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# A SIREN'S MELODY

Love and Family Book Two

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.  
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## Prologue

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### Colchester 1685

**I**n the darkness of the night, two newborns were left at the door of a church in a wicker basket by a cloaked figure. In the morning, the newborns were found by the local priest. He took them inside, washed the dirt and soot from their faces with a soft cloth. The priest crossed himself in fright when he saw the faces of the newborns.

“God saves us all, what kind of sorcery is this?” he mumbled. “One child looks exactly like the other. This is the work of a witch.”

He bent on his knees, held his hands together before his face and prayed for his own soul. He believed the children were sent by a demon to test his faith.

“Oh, holy father in heaven, save me from the demon’s wicked tricks.”

The priest was not familiar with the concept of twins. He was a local priest in a small town, and it was the first time he had ever seen a pair of twins. He was afraid to go near the children. He believed them to be the product of witchcraft.

“I will take them.”

He looked towards the source of the voice and found a stranger standing near the basket. The stranger was looking down at the demon spawns with a look of adoration. Either the stranger was the devil himself or he could not see the face of evil.

“Who are you?” the priest asked. “Why do you wish to take these abominations?”

The stranger’s name was Simon, who was a coachman for a duke. He was on his way to return to the estate of his master when he heard cries of newborns coming from inside a church. It was already late. He should have left without bothering, but the wailing of the babes was so heart wrenching he could not stop himself from investigating the situation.

Inside the church, he saw a priest praying to God to save his soul from the demon. Simon went near the wicker basket, where the heart-wrenching sobs of the babes were originating. In the basket, he found two sets of green eyes and two heads with soft blond hair. A card was tucked in the middle of the two babes. There were only two words written on the card, Shane and Russell. Someone had already named the babes

“I am sent by God himself. He was testing your faith, Father. I am here to take the babes with me. God is pleased with you. You have passed his test.”

The priest fainted when he realized the stranger was an angel sent by God. Simon chuckled at the fool who thought the innocent babes were sent by a demon and he was actually a messenger of God.

He held out his fingers to the babes, both of whom grabbed the same finger at the same time and pulled his finger towards their mouths. Simon understood the reason for their wailing. They were hungry. His conscience would not allow him to leave the newborns at the mercy of the priest.

Simon picked up the basket and placed it in the carriage

waiting outside the church. On his way back to his small quarters at the duke's house, Simon bought goat milk for the newborns.

Simon was a forty-year-old bachelor. He had never wished for a wife or children, but God had different plans for him. In one night, he had become the father of two boys. Oddly, he was not upset, but rather giddy at the prospect of looking after the two lads.

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Ipswich, 1693

Seven-year-old Isabella was standing in a cemetery in black mourning clothes. Her father was murdered by bandits. He had gone to meet a friend of his in Colchester, but he never reached the estate of his friend.

Her father was an Earl and now that title was left to her uncle. Because of that, she was moving to a house on the outskirts of town with her mother and sister. Her uncle asked them to leave their family home so his family could move in.

“When can we go home, Bella?”

She looked at her two-year-old sister, Margaret. Her sister could not utter her name properly, so she had shortened it to Bella. Isabella had gray eyes and auburn hair while her sister had blue eyes and blonde hair.

Her sister had no inkling about the gravity of their situation. She did not understand that they could never go back to their home. Her father had not written a will; hence all his property was shifted to his brother. Their uncle was kind enough to fix a stipend for them and allow them to live in a house of their own. He could have kicked them to the street without giving them a penny and no one would have stopped him because he had every right to take everything away from them, but their uncle had a kind soul.

“The carriage will be here soon, Margaret,” she said.

She could not bring herself to tell her little sister the unfortunate news. Her sister was fond of running around their estate. It would crush her if she realized she could not live in that house anymore. Isabella was cursing the bandits who had taken everything away from them. Their greed had cost them their father.

A carriage rolled up in front of the cemetery gates. Their trunks were already loaded and their faithful servant, Philip was driving the carriage. He had been with them for as long as she could remember. He was loyal to them. When everyone else was leaving them, he was staying behind with them.

Both sisters sat inside the carriage and started their journey towards a new life. Their mother was already waiting for them at the new house with the few servants her uncle had allowed them. She looked out the window and said a silent farewell to her old life.

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### Colchester, 1695

Shane was sleeping at the foot of his brother's bed. It had been two years since their father died and the young duke took them in. Shane did not fully comprehend the events that transpired two years back, but he knew his brother was still in pain.

*He loved horses and enjoyed spending time in the stable. That night, he had fallen asleep in a corner of the stable when a commotion disturbed his slumber. He watched from a corner when a group of men killed his father and his brother was left alone to fend off the attackers. He was so scared he did not step out from his hiding place when his brother called to their dead father for help. His brother was chased by the men when suddenly, the door to the stable burst open and his brother was knocked unconscious from the blow of the door. A man entered in fury, gun raised and sword at the ready.*

*Shane crawled slowly towards his brother when the man started to*

*slaughter the attackers. He lay atop his brother, shielding him from further harm. He closed his eyes, mumbling a prayer his father had taught him to say before every meal. Once the commotion had died down, he was picked up, along with his brother, in strong arms and carried outside a burning stable.*

Shane looked up towards his brother when he heard him mumbling something in his sleep. Two years had passed, but Russell would still call for their father in his nightmares. Shane did not have to listen closely to know that his brother was repeating the same words he had been speaking in his sleep for the past two years.

“Take me, but spare my father,” Russell mumbled.

Shane crawled up in the bed. He wrapped his arms around the knees of his brother and put his head on Russell's thighs. As soon as Shane's hands were wrapped around Russell, the shaking and mumbling were dialed down to a great extent.

Russell could not tolerate someone touching his face or chest. He had pushed Shane away for a long time, screaming at him to not touch him, but with time he had allowed him near him. Shane did not understand the exact nature of his brother's feelings, but he was aware that his brother was fighting with some frightening demons and he would never win against them alone. Shane had to support his brother in every walk of life. If Russell tried to push him away, he would still remain by his side.

Russell was also a very proud person. No one, not even the young duke, was aware of the demons he was fighting. The only person who was allowed in his close proximity was his brother, Shane. Their similar faces helped a lot in the healing process. If his brother's touch made him uncomfortable, he could pretend they were his own hands.

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## Chapter 1

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London, 1707

**T**he season was in prime. Everyone was looking for a suitable match for their sons and daughters. So far, Isabella had been approached by an older gentleman, but the bachelors who were close to her age did not even look her way. Despite her pretty face she was found repelling by everyone else.

The old man, Lord Harley, was a wealthy merchant who was looking for a young bride. Her choices were limited because her dowry was not grand enough to attract a young and wealthy suitor. She did not care for the station of the person, but she would have appreciated it if someone close to her age had courted her. Like every other maiden, she had dreams and wishes, but she was not fortunate enough to see those dreams come true.

“Are you enjoying yourself, Lady Isabella?” Lord Harley asked.

The party was a bore. Everyone was dancing and laughing while she was forced to endure the company of a withering man.



Life could be so unfair sometimes. If her father were alive, she would have not been forced into enduring the company of an old man. She would have been a titled lady and her dance card would have been full. The same people who were avoiding her would have been standing in line to get acquainted with her.

“Yes, my lord, I like the festivities,” she said.

She looked around the ballroom and found her mother standing amidst a group of ladies. Her mother was once a very beautiful woman, but time and stress had made her skin wrinkled. Her mother worried about her and Margaret. Her uncle had agreed to sponsor one season for her, which meant it was her only chance to find a husband for herself and reduce the burden on her mother. Margaret was young. It would be a long time before she was ready to step foot in the marriage market.

“I am glad to hear that, Lady Isabella,” he said. “By the way, you look very pretty tonight.”

She was wearing a golden ball gown of the latest fashion. Her uncle had commissioned a new wardrobe for her for the whole season. Her hair was styled into fontange-coiffure, the latest fashion that was all the rage these days.

“You are very kind, my lord.” She remained silent for a moment and then turned back towards him. “My throat is parched, my lord. I am fetching a glass of lemonade for myself. I will be back in a few moments.”

She went to all this trouble of dressing up as pretty as possible and the only man who noticed her was thrice her age. He could not dance with her either because he was suffering from pain in his knees. The amount of fat he had on his body could justify the cause for all these pains.

“I would have brought you the drink myself, but I am afraid the aches in my knees would get worse,” he said apologetically.

She went towards the table laden with food, picked up a small cake, waited for a few moments and then went towards the nearby balcony. She needed fresh air to breathe. The current

company was suffocating her. He was a reminder of her failure in her debut in society.

She leaned against a pillar, closed her eyes and hummed a melody. It was her habit to hum whenever she felt alone and sad and she certainly did. Her debut into society was a failure. Due to life playing a cruel trick on her family by taking away her father, she was staying at the London residence of her uncle. A house that once belonged to her family. She poured all her feelings into the music when life became depressing for her.

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RUSSELL WAS SITTING on the roof of the ballroom. He was skilled at stealth and discretion. It was part of his job to remain unseen. He and his brother worked as spies for the authorities. To others, they might look like a pair of morons, but there was more to them than what met the eyes.

He had snuck inside the building where the current ball was being held to watch his friend adjusting to society. Elliot and his wife had been dancing ever since the evening had started. He was ensuring that no one mentioned the dark past of his friend, and so far, no one seemed to remember his sketchy past.

He was about to sneak out through the roof of the building when he heard the call of a Siren. He heard the plea for help in the dejected tune. There was only one possible explanation for the amount of hurt and emotion he heard in the voice: only someone who had nothing left in the world to live for could narrate so much sorrow in a tune.

He had no intention of showing his face during the party, but the voice was tugging him towards the source of its own accord. Without making a sound, he slid down the drainpipe and jumped on the balcony. Against a pillar, he saw a lovely young lady. Her eyes were closed while she hummed, unaware of her surroundings. He took a step towards her and saw tears glistening on her

powdered cheekbones. He was having an unusual urge to remove all the artificial cosmetics and see the real face lying beneath all the powder and rouge.

Isabella was not aware of the stranger standing close to her. She was narrating the sad tale of her broken dreams through her melodies. When she stopped humming, she did not open her eyes. She needed a few more moments. The waltz was starting and there was not a single name on her dance card. She did not want to be the only girl who was rejected by every available bachelor in the room.

“Your voice is eerily beautiful,” Russell said.

She opened her eyes and saw a strange man standing before her. He was dressed in a brown leather coat that reached the middle of his thighs and black knee-length boots. The stranger was not wearing any hat nor any wig. He neither seemed like a servant nor a nobleman. She should be afraid of him. She should scream and run away from him, but she did not want to do any of those things. She wanted to feel his golden hair with her fingers and put her hand on his strong jaw.

“Who are you?” she asked.

The stranger looked shocked at her query. Either he was not expecting her to answer or he was not aware that he had spoken in the first place.

He did not look like someone who might harm her. For some odd reason, she felt safe in his company. In the corner of her mind, a voice was advocating for the stranger.

“I am Russell,” he said.

It was a strange name. She had never heard such an odd name before. She had spent time with both nobility and commoners, but neither had such name. For all she knew, he could be an illusion of the mind. If he were a manifestation of her dreams, she would like to spend a few more moments in his company.

“You are not dressed for the occasion,” she said.

Russell's lips twitched. He was definitely not dressed for a party. The high and proper ladies would faint if he went inside the ballroom. People were not allowed in such a high-profile event unless they had noble blood or heavy coffers. He had neither of those, yet he was standing a few feet away from the ballroom.

"I was not invited, my Siren," he said, smiling broadly. "I came here because I heard your call."

Their servant, Philip used to tell them stories about strange creatures when they were small. Both Isabella and Margaret were raised by the faithful servant. He was the one who filled the void of a father figure in their lives. She had a vague memory of her own father, but he was not as loving as Philip.

"I am not a mythical creature, Lord Russell," she said gloomily. "I wish I was someone far more interesting, but alas, I am not."

Russell was shocked to hear that a fine and pretty lady like her would find herself lacking. When he had followed the music, he had not expected to see a beautiful young maiden. The music was sorrowful and gloomy. It was not the sort of melody he had expected to come from the lips of a pretty, young woman.

"Your voice had the power to drag a man, who had no intention of being seen in public, to you. You are far more interesting than you give yourself credit for."

He had no clue about her ill fate. No one at the party seemed to be missing her. She could hear the notes of the waltz coming from the ballroom, yet no one was searching for her. Everyone would be dancing and enjoying the party, but she had no one to share this moment with. It was the first time she had stepped foot in society, and she was not as welcomed as she had hoped. When she was applying powder to her face, she had imagined a number of handsome gentlemen falling at her feet, but she was gravely disappointed.

"Do you see this?" she held her empty card to him. "If I was

someone interesting, a gentleman would have asked me for a dance.”

Russell knew he should leave before anyone could see him, but the sorrow in the girl’s eyes was keeping him rooted to his place. He should leave her to her fate, but there was a strange kind of pull that made him make his next request.

“I am far from a gentleman, but could I ask for a dance?”

He bowed at his waist and held out a hand to her. Isabella was shocked at his bold behavior. She wanted to accept his offer, but it was a waltz. It would be scandalizing behavior for her if she waltzed with a stranger in a secluded place. If someone witnessed her with him, she would be ruined. Her chances of a proposal from a titled heir were already slim, but this would snuff out the small flicker of hope that was still burning in the corner of her mind. She could not understand that despite these reasonable thoughts, a small part of her wanted to accept his offer.

“It is a waltz,” she said hesitantly.

Russell understood her predicament. She wanted to dance with him, but not the intimate kind. The logical decision would have been leaving her at the balcony, but sanity had left him at that moment. He did not second-guess his decision and pulled her into his arms in one abrupt motion.

“As I said, I am not a gentleman.”

She gasped in shock but did not push him away. She could not bring herself to break the spell of the magical moment. The stranger held her at her waist while she put her hands on his shoulders and together, they started waltzing to the music coming from inside the ballroom.

“Why would a beautiful maiden not get approached by even a single person?” he asked with a smile on his face.

Despite how good his hands and close proximity felt, she got irritated at his question. He broke the magical spell of the moment with his personal question. He was mocking her. To him, the situation was hilarious that she was the only one who

was not approached by a young man. She was already aware of her humiliating condition; he had no right to rub that in her face.

“One person has shown interest in me,” she said defensively.

Lord Harley might be old and heavy, but he was still counted as a person. Unlike the man she was dancing with, he was considered a gentleman. She questioned her decision of sharing this moment with a stranger for the umpteenth time. He had already confessed that he was not a gentleman; so then why was she feeling safe in his presence? If he took unwanted liberties with her, she would not be strong enough to defend herself. He could be a miscreant and ruffraff for all she knew. She should stop dancing with him and run, but a strange power was making her stay there.

“He did not ask for a dance?” he asked, raising a brow.

She flushed at the challenge in his voice. He did not believe her. It was her own mistake that she had showed him the empty card. She would not have been feeling embarrassed at the moment if she had lied about the number of suitors waiting for her back in the ballroom, but then she would not have had the opportunity to share a waltz with a stranger from a far-off land who had literally fallen from the skies.

“He had pain in his knees,” she said sheepishly.

Her words sounded false even to her own ears. If Lord Harley had asked her for a dance, she would have declined his offer. It would have been more humiliating if she were the only young maiden who was waltzing with an old, obese man who could not see his own toes due to the barrier of his belly. She would have been plastered on the front page of tomorrow's papers if she had accepted the offer of a dance from Lord Harley. Everyone would have been laughing at the girl who was dancing with a man who was old enough to be her grandfather.

“What is the name of this strapping young man?” he asked with a mock horrified expression on his face.

Russell knew since no one else had asked her for a dance, it

meant she had no promising dowry nor a title to her name. He should drop the subject and talk about something far more interesting than her current embarrassing situation, but he wanted to keep her for a few more moments before she realized the risk she was taking by dancing with a stranger in a dark corner. She would be ruined if someone walked in on them at that moment. A twisted part of him wanted to be discovered with her.

“Lord Harley,” she mumbled.

She wished she could hide someplace where the sound of his laughter would not reach her ears. The stranger had burst into laughter the moment she had mentioned the name of her only suitor.

She pushed at his chest and untangled herself from his embrace. He let her go instantly. Despite his claim of not being a gentleman, he was not taking advantage of her. If he were truly a hellion, he would not have let her go so easily. It should not have mattered to her, but his behavior made her heart skip a beat, nonetheless. She wished he would stay for the rest of the evening and join her in the ballroom.

“No doubt, he has pain in his joints. His frail legs could not support his heavy weight,” she said begrudgingly.

The stranger guffawed more loudly. She should reprimand him for making fun of the unfortunate man, but she did no such thing. She giggled in a most unladylike manner and joined him in laughing loudly. She felt bad for Lord Harley who was unaware of being a target of their mockery, but she wanted to enjoy the moment with this handsome stranger.

Amidst their merriment, she heard footsteps coming their way. She looked sharply at the entrance.

“Someone is coming,” she whispered.

She looked back towards the stranger, but he was not there. He had vanished into thin air. She smiled at the memory of the night she had shared with him. Her night was a disappointment until God sent her a handsome stranger with an unusual name.

He had golden hair that reached his neck and green eyes with a hint of amber around the outer rims of his irises. She had memorized every last detail of his handsome face in her mind. His boyish charm and devil-may-care smile was ingrained in her mind.

At that instant, her mother walked through the entrance. She had been gone for a long time. Nobody else might have cared, but her mother would have sensed her disappearance.

“You have been gone for a long time, Isabella. Lord Harley is looking for you.”

Lord Harley's name reminded her of her current situation. She had shared a magical moment with a stranger, but it was only a moment. She would probably never see him again. He was just an illusion. For all she knew, he could be a manifestation of her own mind.

“I am sorry, Mama. I lost track of time,” she said gloomily.

She looked towards the spot where the stranger had been standing a few moments ago and sighed deeply. He had left her with sweet memories that she would treasure for the rest of her life. She was aware the dance she shared with him was her last dance. She had no intention of further humiliating herself by coming to another ball.

“The season is not over yet, my child. Someone will eventually see your worth.”

Her mother must have sensed the growing melancholy in her. Her mother understood her pain even if she did not share it out loud.

“I am not sure about that, Mama.”

Her mother smoothed the wrinkles on her forehead with her thumb and gave her a mock stern look.

“Now, now, I do not recall raising a quitter. Do not lose hope so soon.”

She hugged her mother and conveyed her feelings on the matter of her failure in the form of fresh tears. Her mother let



her use her shoulder for a long time and patted her between the shoulder blades lovingly. No words of consolation could lift her spirits and her mother knew that.

“Philip is waiting for us near the carriage,” her mother whispered.

People were still mingling in the ballroom, but they were already aware of the outcome of tonight’s event. No one would miss her if they left early. Her mother was aware that she had no interest in the old merchant and that was why she was not forcing her to say farewell to him before they left.

Russell waited for a long time on the roof of the building. He listened to her silent murmurs but could not make out any tangible words.

He saw her slipping out of the back door with an elderly woman. She talked with her coachman for some time, who patted her head and then she entered the carriage. It was an odd behavior for a fine lady to be candid with a mere servant, but then she was an exceptional lady.

“My Siren,” he chuckled.

He left when the carriage became a small dot in the distance. He hoped he could meet her again, but he knew it was only wishful thinking.