to Connor, but Maureen was in a state and all upset and crying. She really would be sick if she kept up. "All right I will, but you best stay in your cabin till lunch then."

Maureen hugged her. "I will, thank you Nora." She quickly left and went back to her cabin and once again flung herself on the bed sobbing.

Nora left for the salon and Ellen was already there when she arrived. She and Connor were quietly talking. Nora went up to Connor and told him Maureen was sick. Connor looked at her sternly.

"Nora, are you telling me the truth? She was fine when we left the dining room."

"She really doesn't look well. Says her breakfast upset her." Nora tried to look as honest as she could.

Ellen had not said a word but her face had gone pale. Connor noticed and glared at her.

"Is there something going on here that I don't know about?"

Neither Nora nor Ellen said a word. Connor was getting angrier by the minute. He had made such progress and it seemed that they were no longer resisting. There must be something that he was not aware of.

"If neither of ye are willing to talk, then ye may be seated and read. I will go see to Maureen myself." Connor started out of the room.

Ellen finally jumped up and ran to stop him. "Connor, please I think it is my fault that she is ill."

"What do ye mean Ellen? What did ye do to her?" Connor had his hands on his hips looking at Ellen.

"She was nasty and saying things I didn't like. She made me angry and I slapped her face."

Connor was speechless. He just looked at her and Nora. "All right ye two stay here. Nora, ye were lying to me also. You are in trouble as well as your sisters. I want both you and Ellen standing in a corner thinking about what ye have done when I return."

Now it was Nora's turn to be stubborn and angry. She put her hands on her hips and looked

right at Connor. "NO! I won't. I didn't do anything wrong!"

Nora, ye best be silent. Now go to the corner." She continued to stand there with her hands on her his. Stomping her foot she once more said, "NO!"

Connor moved faster that either Ellen or Nora could believe. He grabbed Nora and tucked her under his arm. Without a word, he landed 10 hard smacks to her seat. Nora yelled with each swat. Connor carried her to the corner and set her down. "Now missy, nose in that corner till I return." Nora stayed put rubbing her bottom.

Connor turned to Ellen and grabbed her wrist. "Are ye going to defy me as well?"

Ellen bowed her head and meekly answered, "No."

"Good." Connor gave her several swats and aimed her toward another corner. As he reached the door, he turned back to them. "That was just a small taste of what ye have coming to you. Ye both best be thinking hard about your behavior today."

Connor went to Maureen's door and knocked. There was no answer so he opened the door and went in. Maureen was lying on her bed crying. "Why aren't you in class where you were told to be?"

Maureen didn't answer him just turned away.

Connor sat down on the bed and pulled her up. "I asked you a question Miss and I expect an answer."

Maureen finally mumbled, "I didn't feel well. Leave me alone."

"I will not leave ye alone. Ye felt fine at lunch, ye just didn't want to obey." He tilted her face to him and saw the red handprint still showing. Ellen had indeed hit her hard.

"Why did Ellen slap ye?" Connor made her look at him.

"She didn't like what I said about you and her. I am sorry, I didn't mean it." Maureen started crying again.

Connor stood and grabbed her arm. "All right come along we are going to class and straighten this out. And the three of you are not going to be sitting well at dinner."

When Connor and Maureen arrived in the salon, he told Maureen to sit. He then called Nora and Ellen from their corners. "Sit down both of you."

He waited until they were seated and then stood glaring at the three of them. "I don't know what has gotten into the three of you. I thought we had come to an understanding that your schooling was important and ye were to obey me. I know you have had a trying two days, but it is time to get back to normal. I do not understand why ye feel a need to lie to me, disobey me and physically fight each other. I will not tolerate any of it."

I don't care at this time, why any of it happened. I don't ever want it to happen again. I was hoping there would be no need for further use of my paddle, but I see I was wrong."

Connor went to his desk and pulled out the paddle. "Nora, come here." Connor seated himself in a chair in front of the room.

Nora walked slowly over to him, tears forming in her eyes. "I am sorry Connor, I did not mean to lie to you, and Maureen was feeling ill."

Connor said nothing but took her by the wrist and pulled her over his knee. He lifted her skirts but left her bloomers in place. "Since I have not had to spank ye before I will leave your bloomers up this time. But if I ever have to again, it will be on the bare." Without another word, Connor raised the paddle and brought it down crisply on her right cheek. He was not paddling her as hard as he planned to paddle the other two. Nora was younger and much more sensitive. Still she howled with each crack of the paddle. After five, she was sobbing and begging him to stop. He gave her five more and stood her up. Tears were streaming down her face and her hands instinctively went to her bottom.



Connor took her hands and held them. "Nora, I am sorry I had to do that, but I can't tolerate lying."

He hugged her to him. "Sshh, it is all right, you are forgiven. Take your seat now."

Nora walked back to her seat and gingerly sat down, still sniffing. Connor looked at the other two. Both were sitting quietly with their heads down. Connor was not sure how he wanted to handle the situation between them. He thought for a moment and then stood up again.

"Nora, you may be excused to return to your cabin. I want you to take your books and study. You are not to leave the cabin till dinner time." Connor handed her an assignment. Nora quickly grabbed her books and left.

"Now as for the two of you, I want you to each write an essay on what has happened this afternoon. You are both to be spanked but in your cabins after dinner. Now go to your cabins and write. I expect the essays to be handed to me at dinner." Connor turned and left the room.

## Chapter Seven

Connor left Ellen and Maureen and went up on deck; he needed time to think things through before dinner. The storm was almost over, the ship actually felt calm compared to the previous day. It was still too rainy to stay outside so he went into the main salon and sat. He ordered an ale and thought back over the day.

What had happened to the girls? They had been so good lately. Ellen was no longer fighting him and even beginning to learn. He thought back to what Maureen said. She had said some things about Ellen and him that Ellen did not like. That was what caused Ellen to slap her. She didn't mean them and was sorry. Ellen had said Maureen was nasty and said mean things. Could it be that his feelings for Ellen were showing?

Were the girls seeing this and was it upsetting Ellen? He thought that Ellen was showing a bit of interest in him but maybe he was wrong. He knew how futile it was to pursue his feelings, but his heart was not cooperating with him.

Just the thought of Ellen stirred him. True, she was spoilt and spirited, but she was also kind and caring and despite her lack of education was smart as well. He longed to be able to really hold her in his arms and kiss her and make love to her. But for now he could not even dream of that happening; he had nothing, and didn't know what the future was going to bring.

Mick walked into the room and saw Connor sitting at a table alone looking despondent. He wondered what could have happened since lunch. He walked over and sat down with him.

"I thought you were spending the afternoon teaching the girls? What happened?" Mick ordered two ales and waited for Connor to reply.

"Aye, I was supposed to, but first Maureen would not come to class. Nora told me she was ill. I knew she wasn't ill, but being stubborn. I started to

get her and Ellen tells me she was probably the reason that Maureen was not in class. Said Maureen was mean and nasty and she slapped her." Connor paused and took a sip of ale.

"I went and got Maureen and sure enough; she has a red welt from Ellen's hand. I took her back to the classroom, fully intent on punishing all three and resuming classes. But something Maureen said caused me to wonder what was happening. I spanked Nora for lying to me and sent her to her cabin. I assigned Ellen and Maureen an essay to be turned in at dinner, explaining their conduct. I plan on punishing both of them after dinner."

Mick just nodded as Connor talked. He could see the misery in Connor's eyes. When Connor had finished, Mick cleared his throat. "Connor, it is not your fault you know that they are acting this way. Nora is a peacemaker at heart; she was probably trying to calm things down between Ellen and Maureen. Maureen has always been close to Ellen and looked up to her. She sees that Ellen is nearing that age where she will be marrying and leaving home. I don't think Maureen is ready for that yet. She is waging war with her emotions. Unfortunately, I think they are taking this out on you without even knowing it."

Mick stopped; he wasn't sure how much to tell Connor. He knew without a doubt that Connor had strong feelings for Ellen and was equally sure that Ellen felt the same way about him. He knew Connor well enough, though, to know he would not act on those feelings without a secure future. His fear was that Ellen, in her stubbornness, would throw herself at someone else and lose Connor.

"Ye probably be right Mick, but I feel so disappointed in them right now. Disappointed in myself too. I wish that I had --- well, it makes no difference what I wish. Things are the way they are." Connor sighed deeply and looked down through his glass.

Mick made his decision. He would tell Connor enough to reassure him. "Connor, I told you before that I am deeply indebted to you. I can't be very specific at this time, but you will have no need to worry about your future. There are things happening in my life, I can't discuss now, but you are very much going to be part of my future plans. I don't want you to ignore your feelings because you are worried about your future. Your future is going to be fine. Now, how about another ale before we meet the naughty girls for dinner?"

Connor smiled at Mick. "Sounds good, but I am puzzled by what you said."

"I wish I could tell you more right now, Connor, but I can't. Soon I will." Mick chuckled at the befuddled look on Connor's face.

Connor and Mick were at the table before any of the girls arrived. They all arrived shortly thereafter and quietly took their seat. All three looked miserable. Nora had her head down and would not look at anyone. Connor felt bad that she was taking her punishment so hard, but she had to learn as the others did.

"Ellen, Maureen, do you have something for me?" Connor held out his hand.

Blushing Ellen reached into her pocket and pulled out her paper and handed it to Connor. She met his eyes briefly and then looked down. Maureen handed Connor her paper as well.

"Thank you ladies, I will read these and see you both in your cabins after dinner. No one is allowed to stay on deck tonight. I think you all need your rest. Now, lets enjoy our dinner." Connor folded the papers and put them in his breast pocket.

Dinner was a very quiet, solemn affair. The girls did little but answer questions directed to them. Mick and Connor carried on most of the conversation. When the dishes had been cleared from the table Connor stood and asked the girls to retire to their cabins.

Ellen and Maureen nodded and rose to leave. Nora stood and walked over to Connor. "May I talk with you?"

Connor looked down on her sad little face. "Yes Nora, but go to your cabin now, I will see you as soon as I finish reading your sisters' papers." Connor gave her arm a squeeze and smiled at her.

Nora nodded and left but not before Connor noticed the tears forming in her eyes. He felt bad that she was taking this so hard. He prayed he would never have to punish her again.

Mick excused himself. "Connor after you are finished with the girls, why not join me for a while in the salon?"

"Thanks Mick, I will do that." Connor sat down in one of the deck chairs and read the papers. He decided to read Ellen's first.

*I have no excuse for the way I acted today. We were all tired and Maureen did not want to go to class. She wanted to rest and see her friends. I told her she must, and then she said nasty things to me. Accused me of being a traitor to her and told me she had spied on me the night before.*

*I know that I should have ignored it, but I lost my temper and slapped her. I have never done anything like that before and I don't know what came over me. I have apologized to her and tried to make up for it.*

*I think that I deserve to be punished for both of us. I will accept your decision, but I feel that I am mainly at fault here. I am older and should have controlled myself.*

*Please forgive me and I will try not to lose my temper again.*

*Ellen K. McMahon*

Connor put the paper down and smiled. At least she recognized her fault in the matter and that her temper was her downfall. However, Maureen was not totally innocent. No, he would not punish Ellen for both of them. They both deserved to be punished, but for different things. He hoped to

make that clear by the time he was finished with them

After clearing his head a bit, he picked up Maureen's note.

*Mr. Boland Sir,*

*I deeply regret my actions of today. I know I behaved no better than a small, pouty child.*

*I love my sister deeply and was very hurt by what she did. I do see that I was also at fault and made her lose her temper.*

*I also lost my temper and said things to her about her relationship to you that I shouldn't have. She has changed so since you started teaching us. I feel that she is no longer my special friend and I will lose her.*

*That made me say things I now regret. I stayed awake last night and saw her snuggling with you on the sofa. I am sorry I spied. I know I hurt Ellen by my words and she lashed out. She has apologized, and I do forgive her. I have apologized to her as well.*

*I will accept your punishment, but I am scared. I am very sorry and will try and be brave.*

*Maureen A. McMahon*

Connor put down her letter. This was very complicated. Mick was right, of course, Maureen was afraid of losing Ellen. It would happen sooner or later, but she wasn't ready for it. The fright of the last two days had apparently upset the girls more than he knew. He also knew that Maureen at least was aware of the attraction between Ellen and him. He wished he knew fully what Mick meant earlier. He should follow his heart and not worry about the future. That was hard to do, but he didn't want to risk losing Ellen either. He would have to think about this a lot more. In the meantime, he had to address the misbehaviors from today.

Connor rose, and went to Nora's cabin first. He gently knocked at the door, and Nora practically whispered, "Come in."

Connor opened the door, and Nora was sitting at her desk, writing. She put her pen down and turned to him. He could tell she had been crying. His heart almost broke looking at her sadness. He sat down in the chair and held his arms out to her. She flew over to him and fell sobbing into his arms. "Hush, Nora, ye are forgiven. Ye are taking this far too much to heart. Ye misbehaved and were punished, and it is over. I do not think ill of you and do forgive you."

He continued holding her till she quieted. Then setting her up on his lap looked at her. Nora tried to smile but there were still tears in her eyes. "I--- I -- - just feel so bad. I --- I never meant to disobey you. I was ---- just --- just trying to help Maureen and Ellen. Please ---- don't leave because of me." She started crying again.

Connor hugged her a minute and then held her away from him. In a fairly stern voice he hoped would get her attention, he addressed her concerns. "Nora, ye are not going to make me leave. I am not going anywhere. I know you acted out of kindness to your sisters, but you did lie and disobey me didn't you?"

Nora nodded. "Yes, I did. But I am sorry."

"I know ye are. I am sorry I had to punish ye also. Now, ye are forgiven by me, ye need to be forgiving yourself. Do ye understand?"

Nora looked up into his face and saw him smiling. "Yes, I understand. Thank you, but I never want to be bad again. The spanking hurt."

"Nora, that's the point, it should hurt to remind ye to behave the next time. Now why don't ye go to bed, and get some rest. Ye have studied enough for one day. I will see you in class tomorrow." Connor set her on her feet and kissed her on the forehead.

Nora's smile had returned when Connor left her.

Connor was deep in thought on his way to Maureen's cabin. These three may be sisters, but they were each totally different. Nora would always hold a special place in his heart

Connor knocked on Maureen's door. She opened it herself and let him in.

"I read your paper Maureen do ye have anything else to say before I punish you?" Connor sat down on her desk chair.

Maureen was sitting on the bed looking down. "No, other than I really am sorry. Please don't spank me, though. I don't want to be spanked." Maureen had tears in her eyes.

"I know ye don't want to be spanked. But ye are getting a spanking to remind you of the rules and your responsibilities. Your behavior this afternoon was not good. Now come over her and lay across my lap. I don't enjoy this anymore than ye do." Connor motioned to his lap. Maureen slowly got up and walked over to him.

Connor took her by the wrist and guided her over his knees. He lifted her skirt and quickly lowered her bloomers. Maureen was sniffing already and he had not even started her spanking.

"Maureen, I want ye to think about your behavior and disobedience during this spanking. I will not tolerate what you did. If ye want to avoid future spankings you must obey." Connor raised his hand and brought it down hard on her right cheek. Maureen gasped and tried to move her hand back to shield herself. Connor grabbed her hand and pinned it to her back. He continued spanking fast and hard. When her bottom was bright pink, he picked up her hairbrush, raised it high, and brought it down with a loud crack. Maureen screeched and began to sob loudly. Connor smacked her with the brush 20 times and then put it down.

"Now, are ye going to behave for me?" Connor let her lay there for a minute.

"Yes---I ---will." Maureen was still crying. Connor pulled up her bloomers and set her on her feet. Maureen's hands immediately rubbed her bottom. Connor pulled her down on his lap and hugged her till she quieted.



"Maureen, ye are forgiven. But you must not worry about your sister leaving you. You are growing up fast yourself, and you too will be leaving some day. You know that Ellen loves you and would never desert you. She will always be near to you and Nora. Now I want you to go to bed and rest. I will see you in class tomorrow." Connor kissed her on the forehead and left.

He walked slowly to Ellen's cabin. He was dreading this punishment most of all. He had to hide his feelings and be stern enough to let her know how displeased he was with her.

Connor knocked on the door softly and entered. Ellen was sitting at her desk, reading. She had already changed into her nightdress. She looked up at Connor and shyly smiled.

Connor sat down and motioned for her to come stand in front of him. When she was standing there, he took hold of both her hands and started lecturing her in as stern a voice as he could.

"Ellen, I am disgusted and ashamed of your conduct today. Ye know your sisters look up to ye and follow your example. To be so out of control as to strike your sister in anger is utterly contemptible. I read your letter and I know ye have apologized to her and taken all the blame, but the three of ye were equally responsible for your own conduct. There was no reason for ye to be upset because Maureen was not sleeping, but listening to us. There was nothing wrong with our conduct, and Maureen, herself, is well aware of that. Ye are the eldest and are supposed to set an example for the other two. Ye certainly did not set a good example today. Now before I punish ye, do ye have anything else to say?"

Ellen just stood there with her head down. Tears were already starting to run down her cheeks. "No, Connor, I have nothing to say, except I am truly sorry I disappointed you so, and hurt my sister."

Connor took Ellen's wrist and guided her over his lap. He lifted the skirt of her nightdress

revealing her small white bottom. He hated to have to punish her, but it had to be done. He raised his hand and brought it down hard on first one cheek then the other. He kept this up till her bottom was bright pink. He then picked up her hairbrush and continued until she was sobbing and promising to never misbehave again. Her bottom was mottled red and hot. Connor let her cry for a minute and then pulled her into his arms. Holding her against him, he rubbed her back and let her cry. He wanted so badly to kiss her, but knew he dare not kindle those feelings any stronger than they already were.

Ellen quieted and shyly looked into his face. "I am sorry Connor, I will never do that again."

"Sssh, ye are forgiven. I know you won't." Connor smiled down at her.

Without warning, Ellen reached up and kissed him on the lips. Connor felt a shot of fire run through his body. He couldn't help himself, he pulled her back to him and passionately kissed her. They continued kissing for a few minutes, and then Connor pulled back.

"Ellen, we should not be doing this. I cannot offer ye anything at this time. I think ye know how I feel about ye, but we must not continue till I am settled." Connor hugged her hard to him and felt her heart beating wildly.

"Connor, I do not care. I do have feelings for you. Papa will make it right, you will see."

Ellen wanted only to stay in his arms forever.

Connor stood her on her feet and rose himself. "Ellen, I will be my own man. When I am settled and have something to offer ye, I shall, but until then, we cannot be acting on our feelings. It would not be right." Connor pulled her into a tight hug again. Releasing her, he held her at arms length. "I would like ye to wait until then, please? Now ye best be getting to bed and I will see ye in class tomorrow."

Connor kissed her once more and left.

Ellen crawled into bed and resumed crying. Why did he have to be so stubborn? Maybe he didn't really care for her as much as she for him. "I will just have to make sure he loves me and begs me to love him back." Ellen fell into a sound sleep.

## Chapter Eight

After Connor left, he leaned against Ellen's cabin door trying to compose himself. He could hear her sobbing quietly. He wanted nothing more than to go back and hold her, but he could not give in. He just hoped she would wait.

He was going back to his cabin when he remembered that he had promised to join Mick after the punishments. He went back up to the salon and found him sitting at a table deep in thought.

"Evening, Connor! How did it go? Do we have three sweet charming girls again?" Mick laughed.

Connor sat and accepted a brandy from the waiter. "Well we have three sorrowful girls. Hopefully they will be sweet by tomorrow. I could wear my hand out at this rate."

The two men chatted for a while until Connor felt tiredness just sweep over him. The last few days had been a strain on him as well. "Mick, I am going to have to leave you. I am really tired and still have to prepare some things for tomorrow. See you in the morning." Connor rose and left Mick alone.

Mick sat and watched the retreating figure. His thoughts were deep. "I really love that boy. I must make sure that he stays and fulfills my dream." With that thought Mick motioned for another brandy. It was the only thing that kept him going at this point.

The next morning Connor was at breakfast before anyone else. He had slept well, but dreamt of Ellen most of the night. His dreams focused on her with him in Ireland in their cottage with children playing all around. He knew it would not come to pass, but still he could dream.

When Mick joined him, Connor noticed he looked pale. "Mick, are you all right? You have not looked well since the storm. Maybe you should see the doctor."

Mick clapped him on the shoulder. "Don't worry about me lad, once we are in Boston I will be fine. I can see my own doctor there, just a bit of a stomach problem."

Connor noticed him grimace in pain. At least Mick was admitting he wasn't feeling too well. But he had a suspicion it was a bit more serious than a "bit of a stomach problem."

Three very quiet well-behaved young ladies joined them for breakfast. The meal was pleasant and there were no protests afterward when Connor directed them to the classroom.

Ellen sat in her separate seat and watched Connor every second she could. He was aware of her but tried not to let her distract him. He worked with Maureen and Nora and then began to work with Ellen. She was gaining but still needed special help.

When he pulled his chair up next to her, he could almost feel electric sparks shooting between them. Ignoring it as best he could he took her through her lessons. Soon it was lunchtime and he dismissed them for lunch.

The girls were on their way back to their cabins to freshen up. Maureen finally asked Ellen, "Are you in love with Connor?"

Ellen stopped walking and looked at Maureen. "Why do you ask that?" Ellen spoke in a curt voice.

Nora quickly walked by them and into her cabin. She wanted no part of this discussion after yesterday. Maureen sighed. "I am not trying to upset you Ellen, but the two of you seem very attracted to each other. I just wanted to know."

Ellen relaxed. This was after all her sister and best friend. "Yes I am, but he can't commit to anything because he says he has nothing. He won't until he is settled. I know I could ask Papa to help, but Connor doesn't want me to. He is proud. I don't know what I am going to do." Ellen stopped and sighed. "We land in Boston in a few days and then we may never see him again. I have to make him

fall hopelessly in love with me before then. I just don't know what to do." Ellen started into her cabin.

Maureen followed her in. "Is he really a rebel do you think? I remember the prison escape before we left Ireland and the soldiers hunting for the rebels. Do you think he is one?" Maureen looked at her sister for a reaction.

"I don't know Maureen, he could be, he did have to leave suddenly. But I don't care; he will be safe in America. Now let me get ready for lunch." Ellen started to wash.

Maureen left and when she got to her cabin started thinking. "Maybe we could use that as a lever over his head to make him stay with Ellen. I will have to think about it." She finished getting ready and left for the dining hall trying to put it out of her mind for the time being.

When they reached the hall, the porter was passing out notices that a final ball would be held on the next night and all were invited to attend. The girls were all excited and jabbering to one another when Connor got there.

"What's all the talk about? Something good happening?" Connor took his place at the table. Mick was not joining them for lunch, so Connor motioned the waiter to serve them.

Nora handed the flier to Connor, "See there is a final ball, and everyone is invited. I can even go!"

Connor read it and put on a serious face. "Well now I don't know if anyone has been good enough to go to a ball. We shall have to see about that."

The girls all looked at one another and their faces fell, but they said nothing. Lunch was served and they began to quietly eat. Connor looked at them, such three pitiful girls.

"Do ye think ye have been good enough for a ball? What about your behavior the last two days?" Connor was trying so hard not to smile.

Ellen was crestfallen, this may have been a chance to really get him close to her, but she knew when he made up his mind there was no changing

it. She sighed piteously and looked at him. "No, I don't suppose we deserve a ball." She quietly resumed eating, pushing the flyer away from her.

Connor looked at the other two. "Anything either of ye have to say?"

Maureen and Nora both glumly nodded no.

Connor let everyone finish lunch. "Ye may return to the classroom and start reading I will be there shortly." Connor rose and left them sitting there.

As soon as he was gone, Maureen spoke up. "I really want to go to the ball! It will be the last one and who knows when we can get out once we are home."

Ellen nodded, "I know, I really do too, but there is never any changing Connor's mind. Besides he is right, we weren't very good yesterday."

"It would have been my first chance to see a ball. I am so sorry we were bad yesterday." Nora was feeling very dejected.

The three left and went to the classroom. They started reading but wondered where Connor was.

Connor was at the very same time seeing the purser to obtain tickets for the ball. He was going to let them go. He was looking forward to it himself. He could even dance with Ellen. With the tickets safely in his pocket, Connor strode into the classroom. It was very quiet and subdued. He sat down and started the afternoon's lesson. A few minutes before time to stop, he called them to attention.

"I am going to give you each extra homework tonight. I expect you to complete it fully and not stay up on deck tonight." Connor passed out the assignments. The girls looked at the papers and paled. They would indeed have to spend the entire evening working.

Connor waited a second and then smiled at them. "The reward for being good and staying in tonight is this." He pulled the tickets from his pocket. "Ye may all go to the ball."

There was a loud "Ohhhhhh!" from all three. Nora jumped up and hugged Connor. "Oh thank you! This will be my very first ball." Connor hugged her back and motioned for them all to sit. "I do want all that work done, though. If it isn't, ye won't be going. Now I think ye best go and get started. I will see ye at dinner."

They quickly left and hurried to their cabins. The girls each immediately started working on the assignments. Nora had no trouble getting hers almost complete before dinner.

Maureen had made great progress on hers as well, and knew that she would be able to finish easily. Ellen however, was having a very difficult time. She did not understand some of the math at all. When it was time to leave for dinner, she had barely accomplished anything, even though she had been working studiously. She was almost in tears because she didn't see how she could finish the work for tomorrow. That meant she would not be allowed at the ball.

Everyone was at dinner and seated when Ellen finally arrived. She had barely taken the time to freshen up. Nora and Maureen were happily chatting with Mick and Connor about the dance. Ellen said nothing. She was so upset she only picked at her dinner. Connor noticed but said nothing. He couldn't imagine what was upsetting her so.

While they were waiting for dessert Maureen asked Ellen if she was almost finished with her assignment, Ellen blushed and stammered out a quiet, "No, I am not! I doubt I will ever be finished. I won't be going to the dance tomorrow." She burst into tears and quickly rose and ran from the table.

Everyone sat in stunned silence watching her leave. Connor finally broke the silence. "Eat your dessert, I will go see to her."

Maureen was frightened. "Connor, please don't punish her, not being able to go to the dance will be hard enough on her."



"I am not going to punish her, I am going to find out what the problem is. Now don't worry. You two finish your meal and then return to your cabins and finish your assignments. Everything will be fine." Connor left them and went to Ellen's cabin.

He could hear her weeping from the passageway. He knocked and opened the door.

Ellen was prostrate on the bed sobbing. Connor went to her and picked her up and held her. "Ellen, what is the matter?"

She was crying too hard to answer him. He held and rocked her till she quieted. "Now what is this all about?"

Ellen sniffed and brushed away her tears, "I can't figure out the problems. I have worked and re-worked them but I can't understand them. I will never be able to finish tonight. I wanted to go to the dance and now I can't." She started crying all over again.

Connor took her by the shoulders and gently shook her. "Ellen McMahon, ye stop this right now! I will not have ye giving up."

Ellen stopped and looked at him. "But---but I---I don't understand it."

"Did ye think about asking me for help?" Connor was talking very sternly to her. Ellen hung her head and nodded no. "Then I think it is time ye did so." Connor sat and looked at her. Ellen was still sniffing and said nothing.

"Ellen, if ye do not want to go over my knee, I suggest ye ask for help now. I have no patience with a quitter." Connor shook her gently once more.

Ellen finally stammered, "Connor, would --- would you help me?" She tried hard to stop crying.

Connor set her on her feet and pulled her to her desk. "Now sit down and show me where ye are confused." He sat down next to her and waited.

Ellen showed him what she had done. She had worked hard he could see that, but was making the same mistake each time. Connor ran his hands through his hair, "Ellen, I will work through two of

these with ye, then I want ye to do three more on your own correctly. If ye can do that we will discuss how much more ye need to do."

Connor worked with her through her mistake and explained it to her. They went through the two problems and he stood and walked away to let her do the next three. When she was done, he went back and checked them. They were perfect. It was fairly late and he knew she was worn out. "Okay Ellen I want ye to do two more and then we will stop. But I am going to have a talk with ye before I leave."

Ellen wasn't sure what that talk was going to be but did the next two problems. They were not that hard now that she understood them. She even did an extra one to please him. She had only done about half of her assignment, though.

When she told him she was finished, Connor came back and checked her work. He was pleased to see that she had completed an extra problem. "This is fine Ellen, they are all correct."

Connor went and sat in the easy chair and motioned her over to him. When she was standing in front of him, she looked down. "Are you going to punish me?"

Connor pulled her into his lap. "No Ellen, I am not going to punish ye this time. But if I ever hear ye talking about giving up and not asking for help, ye will be soundly punished. If ye asked for help right away, ye would have been able to finish all of your assignment. I am not going to make ye do that. Ye can go to the dance tomorrow. But, I want ye to promise me that ye will do extra work for the next three days to make up for it."

Ellen relaxed against his chest. "Thank you Connor. I promise I will ask for help from now on and do the extra work." Ellen leaned in closer to him and looked up at him.

Connor wanted nothing more than to kiss her lips, but felt he had to refrain. Instead, he held her close and kissed her forehead. "It's best for me to

leave now. I will see ye in class tomorrow. Now I want ye to go to bed and be rested tomorrow." He set her on her feet and hugged her to him once more. Without saying another word, he left and went up on deck.

Connor was leaning over the railing looking out at the night. The air was cool but all traces of the storm were gone. The sea was once again calm and the stars bright. The cool air helped clear his head. *"Connor Boland, what are ye doing man. Ye have no right to fall in love with her. Ye can see she has feelings for ye and ye have nothing, nothing but weak promises to offer her. Sure, her father has said everything will be fine, but ye must make your own way and send for your family. Is that not what ye set off on this journey to do?"* It made sense but unfortunately, Connor's heart was taken. *"Damn it! I can't let another man have her. I will have to do something."*

It was then he heard footsteps behind him. He turned and Mick was standing there. He came over and stood with Connor. Putting his hand over Connors on the rail, he started talking to him. "Connor, I know you are worried about your future. I don't want you to do that. You are a wise, educated man. You can go far in America. I may be speaking out of place, but I also see the attraction between you and Ellen. You have my utmost blessings Connor. I could not ask for a better man for her. Do not let your pride stand in your way."

Connor was stunned. Had he spoken out loud? Or did Mick read his mind? "Mick, thank you, but I am a proud man. I will be honest with you. I do love Ellen, and I think she has some feelings for me. But I have my family to take care of and no job or prospects once we land. I must be able to care for her, before I court her."

Mick chuckled. "Connor you have so many prospects ahead of you. I do not want to speak of them to you at this time for my own reasons. But please be assured, you have a job and a future

when we land." Connor started to talk, but Mick hushed him. "And not as the girls tutor, something far more valuable to you and me. Now please trust me, I do not want to say more until I can speak with some business associates when we land."

Connor turned and hugged Mick. "I am eternally grateful to ye, but I will wait and see. In the meantime I intend to keep a close eye on Ellen so that no one else has the chance to court her."

Mick laughed. "Connor, you are a man after my own heart. This will work you will see. Now it isn't too late for a brandy is it?"

Connor was tired but felt Mick wanted some company. "No, tis never too late for a wee drop." Together they went into the salon.

Class the next day was almost useless. The girls were far too excited about the dance to truly study and even Connor himself was not focused. Finally, at noon break he stood and faced them. "I have decided that since ye are all far too excited about tonight to concentrate that we will end classed for today. I will see all of ye at dinner and then escort ye to the dance."

The girls all thanked him. Maureen and Nora rushed from the room. Ellen stayed behind. "Do you want to give me some extra work to do this afternoon? I will do it."

Connor smiled at her. "No, ye can spend the time like your sisters resting and getting ready for the dance. I shall see ye at dinner."

Ellen smiled at him and left. Connor watched her leave and half wished he had decided to keep her and give her special instructions. He missed not having her around.

After lunch, Connor was walking on the deck when he ran into Henry Harrison. He had not seen him since the attack during the storm. Connor walked past him not acknowledging him. Henry however, stopped him and sneering at him spat out, "I will see you pay Connor Boland, some way, some day you will pay, and pay dearly. A man such as

you is not worthy of the company of ladies. You are scum and I intend for the world to see you for what you are." Henry turned to go.

Connor's temper flared. He grabbed Henry and turned him around. " I will see to it that this is finished between us. Ye are no gentleman. Ye may have money but ye are no gentleman. If ye don't want to spend the next two days in the infirmary, I suggest ye leave." Connor released him and pushed him to the ground. Striding away, he barely heard the threat uttered by Henry. "You will be sorry Connor Boland. Very sorry before this voyage ends."

## Chapter Nine

Connor returned to his cabin and tried to calm down. He had heard Henry's threat, and was somewhat troubled by it. He would mention it to Mick when he saw him before dinner. Before he knew it, Connor had drifted off to sleep. When he woke, he had to hurry to dress for dinner and the dance.

By the time he met Mick in the salon, he had forgotten totally about Henry and his threat. Mick was in a jovial mood and soon Connor was laughing and talking with him. When the girls arrived, it took Connor's breath away. He had never seen three such lovely creatures before. But it was Ellen who was the most beautiful. The emerald green of her gown, trimmed with ecru lace, made her skin look luminous. She wore a simple strand of pearls at her neck, with a single emerald suspended from it. She was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

He felt like a schoolboy staring at her with his mouth open. Quickly he recovered, "Ladies ye are all absolutely breathtaking. Ye shall certainly be the belles of the ball."

Mick rose and took Maureen and Nora by the arm and escorted them in to dinner. Connor bowed to Ellen and offered his arm. She shyly blushing took his arm and let him escort her to the table. Connor leaned down and whispered to her. "Ye are beautiful! I believe ye are the most beautiful woman on this ship."

Ellen smiled up at him still blushing. "Thank you so much Connor, but I am sure there are other ladies just as beautiful or more so." This was a side of Connor she had never seen before.

Dinner was very festive. Every one was feeling jolly anticipating the dance. As soon as dinner was over, Nora wanted to go right away. Connor looked at his watch. "It's a bit early yet Nora, we don't want to be the first ones there do we? Let's just take a walk on deck for a bit."

Mick settled himself in a deck chair. "I'll join you later at the dance."

Connor walked with the girls around the deck. The night was warm and beautiful. When they reached the ballroom, it was filling, so they went in. Connor wanted to keep Ellen by his side, but knew he couldn't do so. He stopped the three as they were entering. "Now, ye may have a good time, but I don't want any of ye to leave this room without telling me. Understand?"

They all agreed and hurried over to talk to their friends. All the young men turned and watched Ellen. She was indeed beautiful tonight. Connor walked to the bar and ordered a brandy. He stood against the wall and watched as young man after young man approached Ellen and asked to sign her dance card.

When he saw Henry approaching her, he was livid. He walked over to them and took Ellen by the arm. "I need a word with ye." Ellen was relieved that Connor had come when he did.

Henry stood his ground. "I am requesting a dance with Ellen. Surely, you could have no problem with that?"

Connor faced him squarely. "I do have a problem with that. I want ye nowhere near her. I have told ye that before. Now if ye would please leave us."

Henry stormed off and Ellen breathed an audible sigh of relief. "Thank you Connor, he wouldn't accept my refusal. I thought he was going to get nasty."

"Remember, I am watching, so he won't get near you again. But as long as I am here, I think maybe I would like to sign that dance card myself." Connor took the card and signed for the last three dances of the evening.

The music started and Ellen's partner for that dance came and claimed her. Connor checked on Maureen and Nora. Both of them were also having

no trouble filling their cards. Nora was so excited she could barely contain herself.

Ellen was dancing, but her mind was on Connor. She was so excited that he had signed for the last three dances. She felt it gave her a chance to win his heart. Maybe since she seemed to be so popular tonight; she could really make him jealous. He would see that he could lose her if he wouldn't commit to seeing her again in Boston. She decided to do her best the rest of the evening to make him jealous.

When there was a break in the dancing, Maureen sought Ellen out. "Oh Ellen, I am having a wonderful time! This is so exciting. I have every dance taken."

Ellen showed Maureen her dance card and pointed to Connor's name on the bottom. "Ellen, that is wonderful! Maybe he is really interested in you."

"Maureen, I know he is interested! I want him to be madly in love with me and court me in Boston." Ellen was a bit exasperated with Maureen. "I am going to see if I can't make him insanely jealous tonight before his dances. Then maybe he will commit to something. What do you think?"

Maureen thought for a moment, "It may work, but are you sure you don't want me to tell him we know he is a rebel on the run and that he has to court you or I will tell?"

"Maureen, don't you dare! That is terrible. You cannot blackmail the man. You are guessing anyway, you aren't sure."

"Oh, but I am sure! I found a newspaper in Papa's room. It listed the names of the prisoners being transported to the penal colony and Connor Boland was one of them." Maureen looked smugly at her sister.

Ellen was furious with her. "Maureen! You should not be snooping. Don't you dare tell a soul, Connor could still be in danger. You should be ashamed."



"Oh, don't worry so, I am not going to tell anyone. You and I are the only ones who know." Maureen walked off in a huff.

What neither girl knew was that Henry Harrison was standing behind the pillar and had heard every word they said. When Maureen and Ellen were gone Henry chuckled, *"Well ladies you are not the only ones who know. Now we shall see what happens to the high and mighty Connor Boland."*

Connor mingled about the room, but did not ask any of the other ladies to dance. He watched Ellen as dance after dance, she was in the arms of other men. She certainly seemed to be enjoying them. One particular gentleman had danced with her twice. Connor felt that he was holding her a bit too close, but Ellen did not seem to mind. In fact, she was smiling up at him and flirting shamelessly.

As the evening wore on, Connor felt extremely agitated. He wanted to pull Ellen from the dance so she could not dance with anyone else the rest of the night. He was on his way to do so, when he realized that he was jealous. Ellen was not doing anything wrong. He had no claim on her, and had told her he wouldn't. The realization did nothing to ease his pain, though.

Connor was leaning against a pillar watching Ellen when Mick joined him. "I guess my little girls are having a grand time."

"Aye Mick, too grand a time for one of them." Connor couldn't hide the bitterness in his voice.

Mick drew Connor to a table and they sat down. "Connor, I told you not to worry about things. If you want to court Ellen, do it! But do it before she gives up and falls for someone else. Girls her age are very impressionable. Don't let your pride and stubbornness get in your way. I love you like a son, and it would be the same advice I would give my son."

"Mick, I know ye are right. But it is hard for me to court her when I feel so uncertain, but I do not

want to lose her. I will have to do something about it tonight. Thanks Mick, I do feel better now."

Mick sat back and happily watched the dancers. He knew that everything was going to be just fine.

Finally, it was Connor's turn to dance with Ellen. There was a short break before the final three dances of the evening. Connor took a cup of punch to Ellen. "I thought maybe ye would be thirsty after all that dancing."

Ellen looked at him, she wasn't sure but she thought she could detect something different in his eyes. He was looking at her differently.

"Thank you, Connor, I appreciate it. It does make one thirsty, but it so nice to have such charming men paying me attention. They are all so nice." Ellen was smiling and waiting to see a reaction from Connor.

Connors mouth tightened and his eyes grew dark. "Aye, they were certainly all over ye."

Ellen had to smirk. It was working; he was jealous. As soon as the music started, Connor took her in his arms and danced her onto the floor. It took all his self-control to not just pull her into his arms. "So ye like having all the men pay attention to ye? Is that what ye want is to be the belle of the ball?" Connor was looking down into her eyes.

Ellen looked down; she wanted him jealous but not angry with her. "I enjoy dancing, but I think this dance is the best so far."

They continued dancing for a bit without saying anything. When the music ended, Connor pulled her out on deck. "Do ye mind if we skip the next dance? I would like to talk to ye."

Ellen didn't mind in the least. "No, whatever you like is fine."

Connor found them a secluded spot and sat down and pulled Ellen onto his lap. Ellen was shocked. "Connor, someone may see."

Connor chuckled. "There is no harm. We are just talking. I like talking this way better."

He pulled her close to him and held her tight. "Ellen, ye know that I am attracted to ye. I told ye the other night that I could not be promising ye anything, because I had no prospects. Yer father has assured me that he has plans for me in Boston. I wish to start courting ye, if that is all right with ye."

Ellen's heart was pounding. It was like all her dreams come true. It worked. A little bit of jealousy had brought him to her. "Oh Connor, that is fine with me!"

Connor turned her chin and kissed her gently on the lips. Ellen melted into his arms. Connor could tell she had no practice at kissing. This pleased and excited him more. He gently probed her teeth apart with his tongue and deepened the kiss. He held her even tighter and could feel her heart beating close to his.

Ellen had never had such feelings run through her body. She felt like there were bolts of lightning hitting her. Her stomach felt like molten lava. They kissed for several minutes, and then Connor pulled away. "Ellen, I do think we best go for that last dance. We shall have plenty of time for kissing." He stood her up and tucked her arm under his and made their way back to the ballroom.

The music for the last dance had just started. Connor pulled her tightly into his arms and as they danced, he whispered in her ear. "If ye ever try and make me jealous again, like tonight, ye will surely find yourself dangling over my knee having your bottom warmed."

He chuckled at the look of dismay on Ellen's face.

Ellen quickly turned crimson and hid her face in Connors shoulder. How could he have known? It didn't matter because everything was beautiful and she didn't need to worry about making him jealous anymore.

Mick was watching them and smiling broadly. He was as happy as they were. When the music ended,

Mick gathered Maureen and Nora. Ellen and Connor soon joined him. "I will escort Maureen and Nora to their cabins. Connor you may see Ellen to hers." Mick winked at Connor.

Connor agreed. "I will see both of ye tomorrow in class. Because this has been a late night we shall start an hour later."

The girls were very happy. They left chatting with Mick excitedly about the dance. Connor took Ellen's arm and headed toward her cabin. They stopped several times and leaned against the rail and looked out at the moon and stars. Connor had not felt so happy since he had been arrested. Maybe things were going to finally be okay. Right before they left the deck Connor grabbed Ellen and embraced her. His lips sought hers and this time she was ready for him and eagerly parted her lips. Connor finally knew they had to stop before he couldn't control his passion any longer. "Oh Ellen, I am the happiest man in the world right now."

"I am the happiest woman, Connor." Ellen leaned against him, then pulled away and looked into his face. "Would you really spank me for flirting?"

Connor gave her a mock stern look. "Yes I would spank ye for flirting. And I will still spank ye if ye do not behave in class, so ye best watch yourself."

Ellen sighed and leaned back into him. Connor hugged her hard. "We best go, it's late and ye have to get your sleep." Connor left her at her cabin and returned to his. Both their dreams were filled with happiness.

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The next morning Connor was at breakfast before any of the others. He woke at his normal time, even though it had been a late night. He was drinking his tea when Mick joined him. Mick's eyes were twinkling even more than normal.

"So my boy, how are things with you and Ellen?"

Connor laughed at him. "They are just fine Mick, I gave in and told her my intentions, and I do think we are both very happy right now. I can't imagine anything that would dim that happiness."

The girls joined them and Ellen smiled at him shyly. It was still a strange feeling for her to know the feelings between them, and that he was still her tutor and guardian. She blushed when Connor winked at her.

The wink was not lost on Maureen. She would have to find out what happened last night the minute they were alone. Nora was still jabbering about how much fun she had the night before. The conversation was light and easy.

They would not have felt so happy if they knew that Henry Harrison was at this very moment on his way to see the Captain.

Henry had thought about it all night. He had spied Connor and Ellen on the deck and had seen him hug and kiss her. That scene played through his mind the entire night. He would make sure that Connor would never get that close to Ellen again. By dawn, he had formulated his plan. Ellen may not be his, but she would not be Connor's, either. Connor would never step foot on American soil, of that he was sure.

He had inquired and found that the Captain was still in his cabin. He knocked on the heavy wooden door and waited to be bid enter. He felt like he had stood waiting for a considerable amount of time, when finally a voice boomed, "ENTER!"

Henry went in and greeted the Captain. "Good morning Sir, I am Henry Harrison, III and I have something of importance to tell you. I think you will find it very interesting. "

Captain Johnson looked at Henry. He did indeed know who he was and had not formed a favorable opinion of him. He was the epitome of a low life, undisciplined, rich American. He was no fonder of them, than he was of the Irish. However, his family had status in Boston society, and it would not pay

to be abrupt with him. The Captain rang for his valet.

"Would you bring us some coffee, please?" Captain Johnson motioned to a chair. "Have a seat, Mr. Harrison. We will have some coffee, and you can tell me your news."

The valet served the coffee and left, closing the door behind him. "Now, Mr. Harrison, what is that I will find interesting?"

Henry sipped his coffee and cleared his throat. "Do you remember right before we set sail, there was a ship bound for the penal colonies berthed next to us?"

Captain Johnson remembered, but hardly found that noteworthy. "Yes, yes I remember, what does that have to do with us?"

Henry continued, "If you recall, as they were loading the ship there was a disturbance, and some rebels attacked the guards and freed the prisoners. Not all were re-captured."

The Captain was beginning to really lose his patience. He had important things to do and a ship to prepare for docking in a few days time. "Yes, I recall, but it is of no interest to me what happened to the scum. Now if you will excuse me, I have many things to do."

Henry was a bit taken aback, but he had to get the Captain's attention and proceed. "I know you are a busy man Captain, and I am sorry for intruding, but this is important. One of those very 'scum' as you called them, is a passenger on your ship. He is escaping to America."

The Captain put down his cup and looked at Henry. "How would you know this? Have you been in steerage or lower decks? Do you know what this man looks like?"

"I do not have to go below. I have heard on good authority and he is traveling first class." Henry smiled in triumph. He now had the Captain's attention.

"Who is this man?" The Captain was furious at being duped so.

Henry paused and took a deep breath. This was his moment of triumph. He intended to savor every second of it. "His name is Connor Boland. He is traveling with the McMahan's as the girl's tutor and guardian. I am afraid from what I have observed that he is taking advantage of his position, as well." Henry was clearly pleased with the Captain's reaction to his news.

"This cannot be true! Michael McMahan may be Irish, but his reputation is unsullied. He is the epitome of honesty and discretion. He must have been duped." Captain Johnson's face was beet red with anger. He stood and paced his cabin. He was in a quandary. He had seen the young man Henry was speaking of, and he did not seem like a rebel.

"Are you sure this? Connor Boland is the same one that was a prisoner?" The Captain asked Henry.

"I am positive. If you do not have him arrested before we land, he will go free." Henry rose and started to leave. "If you need anything further from me please do not hesitate to ask."

Captain Johnson shook his hand, "Thank you for this information. I shall act upon it immediately. Please ask my valet to come in as you leave."

Henry left smiling to himself. This was it; his mission was accomplished. He motioned to the valet. "The Captain wants to see you."

The valet hurried into the Captain's office. "You wanted me, Sir?"

"Yes, summon my Lieutenant, immediately." The Captain penned an order of arrest to give to the Lieutenant

The Lieutenant wasted no time in hurrying to the Captain's cabin. "Yes Sir, at your service!"

"I have been informed that there is on my ship, a traitor to the crown. An Irish rebel, an escaped prisoner, no less. I want the scum arrested and thrown in the brig. As soon as we can, we will transfer him to a homebound ship. If we're not able

to do that, we'll keep him in irons until we sail back." He handed the arrest warrant to the Lieutenant.

"His name is Connor Boland, and I believe you will find him in the McMahon's salon. He is traveling as a tutor for the McMahon girls. Take him at once, before anyone else is in danger from this man." The Captain sat down at his desk.

The Lieutenant hurried off and gathered 5 of his best men. They immediately went to the salon and threw open the door. With weapons drawn, they entered the room.

The three girls were frozen in shock at the sight. Connor stood and faced them. "What is the meaning of this? Ye be interrupting our class."

The Lieutenant motioned his men to take him. "You are Connor Boland, are you not?"

"I am." Connor answered as he felt his arms being pulled behind his back.

"Then you are under arrest, under warrant of Captain Johnson, acting on the King's behalf. Take him to the brig." The Lieutenant and men started forcing Connor out the door.

Ellen ran and tried to pull them off of Connor. "No, you cannot do this, stop at once!"

Connor turned to her and spoke softly. "Ellen, it is no use. Tell your father what has happened."

With that, the sailors pulled him from the room and roughly hauled him toward the brig.



## Chapter Ten

Connor's thoughts were in turmoil as he was dragged across the deck and down to the brig. The guards were being as rough as they could, pulling on the ropes that bound him until they cut into his arms. He was worried about Ellen and the girls. They were surely terrified at this turn of events. He couldn't understand what had happened. No one knew his true identity except Mick, and he knew for a certainty that Mick would never have turned him in. His jumbled thoughts became clearer when he saw Henry leaning against the rail as they dragged him below. That must be who turned him in, but how had he found out?

When they reached the bottom of the ship, the guards opened a musty cell and threw Connor in. They untied his arms, then locked the door and left. Connor looked around his new surroundings. It was far worse than the cell he had left in Ireland. This was damp and musty and he could hear rats rummaging around for food. There was a bucket in the corner to serve as a privy, a bare cot with one thin blanket, and no sign of food or water. He wasn't entirely sure if they would be back to feed him or not.

He sat on the cot and put his head in his hands. All of his dreams the night before were now gone. He would never be in America, never have the chance to court Ellen or marry her. He would at the least be sent to Australia, but more likely be hanged.

It was hours later that Connor heard the noise of someone's boots on the steps. A sailor approached and opened the cell door just enough to push in a jug of water and a tray of food.

"Thank you. I was wondering if anyone was going to remember where I was."

The sailor merely sneered. "Traitors such as you should be forgotten and left to rot! Would save us

the trouble a hanging you." He left without another word.

Connor looked at the tray. It was nothing of the quality of food he had become accustomed to. There was a slab of meat, bread, and beans. At least it would keep him from starving. He ate slowly to try and use up some of the time. It was dark and dreary down here with only one lantern to shed light.

After he finished eating, he placed the tray on the floor as far away from him as possible. It was only seconds before the rats were scurrying over it getting any scraps that were left. He lay back on his cot and wondered what Ellen and the girls and Mick were doing. Would Mick try and help him at all? Was there anything he could do to help him?

He fell asleep with his thoughts heavy. His life was over and nothing would ever be the same. They may as well hang him.

After the sailors dragged Connor away, the girls ran to find Mick. It took them some time but they finally located him in the Salon.

Ellen ran up to him crying. "They took him away! They arrested him! You must do something, please!"

Maureen and Nora joined in, crying and pleading. Mick couldn't figure out what they were talking about. "Calm down! Now sit down and tell me what happened. Who did they arrest? Ellen you tell me, Maureen and Nora hush!"

"Connor. A Lieutenant and five sailors came in with guns drawn on us. They said the Captain had a warrant for Connor's arrest. Said it was on behalf of the King. They grabbed him and dragged him off." Ellen started crying again.

Mick was stunned. How on earth had the Captain received word that Connor was wanted back in Ireland for treason? No one on board except he and Connor knew that. The girls were softly crying. Mick looked at them and wondered.

"Did the Lieutenant say anything specific they were arresting Connor for?" Mick looked at each one of them.

"No, they just said it was on warrant of the Captain acting on behalf of the King." Ellen was getting agitated. "Do something! You can't leave him in the brig."

Mick stood and paced a bit. This was indeed troubling. The Captain would only have one reason to arrest Connor and that was for his escape. Somehow, someone on board must have found out. But how? It had been days since they left Ireland. They were close to landing in Boston. There was no news that could have reached the ship since they departed. A thought suddenly dawned on him.

He went back to where the girls were seated. "Ellen, I want to have a word with you in private." Ellen looked a bit startled at her father and rose and followed him. Mick turned to the other two. "I want you to return to your rooms and stay there for the time being."

Mick led Ellen to his cabin. He motioned for her to sit and stood in front of her. "There is only one reason the Captain would have to arrest Connor. He escaped deportation to Australia before boarding this ship. I have guaranteed him safety. Obviously, someone must have let this knowledge out. Did you know this?"

Ellen cast her eyes down and wouldn't look at Mick. "I didn't know for sure."

"What do you mean Ellen? Did the man tell you or not?" Mick was beginning to think he knew what happened.

"No, he didn't tell me. But I heard that it might be true. Please, can't you do something to help him? I love him!" Ellen was softly crying again.

Mick was beginning to get angry. "Ellen McMahon, you tell me right now how you heard this?"

Ellen was startled at the stern tone of his voice. "At the dance last night Maureen told me. She

offered to blackmail him to make a commitment to me. I told her no, that she didn't really know what she was talking about, only suspicious."

Mick glared at her. "And what did she say?"

"Maureen said she found a newspaper in your desk that listed Connor as an escapee. So, she knew for sure. But she promised not to tell anyone. I know she didn't." Ellen wiped her eyes.

Mick was furious. "I don't suppose either of you stopped to think you could've been overheard by anyone standing near you? Someone who must have told the Captain this today? I don't know what I can do to fix this. Go get Maureen and come back here immediately."

As Ellen ran to get Maureen, Mick started thinking about what could have happened. If he could possibly do anything to get Connor out, he would. First, he had to figure out who may have talked to the Captain. A trip to the Captain himself was in order. Perhaps money could do some talking.

Ellen knocked on Maureen's door and waited for her to open it. It only took Maureen about two seconds to open the door and let Ellen in. "What did Papa say?"

"He sent me to get you. I told him about the paper, Maureen. I had to. He figured one of us found out and told someone."

"Ellen, why did you do that? You know I didn't tell anyone. Now I'll be yelled at."

"I think we better hurry Maureen. He was pretty mad." Ellen shooed Maureen out the door.

When they entered Mick's cabin he stood staring at them. Finally, he motioned for them to be seated. Still he paced and didn't say a word. Suddenly he stopped and turned to face them.

"I have never been so disappointed in anyone in my life. Maureen McMahon, to think you would snoop in my belongings. That is something I cannot tolerate. Both of you are old enough to have enough sense not to discuss a man's fate in public. Anyone could have overheard you. Especially you Ellen, who

professes to love him. I don't know that I will be able to fix this one."

Mick watched as both hung their heads. Both had tears in their eyes.

"I want you to think clearly of who may have been around to overhear you. Anyone at all."

Ellen and Maureen thought back but couldn't remember anyone being in earshot. Ellen finally looked up at Mick. "I don't think anyone was near enough. We did look around and there wasn't anyone there."

"I want you both to go back to your rooms and wait till I come for you. I'm going to talk to the Captain now." Mick strode off and left the girls sitting there.

Ellen and Maureen exchanged glances. Ellen finally spoke. "I guess we best do as he says. I have never seen Papa so angry before. I do hope he can do something. Oh Maureen, I will die if anything happens to Connor."

Maureen put her arms around Ellen and hugged her. "It's all my fault. I'll tell Papa that he shouldn't be upset with you. I just know he'll be able to do something."

Two very dejected girls went back to their cabins.

Mick found the newspaper that Maureen had read and tore it into pieces and burned it. That done, he walked around deck for a while, thinking. He had to be calm and reasonable before approaching the Captain. He told the valet who he was and that he required to see the Captain immediately.

He waited for a few minutes and the valet came back. "The Captain can give you but a few minutes." He knocked on the door and opened it for Mick.

Mick strode in and greeted the Captain. He was seated at his table eating lunch. Normally he would rise and shake Mick's hand, but he knew why he was here and was angry with him for his deception.

Mick ignored the slight and sat down. "Captain Johnson, we have known each other for many years. I have always found you to be fair and trustworthy. That is one of the main reasons I sail your ship and have invested in it heavily. It is therefore with dismay that I find you have arrested an employee of mine and placed him in the brig. I am also extremely displeased that it was done at gunpoint when my daughters were present. They were understandably terrified. I would like to know what the charges are and on what basis you make the charges."

Captain Johnson leaned back and looked at Mick. "Surely, Mr. McMahon, you need not pretend ignorance with me. Your tutor is a traitor to the Crown and an escaped prisoner. I am dismayed that you would hire him, let alone help in hiding him. I could easily have you arrested as well."

Mick was prepared for this. "I see, and on whose word are you basing these absurd allegations? I have known Connor since he was a lad and your charges are totally false. I may have to bring suit myself for slander, against you and this line."

That was a bit of alarming news to the Captain. He knew that Mick was powerful, but was unaware that he was also a major investor in his ship. That alone could cause him a lot of trouble. He thought for a moment before answering him. "Normally I would not reveal the source of the information. I will tell you though it came from another honorable and reliable citizen of your city. Henry Harrison, III approached me this morning. After listening to his allegation I admit I was at first dubious. But he assured me he had it on good authority and that also your daughter was in danger from this man. I have no reason to disbelieve him. If he is not what Mr. Harrison accuses him of being, it will be straightened out in the courts when we return."

"Captain Johnson, Mr. Harrison himself has been trying to take advantage of my daughter. Mr. Boland has saved her from him several times and

been threatened by him on more than one occasion. The man is a cad of the lowest sort. He has fabricated this from a story I am afraid he overheard my second daughter tell at the dance last night. She has a vivid imagination and will do anything to get out of classes. It was nothing more than that he overheard. If you will excuse me now, I will have a word with Mr. Harrison and his father. I shall return with all parties concerned shortly and this will be straightened out."

Mick rose and stormed from his office. Captain Johnson sat there stunned. If this were true, he would be in serious trouble. It was possible that the Harrison lad lied. *If he lied, I will have him banned from this ship forever.*

Mick had to suppress a smile. He certainly had shaken up the Captain a bit. *Yes, Mick me boy, you haven't lost your touch yet. Now to get that Harrison and put the fear of the Lord in him.*

As he passed the salon, he realized his stomach was growling. It was dinnertime and he hadn't eaten since breakfast. He sat at the table and asked that trays be sent to his daughters' cabins. They were going to stay there until he figured out what to do with them. Nora was most likely innocent but he must be sure.

As he ate, he watched for the Harrison family to appear. He finally spotted them across the room. He rose and walked to their table. Henry Harrison, Jr. rose and shook his hand. "It's nice to see you again Mick, what can I do for you."

Mick noticed that young Henry wouldn't look at him. "If it is convenient I very much would like to have a word with you in private on a most urgent matter. Could you meet with me in my cabin in say 30 minutes?"

"Yes that would be fine. I'll be there." Harrison shook his hand again and Mick walked away. "I wonder what that is about. Mick is never one to discuss business when he is traveling on vacation."

Young Henry felt he knew what it was about but said nothing. Surely even Mick couldn't get out of this one.

While Mick was waiting for Harrison to join him, he took a small tumbler of whiskey. The pain in his stomach was bad today, and not made any better by the recent events. He also mulled over what to do about his two eldest daughters. It was not an easy decision to come to, but Maureen needed a stern lesson and Ellen also for lacking in common sense.

Promptly 30 minutes later there was a knock at the door. Mick called, "Come in!"

Henry Harrison, Jr. entered. "What is it you want to discuss Mick? What can I help you with?" Henry sat where Mick indicated.

"This isn't going to be a pleasant conversation Henry. It is one I regret very much having to have with you. Would you like a whiskey before we start?"

Henry was confused but agreed to the drink. When Mick had served him and refreshed his own, he started the conversation. "My employee Connor Boland who was hired as a tutor and guardian for my daughters has been arrested and thrown in the brig. He is charged with treason and escaping from prison."

"I don't understand why you're upset. Young Henry tells me he was making advances at your eldest daughter. Surely you wouldn't want someone of his ilk around your children. He sounds dangerous to me. Is there something I can do to help you?" Henry was baffled at what this had to do with him.

"If the allegations were true you would be right. Unfortunately, they are false and an innocent man is now in the brig. I intend to see that this is set right immediately. I have talked to the Captain and learned that the charges were made by your son." Mick held up his hand to quiet Henry.



"Allow me to finish please. Your son is the one who has been making improper advances to Ellen. Connor stopped him on more than one occasion. Ellen is in love with Connor and they intend to marry. Not only is he not a traitor, he is an upstanding your man whom I plan on bringing into my business. Henry overheard my two daughters making silly talk last evening in an effort to get Connor's attention. It was that information that was relayed to the Captain." Mick stopped and took a sip of whiskey.

Henry was almost speechless. "Why would your daughters do such a thing if there were no truth in it? My son would never act irresponsibly."

"Ellen was not sure of Connor's intentions. Maureen made up a story and was planning on telling Connor she would tell the Captain if he didn't tell Ellen how he felt. Ellen wisely talked her out of it, but apparently, Henry overheard her and acted on it. Your son is unscrupulous, as you very well know. I know of many incidences you have bought him out of." Mick paused and looked at Henry.

Henry was disturbed. "I find it hard to believe that this is true. You are insulting me and my family."

"Yes I am. You have until 7:00 a.m. tomorrow morning to have your son retract the charges. I will be here waiting for him. My daughters will testify to the Captain their part in this matter. If he is not here with you ready to retract all his charges, I will personally see to your financial ruin. Now do you understand me?" Mick watched with interest as Henry paled.

"I will discuss this with my son, Sir, but I find your threat to be most insulting." Henry stood up to leave.

As he walked out the door Mick called after him. "It isn't a threat, Henry, it's a promise. Be here at seven a.m."

## Chapter Eleven

Mick sat back and finished his whiskey after Henry left. Then, his mind made up, he went to Maureen's cabin. He knocked and entered. Maureen was ready for bed and reading. As soon as she saw Mick, she ran and hugged him. "I am so sorry Papa. Did you get Connor released?"

"No Maureen, I did not. I hope to tomorrow but you are going to have to explain to the Captain that you made the story up. Hopefully with that evidence and Henry retracting his charges, Connor will be released." Mick sat down on her dressing table chair.

"Oh, I'll do anything Papa, anything to get him out. I am sorry. I didn't mean for this to happen." Maureen did indeed look sorry.

"Maureen this is far too serious for just an apology and a scolding. I am going to do something I should have done a long time ago. Come here." Mick patted his lap.

Maureen's eyes widened in shock. "Papa you aren't going to spank me, are you?"

"Come here Maureen, now. I do not intend to spend all night doing this." Mick's voice had taken on a stern tone.

Slowly Maureen walked over to her father. Mick took her arm and guided her across his knee. It had been years since he had spanked anyone. Her mother had been the last, but he hadn't forgotten how.

Maureen was tense and trembling. She had never been spanked by her father. Mick shifted her around until she was in the perfect position. "Maureen I'm not going to scold you any more for this. You know what you did was wrong. I hope after tonight you will think before snooping in other's belongings. Also you will learn to watch your tongue in public."

Mick wasted no time in flipping up her nightgown and raising his hand high above his head

to smack down on her bottom. He smacked her continuously, ignoring her sobs, until her bottom was red all over. He then reached back and picked up her hairbrush. He raised that and brought it down hard on her bottom. Maureen squealed and squirmed but Mick ignored all her cries and pleas. Finally, when he knew she would be feeling this for some days, he stopped and set her on her feet.

"I'm sorry Papa, I'll never do anything like this again." Maureen had tears streaming down her face. Mick drew her into his arms and hugged her. "You're forgiven. I love you dearly, but you had to be taught a lesson. Now go to bed and think about what you're going to tell the Captain in the morning." Mick kissed her on the forehead and left for Ellen's cabin.

Mick entered Ellen's cabin after knocking. Like her sister, she was ready for bed and sitting in a chair sewing. She looked up hopefully at Mick when he entered. She had been crying and her eyes were puffy.

"What did you find out? Will they let him out?" Ellen's voice was cracking.

Mick sat down next to her. "I don't know Ellen. I've talked to the Captain and Mr. Harrison. We are to meet with the Captain tomorrow. Henry is to retract his charges. Maureen and you are to explain the prank Maureen was playing. It's our only hope of getting him out. I've used all the influence and pressure I can."

"Thank you Papa. I will do whatever I can to help get him free."

"Ellen, I just came from Maureen's cabin. I gave her a thrashing she will never forget. I intended on giving you a lesser version, but I think your pain is enough. I will leave it to Connor to decide your punishment in this. Now you best go to bed and pray that we are successful in the morning." Mick kissed her on the forehead and left. He could hear her gently sobbing as he closed the door.

He knocked lightly on Nora's door. She was curled up on the bed sleeping. Mick picked her up and sat her on his lap in the chair. "Nora, sweetheart, wake up." Nora opened her eyes and hugged Mick. "Oh Papa, what's happened? What's going to happen to Connor?"

"I don't know yet, Nora. Hopefully tomorrow he will be free. Did you know anything about Maureen snooping in my desk?" Mick looked at her closely.

"No Papa, she didn't tell me anything. Is that why they arrested Connor, for something she told them?" Nora was looking anxiously at Mick.

"Something like that, yes. Apparently she was overheard telling Ellen something at the ball, and the person overhearing it believed it and went to the Captain." Mick hugged her and rocked her gently. "Now, I think it is time for you to get ready for bed and go to sleep. Tomorrow could be a tiring day." Mick set her on her feet, kissed her on the forehead and left.

As he climbed into bed himself, he prayed that Connor would be free soon.

Connor slept fitfully. He was aware of rats scurrying around and even over him at times. His thoughts kept going back to Henry. *How could he have found anything out? Someone must have told him, but who?* His thoughts would be interspersed with prayers and dozing. *Could one of the girls have said something of their suspicions earlier? Would Ellen have told Henry something before we were attracted to each other?* He was in torment when he heard footsteps once again on the steps. The same sailor was back. He opened the door and motioned for Connor to come out.

"Don't you try anything foolish. You get five minutes to walk about and then clean your cell. After you can eat your food." He pushed Connor toward the door. Connor walked up the steps to the lowest deck. At least there was a bit of fresh air. The sailor had a gun on him at all times, so any hope of escape was fruitless. After the five minutes,

he was almost pushed downstairs again and back toward the cell. He was made to empty the privy bucket and take the used tray of food out. Then the bucket was replaced with fresh water and a tray of food. It was almost the same tasteless concoction he had for dinner the previous night. It didn't matter though as he had little appetite for food. He sat on his bunk and ate some bread and drank some water. His thoughts and emotions were still in turmoil. *I wonder if I will be allowed to see Mick or even Ellen before they send me back. I want them to send my trunk and the things mother gave me back to her. I will never be able to use them, so one of the other boys should.*

Mick was awake and dressed by 7:00 a.m. He was pacing his cabin wondering if his threats had paid off. There was a knock at the door. It wasn't Henry Harrison Jr. or his son. It was one of the Captain's lieutenants. "Good morning sir! I am sorry to disturb you but the Captain has requested your permission for me to search your cabin for certain documents pertaining to Connor Boland."

Mick had half expected this. He was sure that Harrison had talked to his son and was told about the newspaper. "I have no problem with that sir, but find the Captain's actions a bit offensive. Please search all you like."

The lieutenant began looking through the papers on Mick's desk and in his drawers. He didn't find a newspaper but he found a contract for employment that he read thoroughly.

It was for the employment of Connor Boland as tutor and guardian for the McMahon girls on their return trip to Boston. It was dated two weeks before the prison escape and was signed by both men.

The lieutenant took the paper and asked Mick if he could accompany him to the Captain's quarters. "I would be happy to." Mick was smiling slyly to himself. *My old talent for forgery is still helpful.*

Mick followed the lieutenant and waited with him till the Captain told them to enter. As Mick had

thought, both Harrisons were there. The lieutenant handed the Captain the paper.

"This was all that was there Sir. There was no newspaper or other document. The trash was searched sir as you requested and there was no newspaper of that kind found anywhere."

Mick was getting a bit angry. "I find it most insulting, Captain, that you would mistrust me to this degree. I told you nothing but the truth yesterday. If you wish, my daughters will tell you under oath the same thing."

The elder Harrison stood and faced the Captain. "This man is a bold faced liar. My son has assured me he heard the daughter refer to a newspaper. His daughters will lie to protect him."

Mick took a menacing step toward Harrison, but the lieutenant intervened. "Your son, sir, is the liar and coward in this matter. His behavior toward my daughters and Mr. Boland has been deplorable." Mick turned back to the Captain. "I see I will have to take this to counsel in Boston. Good day Sir!" He turned to leave.

The Captain was in a quandary. He looked at the paper the lieutenant had given him.

"Wait McMahon, there is no reason to be hasty here."

Mick stopped and turned around. "Then you best make a decision now!"

The Captain turned to the Harrisons. "This document is dated and signed well before the prison escape. It confirms McMahon's story. There was no newspaper found and all trash is saved till we dock, as you know. I will send for the daughters to confirm their story." The Captain asked the lieutenant if he would escort Ellen and Maureen McMahon to his quarters.

While he was collecting the girls, the Captain asked Mick to be seated and ordered coffee for them. It was a tense group drinking coffee when the girls entered with the lieutenant.

The Captain looked at both girls standing in front of him. He himself had daughters about the same ages and he had plenty of experience in telling when he was hearing the truth. "I am going to ask both of you, one at a time, to tell me what happened at the dance the other night. I want the truth. I also want to hear what your relationship has been with Henry Harrison, III, Ellen."

"Maureen, please start." The Captain sat back and listened as Maureen explained that she knew her sister was in love with Connor but that he would make no commitment because of his uncertain prospects when he reached Boston. She explained that she concocted the idea of blackmailing him and tried to convince Ellen it would work. When Ellen wouldn't believe her she made up the story of finding the newspaper." Maureen bowed her head when she was finished.

The Captain was very convinced she was telling the truth. "Ellen, please proceed."

Ellen told basically the same story. She added that at one time she had mentioned something to Maureen about blackmail when Connor first started. They thought then it would get rid of him or make him ineffective. The idea never took because as they grew to know him, they enjoyed his tutoring and she herself grew to love him. The rest of the story was true, but she refused to let Maureen do it. As for the relationship with Henry, he had tried on several occasions to force his attentions on her. Connor had stopped him both times." Ellen looked at the Captain when she finished.

"You may both be excused while I talk to your father and the Harrisons." The Captain motioned to the lieutenant who escorted the ladies from the room.

After the door was closed, the Captain turned to Mick. "I deeply regret that this happened. I will have Mr. Boland released and brought here immediately and personally apologize to him."

He took a breath. "As for you, young Henry, you are to be confined to your quarters till we dock and then personally escorted from this ship. It is up to Mr. McMahon what charges he may want to make. But you may never board any of my ships again."

When both Henries started to protest, he held up his hand. "I don't want to hear it. I should have taken your character into consideration yesterday. Now get out of my cabin."

When they had left, the Captain rang for the lieutenant. "Please release Mr. Boland and bring him here immediately. Treat him with respect. He is no longer a prisoner. There has been a grievous mistake."

Mick's stomach was turning waiting for Connor to appear. "Thank you Captain. I will not forget your fairness in this matter."

Connor was half dozing when he once again heard steps on the stairs. Could it be time for another meal already? He was surprised to see the lieutenant that had arrested him the day before. He unlocked the cell. "The Captain would like to see you. You are free; there has been a mistake. Would you please accompany me?"

In almost a stupor, Connor followed the lieutenant up the stairs. When the door to the Captain's quarters was opened, Connor broke into a smile at seeing Mick there. He didn't know what Mick had done, but he would be eternally grateful.

"Mr. Boland, please accept my personal and full apologies for the way you have been treated. All charges have been dropped and the person placing the false accusation has been confined to quarters for the remainder of the trip with a guard at his door. If there is anything I can do to make the rest of your journey more comfortable, you only have to ask." The Captain shook his hand and Mick's and walked them to the door.

Mick put his arm around Connor's shoulder and walked with him back to Mick's cabin. Neither said a word till they reached the cabin. "Connor me boy, I



am so sorry this happened. But thank the Lord I got you free. As you probably guessed, it was that Harrison lad who caused the trouble. But he and his father are history now. They wouldn't listen to reason last night so I will keep the promises I made to them. Now, do you want something to eat, or a bath and a rest?"

Connor was exhausted. "I think a bath would be in order, and some rest. Then I need to talk to you about how this all happened. My mind is too cluttered now to think. Is Ellen all right?"

Mick hugged him to him. "Yes Connor, she's fine and worried sick about you. I'll have a bath sent to your cabin, and after a few hours rest, come find me and I'll fill you in."

Connor thanked him and went to his own cabin. The bath was delivered and after he felt clean he lay on his bed and fell into a deep sleep.

Mick knew the girls would be wondering what happened, and he was hungry. Quickly gathering them, he shushed them all. "Connor is free, but I will tell you all about it at breakfast."

Ellen started to leave. "I have to see him now."

Mick stopped her. "No, he is bathing and resting. He's had a hard time and needs to rest before he talks to anyone. He's fine and inquired about you. So, come eat breakfast now. You'll see him in a few hours time."

The girls sat and waited for Mick to tell them the story. Maureen was sitting noticeably gingerly and kept her eyes down. "I figured that Harrison would try and convince the Captain that I was lying. I destroyed the newspaper and burned it. In my youth, I had a certain talent for copying signatures of others. I prepared a document outlining the details of Connor's employment and copied his signature on it. I dated in far in advance so he could not have been in prison and signed it."

Ellen was curious. "But how did the Captain find out there was no newspaper?"

Mick laughed. "He sent the lieutenant to search my quarters. They keep all trash, so he had that searched as well. Fortunately, no one else had that paper. He had no choice but to believe me. When he talked to you, he was convinced. Henry is confined to quarters with a guard and will be escorted off the ship when we dock."

"Isn't that dishonest, Papa?" Nora asked innocently.

Mick patted her hand. "Why yes, Nora, it was a bit. But I am sure the good Father will forgive me a lie in order to free Connor. But this is our secret." He looked at all three girls sternly. "You are to tell no one and you are not to discuss this again, even among yourselves. Do you understand?" Maureen was the first to answer yes.

The girls retired to the classroom to read and study. They hoped by lunch they would be able to see and talk to Connor. Maureen especially needed to apologize to him. Ellen also was most anxious to see if he would forgive her.

Mick was napping on deck when Connor joined him. "How do you feel now son? Are you hungry?"

"I'll be fine until lunch. What happened Mick? For the life of me I can't be figuring it out." Connor was pacing in front of Mick.

"Sit down Connor, and I'll explain. I believe you're going to be a bit disturbed at the part two of my daughters played in this, though." Mick pulled a chair up for Connor.

Connor sat and listened to Mick's explanation. His emotions ran the gamut from astonishment to anger and back. "Ellen didn't really intend to let Maureen do this, did she?"

"No, she told her she couldn't. Unfortunately, though, Henry must have been lurking nearby and heard them. He was the one who went to the Captain yesterday morning. I have punished Maureen most severely, but if you feel more is needed you may do what you think is fair. I did not punish Ellen. I told her that was for you to do,

assuming you still have an interest in her." Mick stopped as a pain jabbed at his stomach.

Connor noticed the flinch of pain. "Mick, I think this has been too much for ye. I am very much in love with Ellen. I don't know what it is that ye have planned for me when we get to Boston, but if it will relieve your mind any, I would like your permission for her hand in marriage."

Mick was beaming with joy. "Connor, nothing would make me happier. I am relying heavily on you to take care of her and actually the other two. I will tell you more after we're home."

Connor was still puzzled but he owed Mick his very life. He would have to be patient until then. "Mick, I will talk to Maureen but I feel ye punished her enough. Ellen I will take care of myself. I'm not sure what I intend to do. It will depend on our conversation."

Lunch was announced and the two men rose and went into the dining room. The girls joined them soon after and all ran up and hugged Connor. Connor hugged them back and then disentangled himself. "I am glad to see all of ye too, but let's have some lunch. I'm suddenly starving. After lunch, I wish to talk to Maureen and Ellen separately. Nora, could you study on your own this afternoon?"

"Yes Connor, I'll study my history." Nora smiled at him.

Lunch was pleasant and when they were finished Mick rose and left Connor with the girls. "All right Nora, off with you. Maureen, Ellen I'll see you in your cabins in a few minutes."

## Chapter Twelve

Connor watched Nora scamper off and Maureen quickly leave for her cabin. Ellen sat for a minute before she stood up. She started to say something but Connor stopped her. "I'll see ye in your cabin. We'll talk then. Ye have a while to think about what ye want to say. I'll be seeing Maureen first."

Ellen turned to leave, but not before Connor noticed tears in her eyes. *I don't like seeing her cry, but I need to hear for myself what her part in this was. She needs to learn responsibility.*

After a few minutes, Connor got up, went to Maureen's cabin, and knocked on the door. With a trembling voice Maureen answered, "Come in."

Connor opened the door and sat on the chair. Maureen was curled up on her bed and she looked like she had been crying.

Before Connor could say anything, Maureen started talking. "Please don't punish me Connor! I didn't mean any harm. I'm sorry and Papa spanked me really hard last night. Please forgive me!"

"Tell me why ye did it Maureen." Connor waited for her to talk.

"I wanted you to stay with us when we landed. Ellen didn't want to lose you. I wanted to help her to make up for being mean. She told me not to say anything. I wasn't going to, but Henry must have heard us." Maureen was sniffing.

"Ye snooped in your father's desk, though, to find that paper. Why did ye do that? Were ye planning on using it against me?" Connor had a sterner tone in his voice than Maureen had ever heard before. Maureen hung her head down and wouldn't look at Connor. She didn't know what to say.

Connor reached over and tilted her chin up to look at him. "Maureen, I want the truth. What I do depends on what ye tell me. Now answer the question."

"I ... I thought about it at first. I thought you'd be scared and let us do whatever we wanted. But then I decided you were all right and I wouldn't. I didn't tell Ellen or Nora about it." Maureen was now crying.

Connor stood up and paced the room thinking. "What ye did was very wrong and foolish, Maureen. Your father has spanked ye for it. I will not repeat that punishment. I want ye to spend the rest of today and tomorrow here thinking about your actions, and how ye're going to regain my trust. I will expect an essay telling me exactly what ye decide, by noon tomorrow. We'll talk again after that. My forgiveness ye have, but my trust will have to be earned." Connor kissed her on the forehead and left.

He could hear her sobbing as he walked to Ellen's cabin. Connor stood outside Ellen's door for a minute collecting his thoughts. This wasn't going to be a pleasant meeting for either of them.

When Ellen heard the knock, she jumped off the bed and opened the door. "Connor, I 'm sorry for all that happened. Please, please forgive me?" Connor wanted to take her in his arms and kiss her, but first some things had to be straightened out. Sitting down in the chair, Connor pulled her onto his lap. "Ellen, ye know how I feel about ye. I've told ye before and told ye again at the ball. What happened yesterday could have been the end of our ever being together. I would most likely be hanged if I were sent back. I love ye, but I have to know personally from ye what your part in this was. I've talked to Mick and Maureen, but I want to hear from ye what happened and why. Before we go any further with this relationship, I have to be able to trust ye and believe in ye. Ye also must trust and respect me enough to tell me your feelings."

"Are you going to punish me Connor?" Ellen's voice was a whisper.

Connor looked at her sternly. "The question of punishment will be decided, Ellen McMahon, after ye tell me what happened."

Ellen took a deep breath and started talking. "I'm sure you know that when Papa first hired you, I didn't want a tutor or a guardian. Maureen and I talked about your arrival and the timing of it. I questioned you about your background and you wouldn't talk. I was suspicious that you were one of the escaped prisoners. I've heard Papa talk before to men at home about helping lads. I said something to Maureen at the time about blackmailing you into letting us do what we wanted. I soon realized though that you weren't the type to succumb to blackmail. I dropped the subject and never said any more about it." Ellen paused.

Connor noticed she was trembling in his arms. "Continue, Ellen."

"As I began to know you, I fell in love with you. All thoughts of blackmailing or betraying you left my mind. I was desperate not to lose you, but you didn't seem interested enough and wouldn't commit to anything. I came up with the idea of making you jealous at the ball. Maureen knew I wanted you, so she told me about the paper and that we could still blackmail you. I told her no, but Henry must have been standing behind the pillar and heard us." Ellen paused again, tears were spilling down her cheeks.

Connor turned her in his lap to see her face. He wiped the tears away with his thumb. "Do ye think that was a wise thing to do in public? Should ye not have told me about it?"

"No it wasn't wise. I know I should have said something when we talked, but I didn't think it would cause any harm." Ellen lowered her eyes. "I'm so sorry that you were harmed. I was sick with worry."

"Ye behaved very irresponsibly Ellen, not the way a grown up young lady should behave. Do ye realize that now? Even though Maureen was the one who was most at fault, ye were older and should

have taken better precautions. Ye should also have told me about her plan." Connor stood Ellen on her feet. "I believe ye are sorry, but I can't tolerate deceit. By not telling me, ye were deceitful. It is for that I will punish ye. I want ye to remember the harm this could have caused to us and our future, any time ye are tempted to lie or hide things from me. I want a wife who will trust me completely with everything."

Ellen looked at him. "I understand. But I am sorry. Please don't spank me."

"I want ye to lean over the chair and put your hands on the seat."

Ellen looked terrified, but obeyed. When she was in position, she heard Connor removing his belt. "Please Connor, don't strap me. I can't bear it!"

"Ellen, I do not enjoy this, but ye will learn from this and not repeat it." Connor placed his hand in the small of her back and raised her gown. He lowered her panties, raised the belt, and brought it down hard on the right cheek. He continued to spank her from cheek to cheek, ignoring her squeals and sobs. After twenty, he stopped, lowered her gown, and pulled her up into his arms. Sitting back down, he held Ellen and rubbed her back until she quieted.

"Connor, am I forgiven? I will never be so foolish again. I promise." Ellen put her arms around his neck.

"Yes, ye are forgiven Ellen. I love ye and we shall put this behind us and go on." Connor pulled her into a deep kiss. Ellen responded eagerly and it was some time before Connor broke away.

"It's time for me to go. I want ye to stay here until dinnertime and think about this. I will see ye then." Connor set her on her feet and stood up, pulling her into a tight embrace.

"Ellen, I don't ever want to have to do that again. Do ye understand me?"

"Yes Connor, I understand. I'll never be so silly again." Ellen hugged him back. "I love you, Connor."

"Aye, I love ye also." Connor kissed her once more and left. It was still quite early in the afternoon. He decided to check on Nora and let her have the afternoon free. He did not feel up to teaching today. When he opened the door Nora was so engrossed in her book she didn't hear him. "What are ye studying Nora?"

She jumped and turned around. "Oh Connor, is everything okay?"

"Yes Nora, everything is fine. Your sisters won't be joining us this afternoon. Ye may take the afternoon off too. Now what are ye studying?" Connor picked up the book. He hid his amusement. "I see. Ye weren't quite studying history after all." The book was a novel.

Nora looked down. "I was studying, but I got tired of it."

Connor gave her the book back. "It's all right. Now off with ye."

Nora got up and started for the door. "Connor, did you spank them?"

"That, little one, is none of your business. If ye don't want one yourself, ye best be minding it and not be so nosy."

Nora smiled and ran out the door. When she was out of earshot Connor laughed.

The afternoon was still young and Connor was rested. He decided to find Mick and talk to him. Mick was usually in the salon at this time, so that was his first stop. Mick was there at his usual table.

"Connor! Join me!" Mick pulled out a chair. "How are things with my daughters?"

"They will be fine. One has a very sore bottom. The other is to stay in her cabin the rest of the day and tomorrow. She will write me an essay on trust." Connor ordered ale.

"I would guess from that, you spanked Ellen and Maureen is restricted to quarters?" Mick had a grin



on his face. " I figured that you wouldn't spank her again, but hoped you would show Ellen the error of her ways."

Connor laughed. "I see Nora comes by her nosiness naturally. I am sure they both see the error of their ways." Connor sipped his ale. "This is the best tasting thing I have had in two days. I was positive last night I would never taste it again."

Mick realized that Connor was not going to share any details of his punishments. "I talked to the Captain a bit ago ... he came by the table. He would still like to do something to make up for his 'mistake'. You and Ellen are invited to dine with him tomorrow evening in his quarters."

Connor frowned at the news. "I suppose it would be impolite to refuse, but I hold the man in little regard."

"I know how you feel Connor, I'm not too fond of him myself. However, he is good for business and we need to keep him satisfied." Mick took a deep drink of his ale. "Also tomorrow night is our last night at sea. We should dock midmorning the next day. It has always been an honor to dine with the Captain privately on the final night at sea. He's awaiting your answer."

Connor thought for a minute. "What did you mean when you said 'we' need to keep him satisfied?"

"I'll explain that soon, I promise." Mick would say no more.

"I'll send word to the Captain that Ellen and I would be honored. I hope she behaves and doesn't say anything wrong to him."

"I doubt that she will. All the girls were very scared when you were arrested. Remind her that a slip of the tongue is dangerous." Mick rose from the table. "I think I'm going to rest now till dinner. I'll see you then." Mick rose and went to his cabin. Connor noticed him holding his side.

It was a gorgeous day so Connor roamed the deck a bit. After being confined in the brig for a day,

he wanted all the fresh air he could get. When he got to his cabin, he went in and penned a note to the Captain accepting the invitation for dinner. There were still several hours till dinner so he picked up a book and headed back to the deck to read.

A deck hand took his note to the Captain. Connor sat down in a lounge chair to read. The book was interesting but the roll of the sea and the soft breeze, soon had him asleep.

Henry Harrison Jr. had been upset and drinking since the meeting with the Captain that morning. He was insulted at the treatment of his son. He firmly believed that young Henry had been telling the truth about Connor and that Mick and his daughters had lied to convince the Captain otherwise. He was worried though; Michael McMahon was a powerful man in Boston. His biggest hope had been to marry young Henry to Ellen. Rumors were circulating that Mick was not well and the purpose for the trip was to say goodbye to his relatives. Now of course, those hopes were dashed. Not only would Henry have no chance of marrying Ellen, but Mick had vowed to ruin both of them. Mick had the power and connections to do it also. Henry was so drunk that the servers suggested he retire to his cabin. They would not serve him more. It was in this state of drunkenness that Henry stumbled on to the deck. He was almost back to his cabin when he saw Connor asleep in his chair. All of his pent up fury and hate came to the surface.

Someone violently kicking his chair awakened Connor. As he opened his eyes it was the face of Henry he saw leaning over him. His eyes were bloodshot and he reeked from the smell of whiskey.

"You're a traitorous bastard, Connor Boland! You're not fit to walk the same streets with my son. I'll make sure you pay for what you've done. I will personally get you and don't forget it, you swine." Henry reeled back and started to throw a punch toward Connor's face.

Connor rolled off the lounge and stood to face him. "Ye're drunk, old man. I suggest ye sleep it off. It's your son who's the swine. Now get out of here."

Henry was too drunk to listen to reason. Once again, he lunged at Connor. Connor moved out of his way and Henry collapsed on the deck. Connor turned to walk away and suddenly felt a punch land on his back. He turned around and Henry was right there with fists raised. "Fight me, you yellow coward!"

Before he could answer, the lieutenant and two of his sailors arrived and grabbed Henry. The lieutenant gave them orders. "Take him to his cabin and see that he stays there until I tell you to release him."

Turning to Connor, he apologized. "I'm sorry sir, that this happened. I will report it to the Captain at once. Are you injured?"

"No, I'm fine. He's drunk and out of control. I'll do my best to avoid him the rest of the trip." Connor turned and went to his cabin. It was time to rest a bit and freshen up before dinner.

As he entered the cabin, he noticed an envelope on the floor. It was addressed to him in Ellen's hand. Sitting down at the desk, he opened it and read.

*"My dear Connor,*

*I have been thinking a lot since you left this afternoon. I realize what happened and my part in it. I am so sorry knowing what a thoughtless act on my part could have wrought. I had to write this to assure you that I will never disobey or lie or hide anything from you ever again. I will always be thankful that you were not harmed more and we have a chance at a future together should you want that.*

*My desire is to make you happy for the rest of your life. Whatever decisions you make I shall always abide by. I feel so sorry for what happened. If they had sent you back, I don't think I could have lived.*

*I love you very much and I promise never to hide anything from you again.*

*All my love,*

*Ellen*

Connor folded the note and put it back in the envelope, smiling. *Ellen I love you so, but I know there will be many times you won't quite fulfill that promise.*

Mick was waiting in the salon for Connor when he got there. "Are you all right? I heard about the scuffle with Harrison."

"He was drunk and very unpleasant. I will definitely have to watch my back with him around." Connor ordered his ale.

Mick seemed a bit nervous and edgy. "Are ye all right Mick? Ye seem a bit nervous."

"I'm fine, but wanted to talk to you. You asked permission for Ellen's hand, which I have given. When do you intend to ask her? And don't say I'm nosey ... I have a very good reason for asking."

"I hadn't thought about a time. Are you wanting me to ask her soon?" Connor was puzzled.

"Yes I think it would be best." Mick was smiling slyly.

Connor looked at him, trying to read his face. "I will ask her tonight then. I won't have a ring for her though until we land. I have a wedding ring my mother sent me but not an engagement ring."

Mick beamed. "Don't worry about it." He pulled a pouch out of his pocket and handed it to Connor. "This was her mother's. She would have wanted her to have it."

"Mick, you're way too generous. I will treasure this as I know Ellen will." Connor put the pouch in his pocket.

"Connor, tomorrow before you have dinner with the Captain I would like to talk to you about my plans. Let the girls have the afternoon free. Please meet me in my cabin right after lunch."

Before Connor could say more Ellen and Nora arrived for dinner.

## Chapter Thirteen

Connor and Mick both rose and greeted the girls. Mick bowed to Nora. "May I have the honor of escorting you to the table, my dear?"

Nora giggled, "Papa, you're so funny!" She took his arm and walked to the table.

Connor looked at Ellen. "Will ye do me the honor?"

Ellen smiled at him. "I would love to." She had not been sure of what his reaction to her would be after this afternoon. As they walked the short distance to the table, Connor whispered in her ear, "I got your letter. We'll talk more later." He kissed her quickly on the ear lobe.

Ellen turned, surprised at the quick kiss. "Connor, people will talk!"

"Let them." They had reached the table and Connor pulled her chair out for her.

When the server arrived, Connor arranged for a meal to be sent to Maureen. Nora looked at him quizzically. "Isn't Maureen joining us? Is she sick?"

"Nora, what did I tell ye this afternoon?" Connor looked sternly at her. "Don't be nosey! No, Maureen is not joining us. Now no more questions."

Nora wasn't happy with that answer, but for now, it would have to do. As soon as dinner was over, she planned on paying Maureen a visit to find out what happened. Mick winked at Connor as he turned to Nora. He had an idea of what she had in mind. "Nora, you and I are going to spend some time together this evening, so you won't be able to do any visiting." All three had to laugh at the look of astonishment on Nora's face.

The rest of the meal passed pleasantly. When the last of the plates had been cleared, Connor took Ellen's arm. "Why don't we go and sit on deck for a bit? I know the perfect spot."

Connor led Ellen to a secluded spot on deck. Very few people passed that way and they wouldn't be noticed in the shadows. When they got there,

Connor pulled Ellen close to him and kissed her. "I have been waiting for that all afternoon. Now we have some talking to do." Sitting down, Connor pulled Ellen onto his lap.

"When I left you this afternoon, did I tell ye to stay in your cabin until dinner?" Connor was trying to be very stern.

Ellen gasped. "Yes, and I did!"

"Ellen McMahon don't ye lie to me. If ye stayed there then how did this letter come to be under my door?"

"Really Connor, you must believe me. I did not leave my cabin. I intended to give you the letter tonight, but Nora came by and delivered it for me. She wanted to know what had happened." Ellen looked up at Connor pleadingly.

"I believe ye, but your sister is way too inquisitive herself. Did she see Maureen?"

"She said Maureen wouldn't let her in." Ellen knew now that Connor wasn't angry with her. She leaned back against him.

"I liked your letter. I'm keeping it to remind ye if ever the need arises." Connor brushed his lips against the back of her neck, sending shivers throughout Ellen's entire body.

Connor could feel Ellen's reaction to his kiss. He stopped long enough to tell her of the invitation from the Captain. "Ellen, the Captain has invited us to be his dinner guests tomorrow night in his cabin. I've accepted on our behalf."

Ellen sat up and turned toward Connor. "Why? He's a beast of a man! I loathe him and you should too, for what he did. I don't want to be in the same room as him, let alone sit and have dinner with him. I won't go!"

Connor turned her to face him. Ellen could see the stern look on his face. "Ellen, what did ye just promise me this afternoon? Shall I quote for ye?" Connor removed her letter from his pocket and opened it. He read quickly to the part he wanted. *'Whatever decisions you make I shall always abide*

by.' Ye also promised to obey me. Have ye so soon forgotten your promises? What am I to think of this?"

Ellen wouldn't look at him. "I don't mean to break them. I don't want to go."

"Ellen I've made a decision. I'm not happy with it myself, but your father feels it's important that we attend. Ye will go Ellen!" Connor exhaled in exasperation. "Are ye going to defy me?"

No reply came from Ellen. He could feel her tense on his lap. Tilting her chin to look into her eyes, Connor slowly spoke. "Ellen, I want ye to answer me. If ye don't, we're going back to your cabin to have another discussion similar to this afternoon. I will not tolerate defiance."

Finally, Ellen started to cry. "Please Connor, I don't mean to be defiant. I love you, but I will have a miserable time. I would rather spend the last night at sea with you."

Pulling her into his arms, Connor kissed her forehead. "I know. But we'll have time later to ourselves. Ye will be with me. It will be all right."

"I'll go Connor. I'm sorry I questioned your decision." Ellen leaned against his chest once again.

"Don't do it again, Miss McMahon or we will have to address it right then no matter where we are." Connor laughed at her gasp of horror.

"You wouldn't?"

"I told ye I am a man of my word." Connor pulled her back into his arms.

"Why does Papa think it important that we attend dinner with the Captain?"

Connor stroked her cheek. "For business reasons. More than that, I don't know now. He wants to talk to me tomorrow afternoon, before the dinner. I'll find out then, I imagine. Now enough talk for a while." Connor leaned over and claimed Ellen's mouth with his. They were both lost in the kiss and unaware of the muffled giggles of some young girls passing by.

After several minutes. Connor stopped and once again pulled Ellen around to face him. "I have a very serious question to ask ye. If ye're not ready to answer I'll understand and be patient."

Ellen sat waiting anxiously for him to finish. "Ellen McMahon, I would like ye to marry me and be my wife for all eternity. Will ye accept me as your husband?"

Tears sprung to Ellen's eyes. "Oh Connor, nothing would make me happier. I know we haven't known each other long, but I am sure. You'll have to speak to Papa though." Ellen put her arms around Connor and hugged him tight.

Connor disengaged himself and pulled the pouch from his pocket. "Your father has already given his blessing. He would like you to have this as your engagement ring. I have a family ring for you as a wedding ring." He put the ring on Ellen's finger.

"Connor, this is so special! This is my mother's ring."

"Your father told me. I am so proud to have you Ellen." Connor once again pulled her into a kiss.

Mick had kept Nora occupied all evening. It was now late and time for her to be in bed.

"Now you go right to bed and do not leave your cabin," Mick instructed Nora as he left her for the night.

Nora wanted to see Maureen, but her father had such a stern tone she decided she should obey. Mick watched for a few minutes to see if she would leave. When he was satisfied she would not, he himself retired to his cabin. He was tired and wanted to be clear headed when he talked to Connor the next day.

Connor suddenly realized that it was late. "Ellen, it is time I got ye back to your cabin."

He set her on her feet and took her arm and walked slowly toward her cabin. "Sleep well Ellen, I'll see you at breakfast." Connor opened the door for her and gave her one last hug and kiss.



As he fell asleep, he was very curious about what Mick wanted to talk about the next day.

The next morning Connor was back in the classroom with Ellen and Nora. He knew that Nora wanted to ask about Maureen, but didn't dare. Connor addressed the two girls. "Since this is our last day at sea, we'll have a shortened day. This afternoon I have a meeting with your father. You can use the time to pack and get ready for tomorrow. This morning we'll work on math and history."

Each girl received her assignment and worked quietly. At eleven o'clock Connor stood up and called them to attention. "I have some business to take care of before lunch. For the next hour, you can pack up the books and supplies. I'll see you at lunch."

"Ellen, are you really engaged?" Nora could barely wait for Connor to be out of earshot.

"Yes we are." Ellen showed Nora the ring. "This was mother's. Papa gave it to Connor for me."

Hugging Nora, Ellen danced her around in a circle. "I'm so happy!"

"I think we better get to these books though, or we won't have our afternoon off." Ellen dragged a trunk from the corner and the two started packing books and supplies.

Connor knocked on Maureen's door. "Come in." Her voice was very quiet and subdued.

"Good morning Maureen. Have you finished your assignment?" Connor noticed she hadn't touched her breakfast and had been crying. Her eyes were red and puffy.

Maureen handed Connor a paper and said nothing. He sat down and read the paper through. She had promised never to snoop or pry in anyone's business again. Apologies abounded and she begged for his forgiveness and trust once again. It was not long but Connor could tell it came from her heart.

"Come here, Maureen." Connor called her over to him. Walking timidly, Maureen approached. She was positive he was going to spank her. Once she was standing in front of him, he took her hand and pulled her onto his lap. "Ye're forgiven Maureen. This was a very good essay. Ye have my trust."

Tears and sobs tore from Maureen when she heard his words. Connor hugged her tight and rubbed her back. "Hush, no more tears. Ye've cried enough. Now quiet down and ye can come have lunch with us. Ye needn't stay here any more. Your sisters will be glad to see ye."

Slowly Maureen quieted. "Thank you Connor. I will never do anything like this again."

"Now wash your face and come to lunch." Connor set her on her feet and hugged her before he left.

The salon was empty when Connor arrived. Mick was normally there waiting for him at this time of day. Connor sat down and ordered ale. The waiter had just served him when Mick came in and sat with him. "Ye be looking a bit pale Mick. Are ye all right?"

"Aye don't worry son. I just need a bit of ale and I'll be fine. Have you made arrangements for the girls, so we can talk privately this afternoon?" Mick seemed nervous.

"They'll be packing and getting ready to land tomorrow. Maureen will be joining us for lunch. I figured they would all sit and gab about Ellen's ring anyway."

Mick sighed. "I am so glad that she has you, Connor. It puts my mind at ease. Now let's enjoy our lunch and then talk and get you ready for your evening with the Captain."

They were chatting when the girls joined them. Ellen and Nora both hugged Maureen and started talking at once. Mick and Connor rose to go into the dining hall. Mick broke them apart. "Come girls, time for lunch. You have all afternoon to talk."

Lunch was almost over when Mick told them about Connor and Ellen having dinner with the Captain. "I will be entertaining the two of you this evening. There's a small gathering with music in the ballroom. If you're all packed and ready for tomorrow we shall attend."

Nora and Maureen smiled broadly. "Oh, we shall be Papa. We'll be all ready and have all the classroom things ready, too."

Smiling at them, Mick added, "Also you must not interrupt Connor and me for any reason this afternoon, except for a dire emergency. Is that understood?"

All three answered, "Yes Papa."

"Now off with ye then, I will see you at dinner." Mick rose and waited for Connor to join him.

Connor took Ellen aside. "I shall come for ye at 7:00."

Connor joined Mick and the girls scampered off in the direction of the classroom. Ellen took charge. "Now that there are three of us, this should go fast. Then we can pack our belongings and still have time to relax." They all pitched in and started clearing the room.

Mick ushered Connor into his cabin and closed the door. There was a table and two chairs set in the corner of the room. Mick has various papers on the table. "Have a seat Connor. There is much I need to tell you."

When both men were seated, Mick began. "I know I've told you how much I appreciate what you've done and that I feel indebted to you." Connor started to speak, and Mick raised his hand to stop him. "Hear me out and then we have plenty of time to talk. You have told me you feel indebted to me as well. I'm going to propose some things to you today that will require an answer from you. If you agree, I will go into greater detail when we're home." Mick paused. "I find discussing business to be a thirsty task. Would you join me in an ale?"

"Aye that would be fine." Connor's curiosity was building by the minute. Mick opened the door and hailed a passing cabin attendant. He placed his order and returned to the table. "Now as I was saying, you're going to be part of my family. I've always wanted a son and I could think of no finer one than you. I told you I was a banker. What I didn't tell you is that I own the largest bank in Boston. It has been passed on to me from my father. I need to make arrangements for someone to take over for me when I'm gone. My girls obviously will not be able to handle this. Nor would it be proper."

There was a knock at the door and the server entered with a pitcher of ale and two glasses. Accepting his tip, he nodded and left the room. Mick locked the door behind him. "Now we'll not be interrupted."

Before he continued, Mick poured each a glass of ale. "What I am proposing is that you come into the bank with me and learn the business. You will take over for me as my heir. I think you are ideally suited to banking. As my son-in-law, this would be a natural progression, and meet with no resistance from other members of the community. The papers here will show you the amount of assets the bank controls." Mick picked up one paper and handed it to Connor. "Read that over and then we can discuss it."

Connor sipped his ale and read over the paper. He was amazed at the figures on it. "Mick, these figures are astounding! I would never have imagined anything close to this. Ye indeed must own most of Boston."

"Not even close, Connor. Boston is a very wealthy city. Let's review some of these other documents." Mick pulled his chair around closer to Connor. The next hour was spent reviewing the papers on the table. When they were finished, Connor sat back in his chair in thought. "Mick, I'm very honored by this. I don't know that I am the

most qualified to take your place, but I will accept your offer. This is fascinating. I do have some questions for ye, though."

Mick stood and stretched his legs. "I was sure you would. I'll answer as many as I can. Some, as I said, will have to wait until we are home."

"That is one of the questions I have. Ye speak of home, but is it proper that I be under the same roof with Ellen until we are married? I'm not sure what ye mean." Connor watched Mick's reaction.

"Connor, my house is large. There's a housekeeper and many maids and servants. The girls are in a different wing of the house from where my rooms are. There's room in my wing for you as well. I trust you and Ellen, and see no problem with it. However, it is my wish that you marry as soon as possible. The reason why will be evident later." Mick sat back down across from him. "What are the rest of your questions?" He poured another glass of ale.

Connor cleared his throat. "What are your plans for the girls' education? I would like to see that continue, particularly in Ellen's case. A well spoken and read wife would only be an asset, if I were to succeed ye in the bank. Since I will no longer be tutoring them, have you thought of anyone to do so?"

"No Connor. To be honest I'd not given it a thought. You may do what you wish in that area. There are schools available and plenty of private tutors as well."

"I was thinking more along the lines of a governess and tutor combined. I believe the girls could use some womanly influence in their lives." Connor chuckled. "I can imagine how that will be received."

Mick laughed along with him. "That's why I'll leave it up to you."

"Mick there is one more question I have." Connor paused for a moment. "What is ailing ye?"

## Chapter Fourteen

Mick was taken aback at the question. He hadn't expected Connor to question his health so bluntly. He answered carefully. "As you know, I've had some health problems on this trip. I must see a doctor once we're home to fully answer that question." Mick picked his glass up, drained it, and poured another.

"Mick, I need to know more than that. It's been obvious to me that ye're in great pain at times. During the storm, I don't think it was seasickness. Ye're far too experienced a sailor to get sick like that. Your answer won't change my decision if that's what worries ye. I do need to know the truth though, to gauge how fast I must learn." Connor coolly watched Mick for his reaction.

Sweat was on Mick's brow. This was one question he didn't want to face. "I suppose the time has come to tell someone. What I'm about to tell you must remain in strict confidence between us. If it were to leak out it could prove disastrous for the bank." Mick had started pacing again. "I also do not want the girls to know of any of this yet. No one other than my physician knows of this."

It was obvious to Connor that Mick was in a great deal of distress. He didn't like forcing his hand but felt he must. "Your confidences will always be safe with me, Mick. I would never break that."

"Connor, I came on this trip to say goodbye to my homeland. I also hoped to be able to make some decisions about the future of the girls. I looked over various schools and places there to educate them. I even interviewed several ladies to take on the job of governess and tutor as you have suggested. Nothing seemed right. When I left Boston I felt that perhaps I had several years left, time to make some changes and assure my family's future. I have taken worse on this trip. The medicine no longer helps much. I fear that I may not have much time left, although I won't know for

sure until I see the doctor." Mick suddenly paled, grabbed his side, and sat down.

Connor rushed to his side. "Is there anything I can get ye?"

Mick waved him away. "It will pass in a moment."

In a few minutes time Mick's color returned and he was able to speak again. "It's something in my guts. I'm not sure what. But I think we shall have to work fast. There will be much to do when we're home. It's for that reason I wish the wedding to be held as soon as possible. To free your mind for learning."

"Yes, I agree we shall have to escalate my training. Fortunately, I've a skill for mathematics and have always been a fast learner. Holding the wedding soon will not displease me in the least. I doubt that Ellen will mind either."

Mick was visibly relieved at Connor's answers. "Do you have any other questions?"

"Yes, one more for now. What's the importance of having dinner with the Captain tonight? I've accepted but do not hold him in much regard. Ellen was almost adamant about not wanting to go."

Smiling broadly, Mick answered him. "I can imagine you had your hands full with Ellen. The simple fact is he could become an important client for the bank. There are newer, faster ships being built now. He's been looking into them. Gold was discovered in California, which is the other side of our country. Men are anxious to get there fast and not have the rigors of a land journey. Ships are being built to go around and carry them there. There will be a lot of money to make in financing these ventures. The closer we can get to the Captain and the more indebted he is to us, the better position it puts us in."

Connor chuckled. "So the fact that he threw me in the brig could become a business advantage?"

"Exactly. You're already learning. The Irish are still not looked upon well in many areas of society.

It's been an uphill battle for my family, but we have become accepted. If he knows you're marrying Ellen and will be taking control of the bank from me, he'll be more inclined to feel indebted to us. Also, this should wipe away any traces of doubt he may have concerning you ." Mick drained his glass and poured another. "I think we've talked enough for one day. Tomorrow will be busy with docking and getting home. Enjoy your evening and I'll see you at breakfast."

"Thank ye Mick, for this opportunity. I'll do my best for ye and take care of the girls as well." Connor rose and started out the door.

"I am the one indebted to you Connor." Mick hugged him like a son.

There were still several hours left before dinnertime. Connor decided to check the classroom and make sure everything was packed. The room was totally packed and the boxes had been removed to the baggage area for the morning docking. The furniture had been arranged back into a salon setting. Connor sat down and reminisced about the last few weeks spent here. His life had certainly changed and was about to change even more. There were a lot of important decisions he would have to make in the near future. When he next looked at his watch two hours had passed. He would have to hurry to get ready on time.

Promptly at seven, he knocked at Ellen's door. Ellen answered the door and took his breath away. She was a vision of loveliness. Her red hair was wound up in curls on top of her head. Her dress was a turquoise satin trimmed with the finest of lace at the neck and sleeves. The bodice was fitted and tapered to a full skirt that emphasized the smallness of her waist. Around her neck was a necklace of pearls, with a jeweled drop of diamonds. Her skin was luminous from the reflection of the dress and her eyes the bluest he had ever seen. He hugged her to him, careful not to muss her hair or dress. "Ellen, ye are the most beautiful women in the



world. Ye make me so happy to have ye on my arm."

Before Ellen could answer him, he leaned down and claimed her lips with his. Sighing, after a minute she broke away. "Connor, I do love you so, but if we don't go we shall be late."

Reluctantly, Connor admitted she was right. Her arm in his, they walked toward the Captains cabin. Ellen was quiet most of the way. Connor could feel her tremble a bit.

"Ellen, don't be nervous. Everything will be fine. Just don't lose your temper or say anything ye will regret later." Before they got to the Captain's passageway, he pulled her to him and kissed her once more. "Now remember, Miss McMahan, this is something that is important to your father, and to us as well, so behave."

"I will Connor, but please let us leave as soon as we can. I would like to find out what you and Papa talked about today." Ellen tensed as they neared the Captain's cabin and saw the attendant at the door.

Connor addressed him when they reached the door. "Good evening! I believe the Captain is expecting us."

"Good evening, Mr. Boland and Miss McMahan. The Captain is indeed expecting you." He knocked lightly on the door and opened it for them.

The sitting area of the cabin contained a beautifully set table for six, complete with a fine linen tablecloth, china, crystal, and silver. Candlelight caused rainbows of color to sparkle from the crystal. It was the nicest table Connor had ever seen. He and Ellen exchanged glances at the number of places set. They had both felt they would be the only guests.

The Captain was seated with his Lieutenant and two other ladies, in a nearby sitting area. He and the Lieutenant both rose to greet them. "Good evening! I am glad you could join us this evening." The Captain shook Connor's hand and kissed Ellen's

outstretched hand. The lieutenant did likewise. The Captain turned to the ladies who were seated. "I have asked Mrs. Thompson to join me tonight as my guest. It is customary for my Lieutenant and a guest of his choice to accompany me also. This is Miss Smith." After introductions were made, Connor and Ellen were seated. A steward was motioned forward. "What would you like to drink Sir, and Miss?"

Ellen noticed the other ladies were sipping wine so she ordered the same. The men appeared to be drinking whiskey and Connor ordered that. Once the drinks were served, light conversation ensued. Connor noticed that the other ladies were talking between themselves and seemed to ignore Ellen. Connor squeezed her hand and smiled at her. Ellen sat and politely listened to the conversation. She knew that she was being excluded. She hated it, but it was nothing new. Being Irish in Boston, she was used to the feeling. It was only when people learned who her father was and their place in society that she was accepted. She vowed before the evening was over she would put these two in their place.

Dinner conversation centered on the docking the next day and discussion of the trip and the storm. Ellen contributed very little to the conversation unless she was directly asked a question. Toward the end of dinner, the Captain asked Connor what his plans were for the future. "Are you going to continue as a tutor in Mr. McMahon's employ?"

"I will be employed by Mr. McMahon, but not as tutor. I will be working with him in the bank, learning the business." Connor looked across the table and smiled at Ellen. She smiled back at him; she was surprised at the news, but hid it from the rest of the table. She and Connor would have time to talk later.

Mrs. Thompson noticed the ring on Ellen's finger. "Oh Miss McMahon, I just noticed your ring. Are you engaged?"

"Yes, Connor and I were engaged last night." Ellen blushed and looked down.

"Then congratulations are in order all around." The Captain called for his valet and ordered a bottle of champagne. When it was delivered, everyone's glass was filled and a toast was offered. The champagne was making Ellen feel a bit tipsy. She had never had so much champagne and wine at one time before.

Conversation between the men naturally steered towards business matters. Mrs. Thompson suggested that the ladies retire to the sitting area and allow the men to enjoy their brandy and cigars. Ellen did not particularly want to leave Connor, but could hardly protest.

"Would the ladies like some coffee?" The valet was questioning Mrs. Thompson. "Yes, that would be lovely. Oh dear, Ellen, I totally wasn't thinking. Do you drink coffee or would you require tea?"

"Coffee would be fine, thank you. Irish are allowed to drink coffee." Ellen was tired of her tone and the champagne was causing her to lose the tight control on her tongue and temper.

Mrs. Thompson ordered the coffee, but was not going to let Ellen get away with putting her down. As far as she was concerned, she was a low class Irishwoman and therefore did not have the same class and caliber as she and Miss Smith. She was not from Boston and was unaware of the standing her family enjoyed in Boston society. She could not imagine why the Captain had invited her and Connor to join them for dinner in the first place.

The Captain was busy talking to Connor about what banking plans he and Mick had made. He was very impressed when he learned that Connor indeed would be taking control of the bank when Mick decided to step down.

"Yes, when Mick and I first discussed employment the tutoring was only a prelude to working with him in the bank. My falling in love with Ellen was strictly coincidental. But heartily approved

of by Mick." Connor was enjoying watching the implications of the discussion sinking in on the Captain. Mick was totally right. This dinner was very important to the bank.

The men had been so engrossed in their conversation that they had not paid any attention to what the ladies were doing, until Connor heard Ellen's voice raised and recognized the temper in it.

"No, Mrs. Thompson, I have never been employed outside my home. Even though my family may be Irish, my father happens to hold a high standing in the community. I think it might be wise for you to not turn your snotty English nose up until you know who you are speaking to!"

Connor was shocked. "Please excuse Ellen, Captain, I believe the champagne must have gone to her head. If you will excuse us, I believe it is time for her to retire to her cabin. I will see that she apologizes to Mrs. Thompson.

"Yes Connor, I think that would be wise. I like a man who can control his lady. It is a sign I look for in those I do business with. I am afraid Michael McMahon has been rather lax with his daughters."

Connor rose and bowed to the Captain. He swiftly approached Ellen and took her arm. "Come my dear, it is time we said good night. Good night Mrs. Thompson, Miss Smith."

Connor whispered to Ellen, "Thank the Captain and say goodnight."

Ellen gave Connor a defiant glare that was not lost on anyone in the room. Connor tightened his grip on her arm. "Say goodnight Ellen, now!"

Ellen recognized the tone. "Thank you Captain for such a lovely and entertaining evening. Good night Mrs. Thompson, Miss Smith, it has truly been enlightening meeting with you."

Connor wasted no time in propelling her out the door. Once outside Connor turned her to the side and smacked her soundly on her bottom. The guests assembled heard the smack and a loud ouch from Ellen. Connor had never been quite so angry

with Ellen before. Ellen's temper was high also. "Connor, how dare you treat me like a naughty child? That woman was insulting me. I do not have to take that from anyone." Ellen pulled away from him and started to walk swiftly away.

Connor caught her around the waist and carried her on deck. "I don't want ye to say a word until I tell ye to. Do ye understand me, Ellen?"

Ellen was still angry and didn't answer him. "Ye are making things worse for yourself, but if that is what ye want, so be it." Connor said nothing more till they reached her cabin. He put her down and opened the door. He pulled her in and slammed it behind them. Ellen for the first time got a look at Connor's face. He was angrier than she had ever seen him. She started crying and sat down on the bed and put her hands over her face. Connor sat in the chair and watched her. "Ellen, come here!"

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Ellen slowly rose and walked over to him. Connor pulled her onto his lap. He wrapped his arms around her and held her till she quieted. "Ellen, what possessed ye to behave so tonight? Ye knew this was an important evening for your father."

"Connor, she was insulting me because I'm Irish. She's nothing but a snotty English bitch!"

"Ellen, that doesn't excuse your behavior now does it? Ye know better and must be above such things. Ye embarrassed me. Ye behaved like a spoilt bairn, and were called as much by the Captain. I will not tolerate that behavior. Then you out, right defied me in front of them. That is why you were smacked. I didn't care if they heard it or not. Now stand up." Connor lifted Ellen off his lap and quickly placed her back over his knee.

"Connor, please, I'm sorry! I wanted to spend the rest of the evening with you talking and cuddling." Ellen was trying to squirm off his lap.

"Ellen, ye knew better, and ye know I will not brook temper or defiance. Now ye will pay the consequences. I didn't want to spend the rest of the evening this way either, but ye leave me no choice." Connor wasted no more time; he flipped up her dress and petticoats and lowered her bloomers. He raised his hand and brought it down hard on her right cheek. A red handprint was immediately visible. Ellen squirmed, trying to avoid his hand, but Connor only held her tighter and peppered her bottom over and over again.

Connor lifted the weeping Ellen onto his lap and held her tight in his arms. He rocked her gently until her sobs subsided. "Ellen, hush. I love ye, but ye must learn to hold your tongue and behave in social situations. There are people in life who will be rude and obnoxious, but ye can't be that way back. I saw what type of person she was as soon as we got there. Ye were doing fine until the champagne. If you can't handle your tongue with drink, then don't drink it." Connor held her close and kissed her gently.

"I should leave you to think about your behavior, but I don't want to. Come back on deck with me. It's not right we be in here alone together." He set her on her feet, took her hand, and led her on to the deck again. It was late and there were few people around at that hour. Connor pulled her onto his lap again. Ellen was still sniffing slightly and Connor hugged her and kissed her softly over and over again until she was quiet. "Ellen, ye heard tonight part of what Mick and I talked about. The rest is manly business details. We did discuss one other thing that is important to both of us. It's your father's desire that we be married as soon as arrangements can be made. I know that may be a bit faster than normal but I agreed with him. I hope you're in agreement. I want you to have the wedding you desire."

"Connor, that's fine with me. I'm sure that something can be arranged as fast as we can see

the priest and have the banns announced. I only want to be with you. I'm sorry I lost my temper tonight."

Connor shushed her before she could continue, by claiming her lips with his. When he finally pulled away, it was late. "Ellen, we best get you back. Tomorrow will be busy with arrival at Boston. I do expect ye to bring me two notes tomorrow at breakfast. A thank you and apology to the Captain, and an apology to Mrs. Thompson." Connor put his hand over her mouth before she could say anything. "I don't care if you mean them or not, but I want them to sound sincere."

Ellen didn't want to do it, but nodded quietly. "Yes, Connor, I'll do it."

Connor walked arm in arm with her back to her cabin and pulled her into a passionate kiss. "Good night my love, see you tomorrow."

## Chapter Fifteen

Connor woke the next morning to the sounds of seamen scurrying about and orders being barked. He rose, dressed quickly, and packed his remaining clothing and personal items in his trunk. He locked it and put the key in his pocket. He was about to leave the cabin when there was a knock at the door. When he opened it a valet stood there. "Good morning Sir. Is your trunk ready? I will take it if it is."

"Yes, it is." Connor waited while he removed the trunk then left the cabin. It was still early but he headed for the dining room. A steward gave him a cup of coffee and he wandered out on the deck.

Mick was sitting there watching the commotion flow around him. "Good morning, Connor. This is my favorite part of the trip.....all the action the morning we dock".

Connor sat down next to Mick and watched the stewards hurrying back and forth from the cabins, collecting trunks. After a while, Mick turned to Connor. "How was last night? The Captain stopped by a bit ago and complimented you. He said he admired a man that knew how to handle his lady. He found you to be extremely intelligent and congratulated me on taking you into the bank. So tell me, what did Ellen do?"

Connor had to laugh. "She had a bit too much wine and champagne and was fairly rude to Mrs. Thompson, the Captain's guest for the evening. The lady was obnoxious all evening to Ellen, but she needs to learn to overlook it or be much more subtle."

"Connor, my boy, that will be your challenge now. I fear I was not very successful, and it will now fall to you to teach her the subtleties of proper behavior."

They didn't have an opportunity to finish their conversation before Ellen joined them. Connor rose



and greeted her. "Good morning, Ellen. Did ye sleep well?" Connor kissed her lightly on the forehead.

Ellen smiled up at him. "Yes, thank you, although I didn't get as much as I should have. I was busy writing these." She handed him two envelopes.

Connor took her arm and started toward the dining room. "Mick, we're going ahead in. We need to talk a bit before the other two arrive."

"Fine, I think I will go check on them and we will join you in a bit." Mick walked off toward the cabins.

The envelopes Ellen gave Connor were not sealed. "Did ye want me to read these?"

"Please Connor, I want to make you proud of me. If they aren't right, I will redo them. I've never written anything like this before."

Connor opened the one to the Captain first and read it. He re-folded it and placed it back in the envelope. "It's fine, Ellen." The next note he spent a little more time reading. He knew how Ellen felt and he didn't blame her for feeling that way, but it was necessary that her note seem sincere. Finally, Connor put it back in the envelope. "Ellen, I know this was extremely hard for you to do. It is fine, but I want you to personally deliver it to Mrs. Thompson."

Ellen paled at this news. "Please Connor, I can't do that! Please!"

Connor squeezed her hand. "Ellen, I think it's necessary. It will make you think twice before losing your temper in public. I'll be near by, you won't be alone."

Ellen knew from the look on his face, that it would do no good to argue with him. Tears were forming in her eyes in hot pools.

"Ellen, please don't cry. I don't want ye to feel bad. Ye need to learn this lesson, and I feel it's important that ye deliver it personally. Ye don't have to stay and visit with her. Apologize in person, deliver the note, and leave." Connor reached across the table and wiped a few stray tears away. "After

breakfast ye can deliver it and then we will forget it happened. Ye can be with me all day and explain Boston to me."

Ellen had barely regained control when Mick arrived with Nora and Maureen in tow. They were chattering excitedly. They kept the chatter up through breakfast. They didn't notice Ellen was very reserved and quiet. At the end of breakfast, their steward told them they would be docking in approximately two hours. That started them in all over again. Mick finally shushed them. "Girls, pay attention! I have something important to tell you."

Once they quieted, Mick told them the news about Connor. "You will be getting a new tutor or schooling at Connor's discretion. I'm leaving him in charge of that, but he will be working daily in the bank with me. I expect the same cooperation from you to whomever he hires as you currently show him."

This news caused an uproar again with Maureen and Nora. Connor finally interrupted them. "Girls, we'll have plenty of time to discuss this later. Does everyone have all her belongings packed? Have your trunks been picked up?"

When they all answered yes, Connor continued. "I want you two to stay with your father. Ellen and I have an errand to take care of and then we will re-join you. I don't want anyone wandering away."

"I'll make sure they stay here Connor. We'll be waiting on deck for you and Ellen to return." Mick had noticed Ellen's dejected manner and felt the errand had something to do with her behavior the night before.

Walking toward Mrs. Thompson's cabin, Ellen's legs felt like they contained lead. She found it impossible to even talk to Connor. Her emotions were on the edge and she didn't want to cry. Connor held on to her arm and didn't pressure her to talk. When they approached the entry to the cabin passageway, Connor stopped. "Ye can go on from here on your own. It's the second cabin. I'll

wait here for ye." Connor gave her arm a squeeze and gently pushed her in the right direction.

Ellen gathered her courage and putting her head up walked to the cabin and knocked on the door. A maid answered. "Yes, can I help you?"

"I would like to speak to Mrs. Thompson, please."

"Who should I be telling her is asking?" Before Ellen could answer, she could hear Mrs. Thompson yelling from within the cabin. "Bridey, who is it? Get your lazy Irish bones in here and finish this packing. You have no time for chatting."

"Tell her it is Ellen McMahon and I just need a second of her time." Ellen cringed at the tone of the woman inside.

Bridey hurried off and Ellen heard her message relayed. She clearly heard the response. "I do not have time to talk to Irish trash. Tell her I want nothing to do with her."

"The missus said..." Bridey with a scarlet face started to repeat the message. Ellen shushed her. "It's all right Bridey, I heard. It is not your fault. Please give this to her. If you ever would like to seek other employment, please come see me."

Ellen turned and left as fast as she could. Her tears wouldn't stay back this time. She was crying so hard she almost ran into Connor without seeing him. He caught her and hugged her to him. He pulled her into a nook and held her. "Ellen, what happened?"

Ellen was still sobbing but managed to choke out the story between sobs. Connor stiffened when he heard the whole story. He held Ellen tight until she finally quieted. "Ellen, I'm sorry ye had that happen. I didn't think she would be cruel. Ye never have to have another thing to do with her. I don't care what position she may hold in society. Ye are a far better person than she. Now, try and not let anyone see that she has upset ye so. We'll have a wonderful day together for my first day in Boston, and

freedom." Connor pulled her to him and kissed her passionately. He didn't care if anyone saw or not.

"I'm so sorry Connor, I tried. I wanted you to be proud of me." Ellen was sniffing again against his chest.

Connor held her at arms length, "Ellen, I am very proud of ye. Ye are not responsible for the ignorant behavior of people such as Mrs. Thompson. One day she will be sorry. Now chin up and let's find the rest of the family." Connor took her arm and smiled down at her. Ellen wiped away the last of her tears and smiled back.

Nora was racing back and forth from the rail excitedly when they rejoined Mick and the girls. "Ellen, Connor, come look, you can see Boston!"

Connor and Ellen leaned on the rail, "Oh Connor, look there it is! I can see the buildings from here. See that spire? That's Old North Church. And there that's Faneuil Hall. Oh, it's so good to be home." Ellen squeezed Connor's arm. "I am so happy you are here with me. You're going to love it here, I know."

"I'm sure I will love it. I'll love anywhere ye are Ellen." Connor squeezed her hand back. The excitement of the girls was beginning to infect Connor as well. He had never dreamed he would be here, and just two days ago, it had seemed like it couldn't possibly happen.

Mick sat and watched them all at the railing. He wished he was young again and carefree and could enjoy this as they were. Connor left the girls at the rail and sat down next to Mick. "Is it always this exciting, every time you come home?"

"Yes, I never tire of it. In many ways, I'm sorry to return, but happy just the same. It's the start of a new life for both of us Connor. I would love to give you several months to rest and learn your way around, but I fear we will not have that much time."

"Mick, I don't need time to rest. I'm anxious to start learning and begin in my new life. I don't want

ye to worry about anything. I'm here now to help ye. Together we will do it."

Before either man could say anything else, a loud blast of a horn drowned out any further talk. When they could talk again, Mick explained they were approaching the docking area. Connor and Mick both joined the girls at the rail. The breeze had the scent of city, not just sea any longer. Seagulls circled overhead, noisily announcing their arrival. Connor loved the feel of the wind against his face. He enjoyed it for as long as he could. He didn't know when he might be at sea again.

Connor was amazed at the size of the wharf where they were docking. It was ten times larger than the one he had left from in Ireland. There were many buildings right on the wharf. The closer they got, the clearer the scene was. There were hundreds of people milling about, either dockworkers getting ready for their arrival, or people awaiting the arrival of friends and family on board.

The next hour was a babble of voices and commands shouted as they maneuvered into the dock. Connor took it all in silently. This was his new home and he wanted to absorb every bit of it. Ellen noticed the concentrated look on his face and squeezed his hand. "It is breathtaking isn't it?"

"Yes Ellen, it really is. I doubt I will ever forget this day. Especially since you are here to share it with me."

The two stood at the rail and watched as the ship finally was berthed and the gangplanks lowered. Connor didn't know how they would disembark. "Do we get off now? Is there an order to this?"

Ellen giggled. "Yes, be patient. They will unload the baggage first and then the lower decks. We will be the last to get off. It is not so crowded and rushed on the wharf by then. James and a servant will be here with the carriage and wagon to take the trunks home and us. You of course will be a total

surprise to everyone. I can't wait for you to meet everyone."

Connor was nervous but Ellen's enthusiasm was catching. It would be a totally different life than the one he had left, but having Ellen to share it would make it wonderful. He could hardly wait now to get off the ship and start living it.

"Connor, let's walk down the deck a bit. We'll have a better view of the wharf." Ellen tugged on his arm.

"Mick, we'll be back and meet ye here." Connor was being towed along behind Ellen

When they finally stopped, they had a wonderful view of the wharf and could watch the baggage being unloaded. Ellen leaned over to Connor. "The next will be the people from the lower decks. There will be a lot of poor people from Ireland again I'm sure. They'll have such a hard time here. I would love to be able to help them somehow, but there are so many of them and we can only hire so many at home. Papa does try and hire as many as he can at the bank though."

Connor waited to see how many would get off. He knew that if it weren't for Mick, he would himself be starting life over the hard way. Both of them were engrossed in watching the tumult below on the wharf. The sudden noise behind them startled both of them. Connor turned in time to see the Lieutenant and his men removing both Harrisons from the cabin. Before he could get Ellen out of sight, they were next to them.

"You better watch your back, you Irish scum. You'll be sorry you ever interfered with my family or me. I hope the dirty Irish bitch is worth it. Her father will be sorry as well. I'll see you all in ruins." Henry Harrison, Jr. spat at Connor as he was dragged by. His son was trying to wrest free of the arms holding him, but couldn't. The lieutenant angrily jerked the elder Harrison past them, before Connor could get his hands on him.

"Pardon me, Sir, Miss. I am sorry this happened. They will be off the ship shortly." The group moved toward the stairway.

Ellen was standing there white faced as they passed. Connor put his arm around her and held her close to him. "It will be all right. Don't let his threats bother ye. Your father and I will take care of him."

"Connor, why are people so nasty? Henry used to pretend he liked me. I see now he only wanted me for my father's money. He always hated us." Ellen had tears forming once again.

"Sshhh Ellen. Don't cry. Ye are having a bad day, but I promise they will never harm ye or anyone in our family." Connor hugged her to him tightly. "Let's go back and find Mick and the girls." He took her arm and led her away.

Mick could see right away that Ellen was upset. She was still pale and had tear stained cheeks. "What happened?" He looked to Connor to answer.

"We had a bit of a run in with the Harrisons. The elder Harrison strongly voiced his feelings about recent events as he was being taken off the ship. I think we need to watch him and his son in the future."

"Yes Connor, you're right. But when I'm finished with them, they will wish they'd never heard my name." Mick walked over and put an arm around Ellen. "It'll be fine little one, don't worry." Mick hugged her to him.

Nora and Maureen were still at the rail watching the activity below. Both suddenly gave a shout. "Papa, Ellen, Connor! Come see."

They all ran to the rail and looked to where the girls were pointing. There was a commotion on the wharf. The Harrisons had been released on the wharf and Henry III had turned and punched the lieutenant in the face. There was a full-blown battle now going on. There was nothing that the dockworkers loved better than a fight. Before long though, it was over. The police had been called and

several were being hauled off in the paddy wagon. The Harrisons however were escorted to a carriage and removed from the scene. The lieutenant and his men returned to the ship. Connor was puzzled. "Mick, why were the Harrisons treated differently than the others? After all, Henry did start the brawl."

Mick shook his head. "Ah Connor, that is something you will soon learn. The police are partial to the upper class. They will be fined and let go. The dockworkers are poor Irish, though. They'll be held in jail and most likely lose a day or two's wage, if not their jobs. There's nothing fair about the justice system here at times."

Connor was stunned. "It seems not much better than the treatment at the hands of the English. I was hoping it would be a fairer system I would find here."

"Some day, it will be. But we will have to work toward that day. Rights are guaranteed, but you have to fight for them at times. The Irish are a plucky lot though, as you know. We'll overcome it in time." Mick smiled at Connor.

"It appears they're unloading some of our fellow countrymen now. Come see, Connor." Mick was pointing to the gangplank, where groups of people were carrying satchels and cases, which most likely held all their earthly possessions. Connor watched closely to see if there was anyone he knew. He soon realized that from this distance it was almost impossible to tell. They did look battered, though. "Mick, they look like they've had a rough journey."

"Yes, they most likely did with the storm. The Captain here tries to be fair. He gives them as decent a place to berth as he can for their money. Only a few died on this trip."

Connor turned sharply and looked at Mick. "What do you mean only a few?"

"Some Captains and ships are not as kindly to the poor Irish as this Captain. Those ships barely feed them, and they're afforded no comforts. All are



wedged together below decks in small spaces. Sometimes only half those who left make it alive. We call them 'Coffin Ships'. We are very fortunate Connor, very fortunate indeed." Mick watched the poor look around, befuddled, deciding where to go. Some had a family member meet them, but most just ambled off toward the city.

Before Connor had time to assimilate all of this, a steward approached them. "It's time to go ashore, Sirs. Are you ready? Do you need any help?"

Mick thanked him. "No, we're fine. Come girls, time to show Connor his new home."

## Chapter Sixteen

The sounds on the wharf as they disembarked were far louder than they had seemed from the ship. Connor turned and took one last look. He wanted to remember the vessel that had carried him to freedom and changed his life. He vowed then and there that he would never allow anyone in his family to be persecuted again.

Ellen saw the determined look on his face. "Connor, is there something wrong?"

"No, Ellen, I was just taking one last look. Everything is fine." He squeezed her arm reassuringly.

They all followed Mick as he threaded his way through the crowds. There was a lot of confusion with the new immigrants, people yelling and pulling at them to get their attention.

"Mick, what is going on here? Why are they all screaming at these people?" Connor looked around in confusion.

"They're called runners. They work for the tenement landlords and try and get them to come there. Most of them are thieves and take advantage of them every chance they get. They will learn, they need to find someplace to stay and it's a start." Before Mick could say more, they arrived at a fine carriage and wagon.

"Ah James, it's so nice to see you again." Mick greeted the man standing next to the carriage. "James, this is Connor Boland. He is engaged to Ellen. He will be living with us and working with me in the bank."

James offered his hand to Connor. "Welcome to Boston. It's nice to meet you, Sir. This is pleasant and surprising news, I'm sure the rest of the staff will be surprised as well."

"Thank ye James. It's good to meet ye, and be here."

The trunks had arrived and were already loaded on the wagon. They were only waiting for them to

get into the carriage and they would be off. James held open the carriage door for the girls and helped them in. Mick motioned for Connor to join them. "I'll sit up top with James. It'll give me time to catch up on the news from here."

The girls pointed out one thing after another to Connor all the way back to the house. It was truly an amazing city. Connor wondered if he would ever really learn his way about. It was far bigger than the small village he was used to.

He noticed that they passed through some areas that were smelly and crowded with people. Nora pointed them out. "This is a really poor area. Almost everyone here is Irish right off the boats. Papa says we are very fortunate that we don't live here."

Connor had to agree with her. The conditions appeared far worse than they were in some of the cities in Ireland. Times were bad there, but had begun to improve.

The English landlords had taken away the land from many people. Connor's grandfather had saved the life of the heir of an important English lord and been granted full ownership of his land. It was the only reason they hadn't lost it. When the famine hit, they were able to survive on fish and the few animals they had. They were far more fortunate than some of their neighbors. It was for that reason that Connor's father had rebelled, and later Connor had followed in his footsteps.

His reverie was broken when Maureen called out excitedly, "Oh Connor, look over there on the corner. That is Papa's bank. That's where you will be working."

Connor looked around and realized that they were in the business area of town. "It's a large bank, isn't it?" Connor was impressed with the size of the building.

Ellen laughed. "It's the largest one in Boston, and maybe on the East Coast, other than New York."

Within minutes, they were in a secluded neighborhood of large mansions. They took Connor's breath away. He had never seen such grand houses before. His family's cottage would fit in one corner of them. As he was wondering who lived in such large homes, they pulled into a drive and up to the front door of one of the larger ones. James stopped the carriage at the door and jumped down. The door was opened and the girls were helped out. Connor got out and lifted Ellen down. Mick joined them and smiled at the bewildered look on Connor's face.

"I told you it was large enough for everyone. I hope you like it, as it will be yours one day." Mick spoke low enough that the girls couldn't hear. They were excited to be home and were scurrying up the steps. A woman in a white apron stood at the door and hugged them all as they came in. "Oh, it's so good to have you home again! I have missed all of you. Who is this handsome young man you brought with you?"

Connor blushed at her words. Ellen grabbed his arm. "Nancy, this is Connor Boland. He and I are going to be married! He will be working with Papa, too!"

Ellen turned to Connor, "This is Nancy, and she's our housekeeper. She makes sure we have everything we need."

"It's nice to meet you. I hope I won't make more work for you." Connor bowed to her.

"Oh, don't you worry none about that. These girls keep us all busy. You couldn't be any more work than they are. Now everyone come in and get settled. Lunch will be served in an hour." Nancy ushered them all in.

"Come with me, Connor. I'll show you what rooms are yours. I instructed James to have your trunk brought there. The books and teaching supplies will be put in the classroom." Mick motioned for Connor to follow him up the broad mahogany staircase.

"I'll let Ellen give you the grand tour after lunch. This is the girls' area." Mick pointed to the rooms on either side of the hallway. He continued on down the hall and opened a door at the other end. Another area as large as the one they had just left lay behind the door. There were five doors off this hall. Mick opened the first one on the right side. "This will be yours. The room next to it is your study or sitting room. There's also an office on the first floor for you."

Connor looked around the room astonished. It was the largest bedroom he had ever seen. A huge four-poster bed of polished cherry with a canopy took up little of the room. There were several bureaux, and chests of cherry that matched the bed. A large mirror hung over one of the chests. A leather chair and ottoman completed the furniture. Thick heavy drapes hung at the two large windows. "Mick, this is way more room than I will ever need! I'm not used to such luxury."

"You'll get used to it." Mick opened a door that led to another room. "This is your study."

The room was only a bit smaller than the bedroom. A desk and chairs made of cherry were against the wall between two windows. Upholstered easy chairs and a couch were near the opposite bookcase-lined wall. Some books were there, but it was mostly bare. Mick walked back into the bedroom and opened another door. "This is your bath and dressing area."

Connor was speechless. This room was large also. His trunk had been placed on the floor. "Mick this is wonderful. I don't know what to say. I'll get busy unpacking before lunch."

"Nonsense! James will see to that. My room is across the hall. Knock when you're ready for lunch and we'll go down together."

Mick had barely left when there was a knock on the door. James entered with another man. "Mr. Boland, Sir, this is Daniel. He will be your valet. If he gives you any trouble just let me know and I'll

box his ears good for him." Daniel looked to be about the same age as Connor.

"Thank you James, but I don't think I really need a valet. I can take care of myself." Connor was more bewildered than before.

"Mr. Mick insists, Sir. Daniel is a good lad and will be fine." James turned to Daniel, "Now you get Mr. Boland settled. I've arranged for the tailor to be here at 2:00 p.m."

Connor didn't know what he was supposed to do. Daniel took over quickly. "Thank ye for allowing me this chance. Mr. McMahon is a great man and generous employer, but this is a wonderful chance for me to save more to send for my family. It pays much more than kitchen work."

"Where are ye from, Daniel? How long have ye been here?"

"I'm from the West, Sir, County Mayo. I have been here for most of a year. I left my mother, a brother, and a sister behind. My father and 5 other siblings died from the famine. I've been able to send them money since I've been employed here."

Connor knew many families like Daniel's. "I'm sure things will be fine. I'm not use to being waited on, though. It'll take me some time to get used to it. What's this about a tailor?"

"Mr. McMahon ordered one here to make some suits and clothing for you. He wants them finished as soon as next week. You'll need business clothes for the bank. Now you go to lunch and I'll unpack and settle you." Daniel began unpacking the trunk.

Connor walked across the hall and knocked on Mick's door. "Come in, Connor!" Mick bellowed from inside. Connor opened the door and walked in. Mick's rooms were even larger than Connor's. All the doors were open and James was directing a servant with the unpacking.

Mick and Connor left them and went back downstairs. Mick guided them into the dining room. The girls were there and seated, waiting for them to arrive. As soon as Mick sat down, the servants

began serving. The lunch was delicious. Connor didn't realize he'd been so hungry. The day was still young, but it had been a busy and eventful one.

The girls were all excited at being home and talking of friends to see and things to do. It was something subtle, but Connor could notice a change in their attitude. His suspicions were confirmed in the next few minutes.

A servant was removing Maureen's plate and dropped a bit of sauce on Maureen's hand. "How dare you! Don't you know how to serve? I put up with sloppy service on the ship but I don't have to here. I will see to it that you are kept in the kitchens until you learn."

Maureen dabbed at her hand. "NANCY! Come here."

Nancy came in from the kitchen. "Yes dear, what's wrong?"

"This stupid girl spilled on me. Make sure she doesn't serve here again."

Before Nancy could reply, Connor spoke up. "Maureen, that is quite enough! I want you to apologize immediately and then you may be excused from the table and go to your room. We will have a talk about manners later."

Maureen sat and stared at Connor dumbfounded. Everyone in the room was tense with anticipation, waiting to see what would happen.

"Maureen! I am waiting." Connor leveled a hard stare at her.

Maureen blushed beet red. "I'm sorry." She rose to leave.

Before she could leave, Connor stopped her. "That is not a proper apology. Tell her you're sorry you were rude and will not be in the future."

Maureen stumbled through the required apology and ran from the room.

Connor nodded to the girl and Nancy. "You may continue your duties." Immediately the girl cleared other plates and left the room.

Everyone at the table was silent waiting to see what Connor would say or do, even Mick. "Mick, do you allow this kind of behavior?"

"Connor, I've not witnessed this before, but sadly I'm not here for meals many times. I don't condone treating employees that way." Mick shook his head sadly.

"I don't want to ever hear anyone speak to a person like that again. I will not tolerate rude, ignorant behavior. Does anyone have anything to say?" Connor looked from Ellen to Nora. Both had their heads lowered and nodded in agreement.

"You may both be excused. Ellen, I'll meet you in half an hour after my discussion with Maureen." Connor rose from the table and left the room.

Both girls looked at their father. "You heard what he said. I am also shocked at Maureen's outburst. I hope that this is an isolated incident and will never be repeated or you will answer to Connor and myself. Now go, on your way."

Nora and Ellen quickly left the table. Nora hurried to her room and Ellen waited in the sitting room for Connor.

Maureen was sitting in a chair pouting when Connor knocked on her door and entered. He could hear maids unpacking for her in the other room.

"Maureen, what do you have to say for yourself?" Connor pulled the dressing table stool close to her chair.

"Connor, it was just a servant, no one important! They're expected to be able to perform their duties. That's what they're paid for. She was sloppy." Maureen had a decidedly haughty tone.

"You're wrong Maureen. No one deserves to be treated that way. What happened was an accident. I won't tolerate that kind of abuse of another person. I want you to personally apologize to her and Nancy again. This time I expect you to mean it, and not have to be prompted."

Maureen tossed her head. "No, I don't have to. I'm above that. I do not work in the kitchen, and



they are here to serve me. I won't lower myself to apologize."

Connor could not believe what he heard. "You will apologize. It is not lowering to do so. The only thing that is going to be lowered here, are your underthings, for a good spanking."

Before Maureen could protest, she was pulled over Connor's knee, her dress and petticoats flipped up, and her bloomers lowered. He raised his hand and brought it down again and again on her bottom until it was bright red. Maureen was howling and sobbing.

"Are you ready to apologize now?" Connor emphasized each word with a hard slap.

"Ouch! Yes, I'm sorry, please stop, I will apologize." Maureen was sobbing. Connor pulled her bloomers up and helped her sit up. "I want you to do so immediately, and then return here till dinner time.

Maureen wiped her eyes, "Yes Sir, I will. I'm sorry Connor."

"You're forgiven. Manners will be high on my list of subjects that will be taught." Connor hugged her to him.

Maureen scurried from the room and as Connor was leaving, he caught sight of two young girls with wide eyes looking at him from the doorway. He nodded at them and left, chuckling. He doubted they had ever heard the sounds of a spanking in this house before. News would travel through the servants fast.

Ellen saw Maureen run down the stairs rubbing her bottom. She could guess at the outcome of Connor's conversation with her. They had all been guilty of treating the servants badly at times. Papa was never around much, and nothing had ever been said. At their friends' homes, it was commonplace to treat them as such. *I guess we shall have to learn a new way*, Ellen thought to herself as she waited for Connor.

She didn't have to wait long. Connor came down the stairs a minute after Maureen. He sat down next to Ellen. "Before you show me around, I want to ask you something. Was the way that Maureen behaved at lunch a normal occurrence? Are you all in the habit of treating the servants that way?"

Ellen blushed and couldn't look at Connor. "I'm sorry to say, that we've all been less than nice at times. Our friends all treat their servants that way, and Papa has never said anything."

"Ellen, from now on, I never want to hear of a servant being abused in this house by anyone, or of any abuse of any servant anywhere. I will not tolerate that. Do you understand?" Connor waited for her reply.

"Yes, Connor, I understand." Ellen still would not look at Connor.

Connor tilted her chin up to look at him. "Ye know what will happen if ye do, don't ye?"

"Yes, Connor, I do. I promise I won't treat anyone badly." Tears were forming in Ellen's eyes.

Connor hugged her to him. "Good, then let's have our tour as I have an appointment with a tailor shortly. Would ye like to help pick out some appropriate materials with me?"

"Oh yes, that would be fun!" Ellen visibly brightened. "Come, let me show you the house and grounds."

The house was even larger than Connor had imagined. It took almost an hour for Ellen to show him through it. He did have a sense now of where everything was, and could safely negotiate his way around. The first floor had a sitting room and a formal parlor. The dining room he had seen. There was a day room for the ladies, a library, and sunroom. Mick's office was at the far end of the house and his office was next door. A conservatory was at the end and could be opened to the gardens when weather permitted. Ellen paused at the door to his office. "This used to be my mother's household office. No one has used it until now. I can

remember sitting in here with her while she prepared menus and planned parties, and met with the servants."

"You can sit in here with me at times if ye wish."

Connor opened the door and drew her inside. He closed the door and pulled her to him and kissed her. "I love ye, and can hardly wait till we are wed. I hope ye don't mind that we are rushing it."

"No Connor, I am wanting to be married fast as well. I will love being your wife." Ellen snuggled against his chest.

After several more kisses they continued the tour. Ellen took him into the kitchen. The servants all were bustling around and quite pleased when he greeted them so kindly. The girl that had been serving lunch was there as well.

"Did Miss Maureen come and apologize properly to ye?" Connor stopped in front of her.

"Yes Sir, she did. I want to thank you for saving me job." She had tears in her eyes.

"You're quite welcome, and your job is not in jeopardy for innocent mistakes. I think you all will find some pleasant changes coming." Connor looked around the room and at Ellen. "Right Ellen?"

Ellen blushed scarlet. "Yes Connor, you are right."

The tour ended with a quick visit to the gardens. The beds had all been stripped and turned over for the winter. "This is beautiful, Ellen. You and your sisters are indeed privileged to live in these wondrous surroundings. But now it's time to meet the tailor." Connor took her arm and led her to his suite.

## Chapter Seventeen

Daniel was waiting for Connor with the tailor. Ellen sat quietly on the settee looking through various samples of materials for shirts and suits. As the tailor finished his measurements, Ellen handed several samples to Connor.

"How do you like these? I think they would make up nicely."

Daniel took the samples and he and Connor and the tailor studied them. After a bit of discussion and some changes, the selections were made and the order placed. Connor was a bit shocked at the quantities that Daniel gave the tailor. "Are ye sure that Mr. McMahon specified those quantities?"

"Yes Sir. That will be a start to building you a respectable wardrobe. A formal suit is also ordered for your wedding and other occasions as they arise." Daniel left with the tailor.

Most of the afternoon was gone and Connor noticed Ellen yawning. "I think ye should rest till dinner. I have some things to discuss with your father, and will see ye then." Connor hugged and kissed her and sent her on her way.

Ellen went back to her room and rested for a bit. She then decided to go in search of her sisters. She was anxious to talk to Maureen and tell them both what Connor had said. Nora was nowhere to be found, but Maureen was in her room.

"Come in!" Maureen responded to Ellen's knock.

Ellen could tell that she had been crying. Her eyes were still red and swollen. "What happened with Connor?"

"He scolded me and spanked me. Then he made me apologize again to the servants. I was mortified. I know the girls unpacking heard the spanking too. I'll never be able to face anyone again." Maureen was near tears again.

Ellen sat on the bed and hugged her. "Don't be ashamed. We're going to have to learn how to act a bit differently now. Papa told Nora and I that he

wouldn't tolerate any more behavior like that either. Connor just has our best interests at heart. He loves all of us you know."

Maureen wiped her eyes. "I hope so. I wrote him an apology."

"Come, let's go for a walk. That will make you feel better." Ellen stood up and waited for Maureen.

"I can't. I'm to stay here until dinner. You go ahead. I'm going to rest."

Ellen hugged Maureen and went downstairs. She decided to sit in the conservatory for a while. The flowers were beautiful. It was as if it were still summer instead of late November. Winters were never too harsh and then spring would be here with all the beautiful flowers and trees that filled the air with the most wonderful smells. It was the perfect time for picnics and long carriage rides. Connor would love the season, she was sure. They would be married and have happy times together. Ellen sat in thought for a bit until Nora's voice jarred her back to the present.

"Yes she is! I told you my sister is getting married to Connor Boland. She isn't interested in your rotten brother at all." Nora's voice was angry.

"Then she is no better than any of the other Irish scum that live in the slums. He couldn't be a gentleman, if he was your tutor. She must have made a baby with him and that's why your father is letting him marry her." Ellen recognized the voice as Jane Marshall's. She lived down the street and her brother had been one of Ellen's suitors even though she was not at all interested in him. She decided she'd best go set things straight.

Before she could reach them, there was a sound of a loud slap and screeching. By the time she turned the corner and found them, the two girls were rolling on the floor punching and slapping each other. "STOP THAT!" Ellen shouted at both girls and tried to pry them apart. All she succeeded in doing was being pummeled by one or the other. She was trying once more to pry them apart when a pair of

strong arms lifted her out of the way and grabbed both girls.

Ellen looked at one very angry Connor. Her father was right behind him. "What is going on here? Is this anyway for two young ladies to behave?" Connor had both of them by the arm.

Nora started talking fast telling Connor all the nasty things that Jane had said. Connor released them and turned to Jane. "I think it is time for you to leave. Nastiness is not allowed here. When you wish to apologize you will be welcome here." Jane turned and fled out the door to the gardens. Turning to Nora, Connor leveled her with a hard stare. "I know your intentions were good, but fighting is not the way to solve problems. Go to your room and get cleaned up and stay there till dinner." Connor hugged her and sent her on her way.

Mick was holding Ellen at arm's length looking her over. "Are you all right? You look like you took a bit of a bruising there." After Nora left, Connor joined Mick and Ellen.

"Are you okay, Ellen?"

I'm fine. Just got caught in a bit of their scuffle trying to separate them. Jane was saying some awful things, and Nora was only trying to stick up for me." Ellen brushed off her skirt and tried to right her blouse. "Oh dear, it appears I've torn the blouse."

"Go fix yourself up and rest, when I am finished with your father I will send for you and we can sit here a bit." Connor kissed her on the forehead and watched her leave.

Mick shook his head sadly. " I guess there will be a bit of talk, but it is unavoidable. I do hope that my daughters aren't hurt by it."

"Don't worry Mick, time will prove the talk wrong. We are stronger than any talk. Let's finish our discussions and have a nice first evening at home." Connor and Mick walked back into the house and Mick's office.

Once they were seated again, Connor resumed the conversation where they left when the disturbance took their attention. "I would like to go with you to the doctor tomorrow. Have you contacted him for an appointment?"

"Yes, James sent a messenger. I'll see him at 10:00 a.m. tomorrow. I expect that it will take a few hours. We can have lunch afterward and tour the bank. I've decided that since there are only a few days left in the workweek, we can start fresh on Monday. You need to see what arrangements can be made for the girls. I fear they can not be left on their own without reverting to their old ways."

"Aye, I agree. I shall make inquiries yet this afternoon. I've been thinking that a good school with the nuns would benefit Nora. I think Maureen is a bit too old for that, and Ellen is definitely not eligible for that type of schooling. A good tutor would be more appropriate for them. Do ye suppose Daniel or someone could direct me to the local parish church? I could speak to the pastor and make arrangements for the wedding, also." Connor waited for Mick's answer.

"I'll take you myself. I tried to enroll them once before, but they staunchly refused. I had not the heart or patience to force them. But perhaps Nora will be more amenable. I would like to make sure the priest knows the wedding is with my blessing." Mick rose and grabbed his coat. "I'll arrange the carriage and we can go now."

Mick called to a servant and ordered the carriage brought round. Shortly, Mick and Connor were in the carriage and traveling the few blocks to the church. Connor was impressed with the size and beauty of the church. It far outshone the simple church in his village at home. "This is a beautiful church Mick. It looks like a cathedral."

"It was built with the many donations and hard work of our early ancestors. Catholics are still not looked upon too favorably, but we do have a wonderful place to worship. Father O'Malley can be

a bit crusty, but runs a good parish. The good sisters who run the school are a wondrous lot, too. Strict they are, but their pupils are educated and disciplined fairly. I was educated there myself." Mick was proudly pointing to the adjacent building that was the school. "Of course, girls are kept separated from the boys."

The carriage stopped in front of a good size stone house. Mick and Connor stepped out and Mick pulled on the bell. Shortly, a nun opened the door. "Good day to you, Sirs. May I help you?"

"Yes Sister, I would like to see Father O'Malley, if he is available." Mick handed her his card.

"Oh yes, Mr. McMahon, please come in. I will tell the good Father you are here." She scurried off with Mick's card.

Mick chuckled and nudged Connor in the ribs. "I am one of the biggest contributors. Father O'Malley will make sure he sees me."

They didn't wait long before a short very Irish looking priest hurried down the hall to greet them. "Mick, I am glad to see you back. When did you return?"

"Just today, Father. This is Connor Boland. He returned with us. He and Ellen are engaged and we need to make arrangements for the wedding and discuss a few other items with you."

"Certainly. Follow me, and we can discuss them in my office." Father O'Malley shook Connor's hand and led them to a spacious office. He called for the Sister that had answered the door. "Sister Mary, would you please bring us some tea?"

Father O'Malley took his seat behind the desk and motioned for Mick and Connor to be seated in front. He rummaged in his desk for some papers. "Now when would this wedding be taking place?"

Mick cleared his throat. "I would like it to take place as soon as possible. Say in the next 2 months."

Father O'Malley looked up quizzically at Connor and Mick. "Is there a reason we need to rush this?"



It is not customary to have a wedding on such short notice, especially when there obviously has not been a lengthy engagement."

"Father, it is true that there has not been a long engagement. It is my wish that they be married quickly, due to some health problems of mine. They have been circumspect and there is no reason other than my wishes to have the marriage soon. Connor will be succeeding me in the bank, and since my time on earth is most likely severely limited I want this to happen soon." Mick sat back and eyed the priest.

"I see. Then you don't feel your course of treatments have helped you any?" Father O'Malley seemed concerned.

"No, I do not and will find out more tomorrow. Now what about the wedding?" Mick wanted to get back to the subject he came for.

Father turned to Connor. "Are you a good practicing Catholic lad?"

"Yes Father. I was educated by the priests in the seminary until I was 17. I had no vocation and needed to assume responsibility for my family as my father had been killed." Connor decided he didn't really like the tone of the priest.

Father O'Malley asked a few other questions and filled out a form. "I would like to see you and Ellen for a meeting before the wedding. It is customary to assure that you are both entering this willingly. We can have the wedding on January 15, if that is convenient for you."

Mick and Connor agreed. Mick cleared his throat. "Now Father, there is another matter we wish to discuss. Connor has been tutoring the girls on the trip over. Since he will be responsible for them once I am gone, it is his desire that Nora be placed in school here."

Father O'Malley nodded and looked at Connor. "Do you have any idea what level she is at? I know she has had little formal education."

"I can discuss that with the principal of the school. She is a very bright and eager student and I think she will learn quickly. I would like her to start as soon as possible. When would it be possible to speak to the Sister in charge?"

"School has started for the year of course. Sister Mary Immaculata would have to talk to you about mid term enrollment. She is of course at the school now and would most likely be able to meet with you. Is there anything else I can help you with?" Father O'Malley looked between the two men.

"Thank you Father. That will be all." Connor rose and shook his hand and he and Mick left to talk to the principal.

"Mick, I don't think I liked the tone of Father O'Malley. I felt he was looking down his nose a bit." Connor was showing a bit of temper as they walked toward the school.

"Connor, just be patient. I told you he was crusty. He is a good man, and has the welfare of his parishioners at heart. But he is prone to worldly thoughts as others will most likely be. As you said, time will prove them wrong. Now let's see how receptive the good Sister is." Mick opened the door to the school and the men entered.

They could hear the hushed tones from the various classrooms. It seemed that order was indeed maintained here. They found the principal's office and knocked on the door. When bid 'Enter' the men opened the door and announced themselves. Sister remembered Mick from the other time he tried to enroll the girls in her school. "Good afternoon, Mr. McMahon. What may I help you with today?"

"Good afternoon, Sister, this is Connor Boland. He is engaged to Ellen and will be working with me in the bank. He is also assuming guardianship of Maureen and Nora. I fear that a physical problem will shorten my time on this earth soon. He has spent time tutoring all the girls on the trip over

from Ireland. It is his wish that Nora be enrolled for classes here."

"I am sorry to hear of your illness, Mr. McMahon. Mr. Boland, are you aware that the McMahon sisters collectively refused enrollment several years ago? I am not sure Nora will be able to accept the classroom environment and discipline."

Connor smiled at the elderly nun. "I assure ye she will have no problem in the classroom, and has become accustomed to discipline. She's a very bright student and should be ready to handle classes at her age level."

"It is almost mid-term and not usual to accept a beginning student at this time. However, since you have been tutoring her, where do you feel she is in terms of her studies?"

Connor and the nun discussed the courses he had worked with her on and how fast her progress was.

Sister Immaculata sat back in her chair and smiled at Connor. "I think based on your facts, we can accept Nora as a student. She may require some extra tutoring in some areas to catch up. You will need to fill out these forms and return them to me. There are also the uniform requirements and rules attached."

"I was also wondering Sister, if you could recommend a tutor for in-home study for Maureen and Ellen. They're too old for a formal classroom, I feel." Connor put the papers in his breast pocket.

"I will make some inquiries and see what I can find for you. I will send them along when the papers are returned. Nora should be prepared to start school in two weeks time. Uniforms should be able to be made in that time. I do not allow students who are not in uniform." Sister stood up, dismissing the two men.

On the way back to the carriage, Connor chuckled. "Mick, I like her. I certainly wouldn't want to go against her rules and have to face her,

though. I think she makes sure everyone obeys, or else."

"Yes, she is known for her disciplinary methods, but also for her fairness. I think it's just what Nora needs." Mick slapped Connor on the back. "You may have a bit of a hard time convincing her of that though."

"Convincing isn't going to be necessary. She doesn't have a choice." Connor smiled back at Mick.

The ride home was fairly quiet. Both men were caught up in their own thoughts. Connor left Mick and went to his own office. He studied the papers before him and started filling them out. Some of the information would have to be supplied by Mick. When he was finished with what he could fill out, he rang for a servant.

"Would you please ask Miss Ellen to join me?" It was the same girl from the lunchtime disaster.

"Yes sir, right away." She scurried out to find Ellen.

Ellen was resting in her room when the maid knocked on the door. "Come in."

"Miss Ellen, Mr. Connor would like you to join him in his office." She curtseyed and left.

Ellen straightened herself, fixed her hair, and went to join Connor. He stood and greeted her warmly. "I'm finished here for a bit. Let's sit in the conservatory and talk."

Arm in arm, they walked into the conservatory. The sun was almost down and the room had a rosy glow. "Ellen, your father and I visited the priest today and have made arrangements for the wedding to take place on January 15."

"Oh, that's wonderful! It's such a pretty time of year, especially if there would be a covering of snow." Ellen glowed happily as she looked up at Connor.

"We also visited Sister Immaculata at the school. I've enrolled Nora as a student there. She is recommending tutors for you and Maureen." Connor

looked at Ellen and could see her bristle. "Ellen, I don't want any resistance to this. Ye will be tutored some at home, but Nora needs the structure of a school. Ye and Maureen would have been better off for it yourselves."

"Connor, the school is awful. They beat children there!" Ellen was getting angry at the thought of Nora there. "Why can't Nora be tutored here?"

"ELLEN! I have told you why. Now please don't fight me on this. I'm asking for your support in making it easier for Nora. I do not think they beat children. I am sure they are disciplined if they misbehave, just as I would do if I were tutoring you." Connor looked at Ellen for her reaction.

"Is that final? Can you not change your mind? She will hate it, Connor. It will crush her." Ellen looked pleadingly at Connor for an answer.

"I will not let her spirit be crushed. Nor will I tolerate her being beaten or disciplined unfairly. I will take care of her, Ellen. Now let's go in and get ready for dinner. It's growing chilly here and I don't want ye taking ill." Connor stood and hugged Ellen to him. He was aware of some stiffness from her. "I do love ye, Ellen."

Ellen melted in his arms at that. "I love you, also. I will try and help with Nora."

"Thank ye. Now let's prepare for dinner." Connor took her arm and walked back to the main part of the house.

## Chapter Eighteen

"Nora, would ye come to my office for a few minutes before ye go to bed?" Connor stopped Nora as she was saying good night.

She paled when he mentioned coming to the office. "Am I in trouble for this afternoon?" Nora's voice trembled as she spoke.

"No, Nora, ye're not in trouble. I just need to speak to ye." Connor extended his hand and closed it around her small one as they walked to the office.

"Your father and I visited with Sister Immaculata at the parish school today. I have enrolled ye for classes there. As soon as your uniforms are ready ye will start classes."

Nora jumped up from her chair. "NO! Connor, I don't want to go to school there. I want to stay here and be tutored. I won't go!"

Connor was prepared for this reaction. "Nora, ye will go. I have made the decision. Ye need the discipline and routine that school will provide. Classes will be fun for ye."

Nora's face was red and fists clenched at her side. Connor almost laughed. She looked so much like Ellen at that moment. "I'll run away before I'll go to class there. You can't make me!" Nora turned and fled from the room, slamming the door after her.

The reaction and the slamming of the door surprised Connor. Nora was normally the most docile of the sisters. He decided to let her calm down and wait till morning before he approached her again.

Mick was nowhere in sight when Connor returned to the parlor. Ellen was waiting for him and looked upset. "Connor, Nora's in tears. Can't you please change your mind? She's so upset and it's breaking my heart to see her so distraught."

"I know she is, and no I won't change my mind. It's in her best interests. Everyone is tired from

today. I'll talk to her calmly tomorrow." Connor took Ellen's hand and squeezed it.

"Ellen, I promised ye I would never let anyone harm any of ye, and I won't. Now, I think it's time we retired as well. Ye can tell Nora of my promise. Perhaps it will help calm her." Connor hugged Ellen to him and kissed her before they retired to their chambers.

Ellen knocked on Nora's door and entered. Nora was still dressed, lying on her bed sobbing. She looked up when Ellen came in. "Ellen, why is Connor being so mean? I thought he cared for us." She broke down in sobs once more.

"Nora, he does care. He feels you will be better off and advance faster there. He promised me that he would never let anyone harm you. If you're treated unfairly he will take care of it." Ellen held Nora and rubbed her back as she had when she was a baby.

"I told him I would run away first. Will he punish me?" Nora was beginning to calm down.

"You know you can't run away. You would have no place to go and it would break all our hearts, including Connor's. If you listen to him calmly tomorrow, I doubt he will spank you. He is fair, Nora. Now, let's get your face washed and your nightdress on." Ellen helped Nora get ready for bed and tucked under the covers. She sat with her and sang a lullaby for her like she used to. Nora calmed down and drifted off to sleep.

Ellen softly closed Nora's door and went to her own chambers, unaware that Connor had been lurking around the corner and had heard the conversation between Ellen and Nora. His heart swelled with love and pride for Ellen. She would be a wonderful mother for their children and would back his decisions even when she disagreed.

Nora was very subdued and quiet the next morning. Connor noticed that she tried to avoid his glance. He decided to wait a while before talking to her again. Mick's doctor's appointment would come

first. As soon as she could, Nora excused herself from the table and ran upstairs. Connor could not avoid the chuckle that escaped his lips.

"Ellen, I'm going with your father this morning, but I would like ye and Maureen to study your history until after lunch. Please have Nora join ye and work on her studies as well. I will be back this afternoon," Connor stood, kissed Ellen on the cheek and left to find Mick. He hadn't come to breakfast.

Mick was dressed and in his sitting room when Connor knocked on the door. His face was extremely pale. "Are ye not feeling well this morning?"

"I've had better mornings, but we'll continue with our plans after seeing the doctor. Come, it's time for us to go." Mick slowly rose and hung on Connor's arm for a moment, until he gained his balance. The carriage was waiting and the trip to the doctor's office was short. Connor assisted Mick from the carriage and into the doctor's office. The carriage was instructed to wait, as Connor was not sure Mick would be up to walking to the bank.

Connor waited for almost an hour while the doctor examined Mick. He was getting nervous when a nurse appeared and asked him to come back to the Doctor's office. Mick was sitting talking to the Doctor when Connor arrived. His color was better and he seemed to have more strength.

"Ah Connor, this is Doctor Murphy. I would like you to hear what he has to say." Mick nodded toward the man behind the desk.

Doctor Murphy rose and shook hands with Connor. "I have heard good things about you Mr. Boland. Mick here is indeed fortunate to have you. If you will please have a seat, I will explain what Mick already knows."

Connor sat down next to Mick and looked at him. He didn't seem upset, so maybe the news wasn't as bad as he feared.

"I have been treating Mick for almost a year now for stomach ailments and pain. I felt before he left



on his trip that surgery might be necessary. I was of the opinion that there was a growth of some sort causing his problem. My examination today leaves no doubt that a growth or growths are responsible for his pain and loss of blood. However, I don't recommend surgery now. I feel this disease has spread beyond what surgery can help. I gave Mick some injections and a prescription for stronger pain pills. But all indications are that this disease will continue spreading at a fast rate." Doctor Murphy sat back and waited for Connor to absorb the news.

Connor was shocked. Even though Mick has prepared him, he was not ready to hear it.

"How long does he have Doctor?"

"With any luck he should have six to nine months, depending on the rate the disease spreads, but the end could come as soon as two months."

Mick seemed to be taking the news in his stride, but Connor was upset at how little time he had left. "Is there nothing more to be done at all?"

Doctor Murphy shook his head sadly. "I am afraid not, other than to try and keep the pain down as much as possible. It is in God's hands now."

Connor sat for a minute trying to absorb the news. Mick finally tapped his arm. "Time for us to go Connor, I still want to show you the bank and around town. Have to get you signed up for my club, too."

The carriage and driver were waiting and Connor helped Mick in. Mick knew that Connor was very upset despite his warning about the seriousness of his disease.

"Take us to the bank. You can go then and meet us back at my club at three." Mick settled back against the cushions. "I'll give you a quick overview of the bank and then show you where your office is and then we can talk. For lunch, we'll go to the club, and I'll introduce you to my friends and get you signed up. Don't frown so, Connor. It will be fine."

There wasn't much Connor could say, other than to nod. His thoughts were running deep, planning

things himself. He would have to settle the girls and learn the business much faster than he had originally thought. Unfortunately, there would be little time for a honeymoon and he greatly regretted that.

As Mick and Connor walked through the bank, all the employees greeted Mick and welcomed him back. They walked up the office area on the second floor where Mick's office was located. Mick paused in front of a desk and introduced Mick to his secretary. "Connor, I would like you to meet Mr. Matthew Sweeney. He has been my trusted secretary for the last ten years."

"It is very nice to meet ye, Mr. Sweeney." Connor shook hands with him.

"Matthew, Connor Boland is joining us as my Vice President. Would you please call the other executives and ask them to join us in my office?" Mitch opened the door next to Matthew's desk and showed Connor into a lavishly furnished office. He had never seen anything this grand in his life.

"Mick, this is grand! Ye are so fortunate to have such a wonderful life."

Mick clapped Connor on the back. "Connor, your office will be equally as grand. By the time you are ready to come to work, it will be ready for you."

"I want to talk to ye about that. I think after hearing Dr. Murphy that I should start as soon as possible. I will just have to push harder to get the girls settled. I will forego a honeymoon to be here as much as possible."

Before Connor could continue Mick raised his hand to hush him. "We will talk about this later. I'm not going to let this affect my plans or yours anymore than necessary." A knock on the door announced the arrival of the summoned executives. Mick quickly introduced Connor to all those assembled.

After a minute of general greetings, Mick asked them to take seats. "Gentlemen, I have asked you here to not only meet Mr. Boland but to announce

some changes I have decided." There was a quiet murmur through the room and curious glances toward Connor. Mick continued, "Connor is marrying Ellen in January. As my son in law, he will inherit my estate and the care of my family. He will also assume my holdings in this institution and my position." Before Mick could continue there was a shocked murmuring among those gathered. Mick stopped them before they could ask questions. "Please, let me continue before you ask questions." Clearing his throat Mick continued, "I am not planning on leaving you today, but I am planning on retiring soon. At that time, Connor will be in charge. You will find him to be of the same character and have the same methods and opinions as I do. Though he has no banking experience, he has been highly educated by the priests, and proficient in mathematics and the classical studies. The running of his family's properties in Ireland has further enhanced his knowledge of business. I ask that you cooperate and help him during his learning period. Are there any questions?"

After a moment of silence and looks exchanged among the men gathered, there were several questions directed to Mick regarding how soon he planned on retiring. Connor received some congratulations and was asked some questions regarding his learning and where he came from in Ireland. Connor sensed that there was some resentment among the higher executives present. He would have to be on his toes to take care of those problems as they arose. Mick dismissed the executives and sat down on the couch in his office. "What was your impression of the management staff?"

"My first impression without knowing the individuals better is that there are a few that are very unhappy with this news. They are the ones I'll have to watch carefully. I will develop my supporters and allies first from among those that are unsure, or actually in favor of the changes.

Isolate my enemies, and slowly turn them into allies or replace them. First, though, use all the knowledge I can gain from them. Any specific strategy will develop as I go along." Connor pulled up a chair near Mick.

"That's the best synopsis of a group I've ever heard. I knew you were a natural the first day when I saw how you handled the girls. I think there are more than a few who feel you will fall flat on your face. Could even be some traitors to Harrison. Those will be gone as soon as I weed them out. I may be a bit soft, but I don't tolerate disloyalty. Now, let's take a look at your office and head over to the club." Mick rose from the couch and actually seemed to have some of his old bounce about him.

"Mick, I need to talk to ye about your illness and our plans. I think we really need to escalate them." Connor touched Mick's arm to stop him from leaving.

"We will, I promise, but not here. When we're in private at the club. Could be too many trying to hear something here. Come, let me show you the office." Mick strode into the hall and took an old gold ring of keys from his pocket. Selecting one, he put it in the lock of the office next to his. "This was my father's office. I've never had anyone use it since his death. I've been saving it for someone, just didn't know whom. Now, I know it was you."

"Once again Mick you amaze me." Connor looked around an office that was every bit as lavish as Mick's. "I promise ye I will do everything in my power to never disappoint the trust and faith ye have placed in me."

"I know you won't. I have no doubts about that at all." Mick ushered Connor out of his office and stopped at Matthew's desk. "Connor will be starting with us in two weeks, come Monday. I want that office cleaned and stocked with supplies. Temporarily you will also work for him, till we sort that out. I'll see you tomorrow." Matthew wrote

notes down and said good day to both Connor and Mick.

"Now, my boy time for some fun ... lunch at the club. If we're lucky, maybe even Harrison will be there, and we can rub his nose in it a bit." Mick chuckled as they walked the short block to his club.

The Union Club of Boston was one of the most respected organizations of successful men in Boston. The doorman rushed to hold the door for Mick and Connor as they entered. "Good Day, Mr. McMahon. It's nice to see you back. I trust your journey was pleasant?"

"Yes, thank you. It was most pleasant and profitable." Mick handed the man a coin and ushered Connor inside.

Mick was warmly greeted by all of the members they encountered on the way to the dining room. Some Mick introduced Connor to and others he just nodded at. When they were seated, Connor looked around the room. "Mick, I do believe the Harrisons are also dining here. I don't believe they have seen us, though." Connor pointed out to Mick where they were seated.

Mick chuckled. "They will know soon enough. I intend to make life very uncomfortable for those two. I warned them not to mess with me, and I meant it." Mick motioned for the waiter and asked him to have the chief steward summoned.

Connor was perplexed. "Why are you doing that?"

"Be patient. You'll see." Mick sat back and studied his menu and Connor did likewise, wondering what Mick was up to now. He didn't have to wait long.

The Chief Steward hurried to the table. "Yes Mr. McMahon, what can I help you with?"

"I wish to see the President of the club. Is he in attendance today? I have some rather urgent business to discuss with him." Mick waited for his answer with a grim look on his face.

The Chief Steward had never seen Mick looking quite so serious and grim. "Yes, he's at present entertaining a group in the private dining room. I will let him know you wish to see him as soon as he is finished."

"Tell him I wish to see him as soon as I finish my lunch. I will wait in his office." Mick dismissed the Steward and motioned for the waiter. After their orders were placed and the waiter was out of earshot, Mick laughed. "Connor, you should see the look on your face. It's priceless! You look shocked."

"I'm a bit perplexed. I've never seen you so serious and grim. Plus I didn't know that we had urgent business here."

"Oh, but we do. The first thing is arranging for your immediate membership, and the other is having the Harrisons expelled. Once I tell my story, there should be no question about it. Plus, I have a statement from Captain Johnson to back it up, and the police report regarding the brawl on the wharf. Now sit back and enjoy yourself. You are about to learn your first lesson in American politics."

Lunch was served with a complimentary bottle of wine courtesy of the President of the club. A note was attached welcoming Mick back and assuring him he would be waiting in his office for him. Connor was very impressed. "Mick, I see I have a lot to learn from you. I hope I can master it all quickly."

"Don't fret Connor. You will ... you will." Mick poured some wine and offered a toast to Connor and their new partnership. He had no sooner placed his glass back on the table than he saw the senior Harrison headed his way. "We are about to have a visitor Connor. This should be very interesting."

It was immediately evident that Henry Harrison, Jr. had been drinking. His face was flushed and his speech a bit slurred. "Well McMahan, some nerve you have bringing that rebel trash here. Not enough that he has violated your daughter, but you flaunt

him in front of gentlemen? I will see that you are never able to set foot here again."

"You may be surprised to find who will not be setting foot in this club again, Harrison. And you well know your accusations to be false. You Sir, are no gentleman at all." Mick was angry but not about to battle there with the man. Connor on the other hand was furious. He stood up from the table, intending to escort Harrison out, but before he could say a word, was pushed back and punched by Harrison. Two waiters quickly appeared on the scene and escorted Harrison back to his table.

"Are you all right Connor?" Mick helped him up from the floor.

"I'm fine, but if I ever get my hands on him, he'll not be. He has no right to spread lies about Ellen like that."

"Sit and let's finish our lunch. We will be the victors here." Mick picked up his fork and started eating. His appetite was gone but Connor did likewise. As soon as they finished, they rose and left for the President's office. The disagreement had left a hush over the dining room and Connor was glad to be out of there.

Mick knocked on the heavy mahogany door and was bid enter. The man behind the desk stood and greeted Mick. "So glad to see you're back. I trust your trip was enjoyable and fruitful?"

"That it was. Michael Fitzpatrick, I would like you to meet Connor Boland. He returned with us and is engaged to Ellen. He is also my new partner at the Bank. He is part of the reason for our visit here today. I wish him to have immediate membership privileges. I am invoking my status as one of the founding members."

Fitzpatrick shook Connor's hand. "I am pleased to meet you Sir, and congratulations on your engagement. I see no problem with the membership at all. Allow me to serve you some port to celebrate the occasion. I will have the notices printed and distributed immediately."

Swirling the port in his glass, Mick looked at Fitzpatrick. "There is another matter I wish to discuss with you. This is not of such a happy nature." Mick proceeded to tell of the problem with the Harrisons on the ship and the accusations that were made.

"I'm shocked to hear of this. Is there more?"

"I'm afraid so." Mick showed him the letter from the Captain and related the problem just recently occurred in the dining room.

Michael Fitzpatrick was shocked. He knew Harrison was hot tempered and his son was trouble, but he'd never expected to hear anything of this sort. "I see your problem. I will definitely bring this before the board in an emergency meeting. I see no other solution but to bar him from the club. I will inform you immediately after our meeting of our decision."

Mick and Connor rose and thanked him and left for home. In the carriage, Mick chuckled all the way home. "Mr. Harrison will soon have a shock coming his way."

They had no sooner stepped out of the carriage than Ellen opened the door and ran up to them. "I am so glad to see you both! We can't find Nora anywhere."



## Chapter Nineteen

The blood drained from Connor's face when he heard what Ellen said. "What do ye mean, ye can't find Nora? Wasn't she with ye studying today?"

Mick was equally shaken. "Let's go in and discuss this. We need to hear the whole story."

After all were inside, Connor turned to Ellen. "What happened here today? Where is Maureen?"

Ellen was nervous and stammered. "She ... she's looking for Nora. I don't know what happened. I went to get Nora to come and study and I couldn't find her. No one has seen her. Maureen is out, going from house to house asking about her."

"Ellen, it's late. Where d'ye think Maureen is now? I want her back here." Connor was concerned he would have two missing sisters. Just as he finished speaking, Maureen came in, flushed.

"She's no where. I've inquired of all her friends and the neighbors, no one has seen her." Maureen stopped when she saw Connor and Mick were back.

"Maureen, sit and tell me all ye know and when ye last saw Nora." Connor motioned her to sit down.

"Connor, I last saw her at breakfast. I never saw her after that. Ellen looked for her to study and couldn't find her. We've been looking ever since."

Mick summoned the butler. "Please go and ask the police sergeant to come. Tell him my youngest daughter is missing."

The Butler hurried off to summon the sergeant. Connor went and questioned Nancy and the servants. No one had seen Nora all day. It was now late and getting dark. He went back to the others. "Ellen or Maureen, did either of ye check to see if she took anything with her? Do ye think she ran away?"

Ellen and Maureen exchanged glances. "No, Connor we didn't think of it. Would you want me to check now?" Ellen started to rise.

"Yes, I will go with ye." Connor left with Ellen. Something about this whole thing didn't seem right.

When they reached Nora's room, Connor took Ellen by the arms and turned him to face her. "Ellen, I can't believe that Nora would run away. I overheard ye talking to her last night and she seemed fine. If ye know something more about this it would be best to tell me now." Connor studied Ellen's face carefully as she answered him.

"No Connor, I don't know what happened. She was upset at breakfast." Ellen looked down immediately after she finished talking.

Connor felt more strongly than ever that something was up, but would hold back for now. "See if anything is missing."

Ellen looked through her drawers and closet. "There is a small satchel missing and some of her dresses and personal things. Her jewelry is missing, also."

Connor took Ellen's hand and headed back downstairs without saying anything. He reported to Mick. "It appears she's run away. A satchel and some of her things are missing." He turned and surveyed the other two girls. "Do ye think she did this because of school? And do ye have any idea where she would go?"

Maureen spoke up first. "Yes, she was very upset about school. She told me before breakfast that she couldn't bear the thought of it. I don't know where she would go though, unless she were to try and reach our cousins who live in Chicago."

Before anyone could say anything the butler returned with the police sergeant. Sgt. Hannon was a big burly Irishman; he was well acquainted with Mick. The McMahan's were well respected. Sitting down and flipping his pad open, he looked at Mick. "So ye have a missing lassie? How long has she been gone?"

Mick filled him in on all the particulars. "I'll put an alert out for her immediately. We'll wire the Chicago authorities to alert them. My men will watch the train station. Would she have money for

passage?" Sgt. Hannon had been making notes as he talked.

"She may have had some, and if she sold her jewelry, she would have enough, I would think." Mick was pale and drained as he answered.

Sgt. Hannon left and Mick immediately rose. "I need to rest. Connor, please have dinner sent up to me. And of course let me know immediately if there is any word. Nora will be one sorry young lady when we find her, I promise you that." Mick left and went up to his room. Connor was very concerned that this shock would be too much for him.

"Ellen, Maureen, if ye know anything about this ye haven't told me I suggest ye do so now. Ye saw your father. He is very upset and hurt over this. I personally can't believe Nora would do something so foolish and dangerous, just to get out of going to school. It won't work, anyway. She will go to school and be one sorry young lady, also." Connor looked at both girls.

"We told you what we know, Connor. We're upset, too." Maureen looked up at him. "May I be excused? I would like to wash up for dinner."

Connor excused her and sat next to Ellen. "What on earth could she be thinking of? I'm really worried about her."

"I'm sure the police will find her. Don't worry, Connor." Ellen bit her lower lip as she talked to him. "I think I, too, will go and change and rest a bit before dinner." Ellen rose and left Connor sitting there.

When she got upstairs, she hurried and changed and went to Maureen's room. "I'm worried about this. I didn't think Papa would take it so hard. He looked so old and pale."

"It'll be fine. In a few days, they will be so glad to see her that they will forget about school. Connor will be busy at the office and with the upcoming wedding; we won't have to worry about a tutor at all. As soon as everyone is in bed, we can sneak

down and get some leftovers and take them to her." Maureen was smiling.

"But what if Connor or Papa finds out? We'll all be in serious trouble. And what of Nora? What if she is punished and tells?" Ellen was definitely having second thoughts about this plan. She returned to her room, leaving Maureen happy with the way things were going.

Ellen sat down in her rocking chair and thought back on the day. Shortly after Connor and her father had left, she went to see Nora. Nora was in her room and still upset about the school issue. "Come to the classroom and we can talk about it with Maureen." Ellen took Nora by the hand and they joined Maureen.

Once they were all in the classroom, Ellen closed the door so no servants passing by would be able to hear. "Maureen, Connor has enrolled Nora in school. He is finding a tutor for us but insists that Nora attend school."

"I don't want to go and told him that, but he says it will be fine and no one will be mean to me. You know the stories we've heard, it will be awful. I don't want to go and he just doesn't understand." Nora was in tears again.

"Ellen, how can you allow him to do this? I don't even want a tutor myself. This is terrible. We must do something fast." Maureen was as upset as Nora.

"Maureen, I can't stop him from doing anything! You know that. When his mind is made up there's no changing it."

Maureen thought for a minute. "What if Nora were to 'run away'? Not really, but let them think she did. Wouldn't Papa be so upset that she was gone and that school was the reason that he would give in again? He did last time."

"I don't know. How can we fake Nora running away? Where could she hide? How long would she have to be gone? I just don't think Connor will give in." Ellen was pacing. She wanted to help but

somehow this didn't seem right. "I'm going to get us some tea. Think about it while I'm gone."

Nora and Maureen were busy chatting with their heads together when Ellen came back with a tray for them. "Have you reached any conclusions yet? I'm just not sure about this."

"Oh Ellen please listen, we have it all figured out." Nora pulled Ellen over to a chair. "I think it is perfect."

Ellen waited patiently to hear what her sisters had worked out. Maureen began talking. "Nora is going to hide in the attic. There is an old bed up there and we can take up blankets and things and a lamp. No one ever goes up there. We can take food to her so she won't be hungry and some of her things from her room. After a few days, she'll give us a note to smuggle into the mail to Papa, saying she is safe and will come home if she doesn't have to go to school. He'll be so relieved that she's all right he'll overrule Connor."

Ellen frowned a bit. "But what if Connor punishes her? He may very well."

"I can take a spanking to stay out of school. Plus Connor has always been lenient with me. It couldn't be that bad." Nora was anxious to carry out the plan. "Neither one of you will get in trouble. They'll never know where I was or that you helped me. Please, Ellen, say yes?"

"All right. Against my better judgment I'll go along with you, but if Connor ever finds out, I won't be sitting by my wedding day." Ellen hugged her sisters. "I guess we better get busy. We have to move some things out of your room and get you settled."

"I can do that while you two eat lunch. Just say I must be at friends, then after a while sneak me some food. You'll have to sneak some up tonight too after everyone is asleep." Nora was almost dancing, she was so excited.

Ellen and Maureen lunched alone. No one really asked any questions. After the maids were done in

the kitchen, they took some bread, meat, cheese, and tea and smuggled it up to Nora. They were both surprised at the neat little area she had made for herself. She had a bed with linens on it and her lamp set on an old trunk. They put her food and tea on another trunk and left her. "We really shouldn't all be gone long. They may notice. Connor and Papa will be home soon, so we will have to start looking for you." Maureen hugged Nora and she and Ellen crept back downstairs.

The attic was really on the fourth floor of the house. The third floor was servant's quarters, and the family had the first and second floors. There was little likelihood that anyone would notice any noise from the attic. Nora would be sleeping at night, and during the day, the servants were not on the third floor.

Ellen and Maureen began looking for Nora and soon had the entire staff involved. They were all getting upset since no one had seen her leave. Maureen threw on her cloak. "I'll check at her friends' homes and see if anyone has seen her." She went through the motions of going to each home before returning.

Ellen was to tell Connor and Papa as soon as they returned. She had done that and now sitting in her room was feeling this really wasn't a good idea at all.

Connor was in his room changing for dinner. Daniel was hanging up clothes and showing him some of the new shirts the tailor had already delivered. "Daniel, did ye notice anything different with the girls today?"

"I know they were in the classroom for a long time and then Miss Nora wasn't at lunch. It was shortly after that we started looking for her. I don't think it was too unusual, except that I thought when I passed by once I heard Miss Nora's voice. But I must have been mistaken. I was assigned to search the third floor and it was spooky. We were all downstairs but there were funny noises from the

attic. I think we may have vermin up there. But we found no sign of Miss Nora anywhere." Daniel continued with his duties then left.

Connor sat and pondered what he had heard. "This really does sound suspicious to me."

He decided to pay a visit to Mick before dinner. Mick was sitting in a chair drinking whiskey when Connor came in. His color looked much better. "How are ye doing Mick? I was worried about ye when we had the news of Nora."

"I'm feeling better Connor, but this is just so unlike anything Nora would do. Actually, none of them have ever done anything like this before. I doubt Nora would be able to think of this and plan on going to Chicago by herself. I don't understand it, but I have a hunch this is something the three of them are doing to get out of school and tutoring."

Connor sat and accepted a whiskey from Mick. "I agree. I haven't liked this whole thing, and Ellen especially seems very nervous about looking me in the eye. I have been talking to Daniel and have a hunch. But need ye to confirm a few things for me."

Mick downed his whiskey and poured another. "What do you need?"

"Have you ever had problems with vermin in the attic?"

"No, not in the attic, if anywhere the kitchen and pantry, sometimes the cellar. Why?"

"Daniel was in charge of searching the third floor. He said he heard funny noises in the attic, thought maybe there were vermin up there. It sounded like scratching to him. Also he thought he heard Nora's voice coming from the classroom shortly before lunch." Connor sat back and sipped his whiskey, waiting for Mick to think about what he said.

"I think we may know the location of our runaway. But we need a plan to trap the other two into revealing their knowledge of it. When we do, I am personally going to punish Maureen and Nora. I will leave Ellen to you. This is personal to me. No

daughter of mine is going to get away with this nonsense. They may as well learn first hand that things have changed. After this, they will be your responsibility. I will make that clear, also." Mick actually perked up some.

"I think this is what we should do....." Connor told him of his plan. Mick agreed and Connor left for dinner, just as Mick's tray was delivered.

Maureen and Ellen were already seated when Connor entered. "Good evening ladies." Connor sat down and looked directly at both of them. Maureen looked away and Ellen squirmed a bit in her chair. As far as he was concerned, they both had guilty consciences.

"Have you seen Papa since this afternoon?" Ellen asked in a quiet, trembling voice.

"Yes, and he's very distraught and worried about Nora. I can't believe she would do something like this over school. Both of ye are sure she said nothing of her plans to ye?"

"No Connor, I didn't see her except shortly after breakfast," Maureen kept her head down as she replied. "Ellen and I are both worried, too."

Connor reached across the table and patted both their hands. "Of course ye are. Let's eat our dinner and pray tonight that the police locate her soon."

Barely suppressing a smile, Connor started eating. Knowing fairly surely where Nora was, his appetite had returned. Conversation was kept to a minimum. It seemed that neither Ellen nor Maureen was very talkative. When dinner was over, Maureen excused herself, leaving Connor and Ellen alone.

"Come, let's sit in the parlor for a bit. I know ye must be tired, but we haven't had much time together today." Taking her arm, he led Ellen to the parlor and they sat together on the sofa.

Ellen did not want to talk about Nora any more. She was afraid she would just confess if he kept talking about it. Already she felt guilty that it was making her father ill. But she just couldn't say



anything and get them all in trouble. "How did your day go, Connor?"

Connor put his arm around her and held her close. She was slightly trembling. "Are ye cold Ellen? Ye are shaking."

"No, I'm fine. I guess just everything that's happened has me a bit shaky. But tell me what you did today." Ellen leaned her head on his shoulder.

"It was a busy day. Your father had an early appointment and then we went to the bank. He showed me around and then called the executives together and explained who I was and what would be happening. There are some who will be fine, but others whom I feel will be problems. I just have to learn which ones are which, and handle it. My office is huge. I really don't need all that room, but your father insists." Connor stopped and went and poured both of them some port.

"Here, drink some of this. It will help calm your nerves." He handed a glass to Ellen.

The port did wonders to warm Ellen up and she did stop shaking. Her conscience, however, was really bothering her. As Connor held her and talked, on more than one occasion she almost confessed. But the thought of getting the other two in trouble stopped her.

When Ellen started yawning, Connor decided it was time for bed. "Come, ye are tired and ye need rest after today." He stood up, held her tightly, and kissed her passionately.

"Hmmm, I don't feel that sleepy." Ellen reached up and kissed him again.

"But it's time for bed anyway. I'll see ye tomorrow. Remember to pray for Nora's safe return." Connor hugged and kissed her and sent her on her way.

He went to his room and summoned Daniel. "I think perhaps our runaway is hiding in the attic. If so, Ellen and Maureen are sure to sneak up there with some food. Where can I hide to catch them when they do?"

"Sir, my room is right next to the door to the attic. You're welcome to wait there if you like."

"Good, I may need your help, also." Connor rose and the two men went to Daniel's room to wait. They left the door ajar a bit, so they could hear anyone coming. It was quiet, as the rest of the household was sleeping.

Ellen waited a bit and then quietly went to Maureen's room. "Come, let's get some food for Nora. I really think Connor is suspicious. We have to be very cautious." The two girls crept quietly down the stairs into the kitchen.

After they gathered some meat, bread, cheese, fresh tea, and fruit, they bundled it in a basket and started up the back stairs to the third floor. Before they entered the floor, they quietly peeked around to see if there was anyone about. All the doors were closed and it was quiet.

Tiptoeing down the hall, they approached the door to the attic. Opening it quietly, they walked up the stairs as silently as they could. Connor and Daniel had seen them, and when they were sure they were up the stairs, crept up after them.

Nora was so glad to see Ellen and Maureen. "I was really getting hungry. It's lonesome up here all alone. Stay and visit a bit."

The three girls were sitting on the bed chatting while Nora ate. Ellen thought she heard a noise and turned and gasped.

Nora and Maureen turned also and went pale. Ellen stood nervously. "Connor! What are you doing up here?"

"Come ladies, I believe we will discuss this with your father downstairs. NOW! Daniel, would ye escort Maureen and Nora to their father's room. I will be along shortly." Connor grabbed Ellen by the arm and propping his leg on a crate flipped her easily over his knee. Lifting her skirts and lowering her pants, he proceeded to smack her as hard as he could till she was crying. "Now, that is by no means the end of our "discussion" young lady. I can't

believe ye were part of this and lied to me. Now downstairs!"

Ellen was wiping her eyes and crying. "I'm sorry Connor. I know I should have told you."

"No more talk. I will do all the talking in a bit." He took her arm and led her downstairs to her father's room.

## Chapter Twenty

Ellen's heart was beating fast as Connor literally dragged her to her father's room. When they got there, Nora and Maureen were sitting dejectedly in chairs, facing a very stern and angry Mick.

"Now I see we are complete. My third errant daughter has joined us. I can't begin to tell you how disappointed and ashamed of you I am. To cause me such needless worry, all over a silly thing like going to school and obeying rules. This is just atrocious. I have spoiled and pampered you all way too long. Connor has shown me the error of my ways. I intend tonight to make sure that you ALL know the error of your ways also. I want you all to go to your rooms, prepare for bed immediately and return here." Mick sat and surveyed them. "NOW!" It was the first time any of them had heard that tone in his voice.

They scurried as fast as they could from the room. Ellen gave Connor a glance back, but he motioned her to go. When they were gone, Mick turned to Daniel. "Thank you lad. If it hadn't been for your keen ears, we may have been put through days of misery. You'll find a nice increase in your next check. Thank you.

"Connor, I think we could use a shot of whiskey while we're waiting for them to return. As I told you before, I am punishing Nora and Maureen both. I never thought I would do this, but I intend to use the razor strop on both of them. How you punish Ellen is up to you, but as the oldest I hold her more responsible for this foolishness of Nora's." Mick sat back and relaxed, sipping his whiskey.

Connor's thoughts were a jumble as he waited for Ellen and the others to return. *How could she have lied to me like this?* That was the thing that bothered him the most.

The whiskey was just finished when the three girls returned to Mick's room. All three stood with the heads down in front of his desk. In their

nightclothes, they all looked so young and innocent. Mick just looked from one to the other and said nothing for a minute. Each one was getting more nervous by the minute, switching from leg to leg and twisting her hands.

"SIT!" Mick finally commanded them. They all sat on the sofa and looked at him. "Who would like to be first to explain the meaning of this stupidity? Ellen, you are the oldest. What do you have to say for yourself?"

Ellen looked up at her father and started explaining. "I realized it was a foolish plan as soon as you were home and I told you. But it was too late, and I didn't want Nora and Maureen to get in trouble if I said something. I'm sorry it upset you so."

Connor's face was grim hearing her lame excuse. He would be sure to see to it that she was truly sorry later. One glance at his face and Ellen knew she was indeed in more trouble than she ever had been before.

Mick scowled at Ellen. "That's the best explanation you can offer? It's no explanation at all. Go to your room at once and wait for Connor. I will handle your sisters."

Ellen jumped up and started for the door. Connor caught her by the arm before she left.

"I want ye standing in the corner when I get there, thinking about a better explanation for me than that given your father."

Connor sat back down and waited for Mick to start up again. Mick glanced from Nora to Maureen. "Nora, since you were the runaway, you tell me why."

"I don't want to go to school! Those nuns are mean and will beat me every day. I just can't do it! I can't and won't. It was my idea and I begged Maureen and Ellen to help me. They shouldn't be punished. It was my entire fault," Nora was sobbing when she finished.

Mick didn't show one ounce of pity on his face. "I have heard enough! Nora, I told you and Maureen that Connor was in charge of you. I agreed with him on the school issue. You will be going to school. Now, I am not going to put up with any more nonsense from any of you. Ellen is engaged to Connor, so he will be responsible for her punishment. As for the two of you, I will personally see to it that you will be very sorry for this day, and will never think of doing something so foolish again. Maureen, fetch me my razor strop from the wash stand."

Maureen and Nora both paled. Maureen stood on shaky legs and retrieved it. Mick took it from her hands and laid it on the desk. You are both going to get a whipping you will never forget. Tomorrow you will both apologize to Connor as well. If he so desires to punish you again, that is within his right."

Connor rose and put his glass on the desk. "I will leave you to attend to these young ladies and I'll see to Ellen." He turned and looked at Nora and Maureen. "You are to be in the classroom by 8 am. When I arrive I expect a written apology from each of you on my desk."

Nora and Maureen both answered in meek quiet voices, "Yes Sir."

Mick wasted no time once Connor was gone. "Nora and Maureen, I want you each to bend over the arm of the sofa." When they were in place Mick walked behind them and lifted their nightdresses, baring their bottoms.

"It saddens me to think that I have to do this, but your behavior is appalling. As I said before, I will not tolerate it any longer." Without saying another word, he raised the strop high over his head and brought it down on first one girl then the other. After twenty-five, he switched sides and gave each girl another twenty-five. By the time he was finished they were both crying and sobbing their apologies. He let them stay there for a few minutes. "I want both of you in a corner. You are to stay

there until I call you. In addition, you may not rub your bottoms at all. I want you to think about what you did."

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Mick poured another glass of whiskey and watched the two sniffing in the corner. When the sniffles had quieted, he called them. "Nora, Maureen, come here." Both girls turned and saw Mick with his arms open for them, sitting on the couch. They ran and snuggled into his arms, both apologizing at once.

"You're forgiven and all is well. Nora you will be going to school with no more nonsense?" Mick lifted her chin to see her response.

"Yes Papa, I will go and be good." Nora promised. Mick hugged her to him. "Good, now it is very late. You go to bed and I will see you at breakfast early. Remember you have to be in the classroom by 8:00 a.m."

Nora hugged Mick and Maureen goodnight and ran from the room holding her bottom.

Mick turned to Maureen. "I want you to promise me that you will not fight the new tutor Connor hires. You know he is looking out for your best interests. I also want you to become more of a role model for Nora. Ellen is going to be busy starting her new life with Connor. He will have to come first with her. I want you to watch out for Nora."

"I promise Papa. I'll be good from now on and obey everything you and Connor say. I'll help Nora adjust, too." Maureen looked ready to cry again.

"Good, now off to bed with you, too." Mick hugged her tight and kissed her on the forehead. Maureen left rubbing her bottom also.

Mick was almost ready to retire himself. As he got ready for bed, he couldn't help but wonder how things were going with Connor and Ellen. Connor was angrier than he had ever seen him. Ellen was sure to learn an important lesson about trust and truth tonight. "Ah, he will have his hands full for a

while, she is so much like her dear mother." Mick fell asleep remembering the early days of his own marriage.

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Connor had gone to his own room to get his razor strop. He was not quite sure yet how he was going to punish Ellen, but she needed to learn that if they were to be together, he would not tolerate deceit and lies.

When he entered the room, Ellen was standing as instructed in the corner. She had been nervous and crying since he sent her from her father's room. When the door opened, her heart started racing. It felt like it was hours that she had been here waiting for him. "Connor, I'm very sorry." Ellen wanted to talk to him.

"Ellen, I don't want to hear it now. There is time for ye to talk later. Come here."

Connor was sitting in a chair when Ellen turned around. She walked over to him slowly and stood in front of him. Connor pulled her onto his lap. He wanted to do nothing more than hug and hold her, but there were serious matters they needed to discuss.

"Ellen, I don't want ye to say a word until I tell ye to. Do ye understand?" Connor looked sternly at her tear stained face.

"Yes, Connor." Ellen could feel her heart pounding as she waited to hear what he had to say.

Connor started talking in a low stern voice. "Ellen, ye are the oldest here and soon to be a wife and someday a mother yourself. I can't believe ye would allow such a foolish thing to go on. It seems that all the three of ye wanted was to once again get your own way, only this time at the expense of your father and me. Did I not tell ye a long time ago that I would not tolerate disobedience?"

Ellen stammered when replying. "But ... but I didn't disobey you. You never said I couldn't help Nora."



Connor couldn't believe that response. He lifted Ellen off his lap and turned her over his knee. Flipping up her nightdress, he brought his hand down again and again, until Ellen was sobbing and begging him to stop. "Please Connor, I'm sorry. I won't do it again. Please ... it hurts!"

Connor once again pulled her into his lap. "Now young lady, that was not a proper answer to my question. Did I not tell ye I wouldn't tolerate disobedience?"

"Yes Sir, you did," Ellen answered through her tears.

"Did I also not tell ye I wouldn't tolerate deceit and lies?"

"Yes Sir, you did."

"Then I don't understand how ye could possibly have any excuse for your behavior. Ye yourself admitted it was foolish but ye didn't want to tell me for fear of getting your sisters in trouble. Well now, ye are all in trouble. Ellen, ye disappoint me greatly. Do ye have so little trust in me, that ye did not believe me when I said I would make sure no harm came to Nora or any of ye?"

Ellen was once again crying, this time out of shame. "I do trust you Connor. I love you. I just didn't think. Nora was so upset ... I didn't use any sense."

"No, ye didn't. Ellen our relationship has to be built on more than love. Ye have to trust me and obey me. When I ask ye a question I expect ye to be truthful. Have I not made that clear?" Connor once again lifted her chin so he could see her eyes when she answered.

Ellen was sobbing softly now. "Yes Connor you did, and that is what I want too."

"Ye surely didn't display that today. I was so proud of ye last night when ye were talking to Nora, only to find out today ye did something this senseless and stupid. I'm so disappointed in ye." Connor stopped talking and let Ellen cry for a minute.

"Ellen, I want ye to go get your hairbrush and bring it to me and ask me to spank ye for your misdeeds. After your spanking, ye will stay across my lap and be strapped. I don't ever want to have to punish ye this harshly again. But your actions today and lack of sense leave me no other choice." Connor set her on her feet and waited.

Ellen stiffly walked to the dresser and picked up her brush. She had never felt so ashamed and miserable in her young life. When she once again reached his side, she handed Connor the brush.

"Connor, please spank me for all I have done wrong. I deserve to be punished harshly. I'm sorry though and promise you I will never give you cause to punish me like this again." Ellen lay across Connor's lap once again.

Connor said nothing while he lifted her nightdress once again. Her bottom was already hot and red, but sadly, it would be much hotter and sorer before he was finished. The brush came down hard on first one cheek then the other. Even though Ellen was sobbing and begging him to stop, Connor continued. He thoroughly covered every inch of her bottom and thighs. Finally, he stopped and rubbed her bruised flesh for a minute.

"Ellen, this pains me deeply to do, but ye must learn." Connor picked up the strop and quickly gave her ten on each cheek and five on each thigh. He threw the strop on the bed and gathered the sobbing Ellen in his arms.

"I'm so sorry, Connor. Please forgive me, I'll never disobey you again or lie to you." Ellen buried her face in his chest and sobbed.

Connor held her tight, rubbed her back, and kissed her softly on her head until she calmed. "I love ye, Ellen McMahan, and nothing will change that. But ye must learn that I will not tolerate what happened today. Now hush, it's way past your bedtime." Connor leaned down and kissed her gently on the lips, slowly escalating the kiss to one

of passion. Ellen responded eagerly, momentarily forgetting the pain in her bottom.

"Now let me tuck ye in. I also expect ye to be in the Classroom at 8:00 a.m. and to have a written apology for your father on my desk." Connor picked Ellen up and carried her to the bed. He pulled back the covers and gently laid her down. She gasped when her bottom made contact with the bed.

"I think ye shall want to sleep on your stomach for the next few nights." Connor helped her roll over and tucked the covers around her. "Sleep well. I love and forgive ye."

Ellen reached up and pulled him down for one last kiss. "I love you so, Connor, and I'll never ever do this again."

"Good night, Ellen. I'll see ye in the morning." Connor did not want to leave the room, but knew he must. He wanted nothing more than to crawl under the covers with her and hold her to him, but that would have to wait until their wedding night.

Connor himself got ready and went to bed, but laid thinking for a long time about the future and what he must do. He wasn't sure how long Mick would be able to hide his illness. Before word of that spread, he had to be in position to handle all the responsibility and quell any attempts to ruin the bank.

The Harrisons would also be a problem. He doubted that having them expelled from the club would stop them; they were still a dangerous enemy and one to watch closely. His experience in leading his band of men against the English would pay off here. Finally, he thought about his own family back in Ireland. He had to get them here, and the sooner the better. There was plenty of room for them, and his mother would be a wonderful help with Mick and the girls. He also wanted his brothers safe from the English. Tomorrow he would have to talk to Mick and start working immediately on learning everything he could.

Finally, he fell asleep, but slept only for a few hours before the sun was streaming in the windows. He arose, washed, and dressed. It was barely 7:00 a.m. when he left for breakfast, yawning.

Mick was already up and waiting for him. "Good morning Connor, I trust you slept well?"

"It was a bit of troubled sleep and I fear not near enough. The events of yesterday kept me restless." Connor gratefully accepted a cup of tea from the maid.

"I slept very well. I think we shall have no more trouble from our young ladies. They were most repentant when they left for bed." Mick looked thoughtfully at Connor.

"How were things with Ellen? You do look troubled lad."

"I really hated having to punish her that harshly, but she needs to learn. I don't think she'll be sitting too easily for a day or so. That's not the only thing troubling me though. After breakfast while the ladies are working on their essays, ye and I need to talk." Connor was interrupted by the arrival of Ellen.

Mick greeted his daughter and turned to Connor. "Of course. We'll have time before I leave for the bank."

Connor rose and pulled a chair out for Ellen. "Good morning, love. How are ye?"

Ellen sat down very gingerly and smiled weakly at Connor. "I'm fine."

They were soon joined by Nora and Maureen, both of whom were also more subdued than normal and sitting quite gingerly. When breakfast was over the girls left immediately for the classroom.

"Remember I want your essays on my desk. I should be there in an hour." Connor called after them as they left.

"Come Connor, let's go to my office and talk." Mick rose and the two men left for his office. Once seated, Mick turned to Connor. "What is it that's troubling you so?"

"I'm not troubled so much as feeling we need to have some concrete plans. I need to be learning from ye as fast as I can. I know we haven't heard the last of the Harrisons, and I need a plan in place to handle them. I can do that once I know the lie of the land at the bank." Connor paused.

"Connor, you'll learn fast. You already have learned a lot in assessing men in the one day you were there with me. You're a natural leader and fighter. You'll not have any problems you can't handle, I assure you." Mick had to smile at the younger man. Connor reminded him so much of himself at that age.

"There is one other thing Mick. I always planned on some day bringing my family here. I figured it would be years before I could afford it."

Mick interrupted Connor. "Nonsense! I was thinking of that myself. We should arrange to have them come over on the next ship. You needn't worry about the cost."

Connor smiled at Mick. "You're very generous sir, but I will be able to pay for it soon. I would like to have them here as soon as we can."

Mick thought a minute. "Captain Johnson leaves soon to return. I'll make arrangements with him today. You'll need to write a note to your mother. She won't have much time to get ready to leave. But they need only bring the necessary things to get them here. If our luck holds they'll be here for the wedding." Mick was smiling like Connor had never seen him before.

Connor shook his hand. "Thanks Mick. I'll do that right away. I'll give it to ye before ye leave for the bank."

## Chapter Twenty-One

Connor wasted no time in going to the classroom to compose his letter to his family. He had intended to write them anyway, but this was now much more urgent. When he entered the classroom, three pairs of eyes flew to his face. Their owners visibly paled.

Connor had to laugh. "It's all right ladies. I'm early. Ye still have plenty of time left. I have something I must attend to myself, so just keep writing."

Connor sat down and took paper and pen to begin his letter. The room was quiet except for the sound of pens scratching on paper. Smiling at how obedient and subdued they were, Connor started writing.

*Dear Family,*

*I have arrived in Boston safely. The trip was truly an adventure that will take me far too long to repeat now. A wealthy man, a banker, from Boston hired me. I was a tutor to his three daughters, who had never attended formal school. Their mother had died many years ago and they were quite spoiled. I was put in charge of them totally and it was a trying adventure for a time. Mr. Michael McMahon is a truly kind and generous man. We became very close on the trip. I also fell in love with his oldest daughter Ellen and we are to be married January 15.*

*Mick, as he prefers to be called, is quite ill and dying. He has taken me in as a son and I am to take his place as head of the bank. I have much to learn and will also have not only Ellen to care for, but her sisters Maureen and Nora as well. Ellen will soon be 18; Maureen is 14 and Nora 12.*

*I have missed ye all very much. Mick and I have discussed this and we want all of ye to come here on the next ship. The bearer of this note is a representative of Captain Johnson who commands the ship ye are to travel on. Ye will have first class arrangements and will want for nothing. All of ye must come. There is plenty of room for ye and I want all of ye out of danger. I insist on this. Ye will all be better off here.*

*And Liam, I will not hear of ye staying there. Ye will surely be caught soon, as was I. The battle can be fought from here just as well. I will explain more when ye are here.*

*Hugs and kisses to all of ye. I will see ye shortly.*

*Love,  
Connor*

Connor sealed the envelope and took it down to Mick. "I made it fairly short, but hopefully they will come."

Mick tucked the letter in his coat and patted Connor on the shoulder. "I'm sure they will. I'll make sure Captain Johnson understands the urgency of this. He can be most persuasive."

Mick left for the bank. Connor's heart felt a bit lighter than it had since he arrived. He went to the kitchen and had a cup of tea and talked to the servants a bit before returning to the classroom. In his few days here, he found that he truly felt a kinship with them. They were kind and generous with their wisdom and information about his new country.

When his nerves had settled a bit, he went back to the classroom. This time weak smiles greeted him and three essays were neatly placed on his desk. He nodded to them and sat and started reading the essays.

He picked up Maureen's first. It was two pages long and she apologized over and over for not

thinking and going along with the plan. She apologized to Connor and asked his forgiveness. He only needed to quickly scan it to see that she may indeed be sorry, but needed a lot of work in writing skills. That would be a job for the next tutor.

Next was Nora's. After quickly scanning it, he sat back and read it carefully. She was much briefer and to the point.

*Dear Connor,*

*I am heartily sorry for the worry and harm I caused you and Papa. It was extremely selfish of me and wrong. Ellen told me you would not ever let anyone harm me and I should have listened to her.*

*I know you love her, but I have also grown to love you and don't want to disappoint you or hurt you. It was wrong of me to include Ellen and Maureen in my plans. Ellen didn't want to participate but we made her. I was wrong.*

*Papa punished me last night and has forgiven me. He says you may wish to punish us further and I will accept whatever you decide.*

*I promise that I will go to school and do my best to make you proud of me.*

*Sincerely,*

*Nora McMahon*

Connor placed the letter down and picked up Ellen's. Hers was a very heartfelt apology to her father and promise to be a dutiful daughter to him. It was short but good.

After reading all three notes, he stood up and went around and sat on the front of his desk. "I know ye have all been punished once for this by either your father or me. I'm not going to spank any of ye again for this mischief."

There was an audible sigh of relief from all three. Connor continued, "However, I am going to



place some restrictions on ye. Nora and Maureen ye will be in this classroom every day from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. I expect all assignments will be completed and on time. When ye start school Nora, ye will report here after and do your homework. The new tutor may alter the schedule once he is here. Ellen, ye are to spend as much time in classes as possible. I know ye have a lot to do in planning the wedding. Any free time will be spent here. Now let's begin today by reviewing your math work." Connor went back around and sat down as the girls dutifully opened their books and began working on the problems Connor assigned them.

While they were working, Connor wrote a note to Sister Immaculata informing her that Nora would be ready to start classes a week from Monday. He enclosed the completed forms and sealed it up to be delivered to her. "I'll be back shortly. Continue working until I get back." Connor left the room and went in search of Daniel.

He found him in the kitchen and gave him the note. "Would ye please deliver this to Sister Immaculata at the school, and then stop and ask the uniform maker to come here at his earliest convenience to measure Nora for her uniforms? We will need them on a rush basis."

"Yes sir, right away. I know the uniform maker and he'll be glad to accommodate you." Daniel grabbed his coat and hat and left. With that chore accomplished Connor returned to the classroom to finish the morning's lessons.

Mick wasted no time once he arrived at the bank in sending a message for Captain Johnson, inviting him to lunch at the club. The captain sent his reply back with the messenger.

*Dear Mr. McMahon,  
I would be delighted to lunch with you. I  
shall meet you at the club at noon.  
Captain Johnson.*

The morning was a busy one for Mick. He received word that the Harrison's had both been banned from the club. That was good news, but both he and Connor would have to watch their backs closely. He made a note to fill Connor in as soon as he arrived home. It might be best if Connor started coming in every day. He wanted to spend as much time with him in the bank as possible. Connor could work on finding a tutor while working here. Mick knew they would have trouble with the Harrison's and wanted Connor knowing as much as he could, and also knowing the people he could count on.

The morning passed quickly as Mick had a lot of things to catch up on. Before he realized it, it was time to leave for the club. On his way out, one of his top men asked to see him when he returned. "That would be fine. I'll see you at 2:00 p.m. in my office."

Mick thought about the meeting on the short ride to the club. That particular man was close to the Harrison's. This could be the first sign of trouble ahead.

Captain Johnson was waiting for Mick when he arrived at the club. The maitre'd showed Mick to the table where the captain was waiting. The captain stood and shook Mick's hand, then both men sat down. "How are you, Mick? I assume everything was fine at home and the bank while you were gone?"

"Yes, everything was grand here, but I feel very fortunate that I found Connor Boland. That man is going to be a lifesaver for me." Mick ordered a whiskey and the same for the Captain.

When they were served, the Captain took a sip and set down his glass. "I want to again express my regrets at the treatment of Connor on his way over. I saw the notice when I came about the expulsion of the Harrison's. They will be mighty enemies you know. If there is anything I can do to help you, just say the word."

That was exactly the response that Mick had hoped for. "Actually, there is. I understand that you're sailing back soon?"

"Yes, tomorrow at first light. We have only a few passengers traveling at this time of year, so we should make a faster voyage. The winds will be in our favor and our cargo much lighter. I just hope we don't hit any major storms."

"That's good to hear. I need a special favor of you." Mick took Connor's letter from his pocket. "I wish to have the Boland family return with you. They are to receive the best of compartments and anything they desire on the trip. This letter from Connor must be delivered as soon as you land. They are not expecting it, but someone with authority must see to it that they all come back with you. I will of course pay you well for their accommodations and this special service."

Captain Johnson smiled. "I think there is more to Connor Boland than you told me. I expect there may have been a grain of truth in what Harrison said. However, I do like the young Connor. He has a fine mettle and will make a good heir for you. Harrison on the other hand is slimy and a deadbeat. They showed their true colors on the dock when we landed. I will be happy to do this for you, on the condition that I am not escorting a wanted man and a traitor to the crown. You know how I feel about that. I am loyal to the crown and will not knowingly transport traitors."

Mick laughed. "I agree, Connor is a good man and I don't think you should believe a word of the Harrison's story. The Boland family lives in a small village and farms. There should be no problems. I just need your assurance that they will be on the return voyage. I will put enough money with the letter to aid them in settling any debts they may owe."

The remainder of lunch was spent pleasantly and Mick left Captain Johnson with Connor's letter and a good sum of money for the family's travel and

personal expenses, plus a nice sum for his efforts. He was confident that Johnson would see to it the entire family was on the return voyage.

When Mick returned to his office, there was a message for him from the senior Harrison threatening legal action. Mick laughed and stuck it in his pocket to show Connor. "Oh yes, a delightful fight we shall have."

At precisely 2:00 p.m., Ian Riley walked into his office. Mick stood, greeted him, and had him sit down. "You have a troubled look on your face. What's the problem, Ian?"

"Mick, I've been thinking since you introduced Connor Boland yesterday and announced he would be taking over the bank when you retired. I've heard some unsavory things about this man. As you know, we have an impeccable reputation. Do you really know this man in such a short time that you would give him your daughter and your bank?" Ian sat back and watched Mick carefully.

"Ian, we have known each other a long time. You should know that I do not make rash decisions. I may not have known Connor long, but I do know the man and his character. You have probably heard talk from both Harrison's. I can assure you they are wrong. Their character is in doubt, not Connor's. My decisions regarding Connor will not change. It is final. Is there anything else I can help you with?" Mick stood up, indicating the visit was over.

Ian shook his hand, thanked him, and left, shaking his head. Mick watched him leave sadly. He was a good man and smart, but he doubted Connor would ever have his loyalty. He made some notes for Connor and went back to his daily routine.

Connor was surprised when Daniel returned from his errands with a letter from Sister Immaculata.

*Dear Mr. Boland,*

*I have two candidates for a tutor for the older young ladies. Their credentials and a letter of introduction are also enclosed. I have asked them*

*to contact you personally as soon as possible to discuss the position.*

*I look forward to Nora joining us next week. Her paper work is in order. I also appreciate the samples of her schoolwork you included. She should fit nicely into her appropriate grade level.*

*Sincerely,*

*Sister Mary Immaculata*

Connor was pleased with the news; he hoped he would hear from them soon. Daniel also informed him the uniform maker would be there at two o'clock to measure Nora. He had assured Daniel that he would have the required uniforms ready for him next week.

After lunch, Daniel came to the classroom and spoke quietly to Connor. "There is a Mr. Howe to see you regarding the tutor position."

"Thank ye Daniel. Please show him to my office and I will be there shortly."

Connor turned and addressed the girls. "I have a visitor I must see. I will be gone for a bit. I expect ye to finish your math and history lessons while I'm gone."

The minute Connor was safely away the three started chattering among themselves. "Who do you suppose this person is? I wonder if it's someone applying for a job as our tutor? "

Ellen was quiet and thoughtful. "It may well be, and I think we better be on our best behavior, too. Connor will surely instruct him to report on us. I am hoping that once we are married he will let me stop attending classes."

"That's not fair! I would be here all alone then." Maureen was pouting and definitely not happy about that prospect.

"You better behave though or you know what will happen." Ellen warned Maureen.

"Hmmpff, I suppose you are turning into a perfect little angel and will never get in trouble?" Maureen was a bit angry with Ellen. "Little Miss goody-goody we shall call you."

"Maureen, you're a pig! Stop now, or I may tell Connor on you." Ellen was as angry now as Maureen.

Nora finally spoke up. "I think we better get our work done or we will all be in trouble again."

Maureen and Ellen agreed and they quieted down and went back to their studies, but Ellen was still mad at Maureen's taunts and vowed to get back at her.

A tall slim dark haired man about his own age was seated in Connor's office. When Connor entered, he stood and offered his hand. "Mr. Boland, I am pleased to meet you. My name is Edward Howe, and Sister Immaculata told me you were in need of a tutor."

"Yes, Mr. Howe, I am indeed. I fear it may not be a simple task, however. The position is for two young ladies that never had much formal education. They were sometimes tutored but each tutor left rather than put up with their antics. One of them is to be my wife and their father has put me in charge of them. I tutored them myself and they have made progress, but they still have a long way to go. The person, who takes this job, must be able to enforce classroom discipline. There is a younger daughter who will be attending the parochial school and will report to the tutor after school for help in her work." Connor proceeded to explain more about where the girls each stood in their education.

When he was finished, he reviewed the credentials of Mr. Howe. "I see you are very qualified educationally. Have you been teaching long?"

"I graduated from Harvard and took a position at a local private boys' school. It was satisfactory, but I found I liked working with fewer individuals and turned to tutoring. My last position just ended with the lad enrolling in college. I have excellent references and the letters are with my credentials. I am very discipline minded and brook no silliness in my classroom. Of course we would have to have an

understanding on what method of discipline you would want me to use."

Connor looked over Mr. Howe's letters and credentials. They were indeed impressive. Connor asked several questions as he reviewed them. He was most impressed with Mr. Howe and liked the man and his manner. There was however the other candidate to take into consideration. Connor was about to explain to Mr. Howe that he would have to get back to him when Daniel knocked on the door and handed him a message.

Connor rose, "Would ye excuse me a moment? I shall be right back." He wanted to read the message in private. It was from the other tutor candidate informing him that he had accepted another position and was not free to interview.

Connor smiled and went back into his office. "Mr. Howe, if you are amenable I would like to offer you this position. If possible, starting tomorrow. I would like a full report each day on the progress and behavior of the girls. I am not averse to the use of a paddle if done modestly. I can assure you though, that anyone you are forced to discipline will also be disciplined again by me. Is that to your satisfaction?"

"Yes, it is quite satisfactory, Mr. Boland."

"Now that you are employed here you will find it is a very informal household. Please call me Connor. However, the girls will address you as Mr. Howe. Shall we go to the classroom and you can meet them? Then I will prepare some things for you for tomorrow." Connor rose and shook hands with his new tutor.

"Please call me Edward, also. I appreciate the informality."

The two left for the classroom. Before they reached the classroom, they could hear squeals and yells and the sound of fighting. Connor looked at Edward and hurried to the classroom and opened the door.

"Stop this at once! What has gotten into ye?" Connor thundered. He couldn't believe the sight in front of him.



## Chapter Twenty-Two

Connor had been gone for a long time and their work was completed. Ellen had been pondering the perfect way to get back at Maureen. She looked down at her desk and an idea hit her. The pen was lying there so innocently. What if it accidentally dripped on Maureen? Couldn't be helped and her new blouse would be ruined.

Smiling to herself, Ellen got up and went to Connor's desk to refill her pen. On the way back to her desk, she walked past Maureen and flicked her wrist. Sure enough, ink flew all over Maureen. Ellen stopped next to her. "Oh dear me! I'm so sorry! I don't know how that happened."

Before Ellen could get past her, Maureen let out a yell, stood up, and grabbed the pen. She shook it at Ellen, covering her in ink as well. That was all it took. Soon the two were yelling at each other, slapping and pulling each other's hair. Nora sat shocked in her seat. She couldn't believe these two were acting like this. Connor was going to be furious.

At that moment the door sprung open and Connor and a tall stranger entered the room. When Ellen and Maureen heard his voice they both started talking and screaming about what the other had done. Neither seemed to notice the other man.

"QUIET! I don't want either one of you to say another word. There is no excuse for this." Connor's voice was so stern that they both quieted immediately. They started to take their seats but Connor stopped them. "No, just stand where you are."

"I want you to meet Mr. Howe, your new tutor. You've certainly made a fine impression on him. He was asking me my feelings on discipline and you have given me a fine opportunity to show him." Connor turned to Edward. "The naughty lass on my right is Ellen, my fiancée. Next to her is her equally

naughty sister, Maureen. Nora is the one sitting quietly at her desk."

Connor checked his watch and turned to Nora. "You may be excused. The uniform maker will be here shortly to measure you. Go to your room and wait for him. When he is finished, you may have the rest of the afternoon off. Put your work on my desk on your way out.

"Now, I will deal with the two of you." Connor walked over to his desk and took his paddle out of the drawer. He pulled his chair out to the center of the room. "Ellen, come here."

Ellen walked slowly over to Connor.

"What excuse do ye have for this behavior?"

"Connor, Maureen was calling me names. I ignored her, and when I came back from filling my pen, it somehow leaked and got ink on her. She grabbed it and intentionally sprayed me with it." Ellen looked down, trying to look contrite.

Maureen wasn't going to stay quiet. "She's lying! She intentionally did that. It's all her fault. She's just a big tattle-tale lately and thinks she can do anything she wants since you're getting married!"

Connor looked sharply at Maureen. "I didn't ask for your opinion at this time, but since ye were insistent on speaking, I will now let ye both know what I think. I believe ye are acting like spoiled little brats. Ye know I won't tolerate that. I would think that after last night ye both would be on your best behavior. Apparently, I was wrong. Maureen go stand in the corner until I call ye."

Maureen slowly walked and put her nose in the corner. Edward sat at one of the desks, amused at the whole scene. Life with these two was certainly going to interesting.

Connor pulled Ellen over his knee and lifted her dress. For modesty's sake, he wouldn't bare her, but knew on top of last night's spanking it would hurt plenty. Ellen was whimpering before he started. "Ye know why ye're here. I am very disappointed with your behavior." Connor picked up

the paddle and lifted it high over his head. It landed with a loud Whack! Ellen sobbed and pleaded from the first stroke of the paddle. After he had paddled her 30 times, Connor stopped and helped her up. "Are ye ever going to behave that way again?" He held her hands looking into her face.

"No Sir!" Ellen sobbed.

"Very well. Go to your room and stay there till I come. I expect to see your nose in the corner, young lady." Connor turned her and swatted her once. Ellen flew to the door and left.

"Maureen, come here please!" Connor sat waiting for Maureen.

As soon as she was in front of him, she started crying. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that, but she started it."

"Maureen, ye both knew better. Ye are equally at fault." Connor pulled her over his knee, lifted her dress, and gave her 30 with the paddle as well. Maureen was sobbing loudly and pleading for him to stop by the time it was over. Connor stood her up in front of him. "Now, are ye ever going to behave like this again?"

"No Sir. I'm sorry." Maureen was trying to stop crying.

Connor stood and hugged her. "Ye're forgiven, but I want ye to go to your room and stay there until dinner. Then ye and Ellen are going to apologize to each other."

Maureen turned and hurried from the room. Connor smiled at Edward. "Sure ye still want to take the position?"

Edward laughed. "Yes Connor, I think it will be most interesting, though I doubt they will misbehave for a while."

"I hope ye're right. Let me show ye what they've been working on." Connor spent the next hour showing him the girls' work and where they were in their learning.

"Thank you Connor. I think it will be an adventure working here. I shall be here at 8:00 a.m." Edward shook hands and left.

Connor looked at his watch. It would be several hours until Mick came home. It would give him plenty of time for a long talk with Miss Ellen.

Ellen felt like she had been standing in the corner for days. She knew it had been a long time and worried the entire time about what Connor was going to do when he got there. Her bottom was already so sore; she doubted she would sit comfortably by Christmas.

When the door finally opened, Ellen jumped. Now she wished he would have waited longer.

"Ellen, come here please." Connor's voice was calm, but Ellen was trembling. She turned and walked to where he was sitting in her chair. She stood before him with her hands folded in front of her. She was visibly trembling.

Connor took her arm, pulled her into his lap, and held her. Ellen once again started crying and apologizing.

"Shhhh Ellen. Ye are forgiven, but we need to discuss this behavior."

Once she had quieted, Connor started talking. "I can't believe that at your ages, ye and Maureen are squabbling like 5 year olds. Nora behaves better than that. I know ye intentionally sprayed Maureen. I want to know why."

Ellen was still sniffing but felt secure in Connor's arms. "She called me terrible names and said I was being a goody-goody cause of you."

"Why did she think that? From what I can see none of ye have been in the least bit good in the last few days." Connor watched Ellen's face while she replied.

Ellen blushed and tried to look away, but Connor lifted her chin and looked right in her eyes. "She was mad because I said you wouldn't make me attend classes after we were married and she would be alone in the classroom."

"Ellen, did I ever at any time say that?" Connor's voice had a stern edge to it.

"No Connor, you didn't, but I was hoping you wouldn't make me attend any longer."

Connor said nothing for a few minutes. "Ellen, ye know better than that. I have told ye all along that I want ye to reach a certain level, where ye can converse intelligently on subjects. Ye are nowhere near there yet. I don't like lying."

"I'm sorry Connor, but I didn't lie to you." Ellen's voice was petulant and angry. "I'm not stupid you know."

"No, but ye're being petulant and sassy," Connor stood her up and flipped her over his knee once again. This time he bared her. He could see the results of last night's punishment and the paddling as well. This wasn't meant to be hard, just a reminder of her attitude.

Ellen was squirming and trying to wiggle off his lap. "Connor, please ... I'm sorry! Don't spank me anymore. I can't take it!"

"Young lady, ye will not talk to me like that, and ye will change your attitude. I never have thought ye stupid, but ye need to learn. I will tell ye when ye may stop classes, but until that time ye will attend." Connor raised his hand and swatted each cheek and thigh several times. It was far from a hard spanking but Ellen was in tears from the first swat.

Connor let her lie over his lap and sob for a few seconds, then pulled up her panties and set her up on his lap again. Ellen hid her face in his shoulder and cried. Connor let her cry, rubbed her back, and kissed her forehead gently till she quieted. "I didn't want to do that, but when ye act like that ye give me no choice. Now, are ye ready to talk calmly?"

Ellen sniffled a bit. "Yes Connor."

"Good." Connor handed her a handkerchief and waited for her to fully calm down.

"Ellen, at dinner tonight ye will apologize to Maureen. I expect both of ye to set a good example

for Nora. I also want ye to both apologize tomorrow to Mr. Howe for your behavior today. Is that clear?"

"Yes Connor, it is, and I will get Maureen a new blouse to replace the one I ruined." Ellen cuddled tighter into Connor's arms.

"Good, though your blouse and skirt be ruined as well, it is a nice gesture, since ye did start the fight." Connor kissed her gently on the lips.

He wanted to tell her about his family, but one kiss led to another more passionate one. Finally, he pulled away. "We must stop this or we will go further than I want us to at this time." Ellen didn't want to stop but reluctantly agreed.

"I am going to see if your father has returned. I want ye to stay her and rest till dinner. After dinner we can talk more about future plans." Connor pulled her into one last kiss and left her.

Mick was not yet home when Connor went to his office. He started writing some things for Edward in the morning and some future things to take care of as well. He was very preoccupied and didn't hear Mick walk into the room.

"Busy working, I see. I have news for you if you would join me in my study." Mick waited for Connor to put his things away and follow him from the room.

"Mick, I have news for ye, also," Connor said as soon as they were seated in Mick's study.

"Good, then I think this calls for a little libation." Mick opened his chest and poured two generous glasses of whiskey. "Why not tell me your news first then we can talk about mine."

Connor took a sip of whiskey and smiled. "I've found a tutor, recommended by Sister Immaculata. He's well qualified and starts tomorrow. His name is Edward Howe and I think ye will like him very much. Our little lasses, however, gave him quite a first impression." Connor related the events of the day and their outcome.

"That is indeed good news Connor! My news will fit nicely with that." Mick took a sip of whiskey and started re-telling the events of his day.

"I had lunch with Captain Johnson and he has your letter to your family and a hefty sum to assure them of passage. He is very much on our side and will cooperate fully. He sails at dawn tomorrow and should make good passage at this time of year. If we're in luck, your family will be here for the wedding. I think we should assume they would be and have clothes ready for them. I'm sure we can guess at sizes without too much trouble, and if necessary they can be altered."

"Thank ye Mick. That lifts a real heaviness from my heart. I hope their voyage is swift and smooth." Connor's heart was indeed light.

"The next bit of news is the Harrisons have been banned from the club and are threatening legal action against us and the bank. I expected it, and it should be a delightful fight." Mick handed Connor the note from Harrison Senior.

"I'm glad ye think it will be easy, but it troubles me. I fear they will do all the harm they possibly can." Connor handed the letter back to Mick.

"Yes, I'm sure they will, but we will win, because we are smarter and they will trip themselves up. But I do need you at the office every day starting tomorrow. Ian Riley visited me today and was questioning your qualifications and background. He's friends with Harrison and I know they're spreading lies and rumors about not only you and Ellen, but me as well. That is where we will trip them up. But Ian is a good employee and we'll probably lose him along with a few others to the Harrisons. You need to get in and start your own power base and win the loyalty of as many as you can."

Connor laughed. "Good, I've been anxious to start. This really is no different than gathering a band of young inexperienced men and making them into a working team of soldiers for a cause."

"You're so right Connor, and it's those exact qualities you possess that will make you successful in this ... that and your intelligence. I feel we have much to celebrate today, but a lot of work ahead of us in the future. For starters, we must plan on Ian's departure. That will hurt us a bit." Mick sat back and touched his fingers together in thought.

Connor took a sip of his whiskey and was silent for a moment. "Mick, have ye given any thought to the idea that maybe I can win him over? I've done that with enemies before. It may work, and then he'd be even more of an asset and powerful ally against the Harrisons."

"I hadn't given that a thought Connor, but it certainly is something to try. I don't know though ... he was very against you today and has some blood relationship to the Harrisons through marriage. It may be impossible. But if you want to try, that's fine. I will in the meantime plan on grooming some others for his duties."

Both men finished their whiskey in congenial conversation until it was time to change for dinner.

Connor left for his rooms deep in thought. So much was going to be happening in such a short period of time. He must gear himself up for battle and still watch out for Mick's health and the girls' well being. When his mother arrived it would be a godsend. She would be able to take them in hand with no trouble. Liam was the one he worried about the most. He wanted him to get more education, but Liam may well be opposed to that. "I pray he's stayed away from the English and not run afoul of them and landed in prison, or worse." Connor said a quick prayer for the saints to protect his family, then changed and left for dinner.

Mick and the girls were seated when Connor arrived. Mick was in a jovial mood and so was Connor. Ellen and Maureen were extremely subdued and avoided looking at each other. Nora was cheery though.



"How was the uniform measurement, Nora?" Connor smiled at her.

"It was fine Connor. The uniforms aren't ugly like I thought either. I think they'll be fine."

"I'm glad ye're trying to take this positively. Ye'll see ... it will be fine." Connor looked at Ellen and Maureen. He noticed that both had some scratches from their tussle.

"Ellen, do ye not have something to say to Maureen before we eat?" Connor looked across the table at her.

Ellen hesitated a minute then turned to Maureen. "Maureen, I'm very sorry for starting the fight this afternoon. I should have known better than to taunt you. I will be attending classes after I'm married until Connor feels I no longer need to. I'll replace your blouse, too; squirting ink on it was mean and spiteful. Please forgive me?"

Maureen's eyes started to fill with tears. "I do forgive you, and I'm sorry as well. I shouldn't have called you names. You don't have to replace my blouse. I ruined your outfit as well."

Connor and Mick beamed as both girls stood and hugged and cried on each other's shoulders. Connor finally stood and hugged both of them. "Now, enough, this is to be a cheerful dinner. All is forgiven and I'm proud of both of ye. I will let both of ye go shopping on Saturday for wedding clothes and replacement of your ruined clothing. Now let's have dinner."

Maureen and Ellen both sat down again gingerly and listened to the toasts Mick gave. He recounted his luncheon with Captain Johnson and broke the news of Connor's family joining them.

"Really Connor? And you have a sister near my age?" Nora was excited.

"Yes Nora, I do. There is my mother Mary, my brother Liam who is 17, Lizzie 13, Maggie 11, Bridey 9, and the baby Tommy 7. I think ye will all get along well. Will fill the house up a bit, but ye will have company at school Nora."

After dinner, Mick retired to his rooms and Nora and Maureen decided to play some cards. They hadn't been assigned homework so they had a free evening.

Ellen and Connor sat in the parlor. "Connor, do you think your family will approve of me?"

"Oh Ellen, they will love ye as much as I do. Don't think anything different. Ye will also love them, especially little Tommy. He's adorable." Connor reached for her and pulled her into his arms for a passionate kiss. They spent the rest of the evening talking and planning.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

Connor was up bright and early the next morning. He checked the classroom and made sure there were instructions for Edward. He found Nancy in the parlor. "Nancy, there's a new tutor starting today. His name is Edward Howe. He will be taking his noon meal with you each day. He may also want some tea or something during the day as well."

Nancy just shook her head. "I'll inform the staff and find out what his preferences are, but I don't think he'll be here long enough to get acquainted well. He'll leave just like the others were driven off."

Connor patted her on the arm. "This will be different. Ye shall see, he will not be run off any easier than I was. Treat him well and help him all ye can."

"Of course Connor, we'll all do our best to make him welcome. I just hope the young ladies do the same."

"He's already seen them at their worst. I'm sure he can handle them, plus I will be here to back him up. I would appreciate hearing if there is any mischief, though."

Nancy winked at him. "I don't think you need worry about that. There will be lots of people willing to report on the young ladies. They're very pleased to see some discipline enter this house."

Connor laughed and went into breakfast. Mick was already dressed and there. "Good morning, Connor. Ready for your first full day?"

"Yes Sir, more than ready. Everything is in place here and should run smoothly. I've had a thought though about my training."

Mick looked at him quizzically. "What is that, lad?"

"I thought it might be interesting if you assigned Ian Riley to train me. It would give me a good chance to get to know him, and for him to know me. I may also be able to spot any signs of trouble

brewing with him." Connor ate a forkful of eggs and waited for Mick's response.

"It could be something to consider. For today though, I want to give you a general overview myself and have you work with me. Then we shall see where we want to go from here on."

"Fine Sir, I think that will work well."

Connor and Mick were almost finished with their breakfast when the girls joined them. Connor looked from one to the other. "Are ye all ready for your first day with Mr. Howe? I would like to think ye would be on your best behavior. Also remember, Ellen and Maureen, I do expect both of ye to apologize for yesterday."

Both girls nodded. "Yes Sir, we will."

As soon as Connor and Mick were finished, they stood up. Connor leaned over and kissed Ellen on the forehead. "I'll see ye this afternoon. Be good. I love ye."

Ellen looked up at Connor. "I promise I will. I love you, too."

Edward Howe was just coming up to the house when Connor and Mick emerged. Connor greeted him. "Edward, I'd like ye to meet Mr. McMahon. Mick, this is Edward Howe, the new tutor."

Mick shook his hand. "Welcome to my home, lad. I hope your stay will be a long one."

"Thank you Mr. McMahon. I'm looking forward to it,"

"Call me Mick, everyone does. If you need anything, just let the staff know."

"Edward, I left some other papers on the desk for ye. If ye need to report anything to me just give Daniel a note. I believe ye will have some very well behaved young ladies for today at least." Connor and Mick climbed into the carriage and Edward entered the house.

Nancy was waiting for Edward. "Good morning. I'm the housekeeper, Nancy. Let me show you around a bit and introduce you to the rest of the staff. Should you ever need anything, just ask me."

Nancy showed him around the first floor. He was somewhat familiar with it from the day before. She took him into the kitchen and introduced him to the rest of the staff. Everyone was gathered there eating breakfast or doing chores.

Nancy took him up to Daniel who was sitting at the table sipping his morning tea. "This is Daniel, Connor's valet. Should you need to leave Connor a message or get in touch with him, just let Daniel know.

Daniel stood up and shook hands with Edward. "A pleasure to meet you, Sir. If there's anything I can do for you, please just ask."

"Thank you Daniel. I appreciate that." Edward followed Nancy out of the kitchen into the dining room.

"This is the dining room. Lunch is served at noon. If there's anything particular you would like or dislike, please let me know."

"I'm not particular at all. I'll make sure that we are here promptly for lunch." Edward admired the well-appointed dining room. Mr. McMahon was indeed a prosperous man.

"The girls are probably getting ready. Would you like a cup of tea or coffee?"

"I would appreciate a cup of coffee. If it could be brought to the classroom, that would be wonderful. I want to look over a few things before class."

"Certainly. I'll have someone bring you a tray immediately. I don't think the girls will be there for another half hour or so." Nancy left Edward and he proceeded up the stairs to the classroom.

The room was empty and he took his place behind the desk and reviewed the notes and books Connor had left for him. There soon was a knock on the door and a maid brought a tray with coffee and a muffin for him.

"Thank you very much, and thank Nancy for me." Edward smiled as the maid blushed and left the room. She was very pretty. He would have to learn her name.

It was nine o'clock when the girls came into the classroom. They took their seats and waited for him to speak.

"Good morning ladies. In case you've forgotten, my name is Edward Howe. You may call me Sir or Mr. Howe. I would like each of you to stand in turn and introduce yourself and tell me what you have been working on." Edward moved to the front of the desk.

Ellen stood first. "I'm Ellen McMahon, and I have been concentrating on math and history."

"Thank you Ellen. You may sit back down." Edward waited for the next one to stand, but Ellen didn't sit down.

"Sir, may I say something before I sit?"

"Yes Ellen, what is it?" Edward had no idea what to expect after yesterday.

"I'm very sorry that your first impression of us was so bad. I promise you we will behave and not give you any trouble." Ellen sat down.

"Thank you Ellen. I appreciate that. Who's next?" Edward looked at Maureen.

Maureen stood next to her desk. "I'm Maureen McMahon. I've been working on math and English. I too am very sorry for my behavior yesterday. I promise to behave and not let Ellen goad me into losing my temper."

As Maureen sat down, Ellen shot her an angry glance. Edward decided this needed to be stopped now. "Maureen, I find that last remark of yours uncalled for. It was not a sincere apology. You will write me a 500-word essay apologizing to me for your behavior yesterday and also include an apology to your sister for that last remark. You may pull your desk to the corner and write it there."

Maureen was appalled. "But she admitted she did it on purpose and started it! This isn't fair."

Edward stood up and came over to Maureen. He pulled her from her chair and put his foot on the rung of the chair. Quickly he flipped Maureen over and lifted her skirts. Ten sharp smacks landed in

quick secession on her bottom. He righted her and looked her in the eye. "I will not tolerate sassiness. Now move your desk and begin the essay or I shall get the paddle."

Maureen quickly moved her desk. Her face was scarlet with embarrassment. The spanking hadn't hurt that much but she was terribly embarrassed. She hadn't meant to anger him.

Edward waited until she was settled then looked at Nora. Nora quickly stood up. "I'm Nora McMahon and I've been concentrating on geography and history. Connor feels I need more of those two subjects." Nora quickly sat down.

Edward smiled at her. "Yes, you're going to be leaving us soon to attend school. I will help make sure you are prepared."

He walked back around the desk, sat, and picked up a paper. "For this morning, since history is a common thread we will work on that. Ellen and Nora please read chapter 10 and then answer these questions." He handed each of them a list of 20 questions he had prepared.

It was quiet in the room as Ellen and Nora worked on their assignments and Maureen was busy in the corner writing her essay. Maureen finished her essay and took it to Edward.

"Are you sure this is complete?" Edward gave the essay a cursory glance.

"Yes Sir. I did my best. I'm truly sorry for my behavior yesterday and my outburst today as well." Maureen stood with her hands clasped and head hanging.

"Very well, pull your desk back over. It's almost lunchtime. I will read this and you may read the first chapter in this grammar book." Edward handed her a new book.

Maureen quietly moved her desk, sat down, and started reading. Ellen and Nora were almost done with their assignments.

Edward started reading Maureen's essay. It was sincere enough, but Connor was right ... she needed

a lot of help with writing and spelling and grammar. He knew one girl who would be writing a lot of essays for him. He picked up his pen and began correcting the essay. That would be a start for her to see her mistakes.

Soon Ellen and Nora handed in their assignments. Edward stood and addressed them. "It is almost time for lunch. I will dismiss you now and see you promptly at noon in the dining room. After lunch, you will have 30 minutes to refresh. We will meet back here at 1:30. Please be on time. I also don't tolerate tardiness."

The three girls scampered from the room and down the hall toward their rooms. Maureen pulled Ellen aside. "I'm sorry for this morning. I know I shouldn't have said that. Do you think he'll tell Connor?"

Ellen hugged Maureen. "It's okay. I don't know if he will or not. He is awfully stiff and strict though. I don't think I like him much."

Nora and Maureen both agreed. Nora thought for a minute. "I don't think we can get rid of him easily, though. He seems to be the lasting kind, not like the others."

"I agree. I don't think we can run him off like the others. We'll have to just hope he lightens up or bear with it." Ellen walked into her room. "We best make sure we are on time, though."

Promptly at noon, the girls were seated at the dining room table. Edward had been there before them. It was very silent since the girls didn't know what to talk about. Edward was aware they were leery of him. Barely suppressing a smile he decided it was time to show a bit of lightness. He didn't want them to hate him, after all.

"Tell me, ladies, about your trip to Ireland." Edward smiled warmly at them

Nora, who was always the most lighthearted and outgoing one, started jabbering a mile a minute. Soon both Maureen and Ellen joined in, telling him about the voyage back and the big storm. Maureen



told him about the Harrisons and the mix up with Connor. Sooner than they thought, lunch was over.

"I will see you ladies in 30 minutes. It has been a most enjoyable luncheon." Edward stood and left the room.

The girls grabbed their capes and decided a walk in the garden and some fresh air would be nice. Ellen had been fairly quiet, but finally spoke up. "Maybe he won't be so bad after all. Did you see the way he looked at Colleen? I think he's attracted to her. Perhaps we could foster a romance there and it might take his mind off us a bit."

Maureen giggled. "Yes, I saw that. Did you see how Colleen kept glancing his way and blushing? I think there's a definite attraction there. Let's make sure she serves lunch every day. Maybe even bring us a snack in the afternoon. It's worth a try, anyway."

Nora chimed in. "Yes, let's tell him we're accustomed to a break in the afternoon for a snack. We can make sure Nancy has Colleen bring it."

They all agreed that was a great plan. It was time to return to class so they hurried back and all but ran to the classroom. They remembered Connor's punishment for tardiness and didn't want to take any chances. With one minute to spare, they took their seats. Of course, Edward was already there, waiting for them.

The afternoon continued much like the morning, with one exception. There was no need to discipline any of the girls.

Each girl was given a different task to work on. Edward gave Maureen her essay back with his corrections marked. He pulled a chair up next to her. "Maureen, I will explain why each of these corrections needed to be made. Then I want you to look up the appropriate chapter in the grammar book and read about it. You need a lot of work on basic good grammar and writing skills."

While he was working with Maureen, Ellen was working math problems and Nora was working in

her geography book. Both were quite bored and fidgeting. It was close to two and Ellen really wanted to get away. She had a lot of planning to do with only two months to do it. Also, the holidays were coming and she needed to get gifts for everyone. There would also be parties and dances to attend. She really needed her time away from class. She just had to convince Connor that maybe she didn't need to attend every day, or at least not all day.

Edward had finished with Maureen and noticed Ellen fidgeting and daydreaming. He walked up next to her. "Ellen, are you finished with your work? If so may I see it?" Without waiting for an answer he picked up her paper. It was not even half complete.

Ellen was startled and turned crimson. "No Sir, I wasn't finished, I just got lost in thought for a moment. I'm tired and maybe it's time for our break." She shyly looked up at him.

Edward had heard nothing from Connor about a break. They had at least 2 more hours of work to do. He looked at Ellen's work and was not pleased. "Ellen, you've been working on this for over 30 minutes and have completed 2 of the ten problems. You're not concentrating at all. We have only been here for a short time; there is no reason to take a break. At your ages, your concentration skills should be such that you don't need breaks other than for your noon meal. Now, I want this finished in the next 20 minutes, and then you may write 100 times, 'I will not daydream in class'."

Edward handed her the paper and walked back to his desk. He decided that he himself could use a bit of refreshment. However, it would not be fair to leave and not allow the girls a short break. "May I have your attention please? I am going to allow you a five-minute break. I will go to the kitchen and arrange for some tea to be brought up. See that you are in your seats when I return." Edward left the room.

Ellen was dumbfounded. "Just what are we supposed to do in five minutes? He really is obnoxious."

Nora said nothing, but Maureen agreed. "Yes, he needn't be so strict about every little thing. But I can see we aren't going to get anywhere arguing with him."

"No, but I am going to talk to Connor about making him let us take breaks." Ellen turned back to her math and started working the problems. She needed to finish them and the 100 lines or she knew he would make her stay and do it.

Edward found Nancy in the kitchen supervising preparations for dinner. "Nancy, is it customary for the young ladies to have a break and refreshments in the afternoon?"

"I don't think so. Connor only was with them one day and there was no break. The other tutors never had any control, so they just came and went as they pleased. None of them really ever ask for anything in the afternoon though. Would you like me to start providing some?"

"That's what I thought. For today, could you have someone bring some tea and water to the classroom? That should be sufficient. I don't think this will become an everyday habit though." Edward thanked her and left for the classroom. The five minutes were almost up.

Nancy set about preparing a tray with the requested tea and water. When she was finished with it, Colleen approached her. "If you like, I'll take that upstairs for you."

Nancy smiled. She had noticed the looks Colleen had been giving Edward, and his glances toward her also. "Thank you Colleen, that would be nice."

Colleen took the tray, and smiling, headed for the classroom. She knocked at the door and Edward himself opened it. "Thank you so much. Let me take that from you. It looks a bit heavy."

"No sir, I can handle it. Where would you like it?"

Edward indicated a table in the corner and Colleen set it there for him. As she was leaving, Edward stepped out into the hall with her. "Thank you so much for bringing that, and for this morning. What's your name?"

Colleen blushed. "Colleen Rooney, sir."

"Please call me Edward, and it is very nice working with you, Colleen." Edward returned to the classroom and Colleen hurried down the stairs.

Standing in front of the classroom, he addressed the girls. "I have arranged for some tea and water and you may help yourselves. However, we will not be taking breaks in the afternoon. I expect your co-operation. I want no more nonsense."

The girls took what they wanted and returned to work. Ellen finished her problems and lines and handed them to Edward. The rest of the afternoon passed quickly.

Edward looked at his watch and stood up. "It's four o'clock. You are dismissed for today. I will not assign homework tonight until I have had a chance to evaluate your work today, but do not think that will be the normal way of things. Good day Ladies!"

The three girls left the classroom as fast as they could.

## Chapter Twenty-Four

Connor was quiet on the ride to the bank. He really wasn't sure what to expect on his first day. Mick sensed his tenseness and smiled to himself. It was good the lad was nervous. It was that very quality that would keep him on his toes and alert.

As soon as they arrived, they went right to Mick's office. Matthew Sweeney jumped up and greeted both men. "Good morning, Mr. McMahon and Mr. Boland. Let me take your coats."

Both men handed Matthew their coats and went into Mick's office. "I'll review the day for you and then you can go and set up your office with Matthew. He will be able to help you with whatever you might need."

Mick sat behind his desk and started outlining a normal day at the bank. Connor jotted down notes and before they knew it several hours had passed. Mick called to Matthew, "Would you please go with Connor to his office and help him get settled. I think some tea for both of us would be nice also."

Matthew nodded. "Certainly Sir. Mr. Boland, this way please." Matthew led the way out of Mick's office to the one next door that was Connor's. Connor was still shocked at the size of it. Matthew left him to get the tea.

Connor looked around and made some notes on what he might need. He was busily writing when Matthew returned with the tea.

"Here is your tea, Sir. Now I think the place to start is to make a list of files you will need. We can make duplicates of the ones Mr. McMahon uses. Then we shall need to make sure you have the proper supplies and a list of the employees and their duties."

Connor smiled. Matthew was very efficient. All he had to do was sit back and let him handle things. They worked setting up his office until Mick knocked on the door. "Time for lunch, Connor."

Matthew got their coats and they walked to the club. When they walked in the door, Mick called Connor's attention to the announcement board. His name was clearly posted as a new member.

"That was fast, Mick. I must admit it makes me happy to see it. I never thought I would be a member of a club like this."

Mick clapped him on the back. "You'll get used to it."

They were seated for lunch and several members came and introduced themselves to Connor. All were very welcoming and polite. Connor couldn't help but notice there were also a few glares.

"Who are those men over there who are staring at us, Mick?" Connor indicated a group at a table in the corner.

Mick laughed. "Ah, now that would be the enemy. They're close friends and customers of the Harrisons. Don't worry about them. We have far more influence than they do."

Lunch passed with no incidents, and one hour later, they were on their way back to the office. When they arrived back, Mick had Connor spend the afternoon with him. He showed him various reports that needed to be reviewed each day. "I'll point out what to look for and how to fix problems today. Tomorrow, I'll let you do it and see how you do."

Mick took one report at a time and went over in detail what to look for and what to do. Connor took copious notes. The time flew by and it was soon time to go home. Mick and Connor made a tour through the bank to make sure there were no problems, and then left.

Connor was tired but happy. He felt he had a lot to learn but had learned a lot today already. Mick was pleased with Connor's ability to grasp onto the theory and idea behind what he was doing. "Connor, you're a natural at this. I think you'll be on your own fast. I've been thinking about what you said about training. I watched Ian Riley a bit today

and noticed him watching you closely. I'm going to ask him to work with you and see if you can't turn him around. He's a good employee and I would prefer we keep him as a loyal one."

"Thank ye Mick. I'll do my best to make him an ally. I feel today went well and I learned a lot. I wonder how Edward's first day was?"

When they arrived, Connor went to his room to clean up a bit. He promised to meet Mick in the parlor for a whiskey before dinner. Daniel was waiting for him. "The tailor has delivered more of your clothing. I wanted you to see it before I put it away. Also, Mr. Howe left this note for you."

Connor checked over the suits and shirts. "These are fine, Daniel, and just in time since I'll be working every day now. How did things go with Edward today?"

Daniel cleared his throat. "I'm sure he explains everything in there, but I think he had a bit of trouble. Nancy can probably tell you more."

"Thank ye Daniel. I won't need anything else at the moment." Connor sat down in his armchair and opened the note.

*Dear Connor,*

*Over all I feel the first day went well. Students usually try testing the new tutor on the first day and the McMahon girls were no different. I shall summarize the day and ask for a response from you on several issues.*

*Ellen started the day with a very nice apology for her behavior yesterday. Maureen followed with an apology that didn't sound at all sincere. She ended it by promising not to let Ellen goad her into bad behavior in the future. I told her it was not an acceptable apology and to pull her desk into the corner and write me a five hundred word essay apologizing to me as well as Ellen. She promptly sasssed me and wasn't going to budge. I flipped her over my knee and*

*paddled her ten times with my hand. She was then more than willing to obey, with the threat that the paddle would be next.*

*The rest of the morning passed uneventfully, and we enjoyed a nice lunch where they told me about their recent trip to Ireland. The afternoon brought a bit of nonsense again, this time from Ellen.*

*She was given an assignment to complete while I worked with Maureen on writing skills. After an hour, I noticed she was staring into space. I went over and looked at what she had completed. Very little had been accomplished. Her excuse was that it was time for their afternoon break. Since you hadn't mentioned this, I checked with Nancy and found that you hadn't given them one, and furthermore they never asked for anything when not in class. I arranged for water and tea to be brought, but informed them there would be no further breaks.*

*Please let me know if you have a different schedule in mind for the girls.*

*Sincerely,*

*Edward Howe*

Connor put the letter down angrily, then picked it up, and put it in his pocket. One day and they couldn't behave themselves. Sighing he left to join Mick. There were going to be two sorry young ladies this evening.

Mick already had poured the drinks when Connor joined him in the parlor. "So how did Mr. Howe's first day go? Do we still have a tutor?" Mick laughed.

Connor ran his hand through his hair in exasperation. "Yes, but I would say it could have been better. Maureen was sassy and got spanked and Ellen tried to convince them they get breaks and barely completed her work. I am angry with



both of them." Connor handed Mick the note to read.

"Connor, I think they're testing you and Edward. Wanting to see if he will report to you and what you will do about it. Whatever consequences you warned them of you'll have to carry through. I would think that they would have been spanked enough by now."

"I agree, but apparently not. I do need to give Ellen some time though for wedding planning. I'll arrange a different schedule for her, but I don't like her making up lies."

Connor and Mick discussed their day while they finished their drinks. Soon it was time for dinner. Connor decided that he would say nothing about the note until after dinner. He wanted to hear what they had to say about the day.

Ellen came into the parlor looking for him when it was time to go into dinner. "Connor, I missed you today. How did everything go?"

Connor pulled her close in a hug and kissed her. "I missed you as well. Things went well but I have a lot to learn and do." Taking her hand, he led her into the dining room and seated her.

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After dinner was served, Connor casually asked the ladies, "How was class today? Did you get along well with Mr. Howe?"

He noticed a quick look between the three. Nora spoke up first. "It was fine. He's a bit stuffy though."

Ellen smiled at Connor. "I think he could relax a bit. He's too harsh."

Connor looked at Maureen. "What do ye think?"

Maureen pouted. She wasn't sure if Connor knew anything or not. "I agree with Nora and Ellen. He is a bit pompous and stuffy, way too strict and has no sense of humor at all. I don't like him."

Mick was doing his best to keep a straight face. Connor was sure going to have his hands full with these three.

Connor wasn't happy to hear what they had to say at all. "I'm sorry to hear that. I found him a very nice man. Could it possible be that ye weren't very cooperative with him? I think we need to discuss this a bit more. Do ye have homework?"

Nora again spoke up first. "Not tonight. He said he wanted to assess our work today and would assign some tomorrow."

"Very well. Then as soon as dinner is over we shall meet in my office and discuss this further."

The remainder of dinner was fairly quiet. The girls were somber and kept stealing glances at one another. Their behavior wasn't lost on Connor.

When the last plate had been cleared from the table, Connor rose. "I have something to attend to quickly. I will meet you in my office."

As he left the room, the girls walked slowly to his office. Once there, Maureen could no longer keep quiet. "I bet he knows what happened today. I just know that idiot sent him a note. This is all so unfair!"

"We don't know that, Maureen. We'll have to wait and see what he wants to talk about." Ellen tried to be reassuring, but was worried herself.

"At least I won't have to put up with him every day. I think school will be better than him." Nora was smiling smugly at her sisters.

"You may find out differently, but I know I hate him and will never cooperate with him. Eventually he'll get tired of it and leave." Maureen defiantly crossed her arms.

Unfortunately for Nora and Maureen, Connor was outside and had heard everything they said. He abruptly opened the door, stalked over to his desk, and sat down. He said nothing, just glared at them. Finally, he took the note out of his pocket and placed it on the desk. "It seems that Mr. Howe had

a very interesting first day. Ellen, please read this out loud." Connor handed her the note.

Ellen took the note from Connor, giving him a pleading look. "Read it, Ellen!"

Ellen opened the note and read it out loud for the others. Maureen visibly paled when she heard the portion of the note relating to her. When Ellen was done, she handed the note back to Connor. "I can explain, Connor. I intended to talk to you tonight about it."

"There are no explanations for what I have read here. Maureen, what did I say would happen if the tutor had to correct any of ye?"

Maureen hung her head and mumbled something.

"I can't hear ye, speak up."

Sighing, Maureen repeated what she had said. "You said we would receive double from you."

"Correct. Nora, did we not have conversation about your respect for the tutor?"

"Yes Connor."

"Then I think we are all clear on the subject." Connor opened his desk drawer and pulled out a paddle. He moved a chair into the center of the room and sat down, "Maureen, come here please."

"Connor, I'm sorry. I won't be bad anymore. Please don't spank me." Maureen stood her ground and didn't budge.

"Maureen, right now ye are receiving twenty. If you don't come here this instant it will be thirty."

Obediently, Maureen walked over to Connor. Without a word, he pulled her over his knee and flipped up her dress. "Since you weren't bared in class ye won't be here."

Without another word, Connor raised the paddle and brought it down on first one cheek then the other. By the time twenty was reached, Maureen was sobbing loudly and apologizing.

Connor set her on her feet and held her hands. "Are you going to give me cause to do this every day?"

"No. I'm sorry Connor. I'll obey even if I don't like him."

Connor stood and hugged her. "You may learn to like him in time. Now sit back down."

"Ellen, while you were punished for daydreaming, the larger issue of telling lies was not covered. I spanked you for that just yesterday and apparently, it didn't make much of an impression. Ye are to go to the kitchen and bring me a bar of soap."

Ellen paled. "Please Connor, not that."

"Go at once, Ellen." Connor pointed to the door.

Ellen hurried from the room. She was embarrassed and red faced when she reached the kitchen. "May I have a bar of soap, please?"

One of the maids handed her one giggling. On her way out of the kitchen, she heard the maids giggling and whispering. "I think a certain young lady is going to have her mouth soaped."

Ellen had tears in her eyes as she handed Connor the bar of soap. Connor pulled her over his knee and handed her the soap. "Put this in your mouth and leave it there until I remove it. If spanking isn't enough to stop lies, then maybe this will help." Connor flipped her skirt up and began spanking her with the paddle. As he kept spanking, Ellen was sobbing and bubbles were coming out of her mouth. After twenty, Connor stopped and stood her up. "You may nod your answer. Are you going to tell lies anymore?"

Ellen nodded no. Connor took the soap out of her mouth. "Sit down. You can rinse when I'm finished here."

Connor looked over at Nora who was looking very remorseful and nervous. "Nora, you don't deserve a spanking, but I want a two thousand word essay from you on respecting your teachers. You are also confined to your room except for meals and class until you finish it. Now Nora and Maureen you are dismissed and are to go to bed immediately."

Both girls quickly left the room. Ellen was sitting quietly with tears streaming down her face. "Ellen, you may go and rinse your mouth, and then return. We have some other things to discuss."

Ellen left and ran to her room. She thoroughly rinsed her mouth but still had the taste of soap in it. Finally, after repeated rinsing she got rid of most of the taste. When she returned to Connor's office, he was sitting on the couch waiting for her with some tea. She slowly walked over and stood in front of him.

"I'm sorry, Connor. I didn't mean to cause trouble. I ..." Before she could finish, she started crying. Connor pulled her onto his lap and held her until she quieted.

Ellen looked up at him. "I just seem to keep disappointing you, and I don't mean to."

Connor hugged her tight. "I think you have too much on your mind. You do need time to plan our wedding, and I realize that Christmas will be here in a few weeks. There needs to be time to prepare for that as well. How much time do you think you need? I'm not going to allow you out of classes all together, but I know you need time."

Ellen leaned into Connor's shoulder. "I ... I ...don't know. I have never planned one before and none of my friends have married yet."

Connor tried hard not to laugh, but couldn't resist a chuckle. "Why didn't ye tell me that was bothering ye? I'm sure that Nancy can help guide ye, or one of yer friends' mothers."

Ellen started crying again. "I just don't seem to do anything right and I really haven't seen any of my friends since I got back. Normally they go calling in the afternoon. Some called today, but I was in class and unavailable. I just don't know what to do, Connor."

"Shhhh, it will be fine. Ye may attend class in the morning and have the afternoons off. Will that be better?"

Ellen sobbed harder. "Oh Connor, yes, but I feel so bad. You're being so kind, and I do nothing but disappoint you."

Connor shook Ellen gently. "Ellen, I love ye! I don't want to hear ye talk like that again. Ye may have disappointed me, but ye were punished and it is over. Do you understand?"

"Yes Connor."

Connor pulled her back close to him. "Here, sip some tea and quiet down. All will be fine. I will take ye and the girls shopping Saturday for Christmas. In no time at all everything will be in a nice routine and we won't have any unhappy moments."

Ellen sipped her tea and felt much better. Connor began kissing her softly, and then more passionately. When they finally stopped and he walked her to her door, she was feeling better than ever before.

"Good night, Connor. I'm sorry about today, and I do love you so."

Connor pulled her close for one last kiss. "I love ye also, and ye know ye are forgiven. I will see ye at breakfast."

Connor left her and went to the classroom to leave some instructions for Edward.

## Chapter Twenty-Five

Connor left Edward a note explaining that Ellen would henceforth not be attending classes in the afternoons. He thanked him for his note of the day before and assured him that he would probably have no more problems.

The new routine worked well and the rest of the week was peaceful. Ellen in particular was enjoying her afternoon freedom. The first afternoon she looked up her best friend Louise. They were sitting in Louise's parlor catching up on all the news.

"Ellen, are you really getting married? So soon?" Louise leaned in closer to Ellen. "There isn't a reason you have to get married so soon is there?"

"No, Louise!" Ellen blushed. "My father wanted it that way for some reason. Connor is taking over from him at that bank. They don't say, but I think he may be ill. He was under the weather a lot when we were in Ireland and doesn't look good some days now."

The girls chatted for a bit longer about the gossip around town and then turned back to the wedding. "Have you a dress yet? Or made any plans?" Louise was excited at the prospect of her friend marrying.

"Oh Louise, I don't even know where to begin. I'm totally at a loss." Ellen's face fell just thinking about it.

"Let's ask my mother. I'm sure she can help you." Louise pulled Ellen by the hand and went in search of her mother. Louise's mother listened while they explained the situation.

"Of course I'll help, Ellen, but we don't have much time. Your father always was one to be in a hurry. Tomorrow afternoon we shall go see the seamstress and pick out some patterns and materials that will please you."

By Saturday, Ellen had her dress picked out and it was in progress at the seamstress.

Connor had spent a busy week at the bank, absorbing and learning as fast as he could. Ian Riley had somewhat reluctantly agreed to work with Connor. By the end of the week, he had to grudgingly admit that Connor was a fast learner and knew what he was doing. He was even beginning to like him on a personal level. Nothing the Harrisons said about him appeared to be true.

Friday morning Connor was in his office checking reports when Ian came in. "How are things going today? Need any help?"

Connor looked up from his desk and motioned to Ian. "Come look at this. Something doesn't seem right here." Connor pointed to a record of transactions the previous week. "Doesn't it seem that there's a bit too much activity here for a normal account? I called for the actual records of deposit and withdrawals. Matthew is getting them now."

Ian pulled a chair up and studied the report. "Yes, there does appear to be something strange here. The activity seems to be all handled by the same employee, also. That would be extremely unusual. This is one of our biggest customers, too. I would hate to think what would happen if he found an irregularity in his account."

"Here you are Sir, the records you requested." Matthew put them on Connor's desk and left.

Ian and Connor started reviewing them. "Connor, I think you hit on something here. This is not Mr. Collins' signature on most of these withdrawals. I've found only one so far that appears to be his."

Connor took the documents and examined them. "I believe you're right, Ian. Someone is tapping into his account, and I would say it must be Jim Deegan, since he's been the only one handling the transactions."

Connor rang for Matthew. "Is Mr. McMahon in his office?"

"Yes sir, he is. Do you wish to see him?"



"Would ye ask him if he could step over here? Tell him Ian and I have something we need to show him." Connor and Ian separated the items out to show Mick.

Matthew quickly went to Mick's office. Mick's door was closed so Matthew knocked. When Mick called "Enter" he opened the door and excused himself. He hadn't realized Mick had company. A gentlemen dressed in a captain's uniform was sitting across from Mick.

"I'm sorry, Sir. I wasn't aware you had company. Mr. Boland and Mr. Riley would like to see you in Mr. Boland's office as soon as possible."

"Quite all right Matthew. Captain Darius was unexpected, but brings great news. Tell Connor and Ian I will be there shortly." Mick turned back to his guest as Matthew closed the door.

Matthew returned to Connor's office at once. "Sir, Mr. McMahon has a visitor but will be with you shortly."

"Thank ye Matthew!" Connor and Ian returned to checking some of the other accounts.

After Matthew had left, Mick turned back to Captain Darius. "Did Captain Johnson have any estimate of when he would be arriving in Boston?"

"He felt it would be by the end of December, and surely before the first week of January. The winds and weather are holding. I hope his note bears the good news you say it does. He was most anxious that you receive it as soon as possible. From my journey over, I think it even possible that he may arrive in time for Christmas." Captain Darius rose and shook hands with Mick. "I have enjoyed our meeting and look forward to doing business in the future. Captain Johnson has strongly recommended you over the Harrisons. He related to me the problems on your recent voyage."

"Thank you. Any time we can be of help, just let us know." Mick walked him to the door and then went to see what Connor and Ian needed so urgently. He had to smile at how close they were

becoming and how well they worked together. Yes ... Connor was a good leader.

"Good morning, Gentlemen, what can I do for you?" Mick sat down across from them.

Connor looked at Ian and started explaining. "We think there is a large discrepancy in the Collins account. There also seem to be some discrepancies in others of our large accounts, but we haven't verified that as of yet." Ian showed Mick the reports and documents they had pulled.

Mick turned pale looking at the report and documents. "Yes, there does appear to be some problem here. This would have been disastrous if you hadn't caught this and an accounting went out to him." Mick turned to the door, "Matthew please come here!"

"Yes Sir, what do you need?" Matthew stood with a pad and pen waiting for instructions.

"I want the employment file for James Deegan and I want you to instruct the Head Bookkeeper to hold all accountings. Nothing is to be sent out or mailed until I say so. Also tell the Head Teller that Mr. Boland or Mr. Riley must clear any requests for account information." Mick turned back to the reports as Matthew scurried out to perform his duties.

After a few minutes, Mick looked up at the two men sitting across from him. "I can't thank you enough for finding this. I believe there are a few other accounts affected as well. Fortunately we have time to fix it."

"Sir, I think you should know that Connor was the one who discovered this. I just looked it over with him and verified it. He had already done all the footwork." Ian didn't want to take credit for something he hadn't done.

"Thank you, Ian, but you both deserve credit in this. I'll need both of your help to straighten this out and keep word from spreading."

Matthew returned with the employment file. "I have spoken with everyone, Sir. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Thank you, Matthew, that's all for now. Please see we aren't disturbed."

Mick looked through the file on Deegan. "He has only been with us for a few weeks. Last week was his first week working alone." Mick thumbed through the rest of the file. "Now this is interesting! His last employer was Harrison Associates."

Mick handed the file to Ian and Connor to look at. Ian jumped up and started pacing. "I hate to say this, but I think he was sent here by the Harrisons to discredit us. He worked for them for 10 years. They normally never lose an employee after that length of time. I know they're bitter and would do anything to bring us down."

Connor was thoughtful. "I think we best get started examining every account and have the bookkeepers re-do the transactions. I also think we better look at any one we've hired in the last month. See where they came from, re-check their work."

"Good idea Connor. I'll leave that up to you and Ian. I intend to personally see to Mr. Deegan, and have him charged if necessary. I guess we best get the bookkeepers going. They will have to put in extra time to get this straightened out." Mick rose and called to Matthew on the way out. "Please have Mr. Deegan shown to my office. The guard may accompany him."

"Mick? Do ye think you should be alone with him? I think Ian and I should be there as witnesses."

Mick sighed. "Yes Connor, you're right. Both of you join me. Maybe we can find out what he tampered with and save some time."

As they sat in Mick's office waiting for Mr. Deegan, Connor laid out a plan of questioning. "Let Ian review the reports with him and see his reaction. I feel he will deny it. Then I can present

the documents and charges against him. After he is nervous, ye can finish him off with the threat to have him arrested and charged with embezzlement, unless he tells us the truth. In either case he is sacked, but the truth is better than jail."

Ian and Mick both agreed with the plan, just in time as Matthew knocked and ushered in the Security Guard and Mr. Deegan, who was quite nervous.

Ian rose and walked over to the conference table. "Please have a seat, Mr. Deegan. There are some reports here I would like you to look at and explain for me."

Ian shoved the reports in front of him. "Can you explain these transactions to me? They seem very unusual for Mr. Collins. He never has this much activity in his account."

Jim Deegan looked at the reports and shrugged. "It seems he does now. How would I explain his actions?" He was visibly pale and a bit shaken.

"Are you sure that Mr. Collins himself personally made all these transactions, and every time at your window?" Ian slammed another report on the table, causing Jim Deegan to jump.

"I don't know what you mean. Are you accusing me of something? I haven't done anything."

Connor picked up the documents and brought them over to the table. Before he showed them to him, he handed Jim a blank sheet of paper. "Would ye mind signing Brian Collins on this sheet please?"

"No, why should I?" Deegan was sitting back with his arms folded stubbornly.

"Because I think if ye do we will see that it matches this signature on several withdrawal slips. We know it isn't Mr. Collins' signature." Connor laid the slips out in front of him.

While Deegan was nervously examining them, Connor went further. "Weren't ye trained to check signatures of large withdrawals? Since the signatures are different, it should have been

obvious to ye, that ye weren't dealing with the same customer."

Deegan said nothing, just pushed the papers away. Mick decided it was time for him to get involved. "Mr. Deegan, I believe we have enough evidence here to charge you with embezzlement. Theft of funds will land you in jail for a very long time. I can't condone this kind of behavior and dishonesty in my bank." Mick walked to the door. "Matthew, please send someone for the police." He winked at Matthew and motioned him to stay.

When Mick closed the door, again Deegan jumped up. "Please Sir, don't call the police! I haven't done anything. There is no money missing really. Please ... I can't go to jail."

Connor smiled at Ian and Mick. "Then ye best be telling us what ye have been up to and who put ye up to it. I mean the whole truth, written and signed." Connor put a pad of paper in front of him. "If one word isn't the truth ye'll be in jail."

Deegan took the paper and began writing furiously. When he was done Connor picked it up and read it, then handed it to Mick. After Mick read it, he gave it to Ian and walked over to Deegan. "Are you telling us that Henry Harrison, Jr., sent you here with the express purpose of finagling accounts to bring us down?"

"Yes, Sir. I was paid rather well and if your little protégé hadn't stuck his nose in, it would have worked. But no money was taken. It is just moved around between accounts. So you can't have me charged." Deegan had a smug look on his face as he leered at all of them.

Connor's fist clenched in anger. There was nothing he would love to do more than take him outside and beat him. Ian noticed the fist and the look on his face and whispered to him "Connor, relax. Don't let him get to you. Watch what Mick does next."

Mick walked over to the table and grabbed Deegan by his coat lapels and jerked him up. "You

think so, Mister. I can have you in jail faster than you can say Harrison, and them with you. Tampering with bankbooks is still a criminal offense. Now, if you want to stay out of jail, I want details of every transaction you made and where it is." Mick threw him roughly back in the chair.

Deegan was again pale and shaking. "Ok, Ok, what do you want?"

"I want you to sit with the bookkeepers and show them every transaction while they fix it. If it doesn't come out right to the penny, I'll charge you." Mick turned to the guard, "Take him to bookkeeping."

Mick opened the door and asked Matthew to accompany them and explained what he was to tell the bookkeepers. Once they were gone, Mick slumped down in his chair. "This has certainly been an interesting morning." He looked at his watch and turned to Ian and Connor.

"It's lunchtime. Let's go to the club and discuss this further. This will not end here by any means." The three gathered their coats and walked to the club. Mick requested a table in a far corner where they would be more private.

Once they were seated, he ordered the usual whiskey. Connor was somewhat concerned about him. This was a definite blow to him, and he didn't appear well at all. "Mick, are ye feeling all right?" Ian was also looking at Mick with concern.

"Don't worry about me. Let's figure out what to do about this mess. You know it really could have ruined us if you hadn't found it. Word spreads fast here and people are always nervous about their money." Mick sipped his whiskey and the color began to return to his face.

Connor and Ian were silently thinking about the situation. Ian spoke up. "Sir, I hadn't planned on telling you this, I didn't want to hurt you, but I was approached by the younger Harrison to join them in bringing you down. They wanted me to come work for them. I must admit when I heard about Connor,

I was tempted. After I talked to you though, I turned them down and decided to see what happened. I know their true colors now."

Mick smiled broadly. "I knew what was going through your head. I'm glad you changed your mind. I do think you and Connor will do a grand job of running this bank. I appreciate your honesty."

Connor clapped him on the back. "Thank you for giving me a chance Ian. I also appreciate it and all the help you have given me."

Their meal arrived and they ate and chatted for a bit about the upcoming wedding and how the plans were progressing. When coffee was served, Connor cleared his throat. "I may have an idea. I've been reading the banking law books ye gave me Ian, and I believe that we could report Harrison and Sons to the banking commission for fraudulent practice. They would be fined at least and possibly shut down. It wouldn't do their reputation any good for sure."

Ian and Mick looked at Connor in amazement. Mick grabbed his hand and shook it. "Connor, that is brilliant! I believe that is exactly what we will do. Plus we have Deegan's signed statement to substantiate it. The Harrisons will finally know you don't mess with McMahon."

As soon as they got back to the bank, Mick called Matthew in and drafted a letter to the Banking Commissioner, outlining the charges and Deegan's statement. Ian and Connor went to work reviewing employee files and checking on the progress in bookkeeping. By the end of the day, it was clear that Deegan was the only plant, and all the money was accounted for and back in the right accounts.

Mick personally escorted Deegan out of the building. "If I ever hear you were within ten feet of this building I'll have you arrested. Now go and tell Harrison you failed."

On the way home Mick was silent for a while, slumped against the back of the carriage with his

eyes closed. Suddenly he sat up. "Connor, in all the mess today, I forgot to tell you of my visitor. We have great news!".



## Chapter Twenty-Six

What news is that, Mick? we certainly could use some today." Connor was curious as Mick handed him the envelope.

"This is a note from Captain Johnson. Your family is on his ship and on their way here. Captain Darius, who delivered it, thought they may arrive in time for Christmas, but they will surely be here for the wedding."

Connor smiled broadly. "This is indeed great news. I'll read this as soon as we arrive home."

Ellen ran to greet Connor and her father when they walked in the door. She hugged Mick and kissed him on the cheek and hugged and kissed Connor. Connor laughed at her exuberance. "Ye be mighty happy this evening."

"Oh, Connor and Papa, I saw the drawings and start of my dress today, and it's perfect. I think this will be the best wedding ever. Nancy has outlined a menu and needs your approval, but it sounds wonderful."

Connor smiled at her. "Ye certainly are much happier than ye were a week ago. Come sit with me while I read my note from Captain Johnson."

"When you're finished, Connor, join me for a drink in my study before dinner." Mick walked slowly up the steps.

Connor watched him with a frown on his face. He was unaware that Ellen was watching too, and noted Connor's expression. She also frowned and promised herself that she was going to talk to Connor about her concerns that evening.

Arm in arm, Connor and Ellen went into the sitting room. Once they were seated, Connor opened the envelope and read aloud to Ellen.

*"Dear Mr. McMahon,  
You will be happy to know that I have the entire Boland family on board ship and we are sailing three days hence. There was a bit of time convincing the eldest boy, Liam, to accompany us,*

*but shall we say we finally convinced him. I'm sure he will have a lot to tell you when he arrives.*

*I have given Captain Darius this note and asked him to make sure you receive it as soon as he arrives. I have a stop to make at another port so he should arrive well before we do. I do hope to arrive by the end of December, possibly before Christmas.*

*I will give you a full accounting of your funds and update at that time.*

*Sincerely*

*Captain Johnson"*

Connor hugged Ellen when he finished reading. "I bet Liam really put up a fight. Wouldn't it be wonderful if they were here for Christmas?"

"Oh Connor, yes it would. If we are still shopping tomorrow, perhaps we could pick something up for each of them. Even if they don't make Christmas they will have it when they arrive." Ellen hugged Connor hard, and then noticed the tiredness around his eyes.

"Did you have a hard day? You look very tired, and Papa did, too."

"Yes, it was a trying day, to say the least." Connor explained to her briefly what had happened.

"I hate those Harrisons. They've been nothing but trouble since we left Ireland." Ellen was frowning.

Connor kissed her and hugged her to him. "Don't let them worry ye. Your father and I will take care of them. Now, I'm going to go and change for dinner and have a word with your father. I'll see ye at dinner."

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Daniel was waiting for Connor and helped him out of his jacket. "Would you like to rest before dinner, Sir?"

"No, I'm going to see Mr. McMahon. Ye can take the rest of the evening off. I'll be able to handle things on my own."

"Thank you. That is most kind!" Daniel turned to leave and suddenly remembered. "Oh, Mr. Howe asked me to give you this note."

Connor took it and frowned. "Has there been more trouble with the young ladies?"

"Not that I have heard, Sir." Daniel turned and left.

Not sure if he wanted to open the note or not, Connor put it in his pocket and headed for Mick's study, deciding to read it later.

Mick was sitting in his easy chair relaxing with a whiskey.

"Ye look a bit better now than ye did when we got home." Connor poured himself a drink and sat in the chair opposite him.

"Ah yes, this is great medicine!" Mick raised his glass to Connor. "Now don't go getting all worried and upset looking. I'll be fine. Today was a bit draining, but I have all weekend to relax."

"That ye do, and rest ye shall. I plan on taking the girls shopping tomorrow, but I doubt ye will want to join us anyway." Connor chuckled. He knew Mick disliked shopping.

"You're right. I'll have Nancy take care of getting them gifts. Shopping is not for me. I think you will need a long rest after a shopping trip with the three of them."

They chatted about the day and the likely outcome of the complaint against the Harrisons until it was time for dinner. Mick was back in a jovial mood and regaled all at dinner with his report of the day's events. When he told them all about the visit from Captain Darius, they were all excited.

"Oh, we have to get rooms ready for them! I can hardly wait." Maureen was already planning which rooms everyone would have.

Nora joined in excitedly. "Yes, this will be so nice ... not to be the baby anymore."

"We have plenty of time to get ready for them. But I want ye all ready to leave for shopping right after breakfast, so I suggest ye get a good night's

rest." Connor smiled, watching Maureen and Nora excitedly ascend the stairs talking a mile a minute about his family and the shopping trip the next day.

Ellen wrapped her arm in his and looked up at him. "Connor, I need to talk to you about something."

"Let's go to my study and we can talk there." Connor took her arm and led her up the stairs. When they got there, he remembered the note from Edward. He certainly hoped it had nothing to do with what Ellen wanted to talk about.

"Ellen, would ye like some wine or brandy?" Connor was pouring himself a brandy.

"Yes, thank you Connor. A bit of wine would be nice." Ellen took the glass from him and sat nervously twisting in her seat, not sure how to start the conversation.

"I can see ye are nervous Ellen. What is it that's bothering ye?" Connor waited patiently for her answer.

Biting her lip before she replied, Ellen took a deep breath. "Connor, is something wrong with Papa? He hasn't been himself since we left Ireland and he looks sickly much of the time. It's also been a long time since he has gone to the club in the evenings like he used to. I'm worried and want to know."

Connor stood and walked to the window thinking. Mick didn't want to worry the girls, yet Ellen was already clearly worried and suspicious. He turned back, sat down next to Ellen, and pulled her close. "I've promised your father not to worry any of ye about his health. I can see that ye are clearly worried already, so I will tell ye. I do want your solemn promise that ye will not tell the others until your father is ready to say something. I will also tell him ye know, and why I told ye."

"Does he have to have an operation, Connor? Is that why he's rushing you so at the bank and wants the wedding so early?" Ellen's heart was racing. She wanted to know, but dreaded hearing the answer.

"Ellen, he has cancer in his stomach and there is nothing more to be done. It can't be operated on. He probably only has a few months left. That's why he's rushing so. He wants to make sure everything is in place to take care of all of ye." Connor watched for her reaction. When he saw the tears appear, he pulled her close against him. "It will be all right, Ellen. I'll always be here to take care of ye and your sisters. I will miss him too, but he doesn't want to see any of ye sad. He wants to be happy till the end."

Ellen cried softly for a bit, then quieted. "I'm glad you told me, Connor. I won't let Maureen and Nora know. They would be far too upset." Ellen snuggled against Connor's chest. "I'll try and do everything possible to make him happy."

Connor held her and sipped his brandy. Once again, he remembered the note from Edward. "Do ye know of any reason Mr. Howe would send me a note?"

Ellen jumped a bit. "No ... no, not really."

"Ellen! If there is something I should know, ye best tell me now."

"I'm not sure, but he said I needed to pay better attention to classes and homework, but he wasn't scolding. I told him I would."

Connor took the note from his pocket and opened it.

*Dear Connor,  
The week generally was fine. Nora continues to excel in her studies and is more than ready to start at her new school in a week. Maureen still struggles with her language skills but has shown some improvement. I spoke to Ellen about paying more attention to classes and her homework; both have slipped somewhat. I have received her assurances that she will. I would like to suggest if possible that she spend an extra hour either in class or*

*studying. It would make a great difference in her progress. I await your answer.*

*Sincerely,  
Edward Howe*

Folding the note, Connor put it back in his pocket. "It seems that Mr. Howe thinks ye need an extra hour a day of either classroom time or extra study. Since ye have made such good progress with the wedding plans so far, I think that would be a good thing.

"Connor! I don't need an extra hour. I promised him I would try harder. I still have much to do and things to learn about running a home. I can't do it. I WON'T!" Ellen stood and started to leave the room.

"ELLEN MCMAHON! Ye get back here at once, young lady!" Connor rose and stood waiting, with a grim determined look on his face.

Ellen stopped in her tracks and turned to face him. With her eyes down, she walked back to where Connor stood waiting. "I'm sorry I yelled, Connor. I just cannot take another hour of classroom time. I can't." Tears were pooling in her eyes.

Connor took hold of her hand, sat down, and pulled her onto his lap. "Ellen, ye know I will not tolerate defiance. Ye didn't wait for me to finish my proposal before ye lost your temper."

"Please Connor, I'm sorry. Please forgive me." Ellen dissolved in tears on his shoulder.

Sighing, Connor held her tight. "I do forgive ye, and I'll overlook it this time as ye've had a shock to your system tonight. But Ellen, ye have to learn to control your temper. Next time ye will have a sore bottom to show for your efforts." Connor continued to hold and soothe her until she quieted down.

"What I'm going to suggest is an hour of study with me in the evening after ye've completed your homework and independent study. That way I can judge more clearly your progress."

"Oh Connor, that would be fine. I'm sorry I'm so bad." Ellen had brightened immensely.

"This will be serious study time and not time to fool around. The same rules from the classroom will apply. I want no misunderstanding."

"Thank you Connor. I will behave. I promise." Ellen snuggled in close to Connor and raised her lips to his for a kiss.

Connor returned the kiss and they stayed and cuddled until Connor noticed the time. "We had best get some rest. We have a busy day ahead of us tomorrow." He pulled Ellen up and walked her to her room.

When she turned to enter the room, he swatted her on the bottom. "Behave tomorrow. I love ye." Kissing her once more, he left and returned to his own room.

The next morning Connor was up early and met Mick for breakfast before the girls arrived. Mick was not looking too well. "Mick, are ye feeling ok? Ye don't look too well."

"I guess I'm feeling the effects of yesterday. Don't worry about me. Just have fun with the girls shopping today, if that's possible." Mick chuckled. "I have the doctor coming round to check on me later."

"Mick, Ellen knows about your condition. She's been very concerned and worried since Ireland and outright asked me last night. Neither of the other girls is suspicious, nor will know. I wanted to let ye know that I did explain it to her."

"That's fine Connor. I've seen her watching and she's sharp at detecting small things. There's no problem. I should have told her myself sooner, but I didn't want to alarm her. The best solution was for you to tell her and be there for her. Now enough of this. We have to rest up for the upcoming battles. I feel they will be pretty nasty." Mick smiled at Connor and proceeded to eat a hearty breakfast.

Nora was the first one of the girls to arrive for breakfast. She was bubbly and full of excitement. "I can't wait to start shopping. I have my list all ready, and we have so much to buy this year. Oh, it will be

such fun." Pausing long enough to take a bite of food, she continued on. "Oh, and the balls will be starting next week. Am I going to be allowed to go this year? I'll need a ball gown if so."

"Nora, settle down. Ye are still a bit young for balls. I haven't heard anything about this before now? Should I be aware of this?" Connor looked at Mick, a bit bewildered.

"Actually yes, Connor. In fact, I have Nancy planning one for you and Ellen to announce your engagement. I guess I just forgot in all the commotion to tell you about it. It will be two weeks from now, here. But I daresay there will be balls every weekend between now and Christmas and some dinner parties as well. Your formal clothes will get a good wearing at this time of year." Mick had to chuckle at the look on Connor's face.

Maureen and Ellen arrived together. Ellen kissed Connor on the cheek and sat down next to him. "Connor, you look puzzled. What is it?"

Nora giggled and interrupted. "He just found out about the balls and your party. He's in shock!"

Ellen patted his hand. "Oh, it will be so much fun. I'll explain all about them today. I think we already have two invitations that came yesterday. We can go over them this afternoon when we get back, and decide what you would like to do."

Connor smiled down on her. "Good. I was worried I'd have no say in the matter at all, and just be dragged from place to place." They all laughed at the thought of Connor being dragged anywhere he didn't want to go.

Breakfast over, Connor gave the girls 20 minutes to get ready and meet him in the front hallway. The coach was ready and waiting for them. Mick wished them all well and slipped each one a few extra dollars to spend.

Connor and three excited young ladies climbed into the coach for their shopping excursion. Connor addressed all three of them. "I don't want you scattering all over. I want you to stay together with



me. If you need to go somewhere without someone, we shall split up, but no one is to be alone. Do you understand?"

Maureen sighed. "Connor, we're old enough to take care of ourselves. You needn't worry about us."

"Unless ye want me to have the coach turn around and go home, ye will abide by my rules. Understand?" Connor looked at each one as they said, "Yes Sir."

"Good, now where shall we go first?" Connor lightened the mood.

The shopping excursion was nothing like Connor ever experienced before in his life. There were crowds everywhere. It became necessary several times to split into groups when presents were purchased for each other. Ellen and the girls purchased hair ribbons and pretties for his sisters and toys and clothes for all of them.

Connor bought some books for the boys and suggested different things for them. The girls were not used to buying for boys at all. By the end of the day, Connor was exhausted and the coach was filled with packages. He had even selected some things himself for the girls. Nora and Maureen each had gold pendants and for Ellen he had purchased a beautiful pearl necklace and emerald pendant. He had never in his life spent so much money on anything. It was still amazing to him that his life had changed and he could afford to do it.

When they arrived home, the girls scurried to their rooms with their purchases. Ellen decided she needed to rest before dinner. "After dinner, Connor, I'll go over the invitations with you." She kissed him and scurried after her sisters.

Connor collapsed in the sitting room to rest. Mick joined him. "So, how was shopping?"

"Mick, I think next year my mother or Ellen will take them. It was exhausting. Three excited females at one time are more than I can handle."

"Come, let's have a drink, and chat before dinner. You certainly look like you need it."

Mick poured them each a drink and sat down.

"What did the doctor say, Mick?" Connor noticed that he looked much better.

"He gave me some new medicine. Basically, nothing has changed; it is progressing pretty much as he figured. I will have to start resting more and let you handle things more at the bank. I feel comfortable seeing how fast you're learning, and with Ian's help, we won't have any major problems. These social balls will be good for you to get to know some of our top customers and the influential people in town. I intend to go to the main ones to make sure you're introduced properly, and fend off attacks by the Harrisons."

After dinner, Connor and Ellen sat and looked at the invitations and the calendar. There were more that had arrived that day, and they clearly could not attend them all. Responses were also coming in for their engagement party. Connor shook his head in amazement.

"Ellen, ye know more about this than I do. Ye decide which ones are the important ones and I'll mark them down."

By bedtime, they had a full calendar to keep them busy until Christmas. Ellen was so happy. "Connor, you'll have a wonderful time. I will be the happiest woman at the balls to have you at my side."

## Chapter Twenty-Seven

The next day after church, Mick and Connor were relaxing while the girls went calling. "Connor, I've asked the staff to prepare rooms for your family. Would you like to see them? I didn't know if you wanted them all to have separate rooms or not. If so, we can open up all the guest rooms in the other wing."

"I don't think that's necessary Mick. They are used to sharing basically two rooms now. My mother of course should have her own room, and perhaps Lizzie, but Liam and Tommy can easily share, as can Maggie and Bridey." Connor was amazed that Mick had even thought about it.

"That's fine. I'll instruct them to get the rooms ready. It will be interesting to have a full house. I hope you're up to managing all this," Mick laughed.

"My mother will be a great help, and they're all well behaved so it shouldn't be too much. I wonder how they took the news and where they are now?"

Connor would have been amused if he had been on board the ship with his family. At that precise time, Liam was pacing his cabin, pounding on the door. "Ye best be releasing me from here, ye shanghaiing scum!" He had been forcibly removed from his home and brought on board. Try as he might, no one would listen to his reasons to stay behind and finish the fight. Even his mother was against the idea.

"Liam, Connor has specifically said ye are to come with us. I'm not leaving ye behind to get yourself killed. You heard Captain Johnson ... he will not take no for an answer. Now pack your bags and be quick about it."

Liam packed his bags as his mother had said. The entire family had retired early as they were leaving early the next morning for the ship. Once the house was silent, Liam rose and grabbed his bags and slipped out the door. He hated to

disappoint his mother and Connor, but he couldn't leave now. His heart was tied up with the fight.

He was at the edge of town when he was hit from behind and knocked to the ground. Strong arms held him and he was gagged and tied and thrown in a wagon. An hour later, he was on board the ship locked in a cabin. It had been five days and other than being allowed food and water, he had not been out of the cabin. His mother had sent him a scolding note, but he had not seen her or the rest of the family. He knew they had stopped in one port and now were under sail again.

Finally, the cabin door opened, and Captain Johnson entered. "Good day Liam. I hope you have found the accommodation adequate. Now, let's have a talk about the rest of this trip."

Liam rose and clenched his fists. "I nay need to be talking to the likes of ye. I have been kidnapped and forced here against my will. I'm sure my brother did not intend for me to be treated this way."

"Calm down Liam. Your brother paid well to be assured you would be on board. Obviously, he knew you would resist. You have not been mistreated, only confined to your quarters until we were well out to sea. From now on, you are free to enjoy the rest of the ship and be with your family. However, if there are any problems, I won't hesitate to have you confined until we reach Boston. Now behave yourself and enjoy the journey." Captain Johnson smiled and left the cabin, leaving the door open.

Tommy and Bridey came running into the room moments after the Captain had left. "Liam, we be so glad to see ye. Are ye all right? This is so much fun, and we get to see Connor soon." Both of them were pulling on his arms to get him out of the room. "It's time for lunch and Ma wants to talk to ye. Hurry!"

They pulled him along with them to a bigger cabin and opened the door. His mother was sitting there sewing with Lizzie and Maggie. "Children, ye

go play on deck now. I wish to have a private word with your brother."

The children all scurried out. They knew that tone only too well and none wanted to have any part of the upcoming conversation.

"Close the door Liam and sit down!" Mary Boland did not have a smile on her face. In fact, she looked extremely angry. Liam sat meekly waiting for his mother to speak.

"Liam, I am so ashamed of ye. I raised ye to be respectful and obedient. Connor insisted ye come, cause he knows first hand the danger ye were in. I lost your father, God rest his soul, to the English and I'm not about to lose any more of my family. Connor has fallen on good times and wants us all with him. Who do ye think ye are to deny us that? If ye were any younger I would turn ye oer me knee and paddle you, like the spoiled child ye have been behaving." Mary paused and took a deep breath. "I expect ye to behave the rest of this trip and be an example to your brother and sisters. Ye will apologize to Captain Johnson for your behavior and the extra work you caused him and his men. Do ye understand me, Liam?"

Liam indeed felt ashamed. "Yes Ma, I understand,. I'm sorry I shamed ye. I will apologize to Captain Johnson, but I don't intend to forget the fight. I will talk to Connor about it." Liam rose and kissed his mother on the cheek. "Have I told ye lately that ye are the best ma in the world, and the prettiest too?"

"Go on with ye! What blarney ye have. Come, it's time for lunch." Mary rose, took Liam's arm, and left for the dining room.

The dining room was already full when they arrived. Liam looked around in amazement at all the people, who nodded and greeted his family. They did not seem to think he was out of place at all. Mary showed him their table, and as soon as they were seated, the waiter started bringing their meal. The food was wonderful. Liam had hardly eaten the

food that had been brought to him and he was suddenly very hungry.

The younger children were chatting away about some activities, and Liam barely paid attention since he was so busy eating. Lizzie caught his attention when she demanded of their mother. "I'm not too young to go! There are other girls going who are the same age as me. You're being mean!"

Liam turned to his sister. "Lizzie, mind your tongue. That is no way to talk to Ma, and ye know it. Now what are ye whining about?"

"There's a dance tonight, and Ma says I'm too young to go. Some of the other girls I met are going, and Lucinda even offered me one of her dresses. I want to go!" Lizzie twisted her face into a pout.

Liam thought for a minute. "Who will be attending this dance?"

"Everyone is! The entire ship is invited. At least everyone in first class is. I want to go. After all, I am 14 now!" Lizzie was starting to whine.

"Elizabeth! I said no! Ye are not going to any dance without a chaperone, and I do not feel like going. You will have plenty of dances to attend." Mary was not going to budge an inch.

"How about if I check it out for you, Lizzie, and if I think it looks all right, and Ma says it's okay, I'll take ye to the next one." Liam leaned over and ruffled Lizzie's hair.

Lizzie broke down in tears and ran from the table. "Ye're all mean!"

Liam looked at his mother. "What has gotten into her? She never behaved like that before."

"Tis the other girls she has met. They have turned her into a spoiled brat. Idle rich girls are what they are. I don't approve of some of them at all."

"I'm surprised they took to her so. Surely they must know that we aren't wealthy." Liam was becoming even more puzzled. "Tis the grace of God

and Connor's connections that we aren't in steerage."

Mary sighed deeply, "Yes, that's true, but apparently this Mr. McMahon that Connor is working with is a very wealthy and well-respected man in Boston. The young ladies seem to know the McMahon girls well. I hope Connor knows what he has gotten into, as they seem a spoiled lot to me. Lizzie has had her head turned at the thought that she'll be able to be just like them. Tis worried I am Liam."

"Don't ye worry, Ma. I'll watch over Lizzie. She best get over acting this way or she may well find herself over me knee. She isn't too old for that, and Connor did leave me in charge."

"Then ye may well have your work cut out for ye, as the rest other than Tommy are almost as bad. I best round them up and see what mischief they are up to." Mary rose and went in search of the other three children who were playing on deck.

Liam walked out on deck and started taking a tour around. He hadn't gotten far when he ran into Captain Johnson. "Well Liam, enjoying this fine day? Getting used to your way around?"

"Yes Captain, it is indeed a good day. I must offer ye my sincere apologies for my prior behavior. I was very wrong and now appreciate what ye have done for my family." Liam held out his hand to the Captain.

Captain Johnson shook his hand and smiled. "You are very much like your brother Connor. I have high respect for him and Mick McMahon. You are one lucky family to be going to be with them."

"Sir, I do have one question for ye, if ye have a minute?"

"Surely. What can I do for you?" Captain Johnson moved over to the rail and leaned on it.

"I have heard from my mother that the other girls on this journey are somewhat spoiled and the McMahon girls are the same. I cannot believe my

brother would allow that. But my sisters seem to be taking up their ways."

"I wouldn't worry about that, Liam. Your brother had them well in hand. They were very changed young ladies who left this ship from the three who boarded it." Captain Johnson clapped him on the shoulder and walked off.

Liam smiled. He could indeed imagine Connor handling three very spoiled young ladies and knew exactly how he would have handled them. His sisters had better watch themselves or they would not be pleased when Connor finished with them.

The rest of the afternoon he spent getting to know the ship. It was indeed a fine vessel and the first class deck had every thing he could want. A few times, he spotted one of his siblings playing, but hadn't seen Lizzie since lunch. In fact, he hadn't seen any other young ladies either.

After a bit he decided to investigate the bar. He sat at a table overlooking the sea and ordered a beer. Several men about his age were sitting around a table playing cards. Seeing him sitting alone, they called him to join them.

After a short round of introductions, he joined in the card game with them. He learned they were all students who had visited Ireland for a month. They were now headed back to Boston and school.

When the subject of the dance came up, Liam questioned them about it. It seemed harmless enough. Parents or a chaperone usually escorted the young ladies, but there was plenty of opportunity to sneak out on deck for a quick kiss or so.

A young man named Rob filled Liam in further. "There are a few really forward girls on board that are more than willing to go for a quick snuggle. Lucinda Brookhaven is one. Her family is very rich and she wants nothing more than to meet a man who will marry her. Then, there is this new friend of hers, Lizzie Boland. She seems to be a bit young, but we think she's just as willing."



Liam was shocked. "Thank ye for filling me in. I can assure ye though that Lizzie Boland will not be sneaking anywhere. She happens to be my younger sister, and I will personally see to it that she doesn't."

"I'm sorry Liam. I didn't know. No harm was intended, and there certainly hasn't been an opportunity, but she has been with Lucinda a lot and there's been talk."

"I'm grateful for ye telling me." Liam bought them a beer and they went back to the card game.

The rest of the afternoon passed pleasantly without any upsets. Liam was aware that he had seen the rest of his siblings on deck playing but had not seen Lizzie. At dinner that evening, Lizzie was very quiet and barely talked. Liam decided that he would talk to his mother about her tomorrow. He wanted to see this Lucinda first hand at the dance.

The minute dinner was over Lizzie folded her napkin and placed it on the table. "May I be excused? I wish to go to my cabin and read."

Mary looked at her daughter suspiciously. "Are ye feeling all right? Ye look a bit pale."

"I'm fine. I just wish to read and not see the others going to the dance, since I am being treated as a child and not allowed to go." Lizzie stood up to leave.

Liam stood also. "I'll walk ye to your cabin, sister. I wish to talk to ye."

When they reached the deck, Liam pulled Lizzie to one side. "I have heard enough of your sass to last the rest of the trip. What has gotten into ye? If ye don't watch yourself, I will put you over my knee and tan your bottom good. Now, go to your cabin and think about it. I want to see the sweet Lizzie I know from now on." Liam walked her to the door and made sure she was inside.

He went to his cabin and changed into his best clothes for the dance. Since it wasn't scheduled to start for several hours, he had plenty of time to check things out on deck.

His mother and the other children were sitting on the deck. Mary was chatting with some of the other women, and the children were playing games. After making sure they were all fine, he went to the bar.

The young men from the afternoon were there and they chatted until it was time for the dance. Liam stopped Rob before they went in. "Would ye point out this Lucinda for me? I want to watch her."

"Sure, I'd be happy to. In fact I'm going to try and get her attention myself." Rob chuckled and they entered the ballroom. There weren't too many there yet, but slowly the room filled up.

Liam had danced with a few different girls but was watching for Lucinda and her friends.

Rob approached him and pointed to several girls who had just come into the room. "The blonde with the green dress is Lucinda. I'm going to see if I can get on her dance card before everyone else fills it up."

Rob hurried off, and Liam stationed himself by a pillar to watch. Quite a number of young men did hurry over to the group of young women, leaving pouts on the faces of most of the rest in the room. Lucinda was truly flirting and carrying on with all of them. She had a haughty manner that Liam did not care for at all. His mother was right ... this was not a suitable friend for Lizzie.

He had barely finished that thought when one of the other girls moved and he spotted his sister there with them. She was dressed just like they were and had on jewelry he knew wasn't hers. Liam was infuriated to think that she would blatantly disobey.

Lizzie was smiling and batting her eyes at a young man when Liam grabbed her arm. "Say goodnight, sister. Your time here is done." The young man started to say something but Liam stopped him with a glare. "She is my younger sister, and far too young to be here."

Lizzie blushed scarlet, hearing Liam's words. "Liam! Let me go! Ye can't do this. Ye have no right."

"I have all the right I need, little girl. Ye will be one sorry young lady for your actions tonight." Liam continued pulling her till they reached her cabin. When they were inside, he sat on the dressing stool and pulled her over his knee. Her hairbrush was conveniently nearby and he picked it up. He lifted her skirts and proceeded to pepper her bottom relentlessly with the brush, scolding her the entire time. When he finished, he set her on her feet. "Now ye get in bed. I will tell Ma about this, and ye can face her in the morning. Ye will not be associating with those girls again, so ye best give the dress and jewels back in the morning. Good night."

Liam walked out leaving Lizzie sobbing on the bed. He walked the deck a bit, trying to calm down before he sought out his mother.

Mary had just settled Tommy in bed when Liam knocked on the cabin door. "Liam, I thought ye would be at the dance."

"I was, but when Lizzie arrived with her friends I took her and left."

"Lizzie? She disobeyed and sneaked off to the dance?" Mary was shocked.

"Yes, but she has a sore bottom to show for it now. I told her I was going to tell ye, and she could face ye in the morning." Liam sat down and ran his hand through his thick blonde hair.

"She may just find that her bottom will be a lot sorer once I am finished with her. I will not tolerate disobedience and all of ye know that." Mary poured some tea and handed it to Liam.

"I will be glad to get to Boston and off this ship and away from those girls. They are not doing Lizzie any good."

"I have already informed her that she will not be associating with them again." Liam finished his tea

and kissed his mother on the cheek. "Goodnight Ma, see you in the morning."

Mary was at Lizzie's cabin door early the next morning. The night had not diffused her resolve to teach her daughter a lesson in obedience. When Lizzie saw her mother enter with the strap in hand, she gasped.

"I'm sorry Ma, I really am. I don't know what got into me, but Liam already punished me," Lizzie was backing up into the room.

"I talked to Liam, and I am ashamed of ye, Elizabeth. Now lay over the end of your bed and pull up your nightdress."

Lizzie, crying, obeyed her mother. Anyone walking past could hear the clear sounds of a strap striking a bottom and the wails of Lizzie. "Now young lady, ye get yourself dressed and to breakfast. Ye will stay with your brothers and sisters from now on. Do ye understand me?"

"Yes Ma, I'm sorry." Lizzie stood rubbing a very sore bottom.

Mary held her arms open and Lizzie flew into them. "Ye're a good girl, Lizzie. Ye jest let the devil tempt ye too much. Now return the clothes and be good."

Liam watched as Lizzie sat down very uncomfortably at breakfast. He knew only too well what a dose of Mother's strap felt like. He leaned over and whispered to Lizzie, "I think the rest of this trip will be a bit different now, don't ye?"

His attempt at humor was rewarded with a poke in the ribs, and a sharp glance from their mother. Fortunately, the winds were with them, and they only had another week on board.

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

The next week at the bank was peaceful Connor and Ian thoroughly checked all the reports each day, just in case there was another employee playing tricks. Mick's health was clearly deteriorating and he was now working only a few days a week.

Connor made sure that he kept Mick informed of what was happening each day that he wasn't there. He had finished and was about to leave when he decided the time had come to approach the subject of his health. "Mick, I think it's time to tell Ian the truth about your health. I'm sure he suspects something, and since he has proven to be loyal and helpful, he deserves to know."

Mick thought for a bit. "Let me sleep on it. I'll let you know in the morning. You just go to your dance tonight and enjoy yourself. I'm resting up for our party this weekend."

Connor wasn't at all sure about this social whirl they were on. Already they had been to two dinner parties and tonight was the first of the balls. Ellen was having fun though, and that made him happy. He let Daniel fuss about him as he dressed in his formal clothes.

"You look quite handsome, sir, in that suit. You will have all the ladies turning their heads tonight."

"I only need to turn one lady's head, Daniel." Connor slapped him on the back and laughed. "Don't wait up. I'll be fine."

Ellen was ready and waiting for him when he came downstairs. His breath was taken away at how beautiful she looked in her gown.

"Ellen, ye surely will be the most beautiful woman there tonight!" Connor picked her up and twirled her around.

"Connor! Put me down! My hair will fall." Ellen laughed as he spun her around.

Connor set her on her feet, pulled her close, and kissed her. "No matter ... you would still be beautiful and I love ye."

"I love you too, Connor, but we must go or we shall be late." Ellen took his arm and they left in the waiting carriage.

There were close to a hundred carriages dropping people off. Connor started to tell the driver when to return, but Ellen stopped him. "Connor, let him wait. All the drivers gather in the stables and have a bit of a party themselves. This is a special night for them, too."

Connor smiled at Ellen and helped her down from the carriage. "You are sweet Ellen, thinking of others." Ellen blushed at his compliment.

Once inside, Ellen's friends and people that Connor was now acquainted with from the bank and the other social gatherings quickly engulfed them. He was beginning to make some solid acquaintances and felt much more at ease than he thought possible.

The evening was half over and Ellen was freshening up. While Connor was waiting for her he was talking to Jack Moran, a man that he had seen at all of the gatherings. Jack was an executive with one of the large retail stores, and he and Connor were becoming very friendly. Jack looked away for a moment and then pulled Connor into an alcove. "I think we have trouble brewing. Henry Harrison III has just arrived and appears to be intoxicated. I heard of the troubles you've had with him. It might be best to stay out of his way."

"I don't intend to entertain any conversations with him at all. I'll do my best to stay away from him." Connor looked to where Harrison was standing. He was definitely unsteady on his feet and seemed to be looking around the room for someone specific.

At that moment, Ellen walked back into the room and right past him. Before anyone could react, Henry grabbed her and spun her around to face

him. "So, if it isn't the little belle of the ball. Where's that bastard you're engaged to, that's trying to ruin us?"

Connor and Jack immediately ran to him.

Ellen had turned white and was trying to pull away from him. The room grew silent.

"Henry, let me go, you're hurting me!"

"I'll do more than this, wait and see." Henry raised a hand as if to slap her.

Jack grabbed his arm and Connor pulled Ellen away. "Are ye all right?" Connor looked down at her arms, which were red with fingerprints from Henry.

Ellen rubbed her arms and looked at Connor with tears in her eyes. "I'm fine. He just hurt my arms."

"Go sit down. I'll be with ye in a minute." Connor turned and walked over to where several men were now restraining Harrison.

"If ye ever touch her again, ye will regret the day ye were born. Ye best leave. The like of ye don't belong here." Connor watched as they escorted him out.

The host, Timothy Douglas, ran over to Connor. "I'm so sorry this happened. He wasn't invited and crashed through the servants at the door. I assure you he will not be invited to any social events again."

"Thank ye, Tim. I know it wasn't your fault. I think that Ellen and I will be leaving now. I want to get her home." Connor shook hands and walked over to Ellen. Women talking to her surrounded Ellen. When they saw Connor, they shushed and moved away so he could be with her.

"Are ye ready to go Ellen? I think it is time, I don't want any further problems with Harrison and he may try and come back."

"Yes Connor, I'm ready." Ellen took Connor's hand and rose. She was still a bit unsteady on her feet. They said their goodbyes as they made their way out. The carriage had been called and was

waiting for them. The driver seemed a bit surprised they were leaving so soon.

Connor helped Ellen into the carriage and climbed in after her. He pulled her close and held her as she began to cry. "I'm sorry Connor. I didn't want to ruin your evening."

"Shush Ellen, ye ruined nothing. Harrison did all the ruining. He has ruined his standing in the community. All see him now for what he is." Connor held and comforted Ellen until she quieted.

When they arrived home, Connor walked Ellen to her room, held her close, and kissed her goodnight. "I love ye. Sleep well. I'll see ye in the morning."

"I love you, too, Connor. Good night." Ellen raised her head for another kiss and then went into her room.

Mick was still up when he heard Connor in the hallway. "Connor! Why are you back so early? Ellen isn't sick is she?"

Connor had hoped to wait until morning to talk to Mick. "Ellen is fine. Young Harrison decided to crash the party. Before they could throw him out, he grabbed Ellen by the arms and threatened to hit her. We stopped him and he was thrown out, but Ellen was upset and I decided we needed to come home."

Mick's face grew red with anger. "I'll have him arrested if he comes near any of us again. He's a wild and dangerous man."

"I know Mick. That is another reason I wanted Ellen out of there. I was afraid he might try and come back and really cause a problem."

Mick nodded. "Yes, it was for the best. Get some sleep now and we can talk more in the morning."

Connor said goodnight and returned to his room. His sleep was troubled though with thoughts of Harrison and what might come when they heard of the charges filed against them.



Connor was up early the next morning. He was the first one in the dining room and was having tea and reading the paper when Mick came in.

"I was hoping you'd be here before the girls. I've been thinking about what you said about Ian." Mick paused as a pain spasm hit him. "I feel this disease is progressing a bit faster than the doctor thinks. Tell him today, and then I'm going to make some further decisions and will talk to you about them then."

"That's fine Mick. I think ye do need to rest more. I'll explain it to Ian and ask him to keep it confidential."

"I'm also concerned about the Harrisons and what revenge they may take. I worry about the girls being out alone, especially Ellen. I don't want to scare them, but I think some of Ellen's shopping excursions should be chaperoned for a while." Mick drank his tea and waited for Connor's reaction.

"I know she won't like it, but I agree. I'll talk to her this morning and tell her. Last night could have been ugly." Connor was frowning when Ellen, Maureen, and Nora came in chattering about the ball the night before.

Connor rose and kissed Ellen on the cheek. "I'm going to be in my office for a bit before I leave. Would ye come see me when ye are finished with your breakfast?"

Ellen looked a bit befuddled. "Yes, Connor. Is there something wrong?"

"No, not at all. I just want to talk to you." Connor squeezed her shoulder and left the room.

Twenty minutes later, Ellen knocked on the door and entered timidly. "Connor, you seem preoccupied this morning. Is there something wrong?"

Connor rose from behind the desk and hugged her to him. "Don't look so frightened. Ellen. There's nothing really wrong, but something I must discuss with ye."

Connor pulled her to the couch and onto his lap. "Ellen, last night worries me. I don't trust the Harrisons, and when they learn we have filed charges against them, they may seek revenge. I don't want ye or your sisters to be the target of that. I know ye've been enjoying your shopping trips, but from now on, I don't want ye to go alone. Ye must take Nancy or some of your friends."

Ellen stiffened. "Connor, that's silly! No harm can come to me in public. I will be careful and perfectly fine."

"Ellen! Don't fight me on this. It is a decision your father and I have made. None of ye are to be unescorted outside this house. I know ye think ye will be fine, but I don't trust the Harrison at all."

Ellen didn't respond to Connor, just sat stiffly in his lap. Connor cupped her chin and made her look at him. "Do ye understand Ellen? Ye don't have a choice. This is my decision."

Ellen nodded her head. "Yes, but I think ye're being silly."

"That's fine as long as ye obey. I have to go now. Have a good day and I'll see you tonight." Connor set her on her feet and kissed her.

While Connor was talking to Ellen, Mick had told Maureen and Nora of the new rule. He also informed all the staff.

Nora was upset. "But Papa, I can't even go visiting down the street alone?"

"No Nora, you can't. One of the servants will walk you and come back for you. I don't want to hear any more about it. Now off to the classroom with you."

Grumbling, the two left and met Ellen in the hall. Maureen stopped her. "Have you heard about the new rule?"

"Yes, Connor just told me. He's quite serious about it and so is Papa. We will just have to go along until this problem is over." Ellen walked with them to the classroom.

When Connor arrived at the bank, Ian met him at the door. "We have someone from the commission waiting for you. It appears they need to verify some information on our charges."

"Good, please join me also." Connor and Ian went upstairs to his office and greeted the gentleman.

"Good day Mr. Boland. I am Lawrence Rollings from the Banking Commission. Is there some place we can talk?"

"Please come into my office. I have asked my associate Mr. Riley to join us." Connor opened the door and motioned them in. "Matthew, could you please bring us some refreshment?"

Matthew inquired of Mr. Rollings what he would like, and left to get it.

Connor sat behind the desk while Ian and Mr. Rollings sat in chairs in front. "What can we do for you today Mr. Rollings?"

He opened his briefcase and drew out some papers. "We have received the correspondence from Mr. McMahon outlining some irregularities with Harrison and Associates. I understand that Mr. McMahon is not here and you are fully authorized in his absence to perform his role. I need further information and any other details you may have omitted from this letter."

Ian and Connor spent most of the morning reviewing all the details of the charges. By lunchtime, Mr. Rollings was satisfied that there was sufficient proof, especially the handwritten confession from Deegan.

Mr. Rollings packed away the documents in his case and shook hands with both men. "Be assured we will be addressing this with the board and will consider what penalty to assess on Harrison and Associates. You will be informed of our decision."

"That is good news, expect there will likely be trouble from the Harrisons. They won't take this without seeking revenge." Ian was frowning in

thought. "I just don't know what we can do to ward off attacks ahead of time."

"There are some things I need to discuss with ye, Ian. Let's have lunch at the club where we can be a bit more private." Connor wanted to tell him not only about Mick, but also what had happened the night before.

After Connor had explained about the night before, Ian was shocked. "I have known Henry for years, and though he has had his share of problems and has not always been a gentleman, I can't believe he would stoop that low."

"There is more I need to tell ye also, Ian. I think ye may understand more why Mick was in such a hurry to have Ellen and I marry and start working here." Connor took a deep breath. "He is dying of cancer. There is nothing more to be done and the doctor feels it will be a matter of months. As you know, he has cut back more and more here. He seems to be failing faster."

Ian shook his head. "I have been a bit suspicious. He seems at times to be in pain, but hides it well."

"He told me this morning that he wants the two of us to really take over and run the bank. He isn't ready to announce his leaving yet, but I don't think he plans on being around much anymore. He will of course talk to ye about it when he come in."

"Thank you for telling me that, Connor. It means a lot to me. I will more than happy to work with you on running things." Ian was smiling even though the news had not been happy.

They worked together for the remainder of the day and both felt they had a good understanding of the future plans and how they would work together.

Connor was tired when he arrived home. Ellen wasn't there so he went to his own room to change. Daniel was waiting for him and chatting about the day. "I told Edward about the new rule and he insisted on joining the girls on their walk today."

They were a bit resentful, but it didn't sway him at all."

"Did he leave me a note?" Connor certainly hoped not as he wasn't in the mood to have to discipline any of them.

"No Sir, no notes. I think things were fine. As you don't have a social function tonight, is there anything special you would like me to do?"

"No Daniel, I'm fine. Enjoy the rest of the evening." Daniel finished hanging up Connor's clothes and left.

Connor looked in on Mick and they chatted about the day. Mick did look better since he was getting more rest. "I think the war is about to start. A Mr. Rollings from the Bank Commission spent most of the morning with Ian and me. He is reporting his finding to the board and will let us know what disciplinary action will be taken."

"I believe since they sent Rollings they are seriously considering at least suspending their activities. Henry Jr., can afford not to work any longer but it will leave the younger Henry in an awkward position. I would say he would have to leave town and build something for himself elsewhere. After last night, he will be ruined socially as well. It's sad, but they brought it on themselves." Mick poured two glasses of whiskey and handed one to Connor.

Before Connor could comment Mick brought up something else. "I think you should be aware that our new rules aren't sitting well with three young ladies. There was a bit of a verbal exchange with Edward about his accompanying them on their walk. It ended rather abruptly when I appeared. Later Ellen was upset and has been sulking in her room because she wanted to go shopping and visiting and no one had time to go with her. I'm afraid she exhibited a bit of her old habits and I sent her to her room to contemplate her actions."

"I don't like hearing that, as I was most clear on the subject this morning." Connor rose and set his

glass down. "I think I'll visit Miss Ellen before dinner."

Connor knocked softly on Ellen's door. "Go away! I don't want any company."

Not waiting to knock again, Connor flung open the door and found a surprised Ellen face down on the bed pouting. "Ellen! Ye stop this behavior right now!"

Ellen scurried off the bed. "Connor! I thought it was Maureen or Nora. I didn't hear you come in."

Connor sat in a chair and pulled Ellen into his lap. "Was I not clear this morning on the subject of leaving this house unaccompanied?"

Ellen hung her head. "Yes Sir, but it is far too cumbersome when no one has time and I know I would be fine."

"And having your father send you to your room for acting like a brat is fine?" Connor was getting angrier as she answered.

"I was NOT acting like a brat. I don't like being confined like this. I'm old enough to be able to take care of myself." Ellen crossed her arms on her chest and looked at Connor defiantly.

Connor set her on her feet and rose. "I think ye need some more time to think about that. I'll see you at dinner and we can discuss this further after dinner, in my study." Connor kissed her on the forehead and left. He heard Ellen fling herself on the bed once more.

Their discussion was not going to be pleasant for his fiancée this evening.

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

Connor and Mick were surprised they were the first to arrive for dinner; usually the girls were there early. Nora and Maureen arrived soon after and quietly greeted Connor and Mick. Five minutes passed and Ellen still hadn't joined them.

Connor called Colleen, who was serving them, to him. "Would ye please be so kind as to ask Miss Ellen to join us? We shall wait for her before we're served."

Colleen scurried from the room like a little mouse and fairly ran up the stairs to Ellen's room. She knocked and called through the door, "Miss, Mr. Boland is wanting ye to join them in the dining room. What shall I tell him?" Colleen had already brought Ellen a tray earlier, but had been afraid to tell Connor.

"You may tell him that since I am treated as a child, I feel that I should not take meals with the adults. Tell him I have already been served here." Ellen smiled to herself, thinking of the reaction that would have.

Colleen hurried back to the dining room, with her heart beating fast. She didn't want to tell him what Ellen had said. "Mr. Boland, Sir, Miss Ellen says she will not be joining ye."

"Colleen, what were her exact words?" Connor was growing angry. "I'll not be angry with ye, I just want to know what she said." Connor smiled at the trembling girl.

"She said that since ye treat her as a child she shouldn't be dining with adults. She was served a tray in her room a while ago." Colleen stood waiting further instructions.

"Thank ye Colleen, ye may serve the rest of us now." Connor glanced at Mick and noticed him struggling not to laugh.

Neither Nora nor Maureen knew what to say. They couldn't believe Ellen was acting this way. Finally, Nora couldn't take the silence anymore. "It's

only two days until your party here, Connor. Am I going to be allowed to come?"

Connor smiled at her. "Yes, I think ye may attend, since it is here. And I believe there is a ball next week that both you and Maureen have been invited too, is there not?"

"Oh yes. It's at Mr. Riley's and he always invites us. There are younger people there and games and things for us." Nora was beaming.

Maureen started talking excitedly, too. "This will be my first year at the actual dance though. It will be so much fun. I have a new dress and can hardly wait. Then the next night we put up the tree and trim everything. I love this time of year."

When dinner was over the girls tarried downstairs. They were waiting to see what Connor would do about Ellen. Connor figured that was what they were waiting for. "Don't ye both have homework to attend to?"

"Yes Connor. We don't have to start it right now, though." Maureen figured that would satisfy him.

"Good, then we can have a chat about your behavior this afternoon. Please join me in my office." Connor stood back to allow them to walk in front of him.

Maureen and Nora exchanged nervous glances; they hadn't expected this at all.

Once they were in his office Connor sat behind his desk. "Please sit, both of ye."

Maureen and Nora sat down immediately. Nora looked across at Connor. His face was expressionless and she couldn't tell if he were angry or not. "Have we done something wrong?"

"Were ye both not told this morning of the new rule by your father?"

Both nodded that they were.

"Then please explain to me why ye would question Mr. Howe when he insisted on accompanying ye on your walk? And were not about to give in until your father appeared?" Connor sat back and waited for their responses.



"Connor, we were only going down the street a bit. It would have been perfectly safe. I feel like a baby who needs a nanny when he has to come with us." Maureen looked at him defiantly.

"Nora, do ye agree with Maureen?"

"Yes. If we are all together, nothing can happen. It's silly."

Connor slapped his hand down on the desk hard. "Ye were given an order and told to obey. I neither care nor want to know why you feel the way ye do. Your father and I have made this rule for a very good reason. If I hear of any of ye so much as questioning it again, ye will not be attending balls here or anywhere, and will not be sitting well either. Now, am I understood?"

Both girls jumped when he slammed the desk. "Yes Connor, we do."

"Good, then go to your rooms and do your homework. As ye pass Ellen's room tell her she has one minute to present herself here."

Maureen and Nora left as fast as they could. Maureen knocked on Ellen's door. "Ellen, Connor says you have one minute to come to his office."

"I won't be ordered around. If he wants to talk to me he can come here," Ellen responded through the closed door. She intended to show him he wasn't going to treat her like a child.

Connor waited five minutes then walked up the stairs and opened Ellen's door without knocking. She gasped when he walked in and without saying a word pulled her off the bed and stood her on her feet. He turned her and swatted her hard ten times.

"Ye will march yourself down to my office NOW!" Connor watched as Ellen thought for a moment and didn't move.

"You can't treat me ..." Ellen got no further. She found herself over his shoulder and carried downstairs.

"Connor, put me down! I'll walk! Put me down!" When he didn't say a word Ellen pounded on his back with her fists.

Still Connor said nothing until they were in his office and he kicked the door closed. He sat down on the chair and pulled Ellen over his knee. Quickly he flipped her skirts and bared her. His hand started coming down fast and hard on her upturned bottom.

"Ye and I are going to have a long discussion on your behavior. Ye are behaving like a spoiled brat. Ye know better than that, and I will not tolerate it." Connor kept spanking until she was crying and begging him to stop.

He pulled her up and walked her to the corner. "Now ye can stand here and think about your behavior today. Then we will finish our discussion. I don't want to hear one word from ye, until I say ye may talk."

Connor let her stand there for twenty minutes until her snuffling had stopped. In the meantime, he took a large ruler and set it on the desk next to him.

"Ellen, come her please."

Ellen walked over to stand in front of him with her eyes downcast and waited for him to say something.

Connor reached out and lifted her chin so she was looking him in the eyes. "I can't begin to tell ye how disappointed I am in your actions. Now, I have told ye before I won't tolerate disobedience or insolence and ye have surely been guilty of both. I want ye to bend over the desk and grab the other side with your hands. If ye are not able to remember the rules, maybe this ruler will help you. After each swat I want ye to repeat, 'I will obey the rules.' Do ye understand?"

"Yes, Connor. I'm sorry." Ellen was already crying.

"I'm sure ye will be even sorrier when we are finished." Connor pushed down on her back and flipped her skirts up once again. He raised the ruler high and brought it down hard on her right cheek. Ellen yelped but repeated, "I will obey the rules."

Connor gave her twenty more and then threw down the ruler. He picked her up off the desk, carried her to the couch, and held her. "Ellen, why are ye behaving this way? Ye knew I would not tolerate it. I explained very carefully to ye this morning the reason for the rules."

Ellen sobbed into his shoulder and apologized. It took her quite a few minutes to calm down. Once she had, Connor turned her to face him and wiped her tears away with his thumb. "Now what is this about?"

"I didn't mean to be this way. I just didn't want to be cooped up, and when you left me this afternoon I got angry." Ellen sniffed and new tears formed.

Connor held her at arms length. "I will not put up with temper tantrums, young lady. Ye best not ever repeat this behavior or it will be the strop instead of the ruler. Ye are expected to behave as an adult. There is danger, or your father and I would not have issued the rule. Now are ye clear on this?"

"Yes Connor. I won't disobey it." Ellen looked down and started softly crying.

Connor hugged her to him and gently rubbed her back. "It's far too late for studying tonight, but tomorrow I want ye to stay in class and extra hour and then we will spend an hour in the evening."

Connor poured himself a brandy and Ellen a glass of wine. "Let's sit and discuss the wedding plans, and what we need to do for this party Saturday."

"Nancy and Papa have everything planned. The ballroom has been cleaned and decorated, the invitations of course have been sent and we will have 100 people coming. Oh Connor, it should be grand. I hope it will be the highlight of the Christmas social season." Ellen snuggled against Connor's chest. "I promise I won't be bad any more. I'm sorry."

"I know Ellen and ye are forgiven, so no more need to apologize." Connor pulled her into a kiss. They continued to cuddle and kiss and discuss the rest of the parties and Christmas.

Ellen stifled a yawn. "I'm glad there is just our party and the Riley's next week. It's been an exhausting round this year."

"Yes, and I think it is time for ye to be in bed. Come, I'll walk up with ye." Connor turned off the gas lamp and took Ellen's arm to walk upstairs. "Or would ye rather go up the way ye came down?"

Ellen looked at him and laughed. "No, I believe I'll walk this time."

At her door, Connor pulled Ellen close to him and kissed her deeply. "Sleep well, and please be good. I don't enjoy punishing ye."

Mick decided the next morning that he felt well enough to go to work. He wanted to keep making appearances as much as possible. He wasn't ready to let his staff know of his condition as yet. The more time Ian and Connor had to establish their authority the better it would be. In the carriage on the way to the bank, Mick told Connor what he had planned

"I plan on announcing today, that I'll be retiring from the day to day activities of the bank. I will formally announce that you are now the President and Ian your Vice President. The two of you will be in charge of all the daily decisions regarding the bank. I shall continue as Chairman of the Board and will appear from time to time."

"Are ye sure this is the right time? Should ye wait a bit longer until they are more comfortable with me?"

Mick patted Connors shoulder. "No, I think this is the exactly right time. They know and trust Ian and have seen how he looks up to you and how well you work together. I don't foresee any problems other than possibly a few of the higher executives. If Harrison and Associates are fined or shut down,

there will be no other place of our repute for them to go."

Mick called Ian into his office as soon as they arrived. "Connor, please join us."

Ian gave Connor a quizzical look, but Connor just winked at him.

"Now Ian, I have already told Connor of my decision on the way here, but you need to know also." Mick outlined for Ian exactly what he had told Connor. "Are you comfortable with this Ian?"

"Yes Sir, more than comfortable. I appreciate your holding me in this regard." Ian stood and shook hands with Mick and Connor. "I think we make a great team."

"Good. You both of course will receive salary adjustments to compensate for your duties. I shall announce this to the remainder of the staff throughout the day. Now, let's get down to business shall we?" Mick ushered them both out the door and called for Matthew to come into his office.

Connor and Ian were busy poring over reports together and discussing strategy when they heard a woman's loud voice asking for Mr. McMahon.

Matthew was explaining that he was in a meeting and unavailable. "I don't show that he has any appointments today. Can I make an appointment for you at a later time?"

"Young man, don't take that tone with me. I don't need an appointment. I shall wait for him. This is a serious matter that needs to be discussed with him immediately." The woman sat down on a chair prepared to wait.

Matthew was a bit flustered. "I shall tell him you are here. May I have your name and what it is you wish to discuss with him?"

"You may tell him it is Mrs. Thompson. I'm sure in your low class you wouldn't recognize my name, but I happen to be a very important person in this city. My business with Mr. McMahon is certainly nothing for an ignorant servant to know."

Connor peered out the door and immediately recognized the famous Mrs. Thompson from the ship. He whispered to Ian. "I'll handle this. It should be most interesting."

"Is there a problem here, Matthew?" Connor stood next to Matthew's desk.

Matthew looked up at him with a horrified look on his face. "This lady is demanding to see Mr. McMahon, and as you know, he's in meetings all day."

"Ah Mrs. Thompson. I'm sure ye must remember me from the ship, Connor Boland? I'm in charge of the bank now. Is there something I can assist ye with?" Connor smiled down at her.

"I wish to speak with Mr. McMahon regarding a gross breach of etiquette by whomever is handling his social affairs. IF that is YOU, then you are hardly the person to whom I wish to speak." She sniffed and turned away from him.

"Ye must not have understood me. I am the President of this bank. Mr. McMahon's affairs are now my affairs. What is this terrible breach ye seem to think has happened?"

"Must we discuss this here in front of your lackey?"

"Yes we must. Matthew is a trusted and reliable member of my staff. If ye wish to discuss anything it will be here so he may take the proper notes." Connor was trying to rein in his anger.

"Fine. If you must know, there has apparently been an oversight. I didn't receive my invitation to his ball on Saturday. I heard of it from my friends who all seem to be invited. It is obviously an error since I am the elite of the society in Boston."

Connor could contain himself no more. "No, Mrs. Thompson, it was no oversight. Ye see the ball is to celebrate the engagement of Miss Ellen McMahon and myself. Since she was told most emphatically that ye wished nothing to do with her, we have only seen your wishes fulfilled. Now I have a busy day, if you will excuse me."

Mrs. Thompson rose and her face was scarlet. "I had no idea she was Mr. McMahon's daughter. Her behavior, as I recall, was atrocious. This is an insult and an outrage!"

"So be it. Please leave the premises before I have security escort ye out." Connor stood and watched her storm from the office, her skirts flouncing in time to her angry march.

"Connor, that was the greatest thing I have ever witnessed. That woman is the bane of society ... everyone is afraid of her." Ian was laughing and even Matthew had settled down and was chuckling.

"I bet this isn't the last you hear of her though. She'll try and have you and Ellen excluded from everything." Ian was still laughing. "And she'll be at our party and I'm afraid you'll run into her there."

"She can do as she wishes. Attending balls isn't my first priority, plus I feel there will be others who may just stand up to her now. I wonder how she'll feel when she realizes she isn't invited to the wedding either." Connor chuckled himself as they walked back to his office.

Mick stopped by to take them both to lunch. "Come, it's time to relax a bit. I want to hear all about the encounter with Mrs. Thompson. Matthew was so excited he could barely talk."

When Connor and Ian finished telling Mick the story, he was laughing harder than he had in a long time. "Oh I can just picture her face. I'm sure I'll be receiving a long winded vindictive warning me of the dire consequences of slighting her."

They were all in a jovial mood when they arrived back at the bank. Matthew was waiting for them with a worried look on his face. "This letter has arrived from Mr. Rollins. I was instructed that you were to see it as soon as possible."

"Thank you, Matthew." Connor took the envelope and the three went into Mick's office.

Connor handed the envelope to Mick. "Why don't you read it aloud for us."

Mick tore it open and read quickly.

*Please be informed that we have investigated the charges you placed against Harrison and Associates. We have found your charges credible and the evidence fully in support of the charges.*

*We are therefore today, revoking the business and banking license for Harrison and Associates and fining them each a sum of \$20,000.00 in punitive damages. The license is revoked until such time as they can prove they are worthy to do business fairly in the State of Massachusetts.*

*Thank you again for informing us of this, and please accept our apologies for the serious harm this could have caused your business.*

*Yours truly,*

*Lawrence Rollings*

Mick put it down and looked at Ian and Connor. "Gentlemen, it will get very interesting from here on. We best be on our guard at all times. I will inform security."

Mick left to talk to Matthew, and Connor and Ian sat and looked at one another. Connor finally broke the silence. "Do you have any idea what they may do?"

"I think the elder Harrison will just retire. Young Henry will be the concern, since he really has squandered most of his inheritances. I think he will try and take personal revenge on you in some manner, Connor."

"Yes, I think so, too. I am more worried about him seeking to harm Ellen. I do hope she obeys and doesn't wander out alone."

They spent the rest of the day planning, and when finally Connor and Mick arrived home, Connor let out a sigh of relief that Ellen was there waiting to greet them.



## Chapter Thirty

Connor greeted Ellen with a hug and kiss. "How were ye today?" He looked at her in mock sternness.

"I was an angel of course and did my extra class work and still had time for Nancy and I to get a little more shopping done for Christmas."

Ellen hugged Mick and gave him a kiss on the cheek. "You look tired, Papa. Are you all right?"

"Yes, but I'm going to take a short nap before dinner, so you two will have to entertain yourselves." Mick slowly ascended the stairs.

"I'll join ye in the parlor as soon as I have changed." Connor kissed Ellen again and went up to change.

When he returned she was waiting for him, with a glass of whiskey she had poured for him. "I fixed it like Papa likes it. I hope it's all right."

"There is little ye can do to harm a good whiskey. Come sit with me and tell me about your day."

"We had class and I actually got all the math problems right. I impressed Mr. Howe with my essay on history, also. He said I am making good progress." Ellen beamed, waiting for Connor's reaction.

"That is wonderful Ellen. That makes me very proud of ye. What else did ye do?"

Before Ellen could answer, Maureen and Nora came into the room. Maureen asked Connor excitedly, "Did Ellen tell you what happened when she and Nancy were shopping?"

Ellen looked daggers at Maureen. "No, Miss Nosey, I haven't had a chance yet. Why don't you and Nora go keep Nancy company? Connor and I wish to be alone."

Maureen stuck her tongue out at Ellen. "This is my house, too, and this is a public room. We can stay if we want to." Maureen and Nora plopped

themselves down on chairs and Nora said, "Well, go ahead and tell him."

Connor could feel Ellen tense. "Nora and Maureen, I think it best ye take Ellen's suggestion. I wish to talk to her alone. Now off with ye. We can all talk and visit after dinner."

Maureen stood up and left muttering. "That figures. She always gets her own way."

"MAUREEN! The will be enough of that." Connor had heard her on her way out. His tone of voice caused her to scurry the rest of the way.

"Now Ellen, what was it they were so anxious for me to hear?"

"I was just about to tell you when they came in." Ellen took a deep breath.

"I told you that Nancy and I were shopping today for Christmas things. We had just left a store when there was a commotion on the street ahead of us. Our carriage was in that direction. We were hurrying toward it when the crowd came our way. They were all running after one person, yelling at him. It wasn't until they were right on top of us that we realized it was Henry Harrison. He stopped and pointed at me and started screaming. "She's the reason your bank is closed. It's her and her friend's fault. Go ask her." He spit at me, and before anything else could happen, the carriage driver grabbed us and lifted us into the carriage. We found out as we passed the bank that they were closed down and examiners were there disbursing funds to people. Connor, it was a mob scene."

Connor tensed hearing this. "I'm glad ye and Nancy weren't harmed. Our charges against them resulted in them being shut down. That's why we are worried about your safety. I think maybe from now on one of the male servants should accompany ye if I am not able to. I will ask Daniel if he would be available. I would prefer that ye go as little as possible to the shopping area."

"I was so scared Connor.....he really looked at me with such hate. I never did anything to him to

have him hate me so." Ellen snuggled tight against Connor.

"I know my love, but he is one who will blame anyone for his own problems. Ye must listen and obey me to stay safe. I hope this will settle and he will leave town. I'll do whatever is necessary to keep all of ye safe. I would prefer that your father not be told about today. He will be very upset and I would rather he not tax himself with this. It's time to prepare for dinner. Would you please tell Nora and Maureen that I don't want this discussed at the dinner table? I prefer light conversation this evening."

Ellen left to find her sisters and Connor went in search of Nancy and Daniel. He found Nancy first. "Ellen has told me of your experience this afternoon. I'm sorry ye were subjected to that, but I'm afraid it may only get worse. I don't wish Mick to know of this just yet, so please don't bring it up with him. I plan on asking Daniel to accompany Ellen and ye on any shopping excursions, but I would prefer they be few."

"I understand that Connor, and I think it's wise. I'm so glad you're here. This house has been such a nicer, happier place." Nancy blushed as Connor hugged her.

Daniel was waiting for Connor in his room. "I'm glad you're here. I have a special favor to ask of ye."

"I hope it has something to do with the way Miss Ellen and Nancy were treated this afternoon. It has been the talk of the servants since." Daniel brushed off one of Connor's dinner jackets and handed it to him.

"Yes it does. I'd like ye to act as a bodyguard for Ellen or any of the others if they wish to go shopping. Since the Harrisons' bank has been shut, I expect there will be big trouble, and some may be aimed at Ellen." Connor slipped his coat on and was ready to leave for dinner.

"I will be more than happy to accompany them anywhere they wish to go. I can always catch up on my work later."

"Don't worry about that. I'll see to it that you are cleared to be allowed to do this." Connor slapped Daniel on the back. "Thank you. It means a lot to me."

Mick didn't come to dinner, but sent word that he wanted to rest more and would eat in his chambers. Ellen noticed a frown and look of concern cross Connor's face at the news. The general discussion was light and about the upcoming party and the holidays. Nora was the most excited about Christmas. "Oh I can hardly wait. It is so much fun. Where do you think your family will be Connor?"

"I expect on board ship, almost here." Connor had to laugh at her enthusiasm.

"Maybe they will make it for Christmas. Wouldn't that be grand?" Nora was almost bouncing in her seat. "We have presents for all of them anyway."

"It would make me very happy to have them here for Christmas, but we shall just have to wait and see."

After dinner, they all gathered in the parlor and played games until it was time for Nora to retire. Maureen left with her, leaving Connor and Ellen alone once again.

"Connor, I don't think father should work anymore. He looked so tired and ill tonight."

Ellen was frowning deeply.

"I agree and I don't think he will. He announced today that I was now the President and Ian and I would be running the bank together. I do think that is the only reason he went in to the office today." Connor pulled Ellen closer to him. "Don't worry about it. Remember I will be here to take care of you."

Ellen smiled up at him and snuggled closer to him.

"I do have something funny to tell you that happened today." Connor laughed remembering the look on Mrs. Thompson's face.

Ellen was giggling when he finished telling the story. "Oh she must be furious! No one has ever stood up to her before. I'm so glad you did Connor. She is so mean and cruel."

"She threatened to have us banned from society, so we shall see what happens. We will see her at Ian's party, and I want ye to stay as far away from her as ye can."

"That won't be a problem. I want nothing to do with her." Ellen was still giggling at the story as she left for bed.

Connor stayed behind to write a note to Edward regarding the incident with Nancy and Ellen and his new instructions. He slept well despite his concerns for the near future.

The next morning Mick was at the breakfast table when Connor arrived.

"Good morning, Mick, how are ye feeling?"

"I'm well rested thank you, but I'm going to stay home the rest of the week. That way I'll be fresh for the party. I know you and Ian can handle things without me."

The rest of the week was uneventful. They opened a lot of new accounts that were former Harrison customers. The closing of their establishment was front-page news and the scandal of the city. People everywhere were talking about it.

Every day at the club different members approached Connor or Ian with questions about Harrison's closure. They said as little as possible to avoid any chance that either Harrison could sue them for slander.

On Friday, one of the older club members approached their table. Connor didn't recognize the white haired gentlemen at all. Ian stood and greeted him.

"Mr. Henley, it's good to see you again. I don't believe you have met Connor Boland. Connor, this

is David Henley, one of the founding members of the club."

Connor stood and shook his hand. "It is a pleasure to meet ye, Sir."

"I have heard a lot about you Connor, and would like a word with the two of you if I may?"

Connor pulled a chair out for him. "By all means, please join us."

After they were all seated David began to speak. "I know the basic story of what happened with the Harrisons. I have known them as well as the McMahon family for many years. I trust Mick completely, but I want to warn you, both of you, that the younger Harrison plans on seeking revenge. I'm not sure in what manner, but I have heard talk from younger members who are still friendly with him. He believes that you, Connor, took what he considered to be his."

Connor shook his head, "What did he consider to be his?"

"If you hadn't been hired by Mick when you were, he feels that he would have been able to successfully court Ellen and inherit the bank when Mick retired. He and his father would then have the largest bank in the State. That of course has been ruined by your arrival and engagement to Ellen."

David took the drink Ian had ordered for him and sipped it. "They are of course totally ruined in this town. They have lost not only their business and good name, but their standing in society as well. I don't understand why the elder Harrison allowed Henry to lead him so astray."

"Thank ye, Mr. Henley, for telling us this. I know he is angry and there has already been some unpleasantness with him." Connor sat quietly thinking.

"Please call me David. I am available to assist in anyway I can, as are the other members of the club. Thank you for the drink. I must be on my way now." David rose and shook hands with Connor and

Ian and made his way down the stairs and out of the club.

"Connor, you may not know it, but he is a very powerful, influential man in this city. It helps a lot to know he is supporting us."

The afternoon passed quietly. As he was leaving Ian paused in the door of Connor's office. "I'll see you tomorrow at your party."

Connor left soon after. He had to admit he was a bit nervous about being the host at tomorrow's gathering.

Ellen was waiting for him all excited. "Oh Connor, you should see the ballroom ... it's gorgeous! Come look!" She had him by the hand and was dragging him to the other side of the house where the ballroom was located. When she opened the door, Connor had to agree that it was indeed beautiful.

"Ellen, this is the nicest ballroom we have seen yet this season. It is perfect." Connor pulled her close and kissed her.

They walked back to the parlor and sat down. "How was your day, Ellen?"

"I was very busy. I finished shopping with Daniel's help and everything was fine. Now I am all ready for Christmas and only have a few things to do for the wedding. Papa and Nancy sent the invitations out today. It's getting so close. Are you excited?"

"Yes and I will be glad when it is over and ye are truly mine." Connor hugged her close.

The next day the house was humming with activity from dawn up through an early dinner. Mick was laughing at Connor's reaction to the hubbub and the three girls nervously eating dinner, just waiting until it was time to dress.

Everyone was dressed and ready well before the first guests arrived. Connor looked at Ellen in awe. "Ellen, ye are by far the most beautiful woman in the entire city of Boston. I'm so honored to have ye at my side."

Ellen blushed a bright red. "Connor, I'm honored to be with you, also."

Connor looked at Maureen and Nora, "Ye are both beautiful as well. All my young ladies make me proud."

Nora giggled and spun around in her dress. "See how it twirls! I hope I get asked to dance so I can show it off."

Connor chuckled at her. "I will dance with ye, but I'm sure there will be others."

Mick joined them, beaming at the sight of his happy family. "You all make me so proud of you. I hope this is the best party ever."

The guests began arriving and soon the ballroom was full. Connor had danced with both Nora and Maureen and they were now enjoying dancing with others. Nora was absolutely thrilled as this was her first real party.

Ellen and Connor mingled with the guests and were accepting their congratulations from everyone. David Henley approached them and kissed Ellen's hand. "I haven't seen you since you were a young girl. but you have grown into a beautiful woman. My congratulations to both of you."

Ellen blushed at the compliment. "Thank you, Mr. Henley, that is most kind of you. If you would both excuse me for a moment, my sister is calling for me."

Ellen went to talk to Nora, and Connor and David stood chatting. Mick soon joined them.

"David, nice to see you again. I haven't seen you in ages. How are you doing?"

"Fine Mick, retirement is suiting me. I hear that you're headed there yourself. Turned the reins over to young Connor here, with Ian's aid. Wise choice." David slapped Mick on the back.

"Yes, Connor has been a god send for me. Retirement is suiting me well so far. I haven't felt this rested in a long time."

David looked hard at Mick. "If I can ever be of assistance, please let me know. I told Connor and



Ian the same at lunch yesterday. I think I best find my wife now."

After he had gone Mick looked at Connor. "You didn't tell me you had lunch with David Henley yesterday. He is usually very aloof."

"I didn't exactly have lunch with him, he came to the table and introduced himself. He sat down and had a drink with Ian and me. He offered his assistance should we ever need it and warned us that young Henry was plotting some sort of revenge. We figured that, but he said if he heard anything he would definitely let us know." Connor looked over the room.

"It does appear that everyone is having a good time. I'm glad for Ellen that this is such a success. She wanted so badly for it to be the ball of the season. Speaking of that, I wonder what Nora called her over for. I best go and check on them. It's almost time for Nora to be leaving anyway."

"I plan on making the big toast in five minutes so meet me at the front of the room with Ellen." Mick ambled off to greet other guests.

Connor found Nora and Ellen whispering in a corner of the room. "Ok ladies, what is the big secret?"

Nora and Ellen jumped when Connor spoke, neither one had heard him approach.

"We were, um, just talking about the dance," Nora quickly said.

"Now Miss Nora, why do I not believe that? I don't think ye wish to tell me a lie do ye?" Connor leveled a stern look her way.

Nora lowered her head and looked at Ellen. "Connor, she doesn't want to have to leave early. Can she please stay?"

"Nora staying until the end is far too late for ye. I will allow ye to stay one more hour and that's all. Don't ask for more beyond that."

Nora threw her arms around Connor's waist. "Thank you, I won't." She scampered off to rejoin the party.

"Now Miss Ellen, what is this plotting against me that was going on?" Connor smiled down at her. "That is not the way we will handle things is it?"

"Connor, I wasn't plotting. I was advising her on how to plead her case is all. Shall we dance?"

Connor swung her onto the dance floor. "I think we have time for one, and then your father wants us up front for his toast."

Mick was waiting for them when they arrived. He had the musicians stop playing and waited until waiters had circulated flutes of champagne to all the guests. Even Nora managed to sneak one.

"Ladies and Gentlemen! Thank you so much for attending tonight to help celebrate the engagement of my daughter, Ellen, to Connor Boland. I feel truly blessed to be the father of such a wonderful daughter and to have Connor as my future son-in-law. Please join me in a toast to their future." Mick raised his glass and toasted Ellen and Connor. The crowd did likewise. When Connor and Ellen toasted each other the guests applauded them.

Mick cleared his throat, "Ladies and Gentlemen, enjoy the rest of your evening. I wish you all....."

Before he could finish, there was a commotion at the door. Mick and James were ushered into the room by Henry Harrison holding a pistol pointed at them.

Connor pushed Ellen behind Mick and stalked angrily toward him. "What is the meaning of this? Put down that pistol and leave immediately! Ye are not welcome here."

Several of the male guests were quietly coming behind Henry to try and grab him. No one knew that a servant had heard the commotion when Henry had stormed the door and had run to get the police.

Before anyone could grab Henry, he raised the pistol and pointed it at Connor. "I'll see you in hell first, before I leave here!"

Time froze and Connor grabbed for the gun as a shot rang out. The only sound in the room was Ellen screaming. "CONNOR, NO!"

## Chapter Thirty-One

Mick grabbed Ellen and stopped her from running to Connor. Ian Riley was standing near and he held Ellen as Mick raced toward the door. It was only as the crowd cleared did he see the Sergeant standing there with a gun in his hand. Connor was picking himself up from the floor, but Henry lay motionless.

"Connor, are you all right?" Mick thought his heart would stop beating before he answered.

"Yes Mick, I'm fine. I ducked when I saw the Sergeant. But I think Henry is dead." Connor walked over to the Sergeant. "Thank ye for arriving when you did."

"You're welcome. I'm sorry your party was ruined by the likes of him. He's been nothing but trouble for years. I'm going to have to ask you to clear the room." In a loud voice, the Sergeant asked those men who were witnesses to please stay until the detectives arrived. He turned to James. "Please go to the station and tell them what happened. They will need to send help and a wagon for the body."

Connor left to get Ellen. When he came up to her, she flung herself crying into his arms. "Oh Connor, I was so scared. I thought he had killed you."

"Shush, I'm fine, but he isn't. I want ye to take your sisters and go up to your room. I will join ye there as soon as we are done with the police." Connor hugged her and kissed her lightly. Nancy was there and ushered the three white faced girls out and to their rooms.

The rest of the guests quickly said their goodnights and left. This would be a party they'd remember for the rest of their lives. The sound of horrified voices whispering on the way out was only a sign of the scandal that would unfold in the next few days.

The remaining guests were seated in the parlor. Mick made sure that they had refreshments while they waited. Connor was pacing the length of the room, obviously terribly upset.

Lieutenant Houlihan arrived along with a doctor and stretcher-bearers. The doctor was taken to the ballroom and pronounced Henry dead, and ordered him to be removed to the morgue.

Lt. Houlihan approached Mick, "Where might I privately talk with the witnesses? I know they wish to be on their way."

"You may use my office." Mick took him to his office and saw him settled. The sergeant was seated on the sofa to take notes.

"Would you please send Connor Boland in first?"

Mick returned to the parlor. "Connor, he wishes to talk to you first, then you may go see to the girls. I will attend to the guests.

Connor knocked on the door and entered the office. He was suddenly chilled at the memory of being interrogated when he was arrested in Ireland.

"Please, Mr. Boland, have a seat. I understand this has been a most trying evening for you, and I am sorry this has happened at what should be a joyous occasion."

Connor sat and nodded his thanks. He wasn't sure he could speak at the moment.

"Now would you please tell me exactly what you remember happening."

Connor told him about hearing the commotion at the door and approaching Henry. "I thought he was drunk, and I could safely disarm him. I knew he was harboring hard feelings, but I didn't want a scene at the party. When he pointed the gun at me and started to pull the trigger I realized he was intent on murder. I ducked and saw the Sergeant shoot him. I felt Henry's bullet pass by and into the ceiling. It was a wonder someone else wasn't hurt."

The Lieutenant asked a few more questions and dismissed him. "Please have one of the other gentlemen come in."

Connor asked Mick to see to the orderly questioning. He turned to the guests waiting. "Please accept my apology for what has happened this evening. I'm sorry that ye have been so inconvenienced."

As he left the room, they all assured him that they were fine and also sorry he had been attacked in the manner he was.

Connor took the stairs two at a time and hurried to Ellen's room. Three scared young ladies were huddled on the bed. Nancy was trying to calm them.

"Nancy, are ye okay?" Connor asked her looking deep into her eyes.

"Yes Connor, I'm fine, but I think we all need some rest. Nora is way past her bedtime."

"Let me talk to them for a minute and then you can see them to their rooms."

Connor sat down on the bed and gathered the three into his arms. Ellen started sobbing as soon as his arm was around her. When they had quieted a bit, Connor spoke to them softly.

"I know ye've all had a scare and shock tonight, but everyone is fine. Ye need some rest and tomorrow we can all talk about it some more. Say a prayer for Henry's soul before ye go to bed." Connor hugged Nora and Maureen close. "Are ye all right?"

Both nodded yes. Nora looked up at Connor with her tear-stained face and scared eyes. "I don't want to sleep alone tonight. I'm scared."

"Where do ye wish to sleep, Nora?"

"May I sleep with Maureen? Please, Maureen, may I?" Nora did indeed seem terrified.

Nancy interrupted. "How about if I sleep with both of you in the old nursery. We can make up the beds quick and then we will be all together. Is that all right?"

Maureen and Nora both jumped off the bed agreeing and hurrying after her to help make the beds.

Connor stood and hugged Nancy. "Thank ye. That is most kind of ye."

Connor lifted Ellen from the bed, carried her to the chair, and sat with her in his lap, cuddling her close. "I was so scared that he would hurt ye, and then that I was going to be killed and unable to protect ye."

Ellen could feel Connor's heart beating through his shirt. "Oh Connor, I was so scared also, but I didn't worry about me, just you. I know it's a bad thing to say but I'm glad he's gone." She held tight to Connor.

Neither said a thing but sat and held on to one another. Ellen finally fell asleep in Connor's arms. He gently kissed her until she awoke. "I think it's time for ye to get some sleep too. I'll see ye in the morning." Connor kissed her good night and left.

Mick was just coming up the stairs when he came from Ellen's room. "Is it all over with, Mick?"

"Yes Connor, they're all gone. Come have a drink with me. I doubt I can sleep just yet."

Mick poured them both stiff whiskeys and they sat in front of the fire in Mick's study. Connor's hand was shaking as he took the glass.

"It's all right Connor. I know it's been a trying time. I was shaking for a bit myself. I worry though about the effect this will have on Henry Senior. I never wished something like this to happen." Mick downed his whiskey and poured another.

Connor ran his hands through his hair. "I know, Mick. I didn't foresee this. I knew he was angry and wanted revenge, but murder never entered my mind. This is supposed to be such a happy time for Ellen, and I'm afraid all she will have is bad memories."

"Don't worry, Connor. She will remember how you were here for her, and the memories from here on should only be good ones." Mick downed the rest of his drink and yawned.

"We best get to sleep ourselves, tomorrow is likely to be hectic." Mick stood and walked Connor to the door.

The mood was still somewhat somber in the morning; everyone was quiet at breakfast and on the way to church. The carriage approached the house on the way home and stopped. The driver called to Mick, "Sir, there seems to be a crowd of people around the house. Do you want me to drive through them?"

Mick looked out the door and swore. "Drive through them. Connor, it seems we have some members of the press on our doorstep. We will need to escort the girls in as fast as possible. I will handle the press."

"Mick, you're tired. I'll handle the press and ye can take the girls in." Connor leapt out of the carriage as soon as it stopped, and helped the three girls out. Mick ushered them inside and shut the door. Connor remained standing on the porch. The crowd of reporters thrust toward him, all barking questions at the same time.

"Please, I'll give you a statement and that is all." Connor held his hands up to stop them.

"Just tell us what happened here last night? How did Henry Harrison, III get killed?" One reporter was more persistent.

"Mr. Harrison broke into our home last night brandishing a firearm. He took our butler and another servant captive and came to the ballroom. Other servants ran for the police. When they arrived Mr. Harrison was preparing to shoot me, and the police instead shot him. If ye have further questions, address them to the police. I will thank ye to leave the premises and allow us our peace." Connor went into the house and closed the door. In a few minutes time they had all left.

Ellen was waiting for him in the parlor. "I heard what you said. You really handled them well. Papa went to his room and Nora and Maureen said they wanted to rest until lunch. I don't think they slept too well last night. Nancy said Nora had nightmares all night long."

Connor sank down onto the sofa and pulled Ellen close to him. "I doubt any of us slept all that well. I think maybe a rest until lunch is a good idea. I'm tired myself."

"Yes, I am too. I'll see you at lunch." Ellen gave Connor a hug and a kiss and left for her room.

Connor waited for a few minutes to make sure everyone had left and then retired to his room for a nap as well.

Everyone was more rested and in better moods at lunch. They talked about the night before and how they should handle questions from friends.

"I think the less you say the better," Mick told them all. "Connor and I will have to discuss how we will handle the Harrisons. I'm not sure what we should do at this point."

Connor agreed. "We don't want to partake in any gossip. I'm sure your friends will ask all kinds of questions, but just say as little as possible and don't embellish any of it. We aren't sure what his real motive was and shouldn't speculate on it."

Everyone agreed, and Maureen and Nora left to call on friends after lunch. Connor and Ellen decided to take a walk. They ran into several people who offered their sympathy at what had happened. Apparently, it was already the talk of the town.

One gentleman had some information regarding Henry's parents. "I hear that his mother has taken to her bed and his father is secluded in his study drinking. I don't think they have made any plans for the funeral."

"That's a shame. I'm sure this came as a shock to them. Are there no friends or other family to help them?"

"Yes, I'm sure someone will, Connor. I myself plan on calling on them and offering what assistance I can."

Connor and Ellen bid him good afternoon and continued on their stroll. "Ellen, do ye think we should send our condolences to the Harrisons?"



"I think we best talk to Papa about that. I do feel sorry for them, but I'm not sure how it would be received."

Mick was up and sitting in the parlor when they returned. "Papa, do you think we should send our condolences to the Harrisons? Connor and I aren't sure."

Mick rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Under the circumstances, I don't think it would be appropriate. I do worry about them, but I think something more anonymous would be best. I'll ask Father O'Malley to say some masses for them."

Connor agreed and the subject was dropped. The rest of the day and evening was peaceful.

Connor arrived at work early the next morning. He wanted to get a head start on paperwork before everyone arrived. The security guard who opened the door for him was surprised. "Good Morning, Mr. Boland. You're an early bird today. I expect you're trying to miss the crowds and the talk."

"I hadn't actually thought of that, but it is a good idea. Would ye be so kind as to make sure none of the press gets to the Executive Offices? Also, I don't want employees making any statements to the press. I'll have Matthew distribute something when he arrives, but if ye would tell them as they clock in, I would appreciate it."

"Of course, Sir. I'll see to it."

It took several days but the gossip finally died down. Henry was laid to rest with a simple ceremony. Only close friends and family attended. Those who were there said that his parents were suffering mightily. Connor felt bad for them, but there was nothing he could do.

Finally, it was Friday; Christmas was only four days away. The bank was closed for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, so everyone would enjoy a nice holiday. Ian and Connor personally handed out the Christmas bonus to each employee; it was a festive day indeed.

Ian suggested that he and Connor take a longer lunch than normal at the club. "It is the holiday season and I think we have a lot to celebrate."

"I agree Ian. I think lunch and an early day is just the way to do it." Connor put his topcoat on and the two left for the club. "Matthew, we don't plan on returning. Ye may as well take the rest of the day yourself. Have a wonderful holiday and we shall see you next week."

"Thank you, sir. That is most kind of you." Matthew smiled as he cleared his desk and prepared to leave. He would enjoy the extra time for his last minute shopping for his family. It was a long-standing tradition of his to spend his Christmas bonus on gifts. This year would be exceptional as the bonus was much larger than in the past.

Everyone in the club greeted Connor and Ian warmly with Seasons Greetings. They were only seated for a few minutes when David Henley approached them. "Do you mind if I join you?"

"No, of course not David, ye are always welcome at our table. Ian and I are having a relaxing Christmas lunch." Connor waved the waiter to the table and ordered David a drink.

Once they were all served, David offered a toast. "To a joyous Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year." Connor, Ian and David raised their glasses and drank.

After chatting for a while David brought the conversation around to the Harrisons. "You probably haven't heard but Mr. and Mrs. Harrison are going to Europe for an extended period. They don't feel they can stay here in light of what has happened. That should take care of any problems that remain. I have spoken with him and he is very sorry for what young Henry did. He asked that I act as an intermediary and offer his apology to you, Connor."

"Thank ye David, but he really has no need to apologize for the sins of his son. I think the loss is punishment enough for any part he may have

played in this. Tell him his apology is accepted and I send good wishes for their journey."

"Thank you Connor, that is a magnanimous act. You are indeed a kind and honorable man. Most would not be so ready to forgive." David finished his drink and then rose.

"Merry Christmas gentlemen! Thank you kindly for the drink." He left and returned to his own table."

Ian and Connor had a leisurely lunch and parted in front of the club. "I'll see ye at your party tomorrow Ian. Have a good night!" Connor climbed into the carriage for the ride home.

When he reached home, everyone was definitely in the holiday spirit. The holiday decorations were laid out ready to trim the tree and the house on Sunday.

Nora was almost bouncing around with excitement. "Connor, I had my last test today from Mr. Howe. I got an "A" and he said he would send it to the school for me. This was my last class with him."

"That's wonderful Nora. I hope you enjoy your school when you start." Ellen came up and hugged him and kissed him on the cheek. "It's so nice to have you home early. We have a long weekend to celebrate."

Mick was in a good mood and looked wonderful at dinner. His resting was agreeing with him and probably adding time to his life. He waited until everyone was seated and served, then proposed a toast.

"To my lovely daughter Nora, for her wonderful success with academics. To Maureen for being her kind loving self, and to Ellen for her maturity and fortitude during these last few trying weeks. To Connor for all he has done for me and for my family. To the Boland family wherever they may be, hopefully soon to join us at this very table." Mick raised his glass and saluted all of them.

There were a few misty eyes around the table. Mick sat down and laughed. "Now that was supposed to make everyone happy, not glum. Come now ... time to be in the holiday spirit. We have a wonderful party to attend tomorrow and then the tree trimming on Sunday."

They would all have been surprised if they'd known just how close the ship carrying Connor's family was. If the winds held, they would be docking on Christmas Eve. It promised to be a very special Christmas indeed

## Chapter Thirty-Two

Saturday was a beautiful sunny day, a perfect day for the Riley party. It started early in the day and included a buffet dinner to accommodate the younger guests. It had over the years become an event everyone looked forward to.

Mick and Connor were normally alone for breakfast on Saturday, but this day Ellen, Maureen, and Nora all joined them early.

Connor feigned surprise. "To what do we do we this honor ... your company so early on a Saturday?"

Nora frowned at him. "Today's the party. We have to be ready to leave by three, and there's a lot to do to get ready."

Ellen smiled at Nora. "The truth is we are all excited about it. You will be surprised at how much fun it is."

"I know. Ian has filled me in on all the details. Even the special surprise he has for this year." Connor waited for their reaction.

"What is it? You have to tell! I can't wait to find out!" Maureen was pleading with him to tell her.

"It's a surprise. Ye shall see when it's time. Now eat your breakfast."

The rest of the morning and early afternoon was a flurry of activity. The servants were kept busy filling tubs and helping with hair and dresses. Finally, it was time to leave.

Everyone was assembled in the front hall exactly at three. Connor was the last to join them and they almost pulled his arms out urging him to hurry up.

"Slow down, we aren't going to be late. We'll be there soon enough." Connor lifted Ellen and the other two into the carriage. He climbed in with them. Mick, as was his normal practice, sat with the driver.

Connor thought his ears would fall off with all the chattering between Nora and Maureen.

Ellen squeezed his arm and whispered in his ear. "They are so excited. This is the one party where they both get to go and is the highlight of the year for them. Next year Maureen will be able to attend the others as well, so she is excited about seeing all the young men who will also be attending next year."

Connor was surprised. "I would think she would still be a bit young for that next year."

"No, all the girls her age go, but are chaperoned. They don't stay as long as they will in the following years, but they are invited. Next year you will have to chaperone as well as attend with your wife." Ellen snuggled against him ... the word 'wife' sounded so good to her.

Before Connor could answer, they arrived at the Riley's. Nora almost jumped from the carriage before it stopped.

Connor grabbed her. "Nora! Ye stay put until it stops and I help ye out. Ye will get there just as fast."

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Nora settled back down, hearing the tone in Connor's voice. She didn't want to upset him and ruin her day.

There was already quite a crowd assembled. Nora gave her wrap to the maid and hurried into the room with the others her age. Connor stood there stunned. "I guess ye can't say Nora's shy."

Mick was standing next to him, smiling. "No, she goes after what she wants. I shall really miss seeing her grow up."

Connor felt so sad for Mick. This holiday had to be hard for him, knowing it would be his last. "I'm sure ye will, but I will make sure she is just fine."

"I know, Connor. Now come let's find something to drink. Ellen and Maureen can catch up. It takes the ladies way too long to freshen up from a 20-minute carriage ride.

Mick and Connor were standing talking to a group of men when Ian joined them. "Merry Christmas! I'm so glad you could attend." After a minute of conversation, Ian motioned Connor aside. "Our dear friend Mrs. Thompson is here and is in rare form. Try and keep Ellen out of her way. I'd hate to see another party ruined for her."

Ellen walked into the room just then and saw Connor. "Here she comes now. I think I'll warn her and stay by her side for a bit."

Ellen greeted Ian with a kiss on the cheek. "Thank you so much for inviting us again. This is always my favorite party."

"You're very welcome Ellen. It wouldn't be a party without your family here." Ian left to greet some of the other guests.

"Where's Maureen?" Connor was looking around the room.

Ellen pointed to her in a corner of the room, surrounded by young men and girls her age. "I think Maureen is going to be the belle of the ball for the next few years. Everyone is attracted to her."

Connor squeezed Ellen's hand. "I doubt she could be more popular than her sister was."

The party happily progressed for the next several hours. Connor was impressed at how much fun it was. The younger children were playing games in one room and the others were talking and playing games and dancing. There really was something for everyone.

It was time for the buffet to be served and Connor was grateful that so far they had avoided Mrs. Thompson. Fate was not going to be with him for long. They were all seated at a table eating when Mrs. Thompson boldly walked over to Mick. She had imbibed liberally of wine and was a bit unsteady on her feet.

"Good day Sir! I would like to know why you have not shown me the common courtesy to reply to my notes. I thought that at least you had some manners, unlike the rest of your family, and that

Irish beggar you have taken in." Her venomous words spat out, taking in everyone at the table.

Mick rose to his feet and towered over her. "I would ask you Madam to take your leave. I believe Mr. Boland adequately explained our position as regards to you. Nothing more need be said."

Mrs. Thompson turned red and looked pointedly at Ellen. "I suppose I should have expected nothing more from the father of a common whore with child from that shanty Irishman. You should all be banned from decent society."

Before she could leave, Ellen rose and threw her glass of wine in her face. "I shall have you know that you couldn't be more wrong, as time will prove to you and any of the other gossips here."

"How dare you! This is outrageous!" Mrs. Thompson was spluttering and wiping at her dress.

Connor pulled Ellen back down. "Mrs. Thompson, please leave! We wish nothing more to do with ye."

She turned and fled from the room. All eyes in the room had been glued on the McMahon table. When Mrs. Thompson fled there was a tittering of giggles and a few comments from the men. "It's about time someone stood up to her."

Talk returned to normal around them, but silence prevailed at their table. Ellen sat with her head down and tears in her eyes. "I'm sorry Connor. I shouldn't have done that, but I couldn't take her insults anymore."

Connor reached over and squeezed her hand. "Shh, Ellen it's fine. I'm not in the least upset with ye. She more than deserved it. Now cheer up ... as ye see, the entire room agreed with ye."

Ellen looked up into Connor's eyes. She smiled and brushed away the tears. "Thank you Connor. I do so love you."

"And I you. Now let's forget this and enjoy our meal. I think the surprise is almost ready."

At the mention of the word surprise, Nora and Maureen were almost jumping in their seats. "What is it Connor? Please tell us!"



"Ye shall see in time. Now just be patient." Connor had just finished speaking when Ian came over and whispered in his ear.

Connor rose from the table. "Please excuse me. I shall return shortly." He followed Ian out of the room.

When they were safely in Ian's study with the door locked, they both started laughing. "Connor I really thought things were going to blow up when Mrs. Thompson took Mick on. I just loved the way he handled it. Ellen showed real courage in standing up to her. I think everyone in the room was glad to see it. She stormed out, ranting at her poor maid for not being able to properly clean her dress, then she fired her on the spot. I have her with our maids in the kitchen, crying. I shall see that she has shelter here until we can find her a job. Now on to the fun."

On the floor was a huge sack of gifts. Each one had been tied with a bow and had a name attached. Ian and Connor had donated part of their Christmas bonuses to buy all the guests a small present. Connor looked at the huge pile in three bags. "I think we should give Mrs. Thompson's to her poor maid." Ian agreed wholeheartedly.

Just then, there was a discreet knock at the door and a gentleman dressed as Santa came into the room. He had natural white hair and a full beard just like the pictures everyone was familiar with.

Ian ran over the last minute details and the three walked to the door of the room. Santa waited there with three servants carrying the bags. Ian and Connor went to the front of the room. A table had been set up to hold the bags. All eyes in the room were on them.

Ian cleared his throat. "Ladies and Gentlemen, your attention please!"

When the room quieted, Ian continued. "Connor Boland and I have a surprise for you this year. We were most fortunate through some contacts of Connor's to present a special guest to you. He is a

busy man at this time of year, but has graciously agreed to spend some time with us today."

Connor took over. "I would like to introduce my good friend from the north, Mr. Claus."

At that announcement, Santa Claus came in to the room followed by the servants. Connor and Ian rejoined their families.

"Connor, you know Santa Claus?" Nora's eyes were wide.

Before Connor could answer, Santa had everyone's attention. "Thanks to Mr. Boland and Mr. Riley I have made a deviation in my schedule at this time of year. I'm sorry to only be able to spend a brief amount of time with you, but I do have a little present for each of you. Is there a Lucy Armstrong here?"

A little girl gasped and ran to the front of the room. Santa handed her a package and patted her on the head. This continued on and the whole room was in an uproar with anticipation and the opening of packages.

Mick leaned over to Connor. "I suppose you and Ian paid for this with your bonuses?"

Connor grinned. "We thought the children would enjoy it. We also have him going to the orphanage with gifts too."

"I shall see to it that both of you receive bonuses again. I think the bank can afford this." Mick had tears in his eyes. "This is the nicest thing you could have done."

Nora and Maureen were called one after the other and both were in awe of the little brooches they received. Ellen was called next and came back with a small package. Connor smiled as he watched her open it. He himself had picked out her gift. She gasped as she held up a beautiful locket. She smiled up at Connor and kissed him on the cheek. "Thank you, Santa."

Connor laughed. "I'm not Santa. Ye owe that man up there the kiss."

Ellen laughed back. "I know better than that. This is wonderful, Connor. Everyone is so happy."

Santa was finally done and took his leave. The room all applauded and yelled "Merry Christmas" as he left. The music resumed and the children returned to the other room for more games and playing with their gifts. Every man in the room thanked Ian and Connor. After much discussion, it was decided that from then on they would all donate for gifts for the poor children and continue the tradition for them.

Ellen danced in Connor's arms, blissfully happy. Finally, they could relax and look forward to the future. "Connor, I'm so happy right now there is nothing I can think of to mar it."

Connor leaned in and whispered in her ear. "I too am happy my love, and very glad ye are too." Connor however could think of some coming sadness, but hoped it stayed in the future for a long time yet.

The carriage ride home was much quieter than the one on the way to the party. Nora fell asleep against Connor and Maureen was yawning the entire way. Ellen was happily leaning against Connor's other shoulder. Mick had joined them inside and was snoozing next to Maureen.

The carriage stopped and jolted everyone awake. Mick helped Maureen and Nora down and Connor lifted Ellen down. Mick announced that he was ready for his bed and Nora and Maureen were already headed upstairs. Connor and Ellen decided to sit up for just a bit and then they too would retire.

Connor poured himself a brandy and a small one for Ellen. They sat on the couch and cuddled and talked about the rest of the holiday coming. "Tomorrow we trim the tree and then Monday is Christmas Eve. We have a nice dinner and then immediately after we sing carols and then to bed early to wait for the next morning. I can hardly

wait. I am getting as excited as Nora." Ellen snuggled closer to Connor.

"At home, we used to have a special potato soup on Christmas Eve and hang stockings. We never really decorated a tree. On Christmas morn, we'd go to church and if we were lucky that year have a ham for dinner. After church, we would open whatever was in our stockings. Usually there wasn't much as times were pretty hard. Mom always managed to knit a new sweater for us somehow though." Connor was quiet and thoughtful. "I wonder where they are right now. I hope the voyage has been smoother than ours."

Ellen hugged him tight. She never could imagine a childhood like he described ... she and her sisters had never wanted for a thing. She reminded herself to say a prayer thanking God for all her blessings. No wonder Connor was such a strong person. He was raised to be.

James was waiting for Mick when he got to his room. "Sir, we have had good news today while you were gone. The ship carrying Connor's family has been spotted. It is due in port on Christmas Eve."

Mick smiled deeply. "Oh, that is great news. I should go and tell him right away." Mick started for the door and then stopped. "Maybe this could be a wonderful Christmas surprise. Do you think we could hide them somewhere until Christmas morning? Surprise Connor with them then?"

James chuckled. "I'm sure we could arrange to put them up in the carriage house. The grooms won't mind bunking upstairs in the spare servants' quarters. We'll make sure all the rooms are ready for them and when you are at church Christmas morning, we shall bring them over and settle them in. They can attend church with us on Christmas Eve."

Mick clapped James on the back. "Oh this will indeed be a wondrous Christmas. I can hardly wait to see Connor's face on Christmas morning."

The next day sped by. Everyone slept as late as possible then dressed hurriedly so they weren't late for mass. They had planned a special brunch when they returned from church. All the Christmas decorations were placed in the parlor ready to decorate the tree. About three o'clock Mick announced that he and Connor were going to get the tree. As usual, the girls clamored to be allowed to go too.

"No, you shall be surprised as always. I have to teach Connor the finer points of tree selection and chopping. Now be good while we are away."

Mick and Connor climbed onto the wagon and the driver headed for the outskirts of town where there was a wooded area. It was there that Mick owned a piece of land. "I didn't know ye had other land?" Connor was surprised.

"Yes, I always intended to build a small house here on the bay as a retreat from the city, but never got around to it. It's a nice piece of land though and perhaps some day you and Ellen will want to do something with it." Mick jumped down when he reached the stand of pine trees.

"Now, we need a fairly large one to please the girls and fill the room. I will not allow candles on the tree, so I try and make up for it in size. I look for one with younger ones around it. That way it will allow them to grow stronger." Mick walked around a bit looking at the trees.

Connor had gone a different direction and spotted a nice full tree. "Mick, what about this one? It looks nice."

Mick walked around the tree, inspecting it. "Yes Connor, I think this is a perfect tree. You have good Christmas tree sense."

The driver chopped the tree down and the three of them loaded it in the wagon. It was beginning to grow dark when they reached home. The fire in the parlor felt wonderful to them as they were chilled from being outdoors.

Ellen, Maureen, and Nora all praised the tree as it was placed in a bucket and supported to stand straight. "Oh this is the best tree we have ever had!" Nora exclaimed.

Ellen and Maureen laughed. "Nora, you say that every year."

"I know, but this Christmas just feels so special to me." Nora was too excited to even sit down and admire it.

Connor and Mick left to change for dinner and the girls laid out decorations, deciding on where they would place them. Mick and Connor rejoined them for a drink before dinner and added their opinions to the grand decorating scheme.

As soon as dinner was over, decorating began in earnest. By bedtime, it was finished and all declared it to be a masterpiece once again. The boxes were cleared away and the room straightened. All retired for the night to sleep well for the next day.

Mick waited until the house was quiet and summoned James. "Are the preparations all made for tomorrow?"

"Yes sir. Daniel and I will meet them at the wharf and spirit them into the couch house. We have cleaned it and fresh linens have been put on the beds. They should be fine for one night. The grooms were more than happy to co-operate. I believe the boat is docking during the night and we shall be able to pick them up in the morning. You need to be sure that none of the household ventures to the stables. We will bring them in the service road so it shouldn't be noticed."

"Fine James, and thank you. Make sure they are well fed and comfortable; please explain to them what we are doing. Nancy is aware of it and will make sure the girls are kept away. I think Colleen and some of the maids are going to be there to help them settle also." Mick went to bed a very excited and happy man.

## Chapter Thirty-Three

Christmas Eve dawned cold and damp. The skies were cloudy and it looked as if they might receive their first snow of the year. All the fireplaces were going and the house was cozy and warm.

Connor woke happy with a feeling of excitement he couldn't quite explain. He dressed and left for breakfast. For once, he was the last to arrive.

Ellen chided him, smiling. "Connor, you must be a real sleepy head. You're the last to arrive."

Connor kissed her on the cheek and sat down next to her. "I slept well and woke feeling as excited as Nora." He looked in Nora's direction. "Did ye sprinkle me with fairy dust?"

Nora giggled. "I don't know what that is."

"Then remind me to tell ye all the story of the Christmas fairies tonight." Connor started eating his breakfast refusing to answer any more questions.

Mick sat smiling at the whole scene. Only he knew how much more exciting things would be tomorrow. When they had all left Mick hurried into the kitchen. "Are things all prepared for the Bolands?"

"Oh, yes sir. I have a roast for you for dinner, and another for them. We shall see to it that they are well fed and cared for until tomorrow morning. James and Daniel have already left to get them." Nancy turned at a knock on the door.

Mick had started to leave but thought he recognized the girl at the door. She was explaining something to Nancy, and she handed her a note. Nancy turned and seeing as Mick was still there, gave it to him. "She has a note from Ian Riley and says that Miss Ellen knows her."

Mick opened the note and read it. 'Mick or Connor, This is to introduce Bridey Morgan; she is the former personal maid of our illustrious friend Mrs. Thompson. She was fired the night of our party and I have been seeing to her care. She seems to know Ellen from the ship and says that Ellen had

promised her a job if she left Mrs. Thompson. I am happy to keep her but if Ellen would like her in her service, I shall agree.'

Mick turned to Nancy. "Have her wait and give her some tea and refreshment. I'll speak to Connor and Ellen."

Mick found the two in the parlor admiring the tree. Mick sat down in the chair nearest them. "There is a young lady by the name of Bridey Morgan in the kitchen. She was Mrs. Thompson's maid but was fired the night of Ian's party. She says that you promised her a job if she needed one Ellen. You met her on board the ship?"

Ellen thought for just a second. "Oh yes, the day Connor sent me to apologize, Mrs. Thompson treated her so horridly and she was so sympathetic to me. The poor thing is as kind as can be." Ellen looked at Connor, "Do you think I could have her as my personal maid? I've never had one, but as a married lady it wouldn't be out of line."

Connor smiled. "Absolutely. I feel responsible for her being fired anyway. I shall go have her shown in."

"I'll take care of it." Mick rose and left for the kitchen. "Miss Morgan, would you come with me please? Nancy you should come also."

Mick led the terrified girl into the parlor where Ellen and Connor were waiting. Connor rose to greet her. "Good day, Miss Morgan. I understand ye are in need of a job?"

Bridey kept her eyes down. "Yes Sir. Mrs. Thompson fired me the other day and sent my belongings to Mr. Riley's."

"I think we can remedy that situation, Ellen and I are to be married in three weeks time and she will be needing a personal maid. If ye would like the position, it's yours."

Ellen looked at the poor girl. "Yes, please take it. I would love to have you work for us. You will see what it's like to work for a kind employer."



Bridey smiled and curtsied. "Oh thank, ye all of ye. Tis most kind. I'd be happy to work for ye. I will do the best job ye could ever ask for."

Mick looked at her. "I'm sure you will. Welcome to our home. Nancy is our housekeeper. She will see you are settled, explain the routine, and show you Ellen's room and your room."

Nancy led a very happy young lady from the parlor, explaining the various rooms, and took her back to the kitchen. She introduced her to the staff and sent one of the young boys to gather her belongings for her.

"This is the best Christmas present I have ever received. Mr. Boland and Mr. McMahon are so kind. Are they always this kind?"

The assembled help assured them they were. "The young ladies were a bit of a handful, but Mr. Boland has seen to that. They are very well behaved now, or they pay the consequences."

Ellen was so happy. "Oh Connor, I do hope she will be happy here."

"Ellen my love, she will be very happy, but ye must treat her well, no temper tantrums, or ye will pay and not her." Connor wanted to make sure Ellen understood well what he expected of her.

Ellen looked down remembering how they had sometimes treated the servants in the not too distant past. "I will be most kind Connor, I promise."

Maureen and Nora had left to visit some friends and arrived home all excited. "It's snowing! We will have snow for Christmas after all."

Connor looked out and was surprised that the ground was covered. "Ellen, let's go out and take a walk in the gardens. I have rarely seen snow."

Ellen got her cloak and Connor his coat and they walked out to the gazebo. Nora and Maureen followed at a distance and when Connor and Ellen were in the gazebo kissing, they pelted them with snowballs. Soon there was a full-fledged snowball fight in progress. They were so busy with their fight

they didn't even notice the sound of a wagon coming along the service road.

The Boland family had arrived on the wharf and was anxiously looking for Connor when James and Daniel approached. James spoke to Mary Boland. "Are you Mrs. Boland, mother of Connor?"

"Yes, is he here?" Mary was holding her younger children close to her, the hustle and rush on the wharf being disturbing to her.

Liam came forward and confronted them. "Has Connor sent ye? Where is he?"

James explained. "Mr. McMahon has sent us to fetch you. Connor isn't aware that you have arrived; Mr. McMahon wishes to surprise him tomorrow morning with your presence. We have arranged for you to stay in the carriage house and tomorrow morning will appear in the parlor and surprise Connor. No one knows you're here except the servants and Mr. McMahon. Now if you would be so kind as to get into the carriage, we can be on our way.

It took a few minutes to settle Mary and the girls in the carriage. Liam decided to ride with the wagon and Tommy begged until his mother allowed him to ride with the carriage driver.

The drive to their new home was not long, but they were in awe at the sights of the city. They had never seen anything like it before. When they pulled into the service road, they caught sight of Connor playing with Ellen, Maureen, and Nora. It was all they could do not to run to him.

James and Daniel hustled them into the carriage house. "I know this is fairly meager but it should be comfortable for one night until we move you tomorrow." Mary and the family looked around. It was five times larger than their little cottage had been.

"Oh sir, this be more than adequate. Where is this house ye be referring to?" Mary couldn't believe anything could be better than this.

James opened the drapes and pointed toward the house. Mary gasped. All the children pushed past her to see. Liam was the first to speak. "That is a house for one family? I have never seen anything so grand in me life."

Daniel laughed, "I had the same reaction when I first came her. Yes, it's the home of the McMahon family and now the Boland family and the servants that help take care of them."

James and Daniel left them when Colleen and Nancy arrived. "We will pick you up for midnight mass with us. Your dinner will be served to you here. If you are in need of anything, please just tell Colleen and she will fetch it for you."

They left the Boland family in a state of shock. Mary couldn't quite believe it. "Oh my, God has certainly showered his blessings on this family. Connor has made a very good way for himself here. I can't wait to see him close and hug him."

It was almost dinnertime and Connor and the girls called a truce and went into the house. Nora and Maureen skipped ahead and Connor and Ellen held back and hugged and kissed before they too headed for the house. All were unaware of the eyes watching them from the carriage house.

Liam turned to his mother. "That must be Ellen. She's a beauty, as are the other two. Connor must indeed be very happy."

The Boland family thought they had eaten lavish meals on board the ship, but the meal they were served that night took their breath away. Mary couldn't believe there was so much food and fixed so well. "Colleen, this is the most wonderful meal I think I have ever had. This must be very special for Christmas."

"Oh no Mrs. Boland, all the meals here are very good. Tomorrow's dinner is the best one. We will have turkey and all the trimmings. The Prime Rib is our traditional Christmas Eve dinner." Colleen was busy removing the plates from the table. Mary and the girls started to help.

"No, I can do this. Ye just relax and rest from your trip."

The dinner in the main house was jovial. The food was delicious and they enjoyed the wine and stories that Mick told. When dinner was finished, they retired to the parlor and begged Connor to tell him about the Christmas fairies.

Connor settled down on the sofa and started his story.

*'Once upon a time in the ancient land now known as Ireland there were a people that were fierce warriors and sentimental lovers. They loved nothing better than to drink, fight, love, and tell wondrous stories.*

*There stories revolved around a mystical things and spells and curses. The common knowledge was that some were 'fey' born with a sense of the spiritual and able to read minds and cast spells. Then there were the wee people, also called leprechauns. They were little ones who hid under the shamrocks, and had huge pots of gold they hid from humans.*

*They would sometimes appear to a human and pull pranks on them. On occasion, they would befriend them but would never reveal where their gold was hidden. Also, they would avoid being captured by humans. If one were captured the gold belonged to the human. As years progressed, they were getting a wee bit tired of the mood swings among the people who had become known as Irish.*

*A council of all leprechauns and wee ones was called. The Chief Leprechaun called them all to order and discussed the problem.*

*"We have here a people who swing between lovin and fightin. This largely depends on the amount of drink they have imbibed. There has to be something we can be doin for at least a time ta make them happy and jovial and loving ta one another. Obviously we are not able ta do it, and need some help."*

*There were many meetings and discussions, and finally it was decided that there needed to be another wee species a fairies, with golden hair and translucent wings, that could dispense dust on the peoples as fine and sparkly as diamonds.*

*Through many potions and trials this fairy was created and multiplied. The month be the last of the year when they be successful. Twas almost Christmastide and therefore they decided to call the fairies Christmas Fairies.*

*Their dust was powerful and they were sent amongst the land. Everyone was sprinkled and a joyous time was had. Old grudges and arguments were forgotten, new friendships formed and all had peace and happiness.*

*Thus every year since the Christmas fairies have come and sprinkled the dust as needed over all the Irish. If ye should be so lucky as to see a fairy sprinkling her dust ye shall be doubly blest. So all good children retire early to see if they can spot the fairy when she lights up their room.'*

Connor stopped and rose and poured himself and Mick a brandy. "So now ye know the story of the Christmas Fairies. Tonight when ye be sleeping they will creep in and sprinkle ye with the happy dust. If ye wish to spot them, ye have to be in bed early."

Nora was half asleep and Maureen was yawning. Connor smiled at them. "I think I know two young ladies that need to go to bed and wait for the fairies. Tomorrow is a big day, and ye need your rest."

Mick stood and stretched. "Come ladies, I am tired myself and we have a lot of celebrating to do tomorrow. To bed with us now."

Nora and Maureen followed behind Mick. Nora turned and looked at Connor. "I hope the Christmas fairies bless all of us tonight. I think tomorrow is going to be a special Christmas."

Connor smiled at her. "I think it will be, Nora. Now sleep tight and let the fairies dust ye."

Ellen snuggled close to Connor. "Do you really believe in the Christmas fairies?"

"Yes and no. I did as a child, but now I think there are fairies all around us blessing us, messengers from God." Connor pulled her tight against him.

"Now tell me, have ye been good enough to receive all your presents tomorrow, or do ye need a spanking to clear the air?"

"Connor Boland! I think you are trying to find an excuse to spank me and make up. Why don't we just skip the spanking and go to the making up?" Ellen pulled him down into a deep kiss.

Connor didn't resist for one second. The fire was almost out and it was nearing midnight when they both decided they best get some rest.

They bade good night to the servants who were headed off for midnight mass. James and Daniel exchanged a look. They hadn't imagined that Connor and Ellen would still be up at this time. Fortunately they had not gathered the Bolands as yet.

The next morning everyone was up early. They would attend an early service and come home for breakfast and presents. Nora was dressed and waiting in the hall for the others to arrive. When Mick arrived last, Nora was almost beside herself. "Papa hurry. We will be late."

"Never fear Nora, Fr. O'Malley won't start without me." Mick laughed and rumped Nora's hair. "Let's be off, and Merry Christmas to all of you."

While they were gone to church, James and Daniel supervised the moving and unpacking of the Boland family. Mary was in shock at the size of the rooms. "Oh my, I surely don't need a room this size to myself. I've not had a room to myself since I was first married."

The others were equally pleased. There were gasps and oohs and ahhs at the furnishings.

"We must hurry. They shall be home soon. As soon as breakfast is over they will go into the

parlor. I shall come and get you then. Please be quiet. Some may come up stairs after church." James and Daniel left them with Colleen in attendance.

Mary had a sitting room attached to her room, so they all gathered there. It was going to take some getting used to being in a house this large, where she couldn't see her family all the time.

Time passed quickly and soon they heard the McMahons and Connor return from church. Cloaks and coats were removed and handed to the servants. All went into the dining room for breakfast.

"I'm starving this morning ... must have been all the fairy dust last night. I had the prettiest little fairy flying around my room." Connor winked at Ellen.

"Did you really see her? Really?" Nora's eyes were wide with amazement at Connor.

"Of course. Didn't ye?"

"No, and I tried to stay awake ... I really did. Do you think I got sprinkled anyway?" Nora was so serious.

"I'd say so. Ye have a certain twinkle about ye." Connor smiled at her.

Nora was trying to rush them through breakfast. Mick finally had enough. "Nora, settle down. You're too old to be acting this way. When we have relaxed and enjoyed our breakfast we shall go see what there is under the tree, but not until I am ready."

Nora settled back in her chair with a pout. Ellen nudged her and whispered in her ear. "No pouting today. You can wait."

Finally Mick put his napkin down and rose. "Now, I shall go check out the parlor and make sure it's okay. Then I'll send for you."

Nora almost exploded with excitement and disappointment at having to wait. Ellen and Maureen looked at each other. "He's never done this before. I wonder what he's doing."

Mick found James outside the parlor. "Are they there?"

"Yes sir and very excited also." James opened the door and Mick entered.

"Merry Christmas. I'm Mick McMahon, just call me Mick. I'm so pleased to see you have all arrived safely." Mick took Liam's hand and shook it, and hugged the girls and Mary.

"Now we shall send for Connor and the girls? They will be so surprised." Mick told James to have the rest join him.

Everyone in the parlor could hear the chatter of voices as they approached the parlor. Connor was first and noticed the door was still closed. "Hmmm, I wonder why he's left the door closed."

He no sooner finished speaking when Mick slid the door open to reveal his family.

Connor took in the scene and couldn't believe it. With tears in his eyes he hugged them all. "I can't believe ye are all really here. Mick this is the best surprise I have ever had."



## Chapter Thirty-Four

Connor had tears of joy in his eyes as he hugged and greeted everyone. Ellen, Maureen, and Nora just stood there in awe not knowing what to say. They knew Connor's family was coming but were surprised to actually see them and see how much like Connor they were.

Connor realized that he hadn't introduced anyone. He pulled Ellen up next to him. "This is Ellen. We are to be married in three weeks' time." Next he pulled Maureen and Nora to the front. "This is Maureen and Nora, her sisters. This is my mother, and my brothers Liam and Tommy, and my sisters, Lizzie, Maggie and Bridey." Connor beamed with pride at all of them.

Mick cleared his throat. "Let's all sit down and see what good things Santa has brought for us this year. Nora, why don't you hand out some gifts?"

Mary had managed to make a few things and had included the McMahons as well. She was glad now that she had, since they arrived in time for Christmas.

Nora scampered eagerly under the tree. She found some of the presents they purchased for the McMahons and handed them each one. Then she found one for everyone else, including herself.

The next hour and half was spent opening gifts and exchanging compliments. Mary had managed to knit sweaters for Liam, Tommy, Connor, and Mick.

Mick beamed at his. "This is the nicest sweater I have ever had. Thank you so much, Mary."

For the girls she had knitted shawls. Ellen thought it was the loveliest she had ever seen.

She rose and hugged Mary and kissed her on the cheek. "Thank you Mrs. Boland. This is beautiful. I shall save it and wear it on my wedding day."

Mary hugged her soon to be daughter in law back. "You may all call me Ma. I'm used to that, and a few more won't hurt."

Connor was so proud of Ellen he could almost feel his heart burst. Nora and Maureen were busy getting to know the Bolands and playing with their presents. Connor suggested that Mick and Mary and he and Ellen retire to the sitting room to talk. As they left, he turned to Maureen. "Would ye show them the house and explain where everything is? We'll join you for lunch."

Maureen felt proud to be able to show them her house. She enthusiastically showed them everything and saved the classroom for last.

"This is where Mr. Howe teaches us. Nora is going to the parish school after the holiday, but Ellen and I will still have classes here. I imagine you will join us."

Liam was shocked at the thought. "I doubt very much that I shall be joining ye. I am far too old for classes."

Maureen stood in front of him with her hands on her hips. "Not if Connor says you have to. Ellen is older than you and she has to attend at least part of the day. Connor thinks education is important. So there!"

Liam straightened his shoulders and looked down on her. She was pretty, but a sassy thing. "I have been the head of my family since Connor left. I was responsible for saving his life. I shall do what I please, and ye best learn to have a little more respect, Miss Maureen."

Maureen's temper started to flare. "How dare you talk to me that way, Liam Boland. You have no right to tell me anything." Maureen pushed him away from her.

Before much more could be said, Connor strode into the room. "What's going on here?"

Liam had an angry glare in his eye. "This little girl thinks she can tell me what to do. I'm just telling her how things are."

Maureen hissed at him. "He called me Miss Maureen and said he didn't have to go to school and I had to respect him."

Connor almost had to laugh at the sparks flying between the two of them. "Enough! There will be no fighting in this house on Christmas day. I'll decide who will attend school and where. Now Maureen, I suggest ye apologize for pushing Liam. Liam, I expect ye to hold your temper and get to know each other before flaring up."

Maureen didn't want to apologize and turned to leave the room. Connor caught her by the wrist. "Maureen, ye were told to apologize. Unless ye want to make a trip with me to your room, I suggest ye do it, and do it NOW!"

Maureen knew Connor meant it. "I'm sorry I pushed you, Liam." She then turned and fled the room.

"Okay, the rest of ye clean up for lunch ... it's time. Liam, I want to have a word with ye after lunch in private." Connor glared at his younger brother.

"Fine, Connor, but I'm a man now and can do as I please." Liam stormed out of the room.

Connor had come up stairs to freshen up for lunch when he'd heard the commotion. When he left the room his mother was standing there. "Is there a problem Connor?"

"I hope not Ma. Seems like Liam is a bit headstrong. He and Maureen were having a battle of the wills. She is just as headstrong."

"I'm afraid your brothers and sisters have changed a bit since ye left. Tomorrow we need to have a long talk about some of their behaviors. I think we should all be happy and carefree today." Mary hugged Connor and continued on to her room.

Connor sat in the chair in his room thinking. Liam was going to be a problem. He had been shocked to learn that they had to force him on the ship and keep him locked up for days until they were well out to sea. But as Liam said, he was a man now and not a child so would have to be handled a bit differently. Connor knew one thing as he left for lunch, Liam would definitely not be going

to classes here in the house. He had thoughts of enrolling him in the university. His mind was sharp and he had completed all his courses with the brothers.

Lunch was a joyous affair with the exception of a few glares between Maureen and Liam. Ellen noticed them and whispered to Connor. "What's going on there?"

"I'll explain later. Just ignore them."

After lunch Nora announced that she was taking Bridey, Maggie and Tommy with her to meet some of her friends. Mary looked at Connor, a bit concerned.

Connor stopped Nora on the way out. "Be sure ye stay with them Nora, and be back before dark."

"I will and we shall." Nora gathered her little crowd and hurried out.

Ellen had to laugh. "She is enjoying thoroughly not being the youngest for once, and being bossy."

Mary shook her head. "They do seem to get along though, and that is good."

Maureen and Lizzie had their heads together talking and left for Maureen's room. Mick retired for a nap, and that left Connor, Ellen, Liam, and Mary. Ellen knew that Connor wished to talk to Liam so she suggested to Mary that they could sew together for a bit and visit.

When they had left, Connor stood. "Come Liam, ye and I need to talk. Let's go to my office."

Connor closed the door and sat in one of the chairs and Liam slumped on the sofa with a sour expression on his face.

"Would ye like some whiskey, Liam?" Connor poured himself a drink and offered one to Liam.

"Thank ye Connor. I figured I was here so ye could scold me like the child ye seem to think I am."

"No Liam, I know ye aren't a child. I want to know what plans ye have for yourself." Connor sipped his whiskey.

Liam looked at Connor and decided to be honest with him. "As soon as I can make passage, I intend

to go back and finish the fight. I didn't want to come, but was shanghaied and forced into it."

Connor shook his head. "Liam that fight will never end. I can't let you do that. There are far more opportunities here to help than going back and getting killed."

Liam sprang from the couch. "What opportunities? Ye were lucky in meeting Mr. McMahon and winning his favor and the hand of his daughter."

"That's true, but there are plenty of opportunities here and I can now help ye. I'd like ye to attend the university here and learn more, and then ye can join me in the bank or set off on your own. The only thing I can't let ye do is go back." Connor watched as Liam paced.

"Ye will like it once ye settle in and give it a chance. I will need your help in taking care of the family, both McMahon girls and our siblings and Ma."

"Why? Mick and ye seem to have it well in hand." Liam poured himself another whiskey.

"Liam, Mick is dying. He may only have a few months left. Only Ellen and my associate at the bank know this. Maureen and Nora will be devastated when they learn."

"Am I to be treated like a man, and not one of the children?" Liam looked at Connor.

"Yes, ye are a man and will be treated accordingly, but what I say is final. Any disagreements ye may have with that we will discuss in private."

Liam smiled and held his hand out to Connor. "Agreed. I'll try it and see, but if after a year I have not changed my mind, I want the freedom to leave."

Connor shook his hand. "Agreed. Now let's go find Ellen and Ma. I think Ellen would like to call on a few friends."

Liam and Connor found Ellen and Mary chatting and sewing in the sitting room. Mary was admiring

Ellen's needlework and showing her some new stitches. When the men entered Ellen looked up smiling. "Connor, Ma is going to teach me to knit and crochet. Won't that be fun?"

Connor laughed, "If ye say so. Just remember classes come first." Ellen frowned. She had planned on replacing those classes with sewing classes.

Connor sat down beside her. "Do ye want to go calling? There is still time."

"No, I think I would rather stay here. Why don't you and Liam go for a ride and show him the city?"

Liam smiled at that. He was indeed interested to see more than he had seen yesterday. Connor agreed and the two left to arrange for the carriage.

By dusk everyone had returned home and were changed for the evening festivities. Maureen had helped dress Lizzie in one of her new dresses. Bridey and Maggie were wearing new clothes as well. Even Tommy and Liam were surprised at the clothing they found in their closets. Mary was stunned to tears when she saw the dresses hanging in her closet. Colleen was helping her and she turned to her. "This is so wonderful! Who thought of this? I haven't had a new dress in years."

"Mr. McMahon ordered all of this. We had to guess at sizes, but it seems we did fine."

When they were all assembled at the table, Mick stood and made a toast. "To the Boland family. I'm pleased that you have come and joined my family. In three weeks when Connor and Ellen wed we will officially be family, but I consider you family now. Anything you need or desire will be provided."

Connor had a lump in his throat hearing Mick's toast and seeing the tears well in his mother's eyes. She looked so beautiful in her new dress, and young again.

Connor stood. "It is I that thank ye, Mick, for all that ye have done. We are all in your debt and will never forget your kindness. I am proud to be part of your family."

Mary was so proud of Connor. She looked over at how Mick beamed at him. "Mick, as Connor says we are surely thankful for all that ye have done. I haven't been this happy since I was very young. The new clothes are wonderful. This is the first new dress I have had in years."

Mick smiled at her. "And not the last, I assure you. It definitely brings out the youthful glow in your cheeks and adds to your beauty."

Mary laughed. "I see ye must have visited the Blarney Stone when last ye were in Ireland."

When dinner was served, the Bolands looked at the big bird in awe. They had never seen a turkey before. Connor watched as they all tasted it for the first time.

Tommy was very tentatively putting a bite in his mouth. Suddenly he smiled. "Ma, this is good! It tastes much better than goose."

Nora looked at him aghast. "You mean you never had turkey before? How come?"

"Nora, turkey is an American bird. We don't have them in Ireland." Connor laughed at all the dismay over one turkey.

The rest of the dinner was equally successful. They were all stuffed and happy when dinner was over. The remainder of the evening was spent telling stories and the younger ones playing games. Liam and Maureen were back to being cordial to one another.

Mary looked at her watch, yawning. "Come children, it's time for bed. This has been a long day, and ye need your rest."

Tommy, Bridey, and Maggie stood up at once. Lizzie stayed seated talking to Maureen and Liam, and Nora paid no attention at all.

Connor cleared his throat. "Nora, Maureen, Lizzie ... time for you to go also."

"But it's Christmas, Connor and we have no classes for the rest of the week. I don't want to go." Nora stayed put, pouting.

"Nora, I did not ask ye if ye wanted to go. I told ye to go. I suggest ye obey."

Nora stood and joined the others headed for the stairs. Mary was waiting for Lizzie and Maureen.

Lizzie looked at her mother and at Maureen. "We are not children and we don't have to go to bed yet. Maureen says she never has to go this early. I'm staying up."

Before Mary could say anything Connor strode over to where the two of them were seated. He grabbed both their arms and hauled them to their feet. "Ye will both be going to bed now. I don't ever want to hear that kind of sass from ye again Elizabeth. Ye and I are going to have a long talk tomorrow about manners. Now off with both of ye."

Maureen scrambled for the stairs followed by Lizzie muttering under her breath. Mary just shook her head and said goodnight to Ellen, Liam, and Mick. She hugged Connor and whispered, "We do need to talk tomorrow. This is but a sample of what has been happening."

Mick arose soon after and asked Liam if he would like to join him for a nightcap in his study. "We can get better acquainted and leave Connor and Ellen some time alone."

Liam happily went with Mick. "Goodnight Ellen. Goodnight Connor."

Ellen snuggled up against Connor as soon as they were alone. "This was a special day Connor. I'm so glad they're here and you're so happy."

"Yes, it has been a special day, but I can see some trouble brewing in the near future. Some children seem to have forgotten the concept of respect." Connor pulled her close and kissed her.

"What happened between Maureen and Liam? At lunch they were glaring at one another, but they seem to be a bit more friendly now."

"Seems they are both stubborn. Maureen told Liam he would have to go to classes with them. When he informed her he wasn't, they got into a



heated word battle. Maureen pushed Liam and I came then and broke it up."

"What are you going to do about schooling? I really don't relish the thought of sitting in the classroom with all the young ones either." Ellen looked up at Connor. "I know you think I need to learn more, but now with Nora in school and the others I will feel out of place. Can't we work on it together instead of in class? I would also like to spend more time with your mother and learn some of the things she knows about sewing and raising children, maybe even cooking."

Connor looked at Ellen thoughtfully and didn't speak for a moment. "Ye do have a point, and I would love ye to spend time with my mother in helping with the children. Let me think about it and I'll see what we can do."

Connor kissed and nuzzled Ellen. "Did ye enjoy your Christmas?"

"Oh Connor, it was the best Christmas ever. Do you really have to work tomorrow?" Ellen was nestled snugly into his chest.

"Yes I do have to work, but perhaps can return a bit early. What are you planning for the day?"

"I thought I could take Ma and the girls downtown shopping. We need to find them something special for the wedding. I'm sure the seamstress can do something in time."

"Then ye won't need me in the way. I'll ask Daniel to have the tailor come and measure Liam and Tommy. I don't think Liam has ever had a proper suit. That may be a struggle."

Connor and Ellen talked and cuddled for a bit more then retired for the evening.

Connor could hear Liam and Mick still talking. Liam was laughing and enjoying himself. Connor paused and considered joining them, then decided that Mick would be able to work wonders with Liam and knew just how to make him feel important. Connor didn't want to overshadow that at all.

He lay in bed and thought about the day. It truly had been a wonderful day and he prayed that all would work out. The house had grown quiet long before Connor fell to sleep.

## Chapter Thirty-Five

Connor left early for the bank before most of the household was up. Ellen came down just as he was preparing to leave.

"I'm glad ye're up so we could talk. I'm leaving early so I can return early. I know my mother wishes to talk to me. Have a good day, and tell them I'll be home early." Connor kissed Ellen and left.

It was relatively quiet at the bank. Everyone was still in a holiday mood and the atmosphere was light. Connor could hardly wait for Ian to arrive. He asked Matthew to send him to his office as soon as he arrived.

Ian bustled in several minutes later. "Is there a problem Connor?"

"No problem Ian. I just wanted to share some wonderful news with ye. My family arrived for Christmas. they are all here and safe."

"That's good news Connor. I can't wait to meet them. Maybe we should have a dinner party to celebrate their arrival."

"The wedding is in three weeks. I think that should be party enough."

"Speaking of weddings, where are you and Ellen going for your honeymoon?"

"I haven't thought about that. It's too bad that Mick never built his cottage on the land he owns. It would be perfect. Under the circumstances I don't want to be too far away."

Ian smiled at him. "It just so happens that I have a cottage on the bay a few miles out of town. It's yours for as long as you want it."

"Ian, that would be perfect! I think Ellen would really like that."

"Consider it a deal. We can discuss the details later. Now I best get to work." Ian left for his own office.

Connor worked diligently through his lunch hour and at 2:00 told Matthew he was leaving for the

day. The bank was closed so there shouldn't be any problems. If there were, Ian could handle them.

The entire way home he wondered how everyone had fared on their first day alone. He didn't have to wonder long. Entering the front hallway, he was met by Lizzie flying down the stairs with Maureen and two of her friends. They were totally unaware that Connor was there. Lizzie was yelling back up the stairs to Mary. "This is America and I can do whatever Maureen does. Ye can't be treating me like a baby. I'm going with them."

Connor could hear his Mother yelling down, "Elizabeth, ye come back up here right now, and ye also Maureen. It's too late to be going out visiting, and I have things for ye to do."

Maureen linked arms with Lizzie and the other girls giggled. Maureen called back up. "We're going and we don't have to sit and sew. You can't make us."

Connor cleared his throat. The four girls stopped dead in their tracks. "Ladies, I think it best if ye proceed without Maureen and Lizzie. They will *not* be going anywhere today."

The two friends hurriedly said goodbye and left. Connor glared at both Lizzie and Maureen. "Ye will both go to your rooms and wait for me."

Lizzie stomped her foot. "But Connor, this isn't fair, Ma is just being mean. She can't tell me everything to do. I'm almost an adult and so is Maureen. I can make my own decisions."

Connor had heard enough. He grabbed her wrist, turned her around, and swatted her hard several times. "I gave ye an order and ye best obey. I shall discuss this with ye when I come to your room. Now go. I'll not tolerate this behavior."

Maureen had already headed up the steps, and a shocked Lizzie followed her, rubbing her bottom.

Connor walked up the steps and knocked on his Mother's door. She was sitting in her rocker looking out the window softly crying. "I don't know what to do with her any more, Connor. She is just so sassy

and disobedient. It seems that no punishment I give works for long. She fell in with a very spoiled group of young ladies on the ship and it's had a terrible influence on her." Mary proceeded to tell him of the incident relating to the dance.

"Even after Liam corrected her and I strapped her she has still fallen back into her old ways." Mary sighed.

Connor hugged his mother. "Don't ye worry about it. The McMahon girls were every bit as bad as the ones on the ship, but they know now I won't tolerate it. Lizzie will learn a hard lesson today and Maureen a stern reminder about respect. Is this the type of problem ye have been having?"

"Yes Connor. Lizzie is the worst but Bridey and Maggie have started imitating her, and even Tommy is beginning to question everything. Liam was hardly ever home after ye left. I think the lack of a strong male around to enforce me, has hurt. I must be losing my touch."

"I remember that touch quite well, and I doubt ye have lost it, but ye need help. I will make it clear to all of them, Ellen, Maureen and Nora as well that ye are to be obeyed and respected, or they shall answer to me as well."

"Connor, I doubt that Ellen could be a problem, she is so sweet and nice." Mary smiled for the first time.

"Yes I know, but still I expect her to treat ye with respect. She has quite a temper and can be willful at times. Now I best see to our miscreants." Connor kissed his mother on the cheek and left to change his clothes.

Connor saw Bridey coming down the hall carrying packages. "Good afternoon Bridey. Would ye tell Ellen that I'm home and I'll see her shortly in the parlor?"

"Yes Sir. I'm taking her the parcels from her shopping trip, I think she is resting." Bridey blushed and continued on her way to Ellen's room.

Daniel was straightening clothes in Connor's room when he entered. "Good afternoon Connor. I didn't expect you for several hours."

"I left early to see how things were and spend time with the family. It seems this has been quite a first day."

"Yes. Ellen was absolutely exhausted when they returned. She told Bridey she had never imagined that shopping with 5 girls would be such an adventure. I guess Maggie, Nora, and Bridey wandered off and got a bit lost. Your mother had told them to stay together and they didn't listen. They had a scary few minutes until they located them."

