

Who Brings Forth the Wind

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One

MIDDLESBROUGH, ENGLAND
MARCH 1853

ANASTASIA DANIELS SAT ON THE CREEK BANK and stared down at the fishing line that lay undisturbed in the water. Four fish on another line lay at her side, but she'd set a goal of five and was not leaving the bank until she had them. However, her mind was beginning to wander. She pushed a stray lock from her face, wishing she had taken time to brush the honey-gold mass or at least secure it out of her eyes.

"Lady Stacy," a voice spoke from behind her, succeeding in drawing her attention from the surface of the water.

"Oh, good morning, Peters."

"Good morning, my lady. Breakfast is ready, and your grandfather is asking for you."

Stacy was on the verge of telling him she would come immediately when the pole twitched in her hands. She gave all her attention to the catch, and in just moments expertly pulled in a fat trout. She then turned to Peters with a huge smile that he found most contagious.

"Tell my grandfather I'll be right along."

Peters went on his way, and Stacy rose gracefully from the bank. The weighty line in her hand felt wonderful as she stepped lightly over the path and headed for the kitchen.

"Here you go, Mercy," Stacy nearly sang with triumph. "I think we'll enjoy these for lunch."

"I'll see to it, Lady Stacy," Mercy, the family cook, told her fondly. She shook her head with true tenderness as Stacy rushed out to clean up for breakfast.

Forty minutes later Stacy and her grandfather, Viscount Andrew Daniels, were finishing their morning meal.

"Did I tell you I caught five fish for lunch?"

"Five!" the old man exclaimed. "Why didn't you take me?"

"I went very early," she explained. "It took me forever, though. I must be losing my touch."

Andrew's only reply to this was a small grunt of disbelief.

"Peters says there's a letter here from London," Andrew commented.

"Oh, it must be Lucinda. Why don't we go into the salon, and I'll read it?"

Stacy began as soon as they were settled:

The weather here is cold right now, but I can tell that spring is around the corner. It will be welcome as the cold gets into my bones these days as never before.

I had two of Mother's pieces reset, the emerald and the ruby, and I'm hoping Stacy will be interested in them. They're quite lovely and up-to-date in style. I'll hold onto them until such a time as Stacy can view them herself.

Stacy stopped reading at that point, and after a moment her grandfather questioned her.

"Is that all she says?"

"No," Stacy admitted, the letter still in her hand. "She goes on about my age and birthday, both of which she has wrong."

"That's normal," Andrew muttered. "If she mentions your age, then she must have a bee in her bonnet about your coming to London."

Stacy said nothing to this, only sat quietly and watched her grandfather where he rested in his favorite chair. He returned her look, but she knew he saw little; his eyesight seemed to weaken daily.

"Read the rest, Stacy." The command was soft, but Stacy complied immediately.

Stacy will be 21 at the end of October, and I can't believe she's never come to London. It's criminal of you, Andrew, not to let her come and try to make a life for herself here. I'm still angry with you that she had no coming out. It's time Stacy

marry and start a family. I know you agree, but you're too stubborn to admit it.

I'll forgive and forget all the past, however, if you'll allow Stacy to come next month and stay for the entire summer, from the first of May to the end of July. I won't settle for a day less. I've been begging you for years, and it's the least you can do.

I await your letter. Please do not let me down, Andrew. Love to you and Stacy.

Lucinda

Andrew listened as Stacy folded the letter and wished he could see her clearly enough to read her expression. He knew she would go in an instant if he asked her, but he wasn't certain she would tell him the truth as to whether or not she *wanted* to go.

From the time she was a little girl Stacy had hated confrontation or unhappiness of any type. Andrew was quite certain that she would walk on hot coals if she thought it would please him.

"Would you care to go to London, Stacy?"

"Would you like me to?"

The old man smiled. He had known very well she would answer his question with a question of her own.

"As a matter of fact, I think it might be a good idea," he said after a moment, keeping his tone carefully neutral. "I don't feel as Lucinda does, that you need to make a life for yourself there, unless of course you want to, but it might be a summer you would really enjoy."

"All right," Stacy agreed, but her voice told him something was wrong.

"You're worried about something."

"Two things, actually," she admitted. "I'm afraid Lucinda will be determined to marry me off."

Andrew nodded. Stacy was a tall girl, nearly six feet and with a statuesque figure. None of the local boys had wanted a wife, even one with the face of an angel, who towered over them.

"I'll set her straight long before you go," he assured her. "What else troubles you?"

"The train ride. London is so far away, and it frightens me a little to contemplate making the ride alone."

Andrew's heart sank. He had been hoping that she would be

bothered by something plausible, such as London itself, so that he could with a clear conscience tell Lucinda she wouldn't be able to come.

He did not have the extra staff to send someone on the train with Stacy. However, just the week before his man, Peters, had told him the Binks were headed to London with their daughter Milly to shop for her coming out. He knew they would be delighted to have Stacy with them.

Careful to keep biased emotion from his voice, he told Stacy this. If Stacy believed he wanted her to go, she would pack that hour. If she sensed he was hesitant, nothing could draw her away.

In just a matter of words it was settled. Andrew dictated a letter to Stacy for his sister on the spot, informing Lucinda of his expectations for Stacy's trip. He also reminded his forgetful sister that Stacy was approaching her twenty-second year and that her birthday was at the beginning of October.

He sent Stacy to post the letter as soon as it was ready and then rang for Peters.

"How did she seem?"

"Fine, my lord."

"Not upset?"

"No."

"Her face? What was on her face?"

This line of questioning was quite common for Peters, so he answered without hesitation as he led his lordship to his bedroom.

"She looked thoughtful, sir. Not upset or overly excited, just thoughtful."

Andrew heaved a great sigh of relief. Next he would have to check with his cousin's young wife, Elena, for Stacy would be certain to visit her while in the village. If Peters had missed anything, Elena certainly would not.



Elena Daniels sat across the parlor from Stacy just an hour later and marveled, not for the first time, at her looks. She was like a Viking queen with her thick, honey-blond hair that hung as straight as a line and her beautiful figure, neither of which Stacy seemed to be aware in

the slightest. She carried herself proudly, and just looking at her, one would not guess how shy and timid she could be.

"So what do you think?" Stacy, who had told Elena all about the plans, wished to know.

"I think if you want to go, then you should." It sounded harmless to Elena, and she was able to answer Stacy calmly. She was just two years older than Stacy, but her marriage to Noel Daniels, who was 24 years her senior, along with the birth of two daughters, made her feel years older.

"I think Papa wants me to go, and I know it would make Aunt Lucinda happy," Stacy told her.

There goes that word again, Elena thought. *Stacy must see to it that everyone is happy.* When would she see that the only true happiness anyone could have was found in pleasing God?

"What about you, Stacy? Will it make you happy?"

Stacy's huge blue eyes were thoughtful. She knew she could be very honest with Elena, but wasn't certain she should be. She suspected that her grandfather would be checking with Elena as he always did with Peters.

If the truth be told, Stacy said to herself, *I would never leave Middlesbrough and the safe haven of Papa's home.*

She had never seen London with her own eyes, but the drawings and paintings she'd studied made it look very large and crowded.

"I think I've lost you," Elena commented, and Stacy was swift to apologize.

"I'm sorry, Elena. I was thinking of London and how big it must be. I'm to have three new gowns." Stacy's face took on a look of excitement. "I'm hoping Aunt Lucinda will approve of them."

"Will that be enough? Maybe you should wait and shop for a complete wardrobe there," Elena suggested.

Stacy looked doubtful. "I don't know if Papa can afford that."

"What about your dowry?"

Stacy sighed; she'd thought of that. "He would never agree. He's so certain that I'll marry someday."

"You could ask him."

Stacy's look of longing turned to one of fear. The question might anger her grandfather, and she would hate that.

"Would you like me to ask him?" Elena offered, accurately reading

Stacy's mind. Quite suddenly Elena wanted Stacy's trip to London to be very special, and thought that an extra dress or two might help.

"No, Elena, but thank you for the offer."

Elena nodded. "I suppose you're wise to let it rest," she commented. "You'll need that money when you marry."

Stacy didn't reply, not wanting to contradict Elena. It wasn't that she was against marriage, but if the suitable young men Stacy had grown up with were any type of gauge, Stacy was probably right in believing that she would never be wed.

It was true that she was as sweet and lovely a girl as any man could hope to find, but her height was a definite disadvantage. Stacy had had numerous dreams of meeting a tall stranger who would not be put off by her height, but so far no such man had materialized. *Maybe in London...* Stacy let the thought hang.

Elena, who had noticed Stacy's thoughtful face but not commented on it, had her own thoughts about the men in London—men who might flirt with Stacy, making promises with their eyes that they never intended to keep.

Stacy had been raised in a sheltered world, one that made her very trusting. The thought of someone hurting Stacy was so painful for Elena that for a moment she couldn't breathe. Maybe it was best that Stacy not have those beautiful gowns.

Both women were pulled from their thoughts when Elena's daughters, Harmony and Brittany, suddenly entered the room. They were thrilled to see Stacy, who was one of their favorite relatives. After swarming into her lap, they begged their mother to let them stay with the adults for tea. All thoughts of London were put aside.