
Chapter 1

“I’m so excited I can hardly sit still!” cried Cam as she once again jumped up and went to look out the window. “Hardly?” echoed Devon, looking amused. “You’ve put several miles on your shoes since we got the call, lass.”

The call had come forty-five minutes earlier to tell them that the truck from Edinburgh carrying a seven-foot grand piano—seven foot six inches to be exact—was just leaving Inverness and should be at Strathmore within the hour.

Several months earlier Devon had discovered that Cam was an accomplished pianist, so he’d insisted they buy a piano for Wensworth House, the home on his father’s earldom where he and Cam lived. Wensworth House was the traditional home of the heir, and Devon Sinclair, Viscount of Gower and oldest son of his father, was that heir.

The piano Cam had wanted was hard to find in Scotland, so they’d ordered it, and, much as a young child counts the days to Christmas, Cam had counted the days until the piano’s arrival. Now it was here, and less than an hour away!

Devon’s parents, the Earl and Countess of Strathmore, had a gorgeous nine-foot concert grand piano in the salon in Creighton

Hall, the main estate house, but if there'd ever been a piano in Wensworth House, it had long since been given away.

"You know, lass, the piano may need some attention before it's ready to be played," Devon warned now as he watched Cam pacing the room again.

"I know, but at least it will be here. You talked to the technician, right? He's coming tomorrow?"

"Either tomorrow or the day after, he'll let us know. He has to come all the way from Glasgow."

Cam sighed. "Didn't you wave your viscount wand?"

Being an American, Cam had her own irreverent view of the peerage and frequently kidded Devon about special attention he received because of his title. When it came to her beloved piano, though, she would happily accept any favors offered.

"My wand is in the laundry," replied Devon with a teasing smile.

He and Cam had met quite by accident in January when he rescued her from a deadly Highland fog. Two days later, while still taking shelter in his home, she fell and badly injured her ankle, resulting in a doctor-ordered one-month recuperation. Devon had insisted she stay at Wensworth House, and after a month of being housebound together, Devon had discovered that the intelligent and often sassy Cam was much more than just an entertaining house guest. She was the woman he wished to spend his life with, so in August, after gaining his father's reluctant permission, he'd given her a family ring to make their engagement official.

Cam moved restlessly to the corner of the spacious lounge, which had now been rearranged to accommodate the new piano.

"Are you sure you don't want it by the window?" asked Devon, not for the first time.

"I told you no," answered Cam, a trace of impatience in her voice. "Piano's don't want to be by weather changes. Inside walls are always better."

Just then Devon's phone buzzed.

"Very well," was all he said, and then he hung up.

"Is that them?" demanded Cam.

"Who's *them*?" asked Devon in a faux innocent tone.

"Devon! Are they here now?"

Devon was enjoying her excitement immensely. He'd discovered early on that his fiancée wasn't nearly as materialistic as most of the women he'd dated, so it was deeply satisfying to him to be able to give her something that meant so much to her.

"Yes, lass, they're here. Caleb opened the gates and is bringing them in now.

Cam ran to the window to watch, and when she heard the rumble of a truck on the lane, she ran to the front door and flung it open. "It's them! It's them!" she cried.

"Maybe we should have cleared a wider path for it," said Devon, half to himself, as he followed.

"Haven't you ever seen a piano moved?" demanded Cam, turning back towards him.

"I suppose I have. What am I missing?"

"Grand pianos are moved on their side and can fit through narrow places. Wait, you'll see."

The two of them moved down the stairs to stand at the edge of the parking area and watch as the crew backed the truck up to position it near the staircase. The crew boss and one of his men came over and introduced themselves and then studied the stairs while conferring quietly. Devon had expected some difficult exercise in logistics, so he was surprised when very quickly the men returned to the truck and, joined by two other men, rolled the body of the piano onto the truck's hydraulic lift and lowered it to the ground.

Two of the men brought some planks and secured them to the stairs while the other two wheeled the piano to the foot of the stairs.

"I see what you mean," said Devon as he looked at the way

the piano, its legs and pedals removed, was strapped on its side to a rolling piano board, thus making the width less than two feet.

Cam watched with bated breath as two of the burly men stood at the top of the stairs and pulled the piano forward using heavy straps around the back end of the instrument while the other two equally muscular men pushed the nine-hundred-pound piano from behind up the planks covering the stairs.