Connor sighed. "I think there are some young ladies that need to have a reminder in obedience and respect. How did the tailor do with Liam and Tommy?"

Daniel grinned. "Liam was a bit mulish about it but Mick talked him into it. Tommy was fine and enjoyed it. Liam reminds me so much of my own brother ... very spirited he is."

"Yes Daniel, ye're right about that. I think it will take him some time to adjust." Connor finished changing and left. He went first to Lizzie's room. He knocked and entered. She was sitting at her dressing table brushing her hair. Connor sat down on another chair and said nothing.

Lizzie slammed the brush down and turned to him. "So what are ye going to do ... scold me? I'm not a child any more, Connor Boland, and I don't expect to be punished or treated like one. Ye have no right to spank me like that."

"Elizabeth, ye are not an adult and ye are certainly acting like a child. Your mother and I are to be obeyed at all times. Your actions today are not going to be tolerated. Ye indeed are going to be spanked until you change your attitude. Everyone in this house is expected to be obedient and respectful. Maureen knows better and will receive a

good reminder when I'm finished with ye. Now, come here and bring me your brush."

Lizzie sat there staring at him. She had forgotten how stern Connor could be. "No, I'm too old to be spanked."

Connor stood and grabbed her wrist and before she knew it, she was over his knee and her skirts were over her head.

"Ye will learn, Elizabeth Boland, that behavior like I saw today will earn ye a punishment each and every time. I never want to hear of ye speaking to anyone in that tone again." Connor proceeded to bring his hand down on her backside time after time until Lizzie was squealing and begging him to stop.

"I shall stop when I believe ye have learned a good lesson and not until." Connor pulled her underthings down, baring her, and picked up the hairbrush. The first few hard smacks of the brush had Lizzie hollering.

"I'm sorry, Connor. Please stop. I'll behave, I promise! I'll obey Ma. Ouch! Ouch! Please stop!" Lizzie was getting hoarse before Connor finally rested the brush on her bottom. She would certainly feel this spanking for a few days.

"Have I made myself clear? Ye will behave?" Connor tapped the hairbrush lightly on her bottom waiting for a reply.

"Yes Connor. I'll obey and never be sassy again." Lizzie was snuffling and could barely talk.

Connor pulled her pants back up and set her on his knee. "Ye are forgiven Lizzie, but ye need to apologize to Ma. It had best be a sincere apology also." Connor held her and rubbed her back until she quieted. "Now, ye go and apologize to Ma, then come back here and stay until dinner."

Lizzie flew out of the room rubbing her bottom as Connor walked to Maureen's room. She was sitting in a chair by the window. "Connor, I didn't mean to be bad, I just wanted Lizzie to meet some of my friends. Your Ma was being too mean."

Connor pulled her up and sat down. He held her hands in front and pulled her close. "Maureen, ye know better. She is to be respected and obeyed. What I heard was not respect and certainly was not obedience. Ye know I shall not tolerate that. I expected ye to be an example to Lizzie and the others. Ye didn't show a good example at all, just how to be a brat."

Saying nothing more he pulled her over his knee and bared her. His hand fell until her bottom was crimson and she was lying limply crying and apologizing. He stood her up and hugged her. "What do ye have to say for yourself?"

"I'm sorry Connor. I'll be good from now on." Maureen was busy rubbing her bottom.

"I hope so. Ye're forgiven, but ye need to apologize to Ma. Ye best be obeying her in the future regardless of what ye think. Now go apologize and then stay in your room until dinner." Connor walked her to the door and saw her head to his Mother's room. He then went downstairs to the parlor. Ellen was sitting there sewing and waiting for him.

"How was your day, Ellen?" Connor sat down next to her and kissed her lightly.

"It was the most tiring day I've ever spent. I don't know how your mother copes."

"Daniel told me something about Nora, Bridey and Maggie getting lost? What happened?"

Ellen set her sewing down and stood. "I'll fix you a whiskey and then we can talk."

Connor laughed. "That bad was it?"

When Ellen handed him the drink she sat down next to him and took a deep breath. "Shortly after breakfast your mother called everyone together. She said that everyone was to stay together unless she gave permission for them to go alone somewhere. There was to be no exceptions. Maureen said that was silly she had been shopping many times and knew her way around. Of course



Lizzie sided with her. Your mother scolded them and told them to mind."

Ellen paused and watched the muscles in Connor's cheek twitch. "Maybe you'd like to hear this later?"

"No Ellen, go on."

"We first went to the seamstress and that went well. It took a bit of time for measuring and selecting fabrics. Bridey, Maggie and Nora were getting a bit restless. Nora was anxious to show them the stores. I asked Nora to please be patient; in time we would see everything.

"It was nearing lunchtime so I suggested that we have lunch and then continue with the largest store. We would always have time to come back and see the others. Lunch was filled with whining and complaining from all of them. No matter how many times Ma told them to be quiet and stop, they ignored her. I finally told Nora and Maureen that they better behave. They told me to quit being a goody-goody and mind my own business that I couldn't tell them what to do.

"When we got to the store Mary was fascinated by the selection of ladies linens. Lizzie and Maureen were interested as well. Nora wanted to know how long we were going to be. She wanted to show Bridey and Maggie the dolls. Ma and I both said to be quiet and wait.

"We made several purchases and turned around and they were gone. Maureen said she hadn't seen them leave, nor had Lizzie. Ma stayed with them, while I went looking for the other three. I found them finally with the dolls. Nora had bought all three of them one and charged them to Papa.

"I scolded her and took them back to Ma. She was furious with them and scolded them all the way home. They are now in their rooms until dinner. Honestly Connor, I was so scared when I couldn't find them at first.

"I asked Nora why she did it. She said could do what she wanted, she knew her way around and wasn't lost."

Connor finished his drink and fixed another. He started pacing the room with an angry glare on his face. "I'm sorry you and Ma had such a troublesome time. My sisters have never behaved this badly before. Maureen and Nora know better. I've already spanked Lizzie and Maureen for the behavior I witnessed when I got home. I guess there will be a few others with sore bottoms as well."

Ellen hated to see any of them punished. She knew only too well how a hard spanking from Connor felt. "Maybe this time you could just scold them and tell them what will happen if they do it again?"

"No Ellen, they all know better than to disobey. They will all learn the consequences tonight. They will also be talked to as well. Now come sit with me for a bit, then I need to visit with your father."

Ellen moved closer to him and snuggled in his arms. They talked about last minute wedding plans, and the purchases Ellen had made that day. Connor hugged her close. "I have to see your father now, but tonight when we are alone I have a surprise for ye."

Connor stood up but Ellen tried to pull him down. "Please Connor, tell me now! You know I hate waiting."

"Ye shall have to learn patience then my dear. Tonight it is, no sooner." Connor kissed her on the nose and left to see Mick.

Mick was waiting for him in his study. "Well Connor, how was your day?"

"It was fine. Everything's going well. From what I hear, ye had an exciting day around here."

"Yes it was a bit busier than normal. Your sisters seem to have gotten a bit out of hand since you left. Mary was telling me of her problems today. Liam and Tommy were fine. Liam isn't used to being waited on or measured for clothes. He really didn't

want a good set of clothes, but I convinced him he did. I like him. He will be fine once he sees the possibilities here for him." Mick laughed at the look on Connor's face.

"I think I have taken on a real challenge here Mick. They all seem to have changed overnight. Lizzie and Maureen are currently spending the rest of the afternoon in their rooms contemplating their sore bottoms. Three others will be in the same position after dinner. They will remember their proper behavior fast." Connor and Mick chatted for a few more minutes, then Connor left to change for dinner.

Connor was intentionally the last to arrive for dinner. He wanted to survey the attitudes of his siblings and Nora and Maureen when he came in. "Good evening everyone. How was your day?"

Nora, Bridey, and Maggie exchanged a glance. They weren't sure if Connor knew about the shopping trip or not.

"We had a good time shopping today. We all got something," Nora finally said.

Connor said nothing about their misbehavior. "That's nice. I'm glad you enjoyed it."

Liam picked up the conversation and talked about doing a bit of exploring the neighborhood and seeing where everything was. "Daniel was kind enough to come with me and show me a lot of things."

The rest of the dinner was filled with lighthearted conversation. Mick entertained them with some of his old stories and had the girls giggling by the time he finished.

Once the last of the plates were cleared away Connor stood. "We will be having a family meeting in the parlor right now. Mick of course doesn't have to attend, but I would appreciate it if he would."

"Of course I will, Connor. I'll order us some tea and coffee." Mick went to the kitchen and Connor ushered the rest of them into the parlor. They were all seated, looking at Connor in puzzlement."

"Why did ye call us here Connor?" Liam asked.

"The purpose is to lay down some basic rules and discuss some disobedience today that I have heard about." Connor looked pointedly at each one of the girls and Tommy.

"Ye are to obey whatever Ma, Mick or myself tells you. If we should not be present at the time then either Liam or Ellen will be in charge. I don't want to hear of any sassiness or rude behavior. Ye will be punished each time ye misbehave. Am I understood?"

All heads nodded in agreement. "Ma, did ye receive a satisfactory apology from Lizzie and Maureen for their behavior this afternoon?"

"Yes Liam. I believe we have a much better understanding now." Mary smiled at Lizzie and Maureen who both were blushing and squirming in their chairs.

"Good, now Nora, Maggie and Bridey, I understand that ye intentionally disobeyed Ma and Ellen today and went off by yourselves in the store?"

Nora was pouting. "I wasn't lost. I knew where we were and how to get back to them. They were taking too long. Plus Ellen can't tell me what to do, and neither can Ma."

"Nora, did ye not listen to what I just said?" Connor's cheek was twitching and that was not a good sign.

"Yes Connor, but I didn't know that this morning."

"Enough Nora, ye knew better. Now, who gave ye permission to charge things to your father's account? Did ye not just receive Christmas presents two days ago?"

Nora didn't respond.

"I want all three of ye to go to my office. Nora, ye may show them the way. I will be there in a few minutes to deal with ye."

The three young ladies marched off to the office. Connor turned to Tommy. "Ye also are to be

obedient, or ye will be spanked just the same as they are."

"I will be, Connor." Tommy was sitting wide-eyed watching the three leave the room.

"If the rest of ye will excuse me, I have something to take care of." Connor left the room.

## Chapter Thirty-Six

Mick stood as soon as Connor left. "Liam, how about a game of checkers? You come too, Tommy. We'll have a men's visit."

"May I go, Ma?" Tommy was so excited to be included.

"Yes ye may, but I'll be up for ye shortly. It's almost bedtime."

Tommy thanked her and ran up stairs after them.

Mary and Ellen sewed and were chatting about the wedding. Lizzie and Maureen wanted to talk in private so they went to Maureen's room.

"I certainly hope they aren't plotting mischief." Mary shook her head.

Ellen laughed. "I doubt they would do so, this soon after the spanking Connor gave them today. Maureen knows it will be worse if they do."

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Connor paused before opening the door to his office. He listened and heard nervous whispers from inside. He put on his stern face and opened the door suddenly and walked in. Three scared little girls jumped when he came in. He sat down behind the desk and looked at them.

"Why did ye three decide ye could wander off on your own? Were ye not told to be patient and stay together?"

None of them said anything. They just sat looking scared. Nora had told them what was going to happen.

"If ye have nothing to say, then I shall have plenty to say. Bridey, come here."

Bridey walked slowly over to Connor's side. "What are ye going to do, Connor?"

Connor pulled Bridey over his knee. "Ye, young lady, are going to be soundly spanked for your behavior. I will not tolerate disobedience." Saying

nothing more, Connor lifted her skirt and started spanking her.

He continued until she was crying and promising to be good. When he was finished he lifted her off his lap and held her. "I'm sorry, Connor. I won't be bad anymore."

"I want ye to try and keep that promise. I don't want to have to spank ye anymore. Now go sit back on the couch. Maggie, you're next. Come here please."

Maggie walked over to Connor, holding her bottom. "I won't ever disobey again. Please don't spank me."

"Maggie, ye have earned this spanking. Now over my knee." Connor helped her over his knee and lifted her skirts.

She was already crying before he even started. By the time he finished she was sobbing. "I promise I'll behave, Connor. I'm sorry."

"I know ye will, Maggie. Now be a good girl and sit down next to Bridey. Nora, come here please." Connor reached in his desk and took out the paddle. Nora's eyes got wide at the sight of it.

"Please Connor, don't paddle me."

"Nora, ye knew better and ye also knew what would happen. Now over my knee." Connor pulled her across his knee and began paddling her hard. After 15 he stopped.

Nora was sobbing and promising to be good forever.

Connor lifted her up and sat her on his knee. "I know ye will try, Nora." He hugged her and sent her to the couch also.

"I want the three of ye to go right to bed. Tomorrow ye are to apologize to Ma and Ellen. Nora, ye are to apologize to your Father and accept whatever punishment he decides for charging without his permission. Now off with ye."

The three scampered as fast as they could from the rooms, rubbing their bottoms as they went. Connor sat down and waited a bit for them to get

upstairs. He walked back to the parlor to join the rest of the family.

"Where did everyone go?" Connor asked Ellen and Ma.

"Liam and Tommy are with Mick. Maureen and Lizzie are in Maureen's room. I'm about to go gather Tommy and make sure the other three are tucked in." Mary kissed Ellen and Connor goodnight, took her sewing, and went upstairs.

Connor sat down on the couch. "Come join me, Ellen." He patted the seat next to him.

"I certainly hope that I've straightened out a few problems, and things will be more peaceful from now on. I don't want to come home to spankings every night."

"I think you got your point across. I'm sure they will be far more respectful from now on."

They sat and cuddled in silence for a while; then Ellen turned to him. "I know you haven't had much of a chance to think about it, but next Tuesday school will start again. Nora will be going to the parochial school, but what about the others, and Liam and me?"

"I haven't forgotten at all. I plan on sending for Edward tomorrow to apprise him of the situation." Connor sat and rubbed Ellen's shoulder. He could feel some tenseness at his answer. "Ye really do not want to go to school with the others any longer, do ye?"

Ellen shook her head. "No Connor, I don't. You gave me authority over them tonight and it would make me very embarrassed. I already know more than other young women my age. I'd much rather study with you and work with Ma."

Connor thought for a minute. "Would ye defy me, if I said ye had to attend?"

Ellen tried hard to keep the tears out of her eyes, but Connor could see them glistening there. "No, I'd obey you, but I would feel humiliated."

"Ellen, I never want ye to feel humiliated. Ye may stop school and work with Ma, but after the



wedding I want ye to work on studies with me. Is that acceptable?"

"Oh Connor, yes! Thank you so much." Ellen flung her arms around his neck and kissed him hard.

Connor returned the kiss and then pulled away. "Ye haven't even asked me what my surprise for ye is? Have ye forgotten?"

Ellen laughed, "No, I was going to ask you now."

"I was speaking to Ian today, and he offered his cottage on the bay for our honeymoon. I agreed and we need to work out the details. Is that all right with ye?"

"Yes, Connor. I didn't think we would be able to go anywhere since Papa was ill. Thank you." Ellen again hugged him and kissed him.

This time the kiss continued for quite a while. Once more Connor broke away. "I think Ellen, it's time for bed. Ye best go on up and I'll be up shortly." Connor hugged and kissed her goodnight and watched her walk up the stairs. He was very glad the wedding was soon.

After thinking for a few minutes, Connor went up to Mick's study. He could hear Mick and Liam were still there talking. He knocked and went in. "Mind if I join ye?"

"Not at all Connor, pour yourself a whiskey." Mick pushed the bottle over to him. "How did things go downstairs?"

"I think we will have some well behaved young ladies from now on." Connor poured his whiskey and sat down. "Nora should be apologizing to ye tomorrow, for charging without your permission. Ye can decide if ye wish to punish her more or not."

Liam was enjoying spending time with Mick. Connor had thought of something that might work in his advantage. "I'm going to have a talk with Edward Howe, the tutor, tomorrow Liam. I have already told Ellen that she will be excused from class. Would you be willing to sit with him some

each day and prepare for the college? You would also be here if a problem should arise."

Liam thought for a minute. "Mick has been talking to me about college himself. I can see ye have a point. No, I wouldn't mind."

"Good, then I will see if he is amenable to that."

Connor sat back and propped his feet up and the three spent another hour chatting. It was decided that one day Mick and Liam would come see the bank and lunch with Ian and Connor.

Connor and Liam walked toward their rooms. Before Connor went in, Liam stopped him. "I want to apologize for being so stubborn when I arrived. Mick has helped me see there are a lot of opportunities here. I'll help ye in anyway I can."

"Thanks Liam. I'm counting on ye keeping him company and letting me know as he gets worse. I don't think he has much time. Plus when Ellen and I are away ye will have to take charge when necessary."

"Ye can count on me, Connor. Good night." Liam left for his room.

First thing next morning Connor asked Matthew to send a message to Edward Howe that he wished to see him at his earliest convenience. The messenger returned with a note that he would meet with Connor that afternoon at 1:00 pm.

At lunch Ian and Connor discussed the cottage. Connor was unsure what was there and what they would need to bring.

"It's fully staffed and stocked. I've sent word that you and Ellen will be there for a week. Ellen should give Bridey a list of what she would like for meals and she can send it to the housekeeper. I would think that both of you would like to bring Daniel and Bridey with you, but other than luggage you won't need a thing."

"What do I owe ye for this?" Connor was amazed

"No, Connor. It is my present to the both of you. I've known Ellen since she was a little girl and

though I've only known you a short time, I consider you a close friend. This is something I want to do." Ian smiled at the startled look on Connor's face.

"You are truly a great person, Ian, and I'm proud to have ye as a friend and partner." Connor raised his glass in a toast to him.

Edward Howe was at Connor's office promptly at 1:00 p.m. Matthew showed him in and Connor greeted him warmly. "Sit down please. Would ye like something to drink?"

"Tea would be nice," Edward answered somewhat nervously. He didn't quite know why he had been summoned.

As soon as Matthew served the tea, Connor began talking. "My family arrived on Christmas Eve, so our family has now grown substantially. As you know, Nora will be attending the parochial school, but I have three sisters and a young brother who will need tutoring. My other brother will need help in preparing for the university." Connor paused. "Ellen will no longer attend classes, but I was hoping ye would be interested in taking on the additional duties. Of course your pay would be adjusted and if ye would like, ye may live in also."

Edward almost laughed, he was so relieved. "Thank you Connor. That would be fine with me. I would also like to live in. It would allow for extra classroom time that will be needed. I can work with your brother when the others are busy on their assignments."

"Good. We shall consider it done. Liam will also be able to help ye in the classroom should ye need it. Ye may move in anytime ye like. I will inform Nancy." Connor shook hands with Edward and arrangements were made for him to move in over the weekend.

Edward was humming happily as he left. This would enable him to see far more of Colleen and save money as well. He had been courting her, but this would make it far easier.

Connor announced that evening that everything had been arranged for Mr. Howe to teach them all and would be living in. Colleen was serving and almost dropped the platter. Mick and Connor exchanged a look, but said nothing. They both were aware of the relationship between the two.

The rest of the week went smoothly and on Saturday, Edward moved in and met the Boland family. Lizzie was happy to see that he was young and handsome. Bridey and Maggie were shy and barely would look at him. Liam shook hands with him and Tommy just said hello and continued to survey him.

When he had left, Lizzie started asking Maureen all kinds of questions about him. "I bet he will be easy. I think all we have to do is flirt a bit."

Maureen and Nora quickly assured her he was very strict and was not afraid to use his paddle. The girls were not pleased with this news at all.

Connor was quick to inform them of his rules also. "If he has to punish any one of ye for anything, ye will receive double from me. So I suggest ye all behave and do your work."

When Monday came, Nora left for her new school, not entirely sure how she would like it. The others gathered in the classroom and awaited Mr. Howe. Ellen and Mary started going over the running of a home with Nancy. Liam and Mick were visiting in his office when Connor left for the bank. It certainly looked like things were working peacefully.

Nora arrived at school and was met by the Mother Superior. "Good Morning, Miss McMahon. I trust you are prepared to work?"

"Yes Sister, I am. Mr. Howe made sure I had the books I would need." Nora smiled weakly; she was very nervous and intimidated.

"Good. I shall show you to your room and introduce you to Sister Annunciata. She shall be your teacher." Mother hurried ahead and opened a classroom door. Sister hurried over and welcomed

Nora to the class. Nora smiled at her; she was young and had a pleasant look on her face. "Class, this is Nora McMahon. She will be joining us." She turned to Nora, "You may take a seat over there." She pointed to a vacant seat in the front row of the class.

"Now Nora, I have seen your test results, and you should be able to keep up with us. If you feel you need some extra help, please tell me." Sister Annunciata took her seat and started the math lesson.

Nora had no problem keeping up; she worked hard until lunchtime was announced.

During the lunch break she met several other girls. They were from families she knew and they filled her in on the rules. A small, slight, girl, Nell, told her that Mother Superior was very strict and used the paddle and worse on anyone who was late or misbehaved. If she didn't like your attitude, that was reason enough. However, Sister Annunciata was a bit more lenient but expected the utmost in respect and hard work.

"Thank you Nell, for telling me this. I intend to work hard, but I've never been in a formal school before. I guess I have a lot to learn." Nora was a bit nervous hearing of the punishments.

"You will do fine as long as your work is done properly and you are respectful," Nell confided. "Don't let Prudence or Caroline sway you. They think they are above punishment and try and get all the new girls paddled."

"Thank you, Nell. I appreciate the information. I hope to avoid that." Nora and Nell returned to the classroom hand in hand. Little did Nora know that Prudence and Caroline already were out to get her. They didn't like Irish girls, and Nora was a prime target.

The afternoon ended peacefully enough, and Nora waited for the carriage to pick her up. Caroline walked up to her and started talking casually. "I know you're new, but you should know that Sister

Annunciata likes it when best when you have your work done in black ink. I know they say to do it in blue, but she really prefers black." Caroline paused and pulled on Nora's arm. "I saw you talking to Nell today at lunch. She's not in very good standing here. She's punished regularly. Ignore anything she told you. She just wants to get you in trouble. She is really beneath us in standing." Caroline waved goodbye and climbed into her carriage as it arrived.

Nora didn't know what to think. James was there with the carriage and she was helped on. They passed Nell walking along the way. Nora was so confused. Who was right, and what chance did she take? She was told to do her homework in blue, but what if black was really the color Sister liked? Caroline seemed sincere, and Nell did seem to have ill will against them.

When she got home, there was a group to greet her to find out about her day. Mr. Howe was waiting for her and ushered her into the classroom. "How was your day, Nora?"

"It was fine. Sister Annunciata is my teacher and she seems nice." Nora was still a bit confused.

"Oh yes. She is one of the best, but she does hold students to a high standard. Now, let's see what you have for homework."

Edward and Nora worked through her homework in no time. Edward said nothing when Nora completed her assignments in black ink. When they finished it was time to get ready for dinner. Nora was so tired that immediately after dinner she readied herself for bed. She felt most comfortable with her first day at school.

Connor had been proud of her and the way she accepted it, and that meant a lot to her. She fell asleep happy and satisfied.

First thing the next morning Sister asked them to turn in their homework. One by one they filed past her desk and placed the sheets on her desk. As Nora placed her work and started away, Sister

called her back. "Nora, do you have a problem with hearing?"

Nora was startled, "No Sister, I don't."

"Then why, despite my explicit instructions, is this done in black ink?" Sister held up the paper.

Nora was speechless. "I thought it didn't really matter, and that you preferred that. It is the ink my father always uses."

"Nora, you are not going to be allowed to use your wealth to advantage. Blue ink is required. Black is a sign of influence. You have defiantly disobeyed me. I can't tolerate that. Please come forward." Sister was holding a paddle and had a determined look on her face.

Nell put her hands over her face. She knew her new friend had fallen prey to Caroline.

Nora walked forward and looked back at Caroline who was smiling smugly. "But, Sister, Caroline said you preferred black."

"Caroline Browning, did you say any such thing to Nora?"

Caroline jumped from her seat, "No Sister. She said she was going to do it in black, and I told her you wouldn't like it."

Sister Annunciata grabbed Nora by the wrist and flung her over her lap. "We shall take care of your disobedience and lying right now. You are no better than anyone in this class." She flipped her skirt up and proceeded to paddle her till Nora was sobbing. When she was done she set her on her feet. "You may spend the rest of the day in the corner doing your lessons, young lady."

Nora, sobbing, took her books and tablet and assumed her position in the corner. Her heart was broken and she didn't understand the unfairness. Perhaps Connor could explain it to her.

## Chapter Thirty-Seven

The rest of the day was a long and miserable one for Nora. Finally the bell sounded for the end of the day. Without a word, she picked up her books and papers and started for the door.

"Nora, please come here. I wish to have a word with you," Sister Annunciata announced from her desk.

Nora walked over to her. "Yes Sister?"

"I don't wish to have to paddle you ever again. You are a bright student and I'm still very surprised by your blatant disobedience. I certainly hope you have learned your lesson. On top of your homework tonight I wish an essay on the meaning of obedience. It shall be 200 words, in blue ink, and signed by your guardian. Am I clear on this? Do you understand?"

"Yes Sister, I understand. I will never disobey you again." Nora kept her eyes down.

"Good, then take this note to your guardian, explaining your behavior today and the punishment you received." Sister Annunciata handed her a sealed note for Connor.

Nora took the note and thanked her and left the room. She didn't want to cry but tears were silently streaming down her face. James was waiting for her outside. "Nora, is everything ok?"

"Yes James, it will be ... thank you." Nora sat in the carriage and cried all the way home.

When she reached home she immediately headed to her room. Edward was puzzled that she hadn't come to the schoolroom to do her homework. He sent Colleen to ask her to come see him.

"Come in!" Nora called, at the knock on the door.

"Miss Nora, Mr. Howe wishes to see you in the classroom."

"Thank you Colleen. I will be there in a moment." Nora was trying to dry her eyes and get



her feelings under control. "Please tell him I will be just a few minutes."

Colleen hurried back to the classroom. "Edward, there is something wrong. Nora said she will be here in a few minutes, but she has been crying and still seems to be trying to gain control."

"I can't imagine what happened. Don't worry, I'll talk to her." Edward gave Colleen a quick hug as she left.

Nora walked dejectedly into the classroom with her books and homework. She nodded to Edward, sat gingerly down at her desk, and started working.

"Nora, stop for a minute. What's wrong?" Edward was sitting at the desk next to her.

Before Nora could say a word, she started crying again. Finally she managed through tears to tell the whole story. "I feel so mortified and lonely. I wasn't lying. I did what I thought she wanted. I don't know why Caroline did that to me, and then lied to Sister about it. I have to write a 200-word essay on obedience and have Connor sign it. I have a note for him, which he is to read also. He will probably punish me again. That is his rule." Nora put her head down and sobbed till she could barely breathe.

Edward rubbed her back and tried to quiet her. "Nora, please try and stop crying. I will speak with Connor. I'm sure he won't punish you. Now, let me see your homework while you work on your essay." Edward gently pried the paper from her hand.

Nora was still sniveling but started on her essay. 200 words were not many for her and she was finished quickly. She handed it to Edward to check. "This is perfect Nora. Now let's work on the rest. There really isn't much here. The reading you can do in your room if you would prefer."

They worked steadily and when they were done, Nora decided to do her reading in her room. She was still teary eyed and sitting wasn't comfortable at all.

Edward left word that he needed to talk to Connor as soon as he returned home.

Connor arrived home a bit earlier than normal. He was tired and had had a hard day at the bank. He was looking forward to relaxing before dinner and spending a quiet evening with Ellen. As soon as he walked in the door he was informed that Mr. Howe wished to see him.

He slowly walked up to the classroom, wondering what mischief had transpired that day.

"Good afternoon Edward. Do we have a problem to deal with?" Connor shook his hand.

"Yes, it is a problem, but not what you think." He quickly explained about Nora and gave him the note Sister had sent home to him. Connor opened it and read quickly. It simply stated that Nora blatantly disobeyed instructions and then lied about it and tried to get others in trouble. She had been paddled 30 times and made to spend the day in the corner.

Connor folded the note and set it on the desk. "I know Nora would not have disobeyed something like that, nor lied about it. It sounds like that girl is out to get her in trouble."

"Yes, I'm sure she is, but what bothers me is how upset Nora is. She has been crying, I think, for hours. Her spirit is crushed. Also, she feels you will punish her again. Her written work was complete so I sent her to her room to read."

"Thank ye Edward. I shall go see her once I change." Connor left and went to his room. He couldn't imagine why Sister Annunciata was taking such a hard line, but perhaps that was her way. He would have to try and explain that to Nora somehow.

Refreshed, he was on his way to Nora's room when he ran into Ellen. "Connor! I didn't know you were home." She hugged him.

"Ah that feels good. Yes I'm early, I had a hard day and wanted to relax a bit and spend a quiet evening with ye, but Nora has had a problem at school that I must take care of." Connor kissed Ellen on the forehead and broke away.

"I know. The other girls said she is crying and won't come out of her room. Do you want me to go with you?" Ellen bit her lip, concerned about Nora.

"Yes, I think that may help." Connor took her hand and they went to Nora's room. Connor knocked softly and there was no answer. "Nora, this is Connor and Ellen. Please may we come in?"

Nora got off the bed and unlocked the door for them. She stood there with her eyes down crying. "I'm sorry Connor, I really didn't mean to get into trouble, and I wasn't lying."

Connor picked her up and sat down in the rocker with her. "Nora, I know ye didn't. Now hush, ye are not in trouble with me at all."

Connor rocked her for a bit and finally Nora stopped crying. Ellen got her a glass of water and a cool rag for her eyes.

"Nora, I have signed your essay, and I will also send a note personally to Sister Annunciata. I don't like that this has happened, but I can't undo it. Can ye please try and go on and just not associate with this Caroline? I think Nell was telling ye the truth. Sister doesn't know ye, and has to take a hard line to enforce discipline. If ye like I will go to school and talk to her personally."

Nora looked at Ellen and Connor, "I don't think that would be good. She might think I'm trying to gain favor. She already said she doesn't intend to let my wealth influence her handling of me ... that I shall be treated the same as the others."

Connor kissed her on the forehead and set her on her feet. "I will just write her a note acknowledging hers and say nothing more. However, if this should ever happen again, I will have a talk with her. Now rest before dinner. Everything will be fine." Connor and Ellen both hugged and kissed her and left her room.

Connor's hands were balled in fists when he closed the door. Not a word was said as he walked down to the parlor. Ellen followed silently knowing he was very upset. He poured himself a whiskey

and sat down, patting the spot next to him for Ellen. "I'm very upset that this has happened. Perhaps having her attend the school is a mistake. I don't want her spirit crushed as it was surely crushed today."

"I know Connor, but if she wants to try and continue, maybe it will work out. She isn't a quitter and is quite determined to succeed." Ellen rubbed Connor's shoulders.

"Aye, I know. I'm just not sure she can overcome this if there are girls out to get her in trouble all the time."

Ellen hugged him. "There are always girls who are jealous and mean. Let Nora try and work on it, before you act. Maybe next year if some of the others go, that will help, too."

Nora was quiet at dinner, but tried to be a bit more cheerful. She dreaded going to school the next day, but when Connor questioned her in the morning, she said she was fine.

Nell was waiting for her outside the school. "I'm sorry about yesterday Nora, but I'll stick by you. Caroline will still try and get you in trouble and will taunt you. She has wealthy parents, but not as wealthy as yours, and she doesn't like the Irish at all. She thinks we're low and nasty people."

Nora linked arms with Nell. "We shall show them that I don't deflate that easily. I don't intend to do anything to irritate Sister ever again."

Nora greeted Sister Annunciata politely and put her assignment and note and essay on her desk. Sister nodded at her and said nothing. Nora sat down at her desk and folded her hands, waiting for class to begin. Some of the other girls were whispering, but she ignored them. She took out her math book and started reviewing yesterday's lesson and looking ahead at what was coming.

Sister was reviewing Nora's essay and the signed note from Connor. He didn't elaborate, just thanked her for the note, and said he was sure it wouldn't happen again. She wondered if Nora had

been punished further, but wouldn't ask. Nora seemed to be a very subdued child and was already studying before class had started.

Sister rose and clapped her hands. "Please stand and we shall say our morning prayers and start."

Class that morning concentrated on math and geography. Several students were scolded for not being prepared with answers and for mistakes on their work. Nora was called on several times and each time answered politely and correctly. Sister was pleased with her conduct so far, but was watching her closely. She intended to see if she tried to seek revenge on Caroline whom she accused of getting her in trouble.

Nell and Nora ate lunch together. Nora had a nice lunch packed for her but Nell had only a small sandwich. Nora, felt bad for her and gave her some of her cookies. Nell smiled at her. "You don't have to share. I'm used to a small meal."

"I want to share with you. You're my friend aren't you?"

"Yes, we are friends." Nell smiled at Nora and took the cookies hungrily.

"I saw you walking home yesterday. Where do you live?" Nora wondered how far away she lived.

"It's about 4 miles away. My father works in your father's bank and my mother takes in laundry to help. I have 8 brothers and sisters, so there is a lot to do. My older sister works as a maid in one of the wealthier homes, and my oldest brother works in the shipyards. I will have to find a skill as soon as I finish school here. We all have to help out with the young ones, too."

Nora instantly made a decision. "James will take you home every day when he picks me up. That is too far for you to walk. We shall pick you up in the morning also. Are there others who walk with you? We can take them as well."

Nell looked at her new friend, shocked. "Oh you don't have to do that. It's nothing really. There are

others and we chat on the way home. Some are older and almost done, and some younger."

"Then it is settled. Tell them to meet you outside this afternoon with me, and James shall take them home and arrange to pick them up tomorrow." Nora hugged her friend and they walked back into school.

Caroline had noticed Nora sitting with Nell, and totally ignoring her. She was waiting for Nora to confront her about yesterday, but she hadn't even spoken to her. It infuriated her.

That afternoon James was shocked to see six small girls waiting with Nora. "James, they live 4 miles away and walk everyday. I told them you would take them home and pick them up in the morning. You don't mind do you?"

James had to smile. That little Nora had a heart of gold. "No, not at all." He helped each one in and inquired as to where they lived. He dropped each one off and helped them down. They all agreed to meet in front of Nell's house the next morning.

Nora was humming and happy when she arrived in the classroom to work with Edward that afternoon. She told him how she had behaved and the story of Nell and her family.

"Nora, unfortunately, there are a lot of Nells in Boston. She is probably better off than most, since she is being educated. You are very kind to help her." Edward was proud of Nora.

"I thought I would ask Papa if I might take some extra food for them. They really don't have much at lunch to eat, and I don't know if they get much at home." Nora was wondering if Sister would be angry if she did that. "Mr. Howe, would Sister or Mother be upset if I did that?"

Edward thought for a bit. "I don't think so, but before you do too much, let me talk to Connor and your Papa. Maybe there is something better we can do."

Nora finished her assignments and Edward checked them. "These are fine, Nora. Why don't you

study a bit more of your history and geography for tomorrow ... get a bit ahead?"

He left Nora in the schoolroom and went in search of Colleen. She was usually on a break about this time and they could take a walk. He found her sitting in the kitchen garden. "I have to share with you what Nora wants to do. She has such a kind heart." Edward related the story of Nell and her family and the rides that Nora had arranged for.

James walked by as they were talking and overheard. "Yes, she is really a little angel. I told Mick and he is so proud of her. I think he would send four carriages and bring them all to school if it were possible."

It wasn't long before all the servants knew of Nora's kindness and wishes to feed all the poor classmates. The house was fairly humming with it when Connor arrived home. Mary had heard of it and she and Ellen had decided they would see what Connor thought.

Ellen was sewing and thinking about it. "Mary, do you think we could bring them back here after school? They could study with Nora a bit, then maybe have some dinner before James took them home?"

"Ellen, you are as kind as Nora, but they most likely have chores they must do at home to help with the other children, and it wouldn't be fair to the others. I'm sure your father and Connor will think of something. But now, we must get busy and finish these linens before your wedding." Mary patted Ellen's hand.

Ellen was becoming quite adept with the needle and still had some work to do on her trousseau that Mary insisted Ellen and she do, instead of having it done for her.

On the way home from the bank, James filled Connor in on Nora's delivery service. Connor had to laugh. It was typical of Nora, and perhaps she would bounce back from her bad start. As soon as he walked in the door, Ellen and Mary literally

dragged him into the morning room. "We have to talk to you right away."

Connor could barely make sense of any of it. "Slow down. Ye are both talking at once and I can't fathom what ye are trying to tell me."

They slowed down and once more told him about Nora's plan on feeding the children. "I thought perhaps we could bring them here every day, but Ma thinks that their parents might not like that, since they likely have chores to do." Ellen waited to see what Connor's response would be.

"I'm sure we can do something, but I must talk to Mick and Edward, and possibly Mother Superior. I also will talk to Nora, but right now, I want to change and relax a bit. I'll meet ye back in the parlor in a little while." Connor hugged and kissed his mother on the cheek and hugged and kissed Ellen, before he left to change.

He was shaking his head and chuckling when he got to his room. "Daniel, I think these women are going to be the death of me yet. Have ye heard the latest they want to do?"

"Aye, and they do have good hearts all of them. I don't know how much help will be accepted though, or to what extent the school will allow it." Daniel brushed and hung Connor's suit up, while Connor changed.

Connor stopped at Mick's room before he went to the parlor. Mick was laughing at the look on Connor's face. "I see you have already heard of St. Nora's plans, and all of the helpers she has enlisted in the few hours since she came home."

Connor sat down as Mick handed him a drink. "Yes, I have, but don't know how much is practical and will be able to be handled without trouble."

"I know. I think we need to be very careful and not hurt the pride of a lot of people, and upset the school. I will pay Mother Superior a visit tomorrow and see what her thoughts are on the subject. I will also perhaps visit a few of the families and see what conditions are. These are hard working families that



maybe could use a bit of a helping hand, without hurting their pride. You worry about the bank and your wedding and leave this with me." Mick saluted him and drained his glass. "Come ... let's join the others."

## Chapter Thirty-Eight

Nora rose early the next morning and hurried through her breakfast, so she and James would have time to pick up everyone and not be late for school. That would surely make Sister Annunciata upset.

Nora made sure that she had some extra treats in her lunch. Until they decided what she could do, she intended to share with as many as she could. James was waiting with the carriage and she bounded in. "Hurry James, we don't want to keep them waiting in the cold."

James smiled at the little girl, and climbed into the driver's seat. They reached Nell's house in plenty of time, but were surprised to find 12 children instead of 6. James surveyed the group. "Did ye all multiply overnight?"

Nell spoke up. "I should have asked first, but it's cold today and the little ones won't take up much room. Otherwise they would have to leave an hour earlier and it was dark and cold."

"No problem, Nell. I spy two young lads there. They can sit up with me. I think the rest of you can manage in the back, if you scrunch together. Now let's get you all in and off to school." James lifted the two boys up to the drivers seat and helped the others into the carriage. They squeezed in and held littler ones on their laps. No one minded and they giggled and laughed all the way.

After they were all unloaded at school, he stopped Nell. "Are there more that could use rides? If so, I will bring another carriage." James watched Nell as she thought it over.

"Yes, there are a few more, maybe another 8 that live near me. They were older so they walked today. We planned on taking turns."

"Have them all here after school. I'll see to it they get home. Now both of you best get inside." James waved goodbye to them and turned the carriage toward home.

James arrived home in time to pick up Connor. He was waiting for him in the front hall. "How were your passengers this morning?"

"We had a few extras today. Instead of six, seems there were 12 and even more who walked. I told them we would see to it they all had rides. Some are so small and their shoes and coats aren't very warm. The older ones walked and left early, so the small ones could ride. There are 8 more and they planned on taking turns. Do you mind if Daniel drives the other carriage and goes with me?"

"That's a wonderful idea. Be sure you mention that to Mick today as well. He plans on doing some investigating; I think he needs to know about this. Our little Nora sure has started something here." Connor sat back and thought about the situation. It was a shame that so many lived so poorly here. He knew there were so many prejudiced against the Irish. Had it not been for Mick, he would be living poorly with them, trying to scratch out an income, instead of being where he was. The least he could do was try and repay Mick by helping as many as he could.

Mick felt better than he had in a long time. His precious Nora gave him a cause and he loved nothing better than a good cause. James came to see him when he returned from taking Connor.

"Good morning James. How are things today? Did you get the children safely to school?"

"Yes Sir, we had a few more than yesterday. Seems they have doubled and more. Connor asked me to be sure and let you know. We had 12 this morning, some quite young and little. There are 8 more that were older so walked as usual. Their clothing is very threadbare and I noticed two of the boys who sat with me actually have holes in the soles of their shoes. I'm taking two carriages this afternoon to give them all rides, and will do that tomorrow as well."

"Good James, good. I think this morning I shall pay a visit to Mother Superior and then to the area

where they live. Perhaps I can find out some of the addresses from Mother and pay them a visit. I would like to see for myself their conditions and what they will accept. If you have the carriage ready in an hour, I'll be ready then." Mick started making a list of what he wanted to do. He decided to see if perhaps Mary would like to accompany him; that may make the families feel more comfortable.

He found Mary and Ellen in the morning room sewing. "Good Morning, ladies. I hope you are both well today."

Ellen rose and gave her father a hug and kiss. "Yes, Papa, I'm fine. How are you feeling today? You look like you're on a crusade."

"After a fashion, I am. I intend to speak to Mother Superior today about the poor children and see what more we can do. James will now have two carriages every day. I don't want to step on toes and create any ill will towards Nora. I also intend to visit the neighborhood where they live, possibly visit with some of the families if I can, and see what help they would accept."

Mary spoke up. "I think it is wonderful what Nora is trying to do. But we do have to be sensitive. We are a proud people, and they won't want to feel they are objects of pity. Most will probably accept help in some manner though."

"I was wondering if you'd like to accompany me, Mary. I felt it would be good for you to meet Mother Superior. It will be good for her to see Nora has a female presence in the house. I also thought the families would be more comfortable and open with you there."

"I would love to accompany ye. When are ye planning on going?"

"In half an hour. James will have the carriage waiting. I'll meet you in the hall." Mick left the room.

Mary folded her sewing up and put it in her basket. "Ellen, ye can continue sewing while I'm gone. We must get this done this week."

Ellen sighed as Mary left to get ready to go with Mick. She was getting a bit tired of all this sewing, but she didn't want to disappoint Mary, and it was better than sitting in class with the others.

The school halls were deserted when Mick and Mary knocked on Mother's door. All the children were in classes and it wasn't near lunchtime yet.

A very stern voice called out, "Come in."

Mick opened the door and he and Mary walked into the office. Mother rose to greet them very surprised. "I thought that was some naughty child being sent to see me, otherwise I would have opened the door myself. This is a surprise, Mr. McMahon. What can I do for you?"

"This is Mary Boland, Mother, Connor's mother. His family has come to join us. She has 5 children, so we have a nice full house now." Mick pulled a chair out for Mary and sat in another one.

"It is nice to meet you, Mrs. Boland." Mother sat back in her chair.

Mick cleared his throat and explained to Mother the reason for his visit. Mother listened intently and when he was finished sat back and thought for a minute.

"This is a very touchy subject. I know many are from very poor families and we try and educate as many as we can. However, I don't know if it would be a good idea to show favoritism and feed only a few."

"There must be some way we can do something." Mick wasn't going to be deterred.

Mary turned to Mick and Mother. "I have a thought. Since James is bringing them to school every morning, couldn't we just give them a lunch on the way and it would look to the others that they brought it with them."

Both Mick and Mother smiled. "That's a wonderful idea. I can see no harm in that at all."

Mother turned to Mick. "Nora is a wonderful child to be so open and sharing. That is an admirable trait, and I must admit, not one we expected to see from what we have heard about your daughters."

"I have Connor to thank for that. He has been a great influence on them." Mick thanked Mother for her time and he and Mary left.

James helped them into the carriage and they were off to visit the neighborhood the children lived in. "Mary, that was a wonderful idea about the lunches. Nora will be thrilled. Now we just have to convince the parents that it's a good idea." James pulled up in front of a shabby but neat cottage. "This is where Nell lives."

Mick and Mary walked up to the front door and knocked. When the door opened a petite woman looked warily at them. The odor of cooking and the sound of a baby crying greeted them.

"My name is Mick McMahon and this is Mrs. Mary Boland. I am Nora's father, and we would like to have a word with you if we may."

Mrs. O'Brien opened the door and allowed them to come in. "Would you like some tea? I hope this isn't because Nell has overstepped herself in accepting a ride?"

Mary spoke up quickly. "Tea would be nice. I'll hold the child for ye while ye are getting it."

Mick added, "Nell isn't in any trouble at all."

Mrs. O'Brien handed the baby to Mary. "My name is Eileen, please call me Eileen."

Mary cuddled the baby and had it quieted within a few minutes. Eileen returned and two other children followed after her. She sat and poured them tea. Mick noticed that it was fairly weak; they were probably draining her supply of tea for the week.

"My daughter, Nora and your daughter, Nell have become quite good friends in the few days they've known each other. She's been telling us about the children in this neighborhood. I'd like to do something to help them. Nora wanted to feed

them all at lunch, but Mother Superior felt that would be disruptive to the rest of the classes. Mary has a plan we feel will work but wish to have your approval and the other parents' approval first. We'd like to provide lunch for the children each day. They'd receive it when they're picked up for school, so no one at the school needs to know it wasn't brought from home. I have some other ideas too, but I think I'll need to meet with the fathers to discuss them. Does this sound acceptable to you?"

Eileen was stunned. "Oh my! That would be wonderful, but my husband is a proud man. I don't want him to feel we're begging food for our children."

"Could you have your husband and the other fathers come meet with me this evening? It will only be for a brief time. I'll have James bring the carriage and pick them up at 7:00. If they don't wish to come, I'll understand."

"Oh I think he'll come. He holds you in high esteem. I'll speak to the other mothers also. Most of the men will come. Mrs. Hagerty is a widow though, so you'll have to speak to her yourself. She's a maid at Mrs. Thompson's and works long hours. Her children pretty much have to fend for themselves. I'm sure she wouldn't mind the lunch though. She struggles to feed them."

"I will certainly find a way to speak to her. Thank you for the tea. I look forward to meeting your husband tonight." Mick and Mary left a stunned and smiling Eileen O'Brien.

"They surely do barely make it from the looks of things. I'll have to check with Connor and see what Mr. O'Brien's salary is and what he does. Mrs. Haggerty is another one we must do something for. Mrs. Thompson is very cruel. I will have to find a way to talk to her. Perhaps Bridey can help there, since she used to work there until recently. Our family isn't exactly on good terms with her and never will be." Mick sat against the cushions and

closed his eyes. It had been a tiring day, but he felt good with the progress they were making.

Mick left word that he wanted to talk to Connor in his room when he returned home from the bank. He went to the kitchen and spoke with the cook and servants. "Do you think you could handle making 20 additional lunches for school tomorrow? We have come up with a plan to feed the poor children."

Cook spoke up first. "It will be no problem at all. We'll gladly do it to feed the poor children."

Mick requested his lunch served in his room and slowly climbed the steps; he needed to rest.

Mary explained to Ellen and the others over lunch what they had found out that morning. Edward was most interested. "The men are to meet here with Mick tonight? What does he have planned?"

"I don't know, he didn't say, just that he would need to talk to them." Mary was as curious as the rest.

They left for their afternoon schooling and Mary and Ellen settled back into their sewing. All were anxious to question Mick at dinner.

Connor had spent a great part of the day talking with Ian regarding the school children and what Nora was attempting to do. Ian was very supportive. "I know they live in miserable conditions. Jobs are scarce and many people refuse to hire them. You said one of their fathers works here?"

"Yes, Nell's father does, but unfortunately I don't know his name. Mick was going to talk to Mother Superior today and visit in the area. I'm sure he will have the name. We can see if there are any others working here too. I'd like to think we pay them enough to properly feed their families."

Ian rose to leave Connor's office. "We can check it out and see. Perhaps some raises or change in jobs is in order. We are doing well. We can share some of that with the employees."



Connor was pleased to hear James talk about the two carriages full of children. "It seems there are a lot more of them than we originally thought."

"Yes, Mick would like to see you as soon as you can when you get home. I'm sure he wants to fill you in on his day."

Ellen greeted Connor in the front hall. "Oh Connor, Papa needs to talk to you and we are having a meeting here tonight for the fathers of the children. Please, find out what you can and tell me."

Connor scooped her up in a hug. "What no kiss for me? Just questions?"

Ellen giggled and kissed him hard. "I missed you, but we are so curious to know what he has planned."

Connor set her down. "I have to see him and I'll let you know what I can. I'll be down in a bit."

After he had changed his clothes and freshened up, Connor knocked on Mick's door.

"Come in," Mick called out.

Connor went in and greeted Mick. "I see you have the entire house all a twitter about your meeting tonight. You have them so curious, they can hardly wait to hear about it."

"Yes, I'm sure they are all wondering." Mick laughed.

Connor poured them a drink and sat down. "So what's going on? How were your meetings?"

Mick told him about the meeting with Mother Superior and Mrs. O'Brien. "We have the lunch problem solved, though our number is 20 now. I asked the men to meet here since I think there are more needs than food. James told me that some of the children were wearing light coats or just sweaters. Several had holes in the soles of their shoes. They are most likely hand me downs from older siblings. I want to hold it out as something I'd like to do to help them, as a fellow Irishman. Perhaps we can even find some of them better jobs."

"I talked to Ian about this today also. He suggested that perhaps it's time to evaluate what each employee is doing and possibly promote some, or give them raises. We both hate to think our employees barely have enough to feed their families."

Mick agreed with him. "Yes, I think that would be a good thing to do. There is plenty of money there to allow for it. Tonight I would like you to join me in the meeting. They need to meet you and know you, since you will be dealing with them in the future with whatever we decide."

"Of course I'll join ye." Connor smiled but was bothered with how casually Mick talked about his death.

Connor and Mick joined the others in the parlor. Immediately everyone stopped talking and looked at them. Connor laughed, "Ye don't all need to stop talking just because we walked into the room." He poured Mick and himself a drink and sat down next to Ellen.

"Connor, don't tease. Tell us what the plans are." Ellen slapped his arm.

Mick stopped Connor before he could answer her. "I'll tell you all what I have planned. However, until later this evening nothing will be final."

Mick explained about the lunches and the meeting later in the evening. Nora jumped up and hugged him. "Oh Papa, that's wonderful! I do hope their fathers agree with your plans."

At seven o'clock James picked up 5 men and brought them back to the house. Mick and Connor greeted them in the parlor. "While we're talking, would ye like a bit of whiskey?" Connor felt that might put them more at ease. They all looked very glum.

Mr. O'Brien was the first one to speak. "Yes, I think that would be nice. Thank ye."

Connor instantly recognized him from the bank. He was one of their best tellers. Tomorrow he and

Ian would look at his records and see what they could do.

Mick calmly explained what he wanted to do. The men sat and drank quietly while he spoke. Mick finished his explanation with what he hoped would be the deciding factor.

"Our people are having a hard time in the world right now. The children are the future, and to educate them is the best thing we can do for them. They learn more when they aren't hungry and are in warm clothing. I'm fortunate to be in the position to afford to do this. I'd consider it an honor, if you will allow me to help your children in their efforts."

There was some discussion between the men and Seamus O'Brien spoke for them. "We would be proud to allow ye to help our children. It's a wonderful thing you are doing for them. We'll be eternally grateful, and will try our best to help ye if we ever can."

Mick shook hands with each of them. "You don't need to re-pay me. If you can some day pass the kindness on, that is all the payment I need."

Mick and Connor walked upstairs after James left to return them home. "I think Connor, that this has been a great day. I'm glad they didn't let their pride get the better of them."

"Yes, I'm glad too. Nora will be thrilled tomorrow when she hears." Connor walked to his room light of heart. Tomorrow would be another day, and he intended to do some more to help those he could.

## Chapter Thirty-Nine

"Really, truly, we can get clothes and shoes for them, and lunches as well?" Nora was literally jumping around the room when Mick told her the next morning about the meeting the night before.

"Now Nora, you must keep this quiet. Mother Superior doesn't want the others to know. Do you understand?" Mick was trying to calm her down.

"Oh, I can hardly wait to tell Nell. It will be so much fun." Nora wasn't paying any attention to Mick at all. Connor stood up and grabbed her arms. "Nora, ye aren't listening, and this is very important! Now sit, and pay attention."

Nora instantly calmed down. "I'm just so happy, Connor."

"I know ye are, but it is important that ye keep this to yourself. Nell isn't to know about anything but the lunches. The clothes are entirely different."

"But I do get to go and pick them all out, don't I? We can all go and it will be so much fun." Nora was still bubbling.

"No, Nora. Ye will have nothing to do with this. It will be handled a bit differently. Ye are not to say one word of this. If it leaks out, ye will be answering to me, over my knee. Do ye understand now?" Connor wasn't smiling when he finished.

Nora was now subdued. "Yes Connor. I won't say anything to anyone, but I'm still happy."

Connor hugged her. "Ye deserve to be happy. Ye did a good thing, but just keep it quiet."

Nora didn't know how she was going to keep this secret, but she realized she had to. If something got out, it might cancel the whole thing. Nell climbed in the carriage with Nora, and watched as Daniel and James helped load the other children. "Oh Nora, my mother and father said it was all right to take the lunches you're bringing. Thank you so much. My mother and father were both so happy this morning. It must be harder feeding us than I thought."

"I'm just glad that Papa managed to get Mother Superior to agree, but we aren't to tell the others where the food came from. Be sure and spread the word."

"I already told them that if they said anything, it could be taken away. They won't tell a soul." Nell sat back satisfied with herself. After all, if they didn't listen to her, she would ban them from the carriage and lunch.

At lunchtime, the other children didn't seem to think anything about the bigger lunches the Irish children had. Caroline and Prudence noticed though. Caroline was extremely curious. "I'm just going to ask Nell where she got the lunch. I bet Nora McMahon has something to do with this."

Caroline and Prudence walked over to where Nora and Nell were sitting eating their lunches. Nora and Nell both tensed. They knew Caroline and Prudence well enough to know that they weren't coming over to be nice.

Caroline looked at both girls. "Nell, it seems that you have a much bigger lunch than normal. In fact it looks a lot like Nora's. Are you begging for food now? Sister Annunciata wouldn't like it at all."

"It's none of your business what I have for lunch. For your information though, I don't beg for food. Now just leave us alone." Nell turned her back and ignored both of them.

Caroline and Prudence stood their ground. "You best tell, or I'm going to tell Sister that you are begging food, and Nora is using her wealth to provide it for you."

Nora stayed calm. "You are wrong. You may tell Sister anything you wish, but it will be a lie."

Caroline gave her a furious glance and turned away and walked over to Sister Annunciata. "I'm sorry to interrupt you Sister, but Nell has been begging for food from Nora, and she has been using her position of wealth to give it to her. I don't think that is right."

Mother Superior had told Sister Annunciata of Mick and Mary's visit the day before. She knew it was sanctioned, and that Caroline was trying to make trouble for Nora and Nell.

"I'll look into it Caroline, but if this isn't true, you will be in serious trouble. Now, go back and finish your lunch hour." Sister rose and sought out Nora and Nell.

She sat down next to them and calmly asked Nell, "Did you beg for this lunch from Nora?"

Nell was worried but she answered honestly, "No Sister, I didn't."

"Nora, did Nell ask you for this lunch?"

"No Sister, she didn't." Nora looked her straight in the eye. She was not going to lie, but she wasn't volunteering information either.

"Very well. Thank you for being honest with me." Sister Annunciata smiled to herself as she went back to her desk. Caroline was going to be one sorry young lady. It was becoming evident that she was making trouble for the others. She now believed that Nora was most likely telling her the truth about the black ink.

The bell rang and the children all took their places in the classroom. Sister stood in front of the class. "Attention please!" Everyone sat very quietly when they heard her voice. "I wish to remind each and every one of you, I don't tolerate someone bearing false witness against a classmate. Unfortunately, this has happened today. Caroline, please come to the front of the class."

Caroline's face turned white. She was fully expecting either Nell or Nora to be called forward. Slowly she stood and made her way to the front of the class. "Yes Sister. What do you want?"

"I want you to get the paddle from my top desk drawer and bring it to me."

Caroline did as she was told. "Now, I want you to bend over the desk. You intentionally tried to get one or two of your classmates punished. What you told me was untrue. I have been suspicious for

some time that you were maliciously getting others in trouble. I will make sure you have something to think about the next time you attempt such behavior."

Caroline leaned over the desk trembling. Sister pulled up her skirt and pulled down her panties. The class was stunned; she had never spanked anyone on the bare before.

"When we are finished here, you will report to Mother Superior's office and tell her what transpired here. She will then decide what further punishment you may receive." Sister raised the paddle and smacked her bottom hard. The sound of the paddle meeting Caroline's bottom and her howl echoed throughout the classroom. She continued for 30 times.

When she was done she righted Caroline's clothing and helped her up. "I want you to apologize to both Nell and Nora, then go to Mother's office."

Choking on her sobs Caroline turned toward the class. Her face was as red as her bottom was. "Nora and Nell, I'm very sorry." Caroline then almost ran from the class.

"Let us resume with our geography lessons." Sister calmly continued with the class.

Mother Superior decided that Caroline had been disciplined enough, but scolded her for 45 minutes and assigned her a long essay on truthfulness and kindness. She wrote a note for her to take to her father and then sent her back to class.

When they were dismissed for the day, Caroline approached Nora. "If you think you are going to get away with this, you have another thought coming. I'll see to it that you will only have the lowly scum as friends. No one in society will have anything to do with you at all. Your whole family will be shunned. My father will see to it."

"Your threats don't bother me, Caroline. I will be friends with whomever I wish. I'm sorry you were punished so severely, but I had nothing to do with

that." Nora walked to the carriage where James was waiting. She climbed in next to Nell.

Nell had a frown on her face. "What did she say? She will try and get us in real trouble. I know she will."

Nora related what Caroline had said. "Don't worry Nell, she can't harm us if we do nothing wrong and avoid her."

The journey home was fun. Everyone was chatting and giggling. Nell hadn't seen her friends and neighbors this happy in a long time. She hugged Nora good-bye. It was all because of her that they were all this happy. If it was the last thing she did, she would make sure that Caroline and her friends didn't get Nora in trouble again.

Connor's day was proving eventful too. He asked for the personnel file for Seamus O'Brien, as soon as he arrived. Seamus had been with the bank for three years, progressing from a trainee position to a teller. He had immigrated from Ireland 5 years before, and had worked day jobs as he could find them, until he was hired at the bank.

He was well educated and Connor could only guess at his reasons for leaving Ireland. From his record, he certainly could be promoted and receive a raise. During lunch he reviewed with Ian what he had learned about Mr. O'Brien.

"We currently have no Head Teller in his area. He would make an excellent Head Teller, and we could give him a substantial raise also. I've been meaning to review that area and appoint someone. I think my work has been done for me. I'll talk to him personally this afternoon." Ian and Connor chatted for a bit, then Connor remembered Ian knew nothing of the meeting the night before. He summarized the reason for the meeting. Ian was very interested. "Did you get them to agree to accept help?"

"Mick handled things very well. They have agreed to let us provide the lunches and some



shoes and clothing. Of course, Nora was all ready to run out and start shopping for them."

"How are you going to handle it?"

"I've explained to Nora that it must remain a deep secret. Nancy and my mother will do the shopping. They will consult with the mothers on sizes and needs. The clothes will be delivered to the homes. Mick's idea is to explain it came from a benefactor and not say specifically whom it is. The men seemed to like that idea."

Ian listened thoughtfully. "Mick is sure resourceful, I'll really miss having him around. How's he doing?"

"He has his good and bad days. Yesterday he was doing fairly well, but it took a lot out of him. I see him failing a bit more each day. I think he's in more pain than he's letting on. He still doesn't want the girls to know. It's going to be such a blow to them." They parted ways once they were back at the bank.

Ian summoned Seamus O'Brien to his office. Seamus appeared shortly thereafter, shaking a bit. He had been trying to figure out what he had done wrong. Surely after the good fortune Mr. McMahon was bestowing on them, he wouldn't be fired. They would not be able to exist. He tentatively knocked on the door and Ian called out, "Enter!"

"Thank you for coming so fast Mr. O'Brien. Please have a seat." Ian motioned to a chair in front of his desk. Seamus sat down and waited to hear his fate.

"Mr. O'Brien, I've been reviewing staffing in your area. We've been in need of a Head Teller for some time. After reviewing your file, I believe you are the most qualified to assume this position. It will require supervision of the other tellers, and a bit longer hours, but your pay would increase commensurably. Are you interested in accepting this?"

Seamus almost fainted from relief and joy. "Yes Sir, I'd be most willing to accept that position."

Thank ye most kindly." The details of the job and amount of raise were discussed and Seamus walked back to his area with Ian to announce the change in position, effective immediately.

Ian made the announcement and watched as his fellow workers sincerely congratulated him. He was going to make a good Head Teller; he already had the respect of his employees.

Connor was just about to see what he could find out about Mrs. Haggerty, when Ian came in and told him about Seamus O'Brien.

"I think he thought at first he was being fired. He almost cried with relief when I told him the purpose of my sending for him. I think the extra money will indeed help his family immensely."

"Good, Ian. Now maybe you can help me with this problem. There is one of the parents, a widow, Mrs. Haggerty, who works for Mrs. Thompson. She puts in long hours and has to leave her children alone. I understand that she barely makes enough to clothe and feed them. She knows nothing of what we're planning to do. I'm sure they will tell her, but I'd like to find out a little more about her, perhaps find her a better position, where she can earn a better wage and care for her children. I thought perhaps some of your servants might know of her. I asked Bridey, but she wouldn't dare try and go anywhere near that house."

"I'll ask. I do think that my Cook is a good friend of her cook. I can probably get some information that way. I personally don't know how she keeps any servants at all. She hates the Irish, yet they are the only ones who will work for her, since they're desperate."

Connor left the bank for the day, feeling they had accomplished some good. The O'Brien family would be celebrating tonight and he had made inroads into finding out about the Haggerty family.

Ellen greeted him warmly when he returned. "I've finally finished the sewing tasks. I now have time to work on finalizing the wedding plans, and

packing for the honeymoon. I don't know how you feel about it, but Papa wants us to move into the master suite. He left it after Mama died. He says it's his wish. Then Liam could have your room."

Connor already knew this. Mick had told him a while ago; he hadn't mentioned it to Ellen since Mick felt it would upset her a bit. "He has mentioned it to me. I think since he strongly wishes it, we should. Are ye unhappy about it?"

"I was a bit upset at first, but it will afford us more privacy." Ellen blushed a bit when she said it.

Connor hugged her. "Don't blush. It's only normal that we would want more privacy. Ye can start arranging things there to suit you. We only have a week left."

Ellen laughed. "Don't worry, Ma has already started seeing that it's cleaned and aired, and putting fresh linens in it. She'll have all our clothes there before we even get married."

Connor left her and went to change and report to Mick. Mick was very happy when he heard the news about Seamus O'Brien. "That is good, Connor. He seemed like a bright lad. This is the type of thing we have to keep doing to help them progress out of poverty."

Nora almost attacked Connor when he came downstairs and entered the parlor. "Oh Connor, everyone was so happy today, and they ate every bit of their lunches, they were so hungry and thankful. Wait until you hear what Sister Annunciata did."

"Nora, calm down. Ye are talking a mile a minute and I can barely follow ye." Connor poured himself a drink and sat down next to Ellen.

Nora took a deep breath and calmly told him all about Caroline and her punishment. "I do hope she doesn't try and ruin things for us socially though. Can she?"

"Don't worry about it Nora. Her father needs our bank. He will not be likely to do anything of the

sort. She's just a spoiled child who finally got her due."

After dinner Connor asked Edward to meet him in his office. "With all the excitement this week, I haven't had a chance to ask you how school is coming? Are we progressing well?"

"Yes, your sisters and brother are good students. Maureen and Liam are still a bit at odds with each other, but after a stern warning from me, she's allowed him to help her with her math. But you can see sparks fly between them."

Connor thought for a moment. "I think actually, some of that is an act between them. I believe they actually do care a bit for each other, but there is plenty of time for that to develop. How is Liam doing in his studies to prepare for the College entry exam?"

Edward smiled. "He is doing wonderfully well. I don't think he will have one problem gaining entry. He is very intelligent. I do worry about his staying with it though and not trying to get back to Ireland and the fray. He talks of it all the time."

Connor was upset to hear this. "I know he was at first, but I thought he'd given up on that. He has promised me to try this for a period of time though."

"Yes, he told me that, but he's also seeking out others here who channel funds and money to the rebels. They can be a rough crowd, and I've warned him about them."

"I knew he would do that, and as long as he watches himself, he should be fine. I'd rather he do that than go back there and get killed. He surely would wind up on the run, with a price on his head." Connor was still grateful every day that he had escaped alive.

"Thank you Edward. Please let me know how things go. I'm afraid for the next week, it will be a bit hectic, and then of course Ellen and I will be gone for a week, but my Mother and Mick can be relied on, if something goes awry." Connor was in a

thoughtful mood when he returned to the parlor. Everyone else had gone separate ways. Ellen was waiting for him, reading a book.

## Chapter Forty

Connor sat down next to Ellen and took the book from her hands. "Are ye ready for next week? I have a feeling it will be very hectic."

"Yes. I have all the preparations completed. I'm so excited. I can hardly wait." Ellen cuddled closer to Connor.

Connor pulled her close into a tight embrace and they cuddled and kissed until it was time for bed. Connor walked her to her room and pulled her once more into a tight embrace. "I shall be very glad for next Saturday."

Connor left early for the office the next morning. There was much he wanted to accomplish before his departure. Ian came to see him as soon as he arrived. "Connor, I have news about Mrs. Haggerty. She is Mrs. Thompson's personal seamstress and maid. Apparently she assumed Bridey's duties when Mrs. Thompson fired her. That is why she is working such long hours. Of course there was no increase in pay at all. She would like to do something else, but can't risk not having an income."

"Thank ye Ian. That at least gives us something to go with. If she is employed as Mrs. Thompson's personal seamstress she must be clever with a needle. Do you think ye could arrange for her to come here to see us? She must have a day off."

"I'll send word home to have our maid inquire."

After Ian left, Connor started thinking about possible solutions. Suddenly one dawned on him. He worked diligently for the next several hours until Ian came to get him for lunch. Once they settled in the club Ian told him what he had learned. "Apparently Mrs. Haggerty has tomorrow off. My maid asked her if she would meet with us tomorrow early in the morning. She was a bit nervous, but since she has learned of the other things we're doing, she's agreed. Do you have something in particular in mind?"

"I know very little of the business, but I thought perhaps we could set her up in her own seamstress business. She could work from her home, once we provided the equipment she would need. Perhaps even spread the word and help her find some customers. I think she would be the perfect person to make the clothing for the children, as it is needed. What do you think?"

"Connor, that's brilliant! I know my wife would be happy to become a customer. She's always complaining about the lack of skilled seamstresses. I know we can spread the word quickly. Why, even the grumpy Mrs. Thompson may be forced to use her. She's very particular about her clothing and if this woman has been employed as her own personal seamstress, then she must be wonderful. I can hardly wait to see her reaction." Ian picked up his glass and toasted Connor.

When he arrived home that evening, Connor sought out Mick. "I have a plan I'd like your opinion on."

Mick listened intently and beamed after Connor finished explaining it. "Connor, I couldn't have thought of a better idea myself. Would you mind if I came with you tomorrow? I have more time these days to deal with setting things up for her, and would like to meet her."

"That would be fine, if you feel up to it? I don't want you to tire yourself too much before the wedding. Ellen will surely want her father to dance with her." Connor poured Mick another whiskey and left to change and find Ellen. He turned as he reached the doorway. "I don't think I'll tell Nora and the others until we have talked to her. I'll let Ellen and Ma know, but I don't want Nora to get so excited and tell. I think we should keep this somewhat private between us."

"I agree. That way Mrs. Haggerty's pride will not be hurt." Mick sipped his drink and smiled at Connor's retreating figure. "Aye, I've made a great choice in picking him. I can die easy, knowing my

family will be well cared for and my traditions passed on."

Ellen and Mary were alone in the parlor when Connor arrived. "Good evening Ma, Ellen. How was your day?" Connor leaned over and kissed both on the cheek.

"We had a nice day. Nancy, Ellen, and I shopped a bit for the children and adults as well. We purchased some necessary undergarments, but until we know their sizes for sure, won't be able to do much more." Mary picked up her sewing and started to leave. "I'll check on the youngsters and let ye two have some time alone."

"Wait just a moment Ma. I have some news for you and Ellen. Mick knows, but we don't want any of the others to know." Connor explained about his meeting tomorrow with Mrs. Haggerty, and his intentions.

Mary hugged Connor to her. "Ye are the kindest person, and I'm so glad ye're my son. Bless ye, Connor, for thinking of others." Mary wiped away a tear and hurried from the room.

"She's right, Connor. I also am so very proud of you, and just love you more all the time. I do hope Mrs. Haggerty will allow you to do this. Her children could really benefit from having a parent around. From what Nora says they are pretty wild." Ellen kissed Connor deeply.

Mick was up early the next morning and waiting for Connor at breakfast. Connor was surprised to see him so early. "Ye must be anxious for this meeting. I haven't seen ye up this early in ages."

"I'm excited to see this through. Mrs. Haggerty is the last piece, the only one we haven't met or been able to help in a more concrete way." Mick sipped his tea and nibbled at the last of his toast.

Connor ate quickly and they were almost out the door before the rest of the family started coming downstairs. Ellen hurried over and gave Mick and Connor a quick kiss. "I hope this works out. It would be so nice for her."



Mick strolled through the bank greeting everyone. It had been a while since he had last visited and everyone was glad to see him. As the time for the meeting drew near, he sat in Connor's office and drank tea.

When Mrs. Haggerty arrived Ian showed her in. Connor and Mick both rose to greet her. "Good Morning, Mrs. Haggerty. Would you like some tea?" Connor pulled out a chair for her.

She was stunned. Gentlemen never stood when she entered a room and never in her years here had one pulled out a chair or asked her if she would like a beverage. "Yes, but I can fetch it if ye tell me where it is."

"No, I'll have it brought to us. Ye just relax." Connor went to the door and requested that tea and some muffins be brought for them.

Once they were all settled, Connor began speaking. "Mrs. Haggerty, I'm sure you're aware that Mr. McMahon and I have been providing lunches for the children at school. We have also seen that some of the other families have obtained more lucrative positions. We also intend to provide shoes and clothing for them."

Mrs. Haggerty nodded her head. "Yes, I have been told by the others, and it is most generous of ye. But why did ye call me here?"

"I have a proposition for ye, that I think will work for our mutual benefit. As I just told ye, we need to provide clothing for the children and some of the adults. I need a seamstress to do this. I of course will provide all the necessary equipment and cloth. I thought perhaps this would be something that would help you. I will also see to arranging the beginning of customers for you. You will have your own business, and be able to work from home and be there with your children. Of course you will be paid for your work in making the clothes."

Mrs. Haggerty sat stunned, looking from one man to the other. Finally Mick spoke up. "I feel family should always be taken care of. You have

children that need you at home, and doing this will be doing a great favor to us. I have heard you're very clever with a needle and I'm willing to bet that you will have a large clientele shortly. Perhaps you can even teach some of the other young ladies the art. I do hope you will do me the honor of accepting this."

"Oh Sirs! I'm overwhelmed. I promised me dear husband on his death bed I'd not accept charity or go on the dole, but this isn't that, is it now?" Mrs. Haggerty finally smiled for the first time.

Ian smiled brightly at her. "Absolutely not. It is merely a business arrangement that is mutually beneficial to all of us."

"When would ye want me to begin? I do have Mrs. Thompson to think of, though I don't know why I should take her feelings into account, since she treats us all as lowly scum."

A sly grin crossed Connor's face. "I think we can safely say your employment ended there yesterday. I'll have a letter prepared for you to sign and send to her. Enjoy the rest of your day, and I'll have my valet Daniel pick you up tomorrow and take you to purchase whatever equipment and cloth you will need to start on the children. Expense is no problem. I want them to have warm durable clothing."

Mrs. Haggerty rose from her chair. "I don't know how to thank you gentlemen. God bless every one of ye."

Mick sat back and finished his tea. "Now, I feel satisfied. Not only will the children and their parents be taken care of, but also Mrs. Thompson once again will not have a fellow countryman to mistreat. I think its time for a nap now. I shall see you at home tonight, Connor. Goodbye Ian. I'll see you and your family at the wedding."

The next day early Daniel and Mary appeared at Mrs. Haggerty's door. She asked them in for some tea and they planned out what they would need. By late afternoon a loaded down carriage returned with

the newest model sewing machine and reams of cloth of different colors and styles.

Ellen was waiting for Mary when she returned. "How was it? Did you get everything she needs?"

"For now at least, and we opened accounts at the stores for her to purchase whatever else she needs on Connor's credit. In time for her own customers she'll be able to open her own accounts. I'm exhausted and need some tea, but it was a wonderful day." Mary went upstairs to rest and Ellen waited in the parlor for Connor to return home.

The carriage had barely stopped in front of the door before Ellen was at the door to greet Connor. She almost threw herself into his arms and hugged and kissed him hard.

"Now that is quite a greeting. Is there a special reason, or can I expect that every evening from now on?"

"I'm just so happy about how things are working out. Mary spent all day shopping and she said it went very well. I just don't know how much happier I could be." Ellen hugged Connor again.

"I'm glad you're happy. I hope though that you'll be even happier Saturday." Connor grinned at her.

Ellen blushed. "Oh Connor, you know what I meant. Of course I'll be happier."

The rest of the week flew by. All the arrangements were made and the wedding scheduled for 8:00 a.m. Saturday morning.

Ellen was so nervous by Friday evening she could hardly eat. Connor was worried she would be ill the next day if she didn't eat. "Ellen, ye must eat something, or ye will be ill tomorrow morning. Remember, ye won't get another chance to eat until after the wedding."

Ellen's nerves were so on edge that she snapped back at Connor. "I know, Connor. I'm an adult and know what I can and can't do."

Connor stood up and pulled Ellen up with him. "Excuse us a moment please." He pulled Ellen out of the dining room and into the parlor.

"I know you're nerves on edge, Young Lady, but I'll not tolerate ye talking to me like that. Ye will eat more of your dinner, and ye will do it without another word of sass." Connor turned her and smacked her bottom hard five times.

Ellen had tears in her eyes, even though the smacks hadn't hurt that much. "I'm sorry Connor. I'm just so nervous I can't swallow."

Connor pulled her close to him. "I know, but ye must eat. I want ye to try and eat more." He wiped away her tears and kissed her before returning to the dining room.

Ellen sat and managed to eat enough to satisfy Connor. The rest of the family disappeared shortly after dinner and left Connor and Ellen alone. Connor sat on the couch in the parlor and pulled her into his arms. "I love ye so much, Ellen. I can barely wait until tomorrow is over."

Ellen leaned in close and kissed him with as much passion as she had ever before. They kissed and cuddled for some time, when Connor broke apart. "We best get to bed. Tomorrow we won't have to stop, but tonight we do."

He stood up, scooped Ellen into his arms, and carried her upstairs to her room. "Sleep well. I'll see you at the church. I won't see you in the morning."

Ellen hugged and kissed him again. "I know, and I can hardly wait. I don't know if I shall sleep or not."

"Try. Ye don't want to be exhausted by tomorrow evening." Connor turned her into her room and swatted her affectionately.

Ellen undressed and washed slowly. She truly didn't feel the slightest bit sleepy, but surprised herself by falling asleep almost immediately upon crawling into bed.

Connor himself was on edge, and on the way to his room, noticed the light was still on in Mick's room. He knocked and waited until he heard Mick call, "Come in."

Mick and Liam were enjoying a nightcap. "So how is our bridegroom. A bit nervous?" Mick chuckled at him.

"As a matter of fact, I am. I thought perhaps I'd join you for a night cap." Connor poured himself a generous glass of whiskey.

Liam studied his brother. "I've seen ye prepare for battle and caught in dangerous situations, but I don't think I've ever seen your nerves this rattled before. Good grief man, ye're just getting married."

"Wait until it's your turn and I'll remind ye of your words. It's a big decision in life, Liam. I know I will forever have others to worry about afore myself. I never thought this day would come quite so soon, but I can hardly wait. Still, it makes one nervous." Connor sat back and let the amber liquid soothe him.

Mick shook his head. "I remember the night before my wedding well. Seems impossible that so much time has passed and my eldest daughter is getting married. It's too bad her mother isn't here to see it, but I know she'll be looking down from Heaven and watching."

The three men spent another two hours talking and then Liam and Connor left for their own rooms. Liam stopped as Connor opened his door. "I wish ye all the best brother. I want ye to know, I'll always be here to help ye. I've met with some of the lads here that support our cause. I've decided that I have my own ideas of how to help. Getting my education and a law degree is one. I won't be contemplating going back."

Connor hugged Liam and slapped him on the back. "Ye've made me very happy Liam. It's the best wedding present I could ever ask for."

"Good night Connor. I'll see ye tomorrow morning. I'll be ready to leave with ye for the church by 7:15."

Connor lay in bed for quite a while thinking about the past and his future with Ellen. Life would indeed be different as a married man. He wondered

how soon they would have children, if he would have a son, and how many they would have. Finally with these thoughts flitting through his mind he fell asleep.

He was still sound asleep at 6:00 a.m., when Daniel knocked on the door to wake him. "It's time to rise and dress, Connor."

Connor washed and dressed and was waiting for Liam in the front hall by 7:15. He was not as nervous as he thought he would be. Liam arrived and the two climbed in the carriage for the drive to the church. Liam looked at Connor as they rode. "Ye don't appear to be as nervous as ye were last night."

"I'm not. I guess since the day is finally here, I've lost my nerves."

It was an entirely different story back at the house. Ellen woke at 5:00 and no one had rested since she rose. She bathed and fretted about her hair, and fussed the entire way through dressing.

"Ellen, if ye don't settle down and behave yourself, I think I shall take my hairbrush to your bottom." Mary was quite finished with her fussing.

"I'm sorry, but I want everything perfect." Ellen once more looked in the mirror.

"Ye are beautiful, and will quite take Connor's breath away. Now, it's time for us to leave. Your poor Da has been waiting patiently for the last 45 minutes. Ye don't want to be late for your own wedding, do ye?"

Ellen looked at Mary, and around the room at her sisters and new sisters gathered there. "Oh heavens no. I know how Connor feels about tardiness."

They all laughed and hugged and watched as Ellen walked down the stairs to where Mick was waiting.

Mick had spent the last 15 minutes pacing. He didn't understand what was taking so long. Good grief! The girl had been up since the crack of dawn and the whole house with her.

His patience was almost exhausted when she came down the stairs. His breath caught in his throat. Ellen was beautiful in her bridal gown. Quickly he walked to the bottom of the stairs and caught her in a hug.

"Ellen, you are the most beautiful bride I have seen since your own dear Mother." He took her arm and led her to the waiting carriage.

## Chapter Forty-One

Connor and Liam were waiting patiently at the church. Connor, though he said he wasn't nervous, had been pacing in the sacristy for the last fifteen minutes. "I hope they're on time, I do hate being late."

"Calm down, Connor. I'm sure they will be." Liam sat and watched his brother with a smile on his face.

Finally the pastor arrived. "Everyone is assembled. It's time for us to take our places."

The three walked out and stood by the communion rail as the music started.

Connor looked around at those assembled in the church. Almost every pew was occupied. His mother and brother and sisters and Nora were in the first pew. Ian and his family were behind them.

Maureen came down the aisle first and smiled nervously at Liam and Connor when she reached the front of the church. After a short pause, Mick and Ellen started down the aisle. Connor's breath was taken away at the sight of Ellen; she was the most beautiful woman in the world.

The pastor came down to greet Mick and Ellen. "Who gives this woman in marriage?"

Mick could barely control the trembling in his voice. "I do." He placed Ellen's hand in Connor's and took his place in the pew. Connor smiled and whispered to Ellen. "You are beautiful, and I love you so much."

The rest of the mass and ceremony were a blur to both Ellen and Connor. It wasn't until they were in the carriage and headed back to the house for the reception that it finally dawned on Ellen that she was now Mrs. Connor Boland. She looked at her ring and at Connor. "I'm so happy, I feel I may explode."

Connor pulled her into a deep and passionate embrace. "Ye will do no such thing. I won't have my wife exploding."



Ellen was lost in the kiss and they finally broke apart as they arrived at the house. They entered the ballroom to a large crowd of friends and family. Ellen hesitated for one moment before they walked in. Connor noticed and looked down at her. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing, just a twinge remembering the last time we were here." Ellen straightened up and smiled. "This will be a much happier event."

"Yes, Mrs. Boland, it most certainly will." Connor took her arm and started greeting all their friends.

The reception was a joyous and happy event. Mick had spared no expense on food and drink. Ellen had never danced so much in her entire life. Connor pulled her into his arms for a last dance of the day. He was so handsome; Ellen couldn't help beaming at him.

When the dance ended, Mick made one last toast to the couple. "I know you will all join me in wishing Ellen and Connor the best for the rest of their lives. I am so proud of Ellen and so happy to have Connor as my son."

Every glass was raised in agreement, and then it was time for them to leave. Bridey and Daniel had gone ahead with the bags and to make sure everything was ready for them. Connor helped Ellen into the carriage and they were off.

Ellen sat next to Connor but was very quiet. Connor held her close. "Why are you so quiet, Ellen?"

"I guess I'm a bit nervous. We've never been alone before."

"Ye'll be fine. I'll be gentle with ye." Connor kissed her gently.

Ellen blushed. "I know you will." She leaned against Connor and closed her eyes.

Connor smiled down at her when he realized she was sleeping. The day had been long and tiring. He closed his eyes and slept a bit also. It was about an hour's drive and just long enough for a quick nap. He woke when the carriage came to a halt.

"Ellen, wake up. We're here." Connor gently shook Ellen awake.

The cottage was wonderful; Ellen was impressed with how nice it was. She examined every room carefully. "Connor, maybe someday we can have a cottage like this for our family."

"I think that would be possible. We'll work on that. Now, let's settle down for some supper. It's been a tiring day." Connor took her hand and led her to the dining room.

The maid served them supper and left them alone as much as possible. They ate, chatting about the day, and what they would do during the next week.

Soon it was time for them to retire. Connor swept Ellen up in his arms and carried her to the bedroom. All of their clothes had been unpacked and the bed turned down for them. There was a fireplace in the room and it had been lit.

Ellen stood rooted to the spot, a soft blush covering her face; she didn't know what to do.

Connor went to her, wrapped his arms around her, and kissed her, forcing her lips apart with his tongue. He had only kissed her this way a few times, but she felt like her whole insides were melting. When he pulled apart he slowly began undressing her, kissing her the entire time. When he had finally removed all of her clothes he laid her gently on the bed and undressed himself.

The glow of the fire illuminated his body. Ellen had never seen a man naked before and watched eagerly. Though she was extremely innocent, she had been informed what would happen, and she was eager to have Connor claim her as his wife.

Connor lay down next to her and started kissing her on her neck and face. His fingers roamed and gently kneaded one nipple than the other. Ellen reacted immediately, and reached for him to kiss.

"Ye are beautiful, my wife. I want you to feel all the passion I have been holding in for a long time." Connor suckled one nipple than the other until they

were hard and Ellen was moaning softly. He took her hand and placed it on his now erect manhood.

Ellen was amazed at how large it had grown. "Connor, I don't think that will ever fit into me."

Connor smiled at her innocence. "Yes, I'm sure it will. When it is time, ye will be more than ready for it." When his hand reached between her legs and massaged her clitoris, Ellen felt shocks running through her body. Connor kissed her and kept on massaging until she convulsed with her first orgasm.

Connor let her rest for a minute and then started all over again. "Next time, we will do this together."

Ellen once more felt she was going to explode when Connor gently pried her lips apart and positioned himself to enter her. "This may hurt some, but I will be gentle."

He thrust in slowly and Ellen cried out a bit as he broke her maidenhead. Connor stopped and kissed her. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, I'm fine." Ellen started moving gently under him. Connor plunged all the way in and moved more urgently in and out until they both cried out in ecstasy. Connor rolled over and pulled her into his arms. "Now ye truly are mine."

"Connor, I love you so much. I never dreamed anything could feel so wonderful." Ellen laid her head against his naked chest and fell asleep.

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Connor held her and thanked God for bringing them together. He too fell asleep for a while. He woke when the sun was just beginning to rise. No one would bother them, he knew. Breakfast would be kept until they came down. He lifted himself on one elbow and gazed down on Ellen. He hoped she wouldn't be embarrassed waking in the nude. Though her nightgown had been laid out waiting for her, neither had bothered with it.

Slowly she stirred in her sleep and groggily opened an eye. "Good morning, Mrs. Boland. How are ye today?"

Ellen smiled and hugged him closer to her. "I'm wonderful, but not quite ready to wake for the day. Are we late?"

"I do think that they will all wait for us. No, we're not late. It's barely dawn." Connor lay back down and pulled the covers over them. The fire had long gone out, and he didn't feel like starting it again.

"It's a bit chilly here, isn't it?" Ellen also snuggled under the covers. Suddenly it dawned on her that neither one of them were clothed.

"Connor, I think we are indecent! Is this allowed?" Ellen blushed furiously.

"Ellen, my love, yes. Between a married couple, I think this is a very natural state of affairs. Would you like me to light a fire?"

"Yes, I think that would be wonderful." Ellen didn't know the type of fire Connor intended to light, until his first kiss woke her fully.

An hour later Connor did rise and light the fire in the fireplace, then quickly returned to bed. Ellen had been shocked to see him rise naked in front of her. "Connor are you sure it is proper to be so unclothed in daylight with each other?"

Connor came back to bed, snuggled under the covers, and pulled Ellen to him. "Yes, it's perfectly normal. If ye start hiding yourself from me, ye will find yourself with a sore bottom. We are married and whatever we do is fine."

Ellen looked at him in some shock. "You wouldn't really spank me any more would you? I mean I'm your wife now, and surely wives don't get spanked."

Connor erupted in a deep belly laugh. "I don't know where ye heard that, but my love, if ye disobey or give me cause, ye certainly will be spanked. That has not changed. I will never allow

ye to put yourself or any of our family in harm's way."

Ellen huffed and pulled the covers over her head. "I think that is totally wrong! I'm sure there are no other wives spanked in the entire city of Boston. My father never spanked my mother, I'm sure. If you spank me, I'll move back to my old room."

Connor smiled at her outburst, but wasn't going to let it go unanswered. "Ellen, ye promised yesterday to obey me. Should ye fail to do that ye will be spanked. Right now ye best apologize for that outburst or ye will feel your first spanking as Mrs. Boland."

Ellen sat up in bed and glared at Connor. "You wouldn't dare! This is our honeymoon."

Connor knew he had to exert his authority now, or forever it would be questioned. "Well Mrs. Boland, I think that is a dare ye lose." Before she had time to think, he pulled her over his lap and brought his hand down on her exposed bottom.

Ellen yelped and soon pleaded with him to stop. Connor paused leaving his hand on her bottom. "Are ye ready to agree, that I as your husband have the right to spank ye, whenever ye misbehave?"

Ellen was more than ready to agree. "Yes, Connor, I'm sorry. Please don't spank me any more."

Connor lifted her up and put her on his lap. The fire in the hearth had caught and the room was once more warm.

"I will now show ye the proper way to apologize after a spanking." Connor kissed her deeply and this time their coupling was slow and long.

When they both finally were sated, Ellen looked at him. "Do I get this treatment every time you spank me?"

Connor smacked her bottom hard. "No, my love. If ye misbehave, ye will not have this comfort. But there may be other times that loving will follow a spanking."

They both lay back down and fell asleep for a bit longer. The next time they awoke it was after nine and they decided it was time to rise.

Ellen put her unused nightgown on and went to the dressing room next door where she knew Bridey would be waiting. Connor left to the room on the other side where Daniel would be waiting to assist him in dressing.

Bridey blushed a bit when Ellen came in. "Congratulations, Mrs. Boland. It was a wondrous wedding."

"Thank you, Bridey. I'm very happy." There was a bath waiting and Ellen eased herself into the hot soapy water. She was surprised at the bit of pain she felt between her legs when the water met her body.

Bridey heard the small gasp and ran to the side of the tub. "Is the water too hot?"

"No, it just stung a bit." Ellen was once again embarrassed.

Bridey knew what the problem was. "I have heard that is normal for a new bride. It will not be like that always. I'll leave you alone now. Just ring the bell when you are ready to dress."

Ellen relaxed and soaked in her bath. All the vague aches left her, but as she thought over the last 24 hours her body responded in ways she never thought possible.

She climbed out of the tub, dried herself, quickly put on her underthings, then rang for Bridey.

Bridey appeared at once and helped her with her dress and hair. She knew that Ellen was very nervous yet. "Pardon me for saying something, but you're the luckiest person alive to have such a wonderful husband. You need not be embarrassed or shy with me or anyone else. What happens now between the two of you is natural and nothing to worry about."

Ellen rose from her dressing table and hugged Bridey. "Thank you so much for saying that. I have been worried a bit."

With a much lighter heart Ellen left and joined Connor in the dining room for breakfast. "This feels so odd to be having breakfast at nine in the morning."

"We are entitled to luxury for this week." Connor pulled out her chair and seated her.

The maid placed the dishes in front of them and left. Ellen was amazed at how they managed to be invisible. "Connor, do you think they're afraid of us? They just disappear and never stay around like the servants at home do."

"Ellen, ye do have an active imagination. We're on our honeymoon, and they are trying to give us all the privacy they can." Connor squeezed her hand and stifled a laugh.

"OH!" Ellen was surprised, as this never had dawned on her.

"What would ye like to do today? We have the whole day ahead of us." Connor munched on a delicious scone and waited for Ellen to answer.

"It looks a bit cloudy and cold today, so maybe we could just explore the beach near here. Perhaps tomorrow we could visit one of the closer towns. They are interesting."

"That sounds wonderful to me." Connor rose and pulled Ellen's chair out for her.

A bit later Ellen was explaining the various shells and debris on the beach to Connor. "You have never seen our beaches before have you?"

"No, I'm familiar with the beaches in Ireland. They're different than here. The water is colder and we have different fish come ashore. But the difference stops there. This is beautiful and I do love to watch the sea." Connor sat down on a dune and Ellen plopped down next to him.

"When we were little, before Ma died, we used to come to the beach often. Papa loved it and reveled in each visit. I think he would have built us a cottage if Mother hadn't died." Ellen grew quiet after that.

Connor waited a few moments then hugged her. "Are ye feeling sad? Ye seem far away."

"I guess a bit is sadness. I've just thought of how things were before her death, and how they changed afterward. Now I have to face another death, and try and help Maureen and Nora through it. I've wondered Connor if we should tell them? I know this isn't something we should be worrying about this week, but it is weighing heavily on me."

"I've wondered the same thing Ellen, but Mick seems to think this is the best way. I do intend if he starts failing fast to tell them. I don't want them shocked at a sudden death. I do understand his wish to keep things normal for as long as possible."

Ellen rose and started picking at shells on the beach. "I agree Connor, but something tells me, a feeling perhaps, that he has held on to see us married, and the poor children Nora took under her wing taken care of. All of this has happened, and I'm afraid he will leave us fast now."

Connor hated seeing the sadness on her face. He rose and hugged her to him "Ellen, ye know that I will do everything in my power to take care of Mick and all of your and my family. I don't want sadness to overshadow our time this week. I know we'll be facing sadness when we return at some point. I want this time to be for us. Now let's relax and enjoy this respite."

Ellen relaxed and pulled away from Connor. "You're right." She picked up a large crab and threw it at Connor.

He hollered and immediately threw it off him. Ellen had taken off running down the beach and Connor followed in hot pursuit. He was a much faster runner, and didn't have the disadvantage of skirts, so easily overtook her.

He grabbed her close and then flipped her over his shoulder and carried her to a nearby rock. He sat and placed her over his knee. "Now my saucy wife, ye shall pay for your misdeeds."



Connor flipped up her skirts, lowered her undergarments and started spanking her softly, slowly increasing the intensity. He stopped periodically to rub her bottom.

Ellen hollered and squirmed at first but slowly the feelings from the morning and the night before returned. She noticed for the first time a distinct swelling in Connor's lap.

"Connor, I think you need to punish me further in our room." Ellen smiled over her shoulder at him.

Connor laughed. "Yes, my love. Ye are right." He picked her up and they quickly returned to the house and their room. It was some time later that they once again rose and proceeded downstairs for lunch.

## Chapter Forty-Two

While Connor and Ellen were honeymooning, the rest of the family was busy with school and normal everyday activities.

Liam hadn't told Connor because he wanted it to be a surprise, but he was sitting for the exam at the University the week they were gone. Edward had worked extensively with him and felt he was more than ready.

The exam was scheduled for Tuesday morning. Liam rose early and nervously studied a few more things before leaving for the exam. Edward found him in the schoolroom. "You're going to be fine Liam. I've never had a student more prepared. Just relax and take your time. When they give you the oral exam, speak slowly and steadily."

"Do ye think my accent will put them off?" Liam was worried about the feelings that existed in some quarters toward the Irish.

"Not with the letter of backing from Mr. McMahon it wont, and Connor has already made a name for himself, so that won't be a problem at all. Money talks with them, and as far as they're concerned, you have that." Edward took the book away from him and closed it. "Eat a good breakfast and I'll give the others a bit of a break and let them start late today. I'll ride with you to the exam."

Liam ate little, as he was extremely nervous; he never in his life had done anything like this before. If he passed the entrance exam and was admitted, he would be the first ever in his family to hold a degree.

The whole family knew he was nervous and worried. Mary hugged him as he left. "I know ye'll make us all proud. Think of how happy Connor will be when he returns to learn the news."

Mick shook his hand and wished him luck. The rest all gathered round and wished him well then scampered off to enjoy a few hours of freedom from class.

Maureen waited until the others left and Liam and Edward were about to depart. "Good luck, Liam. I'll be praying for you." She walked up and kissed him on the cheek, then ran upstairs.

Liam looked at Edward, shocked. "I could have sworn she hated me."

Edward laughed. "It is the closest emotion to love. I think you both are hiding your real feelings for each other. That's fine; you both have a long way to go before you will be ready to make any decisions on settling down."

Liam gave him a horrified glance. "I wasn't even contemplating such a thing."

The ride to the college was quiet. Liam was absorbed in his thoughts about the test and Edward in thoughts of settling down himself with Colleen. They were very much in love and with both of them working at the McMahon's and seeing each other every day, it just made it easier and easier to think of marriage.

Edward walked with Liam to the admissions office and introduced him to Dean Smythington. He and the Dean were friends from Edward's days there.

"So Edward, this is your latest protégée? I see, Liam, that Mr. McMahon is sponsoring you. He is a good man and well thought of in the community. I would take it that Connor Boland who just married Ellen McMahon is your brother?"

Liam shook hands with him and answered in a firm voice. "Yes Sir. He is my older brother."

"Good, are you ready to get started? This should take about three hours." The Dean led the way to an examining room where several others were gathered. Liam took a seat and Edward left.

All the way home, he prayed that Liam would stay calm and do as well on the test as he had done on the practice ones.

Once home he hung up his coat and hat, and hurried to the schoolroom, only to find it empty.

"Hmmm, I guess my students think they can take advantage."

He went in search of them and found them in various parts of the house. "Up to the schoolroom now. I told you to be in your seats at 10:30 and it's almost 11:00."

They all scurried and this time when he came in they were all seated quietly waiting for him.

He looked at each one of them sternly. "Have you all forgotten what promptness means?"

Heads nodded negatively.

"It seems to me that you have. I think we will spend the next hour until lunch writing an essay on the meaning of promptness. You may begin." Edward sat at the desk and watched as they all took out paper and pens and began writing furiously.

One hour later Edward collected the papers from them. "I shall read these during the lunch break. I'll let you know if they are satisfactory or not. Be back here on time at 1:00."

Maureen hung back for a moment after the others left. "Do you think Liam will do well enough to be admitted? When will he know?"

Edward held back his smile. "He should do fine. I think we will know by the end of the week. There aren't many sitting for the exam, so they should have the results by then."

Maureen thanked him and left for lunch.

Edward then smiled. He wondered how long it would be before they admitted they had feelings for each other. Maureen was still young and so was Liam, but there could still be an agreement between them. It would most likely be four years before Liam was finished with school and ready to make any permanent arrangements.

The papers were read and approved so the rest of the afternoon was devoted to normal studies. At three o'clock Edward dismissed them for the day.

He found James and rode with him back to the University to pick up Liam. Dean Smythington was in his office when Edward arrived. "I thought you'd

be back. They should be finished very shortly. I have to tell you that I've looked at some of the early tests from this morning and Liam Boland is a very intelligent man. I have no doubt he will be easily accepted. I'll make sure you know by Friday."

Edward thanked him and the two were chatting when Liam arrived. "Thank you, Dean Smythington, for allowing me the opportunity to apply to this university."

Edward and Liam climbed into the carriage before Edward said anything to him. "How do you feel you did Liam?"

"I think well. I felt at ease with the first test and after that it was fine. The oral exam was very easy, as I was well versed in Latin and the history of Rome, by the priests. I do think they were impressed that I could speak and translate as easily as I do."

"Good, that is the one subject that most often is the downfall of students. It's hard to prepare for that, as you don't know what they may ask you. I think we shall hear on Friday, but I have the feeling you will be attending here very soon."

Liam was greeted with tons of questions about his day when he got home. Later after dinner he joined Mick in his room.

"Do you think you did all right?" Mick wanted him in school more than anything right now. It would keep him here with Connor and the family. They would need all the emotional support they could get once he was gone.

"I think so Mick. It will mean so much to Connor if I do." Liam sipped his drink and looked at Mick. "Ye aren't feeling too well are ye?"

"To tell the truth, I've had much better days. I don't think I have much time left. I'd have preferred to see a grandchild, but I don't think I'll make that."

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Connor and Ellen were thoroughly enjoying their time alone together. On Friday morning Ellen sat

reading with Connor. She put her book down and looked at him. "Connor, do you think we can just stay here another week? It would be so nice. It won't be the same once we get home."

"We can't, Ellen. There are things to attend to at work and home, but that will not change anything between us. What are ye worried about?" He took her hand and held it in his.

Ellen blushed a bit and stammered trying to answer his question. "Um ... well ... you know, here we are alone and no one around. At home ... well ... there will be."

Connor laughed and pulled her onto his lap. "Ellen, there is no reason to be ashamed of anything that happens between the two of us. We are fortunate that we will have a large room away from the others. Think of the poor people who all live in maybe two or three rooms. The cottages in my village in Ireland were small and it was rare there was much privacy at all. It doesn't seem to have harmed the birthrate at all. Remember I told you there was nothing for you to be ashamed or embarrassed over." Connor hugged and kissed her.

Ellen leaned into his chest. "I know you said that, but it is still a bit new to me."

"Ellen Boland, ye will cease to be ashamed about anything we have between us. I know ye are modest. That is a good virtue, but ye are my wife and I'll not have ye ashamed of us." Connor quickly turned her over his knee and swept up her skirts.

"Connor! There are servants about!" Ellen squirmed trying to free herself from his grasp.

"Yes, I suppose there are, but none will interfere with this lesson." Connor laughed and proceeded to bare Ellen's bottom. His hand fell in a rhythmic pattern, not hard but enough to pinken Ellen's cheeks.

Ellen squealed in embarrassment, then began to enjoy the sensations his hand was causing. "Connor, I'm sorry, I won't be embarrassed any more."

Connor stopped and righted her clothing. "I think ye need a further lesson." He swooped her up and carried her upstairs to their room. Once there, he quickly undressed her and himself, and once again plopped her over his knee. "Now, Mrs. Boland, I shall show you what a truly repentant wife should feel like."

Connor once more began spanking and then rubbing her bottom. Slowly his hand drifted between her legs to find her wet and ready for him. He gently rolled her onto the bed and let his mouth and hands further arouse her. When he could stand no more, he gently parted her legs and entered her. The age-old tempo of love brought them both to the peak and over. They lay tangled for a while then Connor pulled the covers over them. "I think a nap before dinner is just the thing."

Ellen sighed and cuddled contentedly into his chest. She didn't care if all of the servants had heard their lovemaking. She hoped only that Connor had to teach this lesson many times in the coming days.

Sunday afternoon they were on their way back home. "Connor that was a wonderful honeymoon. I'll write a very nice thank you note to Ian for lending us his cottage." Ellen snuggled securely under the coach blanket against Connor. The weather had turned cold and there were a few snow flurries in the air.

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The rest of the Boland household was all anxiously awaiting Connor and Ellen's arrival. Liam was the most anxious and continuously paced the parlor. Maureen decided it was the perfect time to tease him.

"I think that I'll take a walk down the street and see if I can meet their carriage. Then I'll ride back with them and be the first to tell them the news." She was on her feet and almost out the door, when Liam grabbed her arm and swung her to face him.

"Maureen McMahon, if ye take one step out of this room, I'll have ye over my knee and paddle ye so hard, ye won't sit for a week. This is my news to tell!" Liam had a stern look on his face and a glint in his eyes, which Maureen had never seen before.

"Let me go. I was just teasing you. What a child you are." Maureen tried to break his grip.

"I think ye are the child here." Liam swatted her once and then pulled her close and kissed her.

Both of them were shocked at the kiss. "I ... I'm sorry Maureen; I don't know what came over me." Liam stammered his apology to her.

Maureen was just as flustered as Liam was. The swat to her bottom then the kiss had set off feelings she hadn't experienced before. She was still held close to him and didn't know why, but she leaned in and kissed him again.

Liam returned the kiss then released her. "Maureen, this is not supposed to happen. I don't understand it, but we best not do this again."

"I know Liam, but I couldn't help myself. I'm sorry." Maureen stepped away and started to leave the room. Liam heard the tremor in her voice and saw the tears in her eyes.

"Maureen, come here." Liam reached for her hand and pulled her down on the sofa next to him. "Perhaps there is an attraction between us, but this isn't the time to act on it. Ye are so young, and I have school ahead of me. Can we just be friends for a while?"

Maureen smiled at him and wiped away her tears. "Yes, I think we can be friends ... for a while."

They were interrupted by the rest of the family bursting through the door, yelling, "They're here! They're here! Connor and Ellen's carriage just pulled in."

Maureen and Liam joined the rest in the front hall waiting to greet them. Ellen and Connor were mobbed with hugs and questions the minute they stepped in. Connor finally broke free, laughing.



"We'll tell you all about it and hear all the news in a bit. Give us a chance to freshen up and we'll meet ye in the parlor before dinner."

Ellen was surrounded by the girls all whispering questions and giggling. Connor shook his head and grabbed Ellen's hand. "We'll see ye later."

Ellen hesitated in front of the door to their new rooms. Connor sensed her feeling and picked her up and carried her in, depositing her on the bed. Ellen lay there giggling.

"Maureen and I used to sneak in her sometimes and jump on the bed, when mother wasn't near. It was so much fun."

Connor lay down next to her. "I don't think we best try that, but I'm sure there are plenty of other things we can try."

"Connor Boland, we just this moment arrived here. We have people waiting to visit with us." Ellen swatted him away playfully.

"I know we do, and they can wait. I really do want to rest for a bit. We have plenty of time to visit later." He pulled her into his arms and held her. Soon both were sound asleep.

When they woke an hour later, they rose and changed for dinner. Ellen was thoughtful as she brushed her hair. "They all looked so happy and about ready to burst, I wonder what it is they have to tell us? Even Papa looked well."

"I don't know, but I'm sure we're about to find out. If ye're ready, shall we go?" Connor held out his arm and they walked down to the parlor.

Mary and Mick were the only ones there when they came in. Mick handed Connor a glass of whiskey. "How was the cottage? You look like you had a restful time."

Connor and Ellen took turns explaining about the cottage and the various things they had seen. Slowly the rest of the family joined them. When they were finished Ellen could stand it no longer. "Now you all look like a cat that swallowed a canary. What happened while we were gone?"

Mick yawned a bit and held his glass out to Connor to refill. "It was pretty quiet around here without you. Not much of interest happened." He paused and then winked at Liam. "Oh, Liam did something a bit interesting one day. Tell them what you did last week, Liam."

Connor looked over at Liam with a puzzled frown. "What did you do Liam?"

"I took the test for admittance to Harvard and found out Friday, I was accepted. I start in two weeks." Liam had a huge grin on his face.

Connor jumped up and pulled him into a bear hug. "That is great news Liam! I'm so happy. I knew you could do it."

"He got the top grade of anyone taking the test also." Mary chimed in. "Edward said that was better than any of his other students have ever done."

"Liam, I'm so happy for you." Ellen kissed hugged him and kissed him on the cheek.

It was one very happy family that went into dinner. The entire dinner talk was of other small things that happened during the week. They were almost finished when Mick remembered another bit of news. "I totally forgot about this with all the other news, but Edward and Colleen are to be married in several months. They spoke to the good father, and I have of course offered them accommodations here. Edward hasn't decided yet, but I expect they will take me up on my offer for the time being anyway. I offered them the coach house."

"That's wonderful Mick. I think that is a generous offer. I must seek him out tomorrow morning and offer my congratulations as well." Connor was happy at that news. It meant that Edward and Colleen would both stay in their employ.

Ellen was absolutely gleeful. "Oh, I can help plan her wedding. It should be spring by then and we could have a party for them in the garden."

Connor and Mick both laughed at her. "I think we should see what plans they might have Ellen."

It was a very happy family that went to bed that Sunday night. In the coming weeks, that evening would stand out in their minds.

## Chapter Forty-Three

The next morning Connor left bright and early for the bank. He was anxious to see how things had been while he was gone.

Ian arrived shortly after and the two sat and drank tea, catching up on the past week.

"Everything went smoothly, Connor. We had no problems at all. I missed your company and share of the workload, but we managed. Enough of business for now. Tell me how you enjoyed your honeymoon." Ian sipped his tea and listened to Connor's response.

"Ian, that is a wonderful place. Ellen and I enjoyed it immensely. You and your wife will be receiving a note from her any day now thanking you for your generosity. As soon as we can, I would like to start building my own on the land that Mick intended to develop and never did. I'm sure the entire family would enjoy vacations there."

Connor poured another cup of tea and turned to the other thought on his mind. "How is Mrs. Haggerty doing? Is there enough money and business to keep her and her family?"

"Yes Connor, things are going very well for her. She is working on clothes for the children and other family members and quite a few ladies are already seeking her out to make their gowns." Ian laughed. "Mrs. Thompson paid me a visit last week. Very irate she was, feels we are trying to ruin her reputation and hurt her social standing. I told her nothing could be further from the truth, we were simply trying to help good people better themselves and treat them decently. I think she understood, because she left red faced and in a huff."

Connor roared with laughter. "As much as I would have liked to have seen that, I'm glad I missed her. That woman just angers me so."

"I guess we best get to work. I'll see you at lunchtime." Ian rose and left Connor's office.

Ellen rose a bit late. She knew she had a lot to do, but was tired and decided one day sleeping in a bit wouldn't hurt. By the time she came downstairs the rest of the household was busy with their daily chores. The children were in the schoolroom and Mary was mending socks.

Ellen sat with her after she had her breakfast. "Why do you darn the socks? We can afford to buy new ones."

"Yes, but these are still useful. It would be a sin to throw them away when there is still good use in them. Do ye know how to darn?" Mary handed Ellen a sock.

"No, I never have before. How do you do it?" Ellen looked at the wooden ball Mary inserted into the sock and the weaving she did with the heavy thread.

"Here, let me show ye." Mary did one with her and then handed her another one. "This is a very useful mending procedure ye should learn. Even though ye can afford new, it is best to be as frugal as possible when running a house. Ye never know when misfortune could fall and 'tis best to be prepared.

Ellen and Mary spent the next few hours until lunch, mending clothes. Ellen was fascinated by her newly acquired skill. "This is really a lot of fun. I enjoy this." By lunchtime all the mending was done.

Ellen wrote her thank you notes in the afternoon for the presents they had received and a special note to Ian and his wife for the loan of the cottage. Writing the note brought back wonderful memories of the week before. It was a sunny afternoon and fairly warm for late January, so Ellen put on her cloak and decided a walk in the gardens would be a good idea.

She had walked all around and examined the bushes to see if she could see any sign of returning life. There were birds feeding under one of the bushes, so she sat and watched them for a bit.

Voices came to her from the other side of the bushes. She listened for a minute and realized it was Liam and Maureen. Before she could move to say something to them she heard Liam's voice. "I know we talked about this a bit yesterday, but I thought more about it last night. I have at least 4 years of hard work ahead of me, but I don't want to lose ye Maureen. Would ye consent to have an understanding with me? If in that time ye should find ye don't want to wait or ye meet someone else, I'll understand and let ye free. I'm in love with ye."

Maureen was happy but surprised as well. "Liam, yes I will have an understanding with you. Perhaps we won't have to wait as long as you think either. I don't know when it happened but I have also realized I'm in love with you."

Liam pulled her to him and kissed her. Maureen loved his arms around her and rested her head on his shoulders. "Should we say anything to Papa or Connor?"

"I should, yes, but let me think about when that should be. For now, we must take things slowly. This is nothing we need to rush into." Liam kissed her again and took her hand and walked back to the house.

Ellen was stunned. Never did she stop for a minute to think about this happening. Her mind raced wondering if she should mention it to Connor or not. Perhaps for now she would keep it a secret. It was beginning to get dark so Ellen hurried back to the house.

Connor was just arriving home when Ellen came in. He wrapped her in a hug and kissed her. "Where have ye been?"

"I was walking in the garden and sat for a bit and watched the birds. It was a lovely day out." Ellen hugged him back and helped him take off his coat. "I'll fix you a drink and meet you in the parlor."

Ellen watched him walk up the stairs. With a happy sigh, she went to the parlor. She was so lucky to have him.

Connor stopped in the classroom hoping to find Edward there. He was in luck; Edward was just picking up his books to leave. "Connor, welcome back. I hear you had a wonderful time."

Connor shook Edward's hand. "I understand that congratulations are in order for ye also. Mick told me of his offer of the Coach House and I certainly hope ye take him up on it. It would be a wonderful home for the two of ye."

"I talked to Colleen, and she agreed, so I told Mick today, we would be happy to accept."

"Wonderful. If ye have some time, could ye meet with me for a while tonight after dinner in my office? I'd like to go over the children's progress and discuss some future ideas."

"That would be fine, Connor. I'll meet you there at 8:00." Edward shook hands once again and left. Connor proceeded to change clothes and join Ellen in the parlor.

"I thought maybe you had fallen asleep. I was just about to come looking for you." Ellen handed Connor his drink and sat down next to him on the couch. "How was your day?"

"It was fine. Ian updated me on all the news. The only thing out of the ordinary was a visit from your old friend Mrs. Thompson, complaining we were ruining her. Apparently she doesn't like losing Mrs. Hagerty. Ian handled her wonderfully though. Maybe someday she will realize the error of her ways." Connor put an arm around Ellen and kissed her gently. "What did you do today?"

"I learned how to mend! Oh Connor, it is so much fun. Your mother says it is wasteful to buy new when something can be fixed and worn a bit longer. I'm going to mend everything I can from now on."

Connor laughed at her enthusiasm. "Ma is the world's greatest mender, but ye don't have to mend everything, we can afford to buy new also."

"Yes, but we should save in case of bad times. She explained it all to me." Ellen was happy with her knowledge.

"What else did you do?" Connor was still chuckling at her.

"I wrote the thank you notes and then took the walk in the garden." Ellen somewhat hesitated, she still didn't know if she should let Connor know what she had overheard.

Connor noticed the hesitation. "Is there something else Ellen? Something you should tell me?"

Ellen looked at him, shocked. How could he tell? Quickly she made up her mind. "No Connor, how could there be? The children were in school all day and I was busy."

Connor wasn't so sure, but he let it be. "Ye do know, that ye should not keep secrets from me, don't ye? I would not like that one bit."

Ellen bit her tongue, but her mind was made up, at least until she had a chance to talk to Maureen.

The rest of the week passed normally. The household had fallen back into a normal daily routine with work, school, and chores. Ellen loved being married and being with Connor every moment she could. Her shyness was totally gone and she didn't worry about what others might hear any longer.

The only mar on her happiness was seeing Mick looking frailer and more ill everyday. Ellen also was watching Liam and Maureen carefully. When Liam returned from classes Maureen would be waiting for him and they would sneak out to the garden or a secluded part of the house. Ellen's conscience was bothering her that she knew of the situation and hadn't told either her father or Connor what was happening.



Maureen and Liam were totally unaware that Ellen knew of their understanding and meetings. Every time they talked they were growing more and more fond of each other. "Liam, I can't believe that we've known each other such a short time and I'm so much in love with you." Maureen rested her head on Liam's shoulder.

Liam tilted her head up and claimed her mouth in a deep kiss. "I know. I love ye very much also. I should probably say something to Connor and Mick, but I'm not sure if either would approve of our understanding at this point. Ye are still very young, and I do have a long road ahead of me."

"Oh Liam, I don't care. I'll wait for you, for however long it takes." Maureen pulled him close in an embrace.

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Connor was aware that something was bothering Ellen, but each time he asked her, she claimed everything was fine. He finally decided to confide in Mick.

"You know your daughters very well. Ellen seems to be worried about something and yet she tells me everything is fine when I ask her. Have ye a clue what could be bothering her?"

Mick sat back in his chair and thought for a minute. "I know she is happy, and loves you very much, so that isn't a problem. Perhaps she is worried about me some, but I don't think it would preoccupy her." Mick thought for another while. "The problem may be with Maureen. I have wondered a bit myself lately about her and Liam. There is definitely a change in the way they act toward each other. Liam seems to be a bit nervous when we visit. I think we need to be a bit more observant there. Something could be going on that Ellen is aware of and hasn't told you."

Connor was dumbfounded. "Liam and Maureen? Why ... Maureen is so young, and Liam has just started his studies. That is foolishness."

"Yes it seems so, but physical attractions rarely wait until it's practical." Mick laughed. "I don't like the idea of them sneaking around unchaperoned though. That's totally inappropriate and they both should know better."

Connor's brows were knit in deep thought. "It will be fruitless for me to ask Ellen again. If she knows about this, she is set on keeping it from me. When it comes to light, she and I will have a discussion about keeping such things from her husband. In the meantime, I shall do a bit of snooping on my own to see what I can find out."

Connor started watching Liam and Maureen when they were together at meals and in the parlor. After a week or so, he noticed a pattern of behavior between them. After meals, both would excuse themselves for study, but if he looked for Liam he was nowhere to be found. He suspected that Maureen was not in her room either.

Mick had also asked the servants to watch the two. "Connor, it seems that when Liam comes home from classes he and Maureen also disappear together for some time. No one seems to know where they go, but it is almost a certainty they are together. Have you found any definite proof?"

"No, but I plan on laying a little trap for them. I asked Ellen the other evening if she had seen Liam or Maureen and she jumped and paled before she responded. She may not know where they are, but I'm sure she is aware of something concrete."

Ellen was becoming more and more nervous about the situation. Several times she had stumbled on Liam and Maureen in deep embraces in the garden and other places they felt alone. Finally she decided she had best tell Maureen what she knew.

Ellen stood outside Maureen's door and hesitated a moment before she knocked. Maureen was getting ready to meet Liam and opened the door expecting to see one of the maids.

"Ellen, I didn't expect to see you."

"I know, but we must talk, Maureen." Ellen entered the room and closed the door behind her.

"It will have to wait Ellen. I have someplace I must be right now." Maureen moved to leave the room.

"I know, with Liam. I've seen the two of you several times and overheard your conversation about your agreement. You have to talk to Papa and Connor. It isn't right that the two of you are doing this and you know it." Ellen sat down and saw the look of surprise on Maureen's face.

"You haven't told anyone have you? Not Connor or Papa?"

"No, but I should. You and Liam must tell them soon, I will be in a lot of trouble with Connor if he finds out about you and knows I knew and didn't tell him."

"Don't worry, Ellen. We're very cautious, and I shall talk to Liam today. I'm late in meeting him right now." Maureen scurried from the room before Ellen could say any more.

Connor obtained Liam's class schedule so he knew when he would be arriving home. As Ellen had been talking to Maureen, he was home. He had told James to drop him off around the back of the house, as he didn't wish anyone to know he was home early.

Liam was prompt in arriving home. Connor saw him head into the garden rather than to the house. Just as he thought, Maureen came rushing into the garden a few moments later.

"Liam, I'm sorry I was late, but Ellen detained me. We have to talk."

Liam grabbed her and kissed her hard. "We can talk later. I've missed ye too much for talk right now." Once more he held her close and the two lost themselves in a passionate embrace.

Connor was livid. "Is there something the two of you should be telling Mick and me?"

Liam and Maureen jumped apart, startled to see Connor standing there. Liam looked sheepishly up at Connor. "I was going to talk to you soon."

"I see that, but apparently not soon enough. Maureen, go to your room. Liam, you and I are going to have a talk with Mick right now!" Connor watched as Maureen fled into the house and then walked with Liam to Mick's room.

"Connor, really there is nothing wrong. We haven't done anything we shouldn't have." Liam tried to soothe Connor's anger.

"Ye have been sneaking around and ye know that isn't right. Ye haven't behaved honorably Liam, I'm ashamed of ye." Connor knocked on Mick's door and ushered Liam in.

"Sorry to disturb ye Mick, but Liam has something he has to say to ye." Connor slammed the door and pushed Liam into a chair.

"Connor, ye don't need to treat me like a child. I'm a man and expect to be treated as one." Liam's temper was now beginning to show.

"A man doesn't behave the way ye have."

Mick saw the tension and anger in Connor's face. "Liam, I think you better calm down and tell us what's been going on. I would like to believe you haven't dishonored me or my daughter."

Liam almost jumped from the chair but stayed seated. "I have not dishonored either of ye, Sir. I happen to love Maureen, and we've done nothing we shouldn't have."

"Would you care to tell me why you didn't discuss this with me? Why you have both been sneaking around?" Mick had a stern look on his face that Liam had never seen before.

Connor sat on the couch silently waiting for Liam to offer his explanation. Liam looked from one to the other.

"I'm sorry I didn't do that before. I know Maureen is young and I have several years of schooling ahead. I didn't intend to fall in love with her, nor she with me. However, it has happened. I

asked her to wait for me. I should have asked your permission before we agreed on an understanding. I'm sorry ye found out this way." Liam waited for either Connor or Mick to reply.

Mick shook his head. "I'm saddened by your behavior Liam, but I believe you meant no harm. I know my daughter and I trust her. I will allow this understanding, but the two of you are not to be alone together without my or Connor's permission. Is that clearly understood?"

"Yes Sir," Liam answered meekly.

"Also, if at any time this understanding is to be escalated, my permission will be sought first, or if I'm no longer here, Connor's. Is that understood? You are not to take matters in your own hands again."

"Yes Sir, I do understand and I'm very sorry. Please though, would you not punish Maureen for any of this? I take full responsibility."

Connor spoke for the first time since entering the room. "Liam, I'm glad that Mick has forgiven ye. I do also, but Maureen knew full well what she was doing. I will leave her punishment to Mick."

"Liam, I am going to have a long talk with my daughter, what happens during that talk will determine if she is punished or not. Now, if you will excuse me I would like to talk to Connor alone." Liam thanked both of them and left the room.

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Mick chuckled. "I think we scared him a bit. I do believe that he has behaved honorably toward Maureen. I'm not inclined to punish her, but I would like your thoughts on the subject."

Connor shook his head. "Mick you are way too good hearted for your own good. I know my brother and they really haven't done anything more than kiss, but it could easily have gotten out of hand. If Maureen were my daughter I would be inclined to see to it she didn't sit for a week, but I probably

would severely scold her and obtain her promise that she would never behave like that in the future."

"Good, I think we are in agreement then. Please send her to see me. We may as well get this behind us before dinner."

Connor knocked on Maureen's door and waited for her to answer. "Young lady, I'm very disappointed in ye. However, this is a matter between your father and ye. He wishes to see ye in his office immediately."

Maureen lowered her head and obediently left for Mick's study.

Connor smiled, but quickly lost the smile thinking of Ellen hiding this from him. He saw Ellen's maid Bridey in the hall. "Would you find Ellen and send her to our room immediately?"

"Yes Sir." Bridey didn't think the look on Connor's face bode well for Ellen at all.

## Chapter Forty-Four

Bridey scurried away hoping to find Ellen quickly. Unfortunately she wasn't anywhere she normally was. Finally in desperation she looked in the garden. Ellen seemed to be hiding behind a bush.

Bridey ran up to her. "Connor is home and wants to see you in your room immediately."

Ellen paled visibly. "When did he get home?"

"I don't know, but he didn't look happy." Bridey hurried back into the house, and left Ellen to come in alone. She didn't want to be anywhere near that room when Ellen met Connor.

Ellen had a horrid sinking feeling in her stomach as she climbed the stairs to their room.

Connor was standing with his back to the door looking out the window when Ellen entered the room.

"You wanted to see me Connor?" Ellen's voice was shaking.

Connor turned and looked at her. "Where were ye? I sent Bridey looking for ye 30 minutes ago. Didn't she tell ye I wanted to see ye immediately?"

"I guess she had a hard time finding me. I was in the garden. Is there something wrong?"

Connor walked over to Ellen and pulled her against him. "Look at me, Ellen."

Ellen looked up into Connor's eyes. She knew he was angry. His jaw was clenched and his eyes dark.

"Why did ye lie to me, Ellen?"

"What do you mean? I haven't lied to you."

Connor sat down on the chair and pulled Ellen down on his lap. "I believe I asked ye several times in the last few weeks what was bothering ye, and ye told me that nothing was. I also asked ye if ye were keeping something from me. I told ye I would not be happy if that were the case. Do ye remember these conversations?"

Ellen looked down. "Yes Connor, I do."

"Ye knew about Maureen and Liam didn't ye?" Connor tilted her chin up to look him in the eyes.

Ellen had tears in her eyes. "Yes, I caught them and overheard some conversations. I thought they would tell you themselves. I didn't want to upset you."

"Ellen, ye knew better. I'm very upset and angry with ye. I won't tolerate this type of behavior. Go get me your hairbrush." Connor set her on her feet.

Ellen got her hairbrush from the dressing table and brought it to Connor.

"I don't like having to do this Ellen, but ye must never lie or keep things from me." Connor took her wrist and guided her over his lap. Her skirts were flipped up and her under things lowered. "I hope you learn from this, Ellen."

Connor raised the brush and smacked each cheek and thigh until they were bright red and mottled with deeper marks.

"I'm so sorry Connor. Please, please don't spank me any more. I will never lie or keep things from you." Ellen sobbed and pleaded but Connor continued spanking.

Finally the spanking stopped and Connor lifted her into his arms. "Sshhh, ye are forgiven, but ye must confide in me, and answer truthfully when I ask ye questions."

"What are you going to do about Liam and Maureen?" Ellen sniffled into Connor's shirt.

"Your father and I have spoken to Liam. Your father is presently speaking to Maureen. Whether or not he punishes her is up to him. I suspect she will not be punished, but severely scolded. That kind of situation can't be tolerated." Connor rubbed Ellen's back soothingly.

"Wash your face and let's go down to the parlor. I'll wait for ye." Connor kissed Ellen and set her on her feet.

Ellen's bottom felt stiff and sore when she walked, but she tried to put on a smile and hide her discomfort. The parlor was empty when they



entered and Connor smiled when he saw how gingerly she sat. After pouring himself a drink, he joined Ellen. "Would you like a pillow to sit on?"

"Sshhh, Connor, I don't want everyone knowing. I'm very sorry." Ellen had blushed a deep red.

Before Connor had time to reply Liam joined them. He approached Ellen and apologized. "I've apologized to Connor and your father, but I owe ye an apology also. I'm very sorry for the way I behaved. I didn't intend this to cause ye trouble."

"It's all right Liam. It was my fault that I got in trouble, not yours."

Liam poured a drink and was just sitting down when Maureen came into the room. It was obvious that she had been crying. Liam jumped up and started to hug her, but then stopped, realizing they weren't in private. "Are ye okay, Maureen?"

"Yes Liam, I'm fine. Papa is very upset with us though. We aren't to be alone at any time."

"Ellen, I'm so sorry that I didn't listen to you. I know it was wrong of me."

"Both of you are forgiven. Let's just go on and forget this unpleasantness." Ellen smiled at both of them.

Connor couldn't resist whispering in Ellen's ear. "I don't think your bottom will forget so soon though will it?"

Ellen blushed to the roots of her hair and swatted his arm. "Connor, behave!"

The rest of the family soon joined them and the talk was all about Liam and Maureen. It seemed that somehow the whole family knew what had happened that afternoon. Mary shook her head, "Is there nothing that can be private here? I don't think this is any of your business, children. I don't want to hear any of ye talking about it again."

Connor agreed with her. "Yes, this is the end of the discussion. Tell me what is going on at school, Nora."

Nora was her usual chattery self. "Oh everything is fine. No one is picking on anyone and I love all

the subjects. I'm having a wonderful time. Nell is my best friend. We are going to always be friends for the rest of our lives."

"I'm glad to hear that. I expect to see a wonderful report card from ye then."

The rest of the family reported on their days and soon it was time for dinner. Mick joined them for dinner that night. Lately he had been dining in his room.

When they were all seated he proposed a toast. "To a wonderful family. It's so nice to have everyone here and happy."

Mick seemed to be in better spirits than he had in a long time, even though he had thoroughly scolded Maureen and Liam just a short time before. Ellen was so happy to see that he looked better.

Life in the McMahon/Boland household returned to normal. Ellen and Connor were very happy, but Ellen wasn't feeling well. She was also gaining weight and that had never been a problem with her before.

The winter weather was waning and the days were warmer and longer. Ellen decided she should take a walk everyday. Maybe exercise and fresh air would help.

As the days went on, Ellen was not feeling much better. Connor noticed that she was pale in the morning and had little appetite for breakfast, but by evening she seemed better. He was concerned about her but when questioned she said it must just be the weather.

Finally one day after Connor left for work, Ellen approached Mary. "I'm a bit worried and need your advice. I haven't felt good for a month now. This morning I got sick. My clothes are getting tighter and I'm gaining weight but I'm eating less. Do you think I could have a disease like Papa?"

Mary thought for a minute and smiled. "Ellen, how long have ye been married?"

"Three months now. Why?"

"I think you may be in a motherly way. Have ye had your monthly on time?"

Ellen thought for a moment. "No, I haven't, but I never thought about it. Oh my, what do I do?"

"Tis nothing unusual ye know. I think we get ye to the doctor and then let things proceed as they always do in these cases. Connor will be thrilled." Mary hugged Ellen who was sitting in shock

"I guess I should have thought of that. I remember my mother being pregnant, but it just didn't cross my mind."

Ellen and Mary went to see the doctor that afternoon. Ellen was so embarrassed as a doctor had never examined her like that before. When he finished he smiled at her.

"I would say you will have a baby in seven months time. Take it easy and don't overdo. The sickness will pass."

Ellen was floating on air all day. Mary was sworn to secrecy until she could tell Connor. Ellen was pacing the parlor when she heard Connor come in. "Connor, I have to talk to you."

Connor was surprised at the urgency in Ellen's voice. "What is it? Is everything all right?"

"Oh yes. Come up to our room. Hurry!" Ellen barely let him take his coat off before she was pulling him up the stairs. As soon as he closed the door she hugged him tight. "Connor, I went to see the doctor today."

Connor paled. "Are ye all right? I know ye haven't been feeling well."

"Connor, I'm fine. Both of us are. We're going to have a baby!"

Connor looked at her in shock for a minute then swooped her up in his arms. "When? I'm so happy."

"In about seven months. That's why I've been sick and gaining weight. Oh what shall we name him?"

"We have plenty of time for that. Ye don't know it will be a boy either. Let's go tell Mick." Connor

took her hand and they headed for her father's room.

Mick was having his usual whiskey before dinner. Connor poured himself one and seated Ellen.

"You both look like you are bursting with something. What are the big grins for?" Mick looked from one to the other.

"Oh Papa, we're going to have a baby! I went to the doctor today and he says in seven months." Ellen got up and hugged her father.

Mick had tears in his eyes. "Oh that makes me so happy! A new child, such a blessing."

The three sat and talked and then Connor and Ellen left to tell the others. Mary hadn't said a word to them, but they were all gathered together when Ellen and Connor entered the room.

Connor couldn't wait. "We have some wonderful news. We're having a baby."

Bedlam broke loose in the room, everyone talking at the same time. Nora as usual was the first one to be heard. "Oh, I'm going to be an Aunt. I'll take such good care of the baby and help you all the time Ellen." Nora hugged Ellen.

Connor was so proud; he couldn't wait to tell Ian the next morning. Ian congratulated him. "You'll get used to it after the first one. I'm really happy for you both." Ian thought for a moment. "I hate to ask this, but how is Mick doing?"

Connor's happiness was momentarily dulled. "He isn't doing well at all, Ian. I know he has to be in a lot of pain. He rarely ever leaves his room anymore. Last night he beamed at the news of the baby. I hope he makes it to see the little one. I haven't told Ellen yet but if it's a boy I want to name it after Mick and my father. I think Michael Sean has a wonderful sound."

"Yes, it's a manly sounding name. I'll be praying for Mick. Perhaps I'll stop by this weekend and visit with him some. I have missed him." Ian left Connor to his daily work.

Ellen's days were spent quietly sewing baby clothes and in general getting ready for the baby. The nursery had been cleaned and aired and was all prepared for the new arrival. Ellen's contentment and happiness was matched by Connor's. Everyday, he felt the new life swelling in his wife's belly. The first time he felt a kick was the most memorable day in his young life. "Oh Ellen, he's moving. Isn't it wonderful!"

Ellen laughed. "Oh, so now it's a boy is it? How can you be so sure?"

"I just know that strong a kick must be a son. That is the sure kick of Michael Sean, I know."

"Oh Connor, you never told me you'd picked a name. That is beautiful, after both our fathers." Ellen hugged Connor tight to her.

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It was late summer when Mick became much sicker. He was now barely able to leave his bed. Ellen spent most of her days sitting with him, praying daily he would last until his grandson, as she now thought of the unborn baby, arrived.

The doctor made almost daily visits to check on Mick. His prognosis wasn't good. On one such visit he told Connor, "I think he is only holding on waiting for that baby to be born. By rights he could go almost any moment."

"Is there anything we can do for him?" Connor hated seeing the face of his friend and mentor pinched in pain.

"No. I've increased the pain medication as much as I can. All we can do is keep him as comfortable as possible."

Connor returned from work one day in early autumn to find Ellen in their room weeping. "What is it, Ellen?"

"Connor, Papa hasn't wakened at all today. He just sleeps and sleeps. I don't know if he's going to last much longer."

Connor held Ellen in his arms. "I know, but we're doing everything we can. It won't help ye or the babe to get upset."

Mick pulled out of his semi-coma several days later, and actually seemed to be a bit better. His color was better and he was able to sit up a bit every day. The family was cheered to see his improvement, but Connor knew it wasn't for long.

October turned into November and one morning Ellen woke Connor in the middle of the night. "Connor, I think it's time. You best send for the midwife."

Connor hurried and woke Daniel. "Please send for Mrs. Murphy at once. It is Ellen's time."

By the time Mrs. Murphy arrived Mary had things well in hand. Connor was unceremoniously pushed from the room to wait. His face showed his deep concern with every pain that Ellen yelled with.

"Connor, tis normal for a woman to experience this pain. She is fine. Now go on downstairs. I'll call ye when it's time." Mary shooed him away.

It seemed like an eternity to Connor before a maid sent for him. He entered their room to find an exhausted Ellen holding a healthy sleeping child. "Connor, this is our son. He is so wonderful."

Connor sat on the bed and took the child from Ellen's arms. "Hello, Michael Sean."

Connor had seen his brother and sisters when they were first born, but this child was the most beautiful child he had ever seen.

Ellen recuperated fast and was out of bed in a day. Mick knew he had a grandson and was impatiently waiting to see it.

Ellen and Connor proudly took their son to see him. Mick was propped up in bed and Ellen placed young Michael Sean in his arms. "Isn't he beautiful Papa?"

Mick had tears in his eyes as he held his grandson. "Connor and Ellen, he's the most precious sight I've ever seen. Take good care of him."

That night Mick lapsed into his final coma and died two days later. His last words were of praise for his grandson.

Ellen, Maureen, and Nora were inconsolable. Connor himself hadn't felt such sadness since his own father had passed away.

Mick was waked in the parlor, and true to Irish tradition it was a lively affair. The parents of the school children that Mick had helped, led by Seamus O'Brien, made sure the family didn't need to worry about seeing to anything. They were there constantly working.

Finally the funeral was over and the family back in the house alone for the first time in a week. They all sat in the parlor waiting for dinner quietly. Ellen looked around the room at all of them dressed in mourning. The holidays were coming and of course they would not be able to partake of most of the festivities. Her heart was breaking but she couldn't help but feel that this wouldn't be what Mick would want.

Before she could say a word, Bridey whispered into her ear that young Mick needed feeding. Ellen excused herself and went to feed her wee babe. When she reached the nursery and picked him up, she noticed that for the first time he smiled. The smile reminded her so much of her dear father.

"Oh Michael, you're so precious, and your grandfather loved you so. I'm so sorry you won't grow up with him to pamper you. Somehow the comfort of feeding her son lessened her sorrow. She was rocking him while she fed him when Connor came into the room. He stood and looked at the sight of his wife and child.

"Ellen, we must not be sad any longer. It would not be what Mick wanted, ye know that. Look at that beautiful child. Mick would want the best for him. It's up to us to guide the others out of this. I know we can't join in normal celebrations, but I do think we must do something special this holiday

season here." Connor caressed Ellen's cheek and the cheek of his son.

Connor and Ellen made special plans and saw to it that the family came back to normal living as soon as possible. The holidays were quiet and a family affair, with a few close friends attending small gatherings with them.

Ian and his family were there and invited them to small gatherings at their house. The O'Brien's and the other school families were invited to a special Christmas gathering. Slowly the sadness lifted.

On the anniversary of Connor and Ellen's marriage they found themselves once again in church. This time it was for the baptism of Michael Sean Boland. The godparents were beaming in happiness. Nora McMahon and Tommy Boland were never prouder than they were that day.

Later that day when everyone had left, Connor and Ellen sat in their room. Ellen was in Connor's lap as she nursed young Mick. "Connor, I'm finally feeling the lessening of sorrow. I think Papa was with us today."

Connor held his precious family close to him. "Yes, Ellen, I'm sure he was. Our family is just starting. I know it will go on into the future. Young Mick here will be part of it, but so will Liam and Maureen and the others."



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