Devon continued to be surprised at the speed with which Cam's new piano was moved into the house. The two men who'd been at the top of the stairs rolled the piano to the waiting corner while the other two returned to the truck to bring the legs, the pedals, and the lid.

"I wonder why they took the lid off?" said Cam, surprised.

"Don't they usually?" asked Devon, for whom this whole exercise was new.

"No, they just fasten it down really well."

One of the crew had heard Cam's question, and he turned to her.

"When we're doing stairs, Miss, we usually take the lid off," he said. "For a piano of this size, it can add an extra forty or fifty pounds."

"Oh. Thanks," replied Cam. "I've never seen it done before, but I've never seen a piano come up steep stairs before either."

Devon was enjoying watching how the experienced workers quickly attached the legs and righted the heavy piano before one of them went underneath on his back to fasten the pedal box with the three pedals. Then they reattached the lid.

"Did you remember to bring the artist's bench?" asked Cam anxiously and then had her question answered almost immediately by seeing one of the crew carry it through the front door.

"This is a beautiful instrument, Lord Gower," said the crew chief. "We don't often bring a piano of this quality to a private home."

"It's going to have a good home here, though, don't worry," put in Cam before Devon could answer.

"I'm sure it will, Miss."

"It will need tuning after its long trip," continued the crew chief.

"We have a technician coming from Glasgow tomorrow," Devon replied.

Cam was practically dancing around as she mentally willed the men to leave so she could be alone with her new baby, and finally they pulled out several papers for Devon to sign, and then Devon handed their boss four sizeable bills.

"Thank you for getting the piano here with such ease," he said. "I truly appreciate your professionalism."

While Cam fidgeted, Mrs. Braedon, the housekeeper, gave the men some meat pies and sweets for their return trip, an offering that was warmly received, but finally the door closed behind the men.

Cam's face was glowing as she savored the moment. She had a beautiful piano in her living room—well, in Devon's lounge—and she intended for it to become her new best friend.

Unable to restrain herself any longer, she sat down on the bench, adjusted it slightly for her height, and then lovingly ran her hands over the keyboard in front of her.

"I have to play something," Cam said, "but it may sound horrible. Poor thing has traveled thousands of miles."

With a smile of anticipation, she played a short Chopin mazurka and then immediately also played an equally short Bach piece.

"It's not bad at all," she exclaimed in surprise. "It needs tuning, of course, but I thought it would sound horrible and it doesn't. It held its tune really well."

"Isn't the lid supposed to be up?" asked Devon.

"It can be however I want," she replied, getting up to show

him how the lid could be closed, somewhat up, or totally up on the so-called long stick.

“Are you happy?” he asked.

“No, I’m delirious! This is one of the best days of my life!”

She moved over to stand directly in front of him and then wrapped her arms around his muscular chest.

“I might have to show you just how delirious,” she went on in an inviting tone, a playful smile on her face. “A girl can be *so* grateful, you know.”

Devon wrapped his arms around her and pulled her against his hard body before leaning down and kissing her.

“There’s nothing I like more than a grateful lass,” he murmured and then returned his mouth to her lips.

Cam gave a tiny laugh. “I remember when you wouldn’t kiss me openly for fear Mrs. Braedon would come in.”

“We weren’t official then,” answered Devon, still holding her close. “You’re wearing a ring now.”

Cam held up her hand so she could look at the ring in question.

“Is it like a hall pass?” she asked, and then put a faux serious look on her face and intoned, “Devon Sinclair has permission to kiss his fiancée in any room of Wensworth House.”

Devon gave her bottom a playful swat. “Even a brand new piano doesn’t stop your sass, does it?”

“You’d hate it if I were boring.”

Devon chuckled. “I can’t even imagine it.”

Cam pulled away and said, “Sorry, but I have to play something else. Even without a tuning, I love this piano. I may never come to bed again.”

“In that case I’ll have to put a lock on it, won’t I?”

“Only if you want to die young. Your poor father will have to find another heir.”

Cam sat down again on the bench and, as she began to play, Devon took out his phone and snapped a couple pictures.

"I'm going to send these to your parents," he said. "They'll be interested in seeing that it's finally here."

Cam wasn't listening. She was playing, smiling happily to herself and feeling like the luckiest woman in the world. She had strongly resisted the idea of living in the Highlands, but Devon had patiently won her over. He'd made sure she'd have a friend by introducing her to another young American not too far away who was also from Dallas and had married a peer several years earlier; he'd helped her adopt a rescue cat and become active in supporting the SSPCA; and now, the crowning jewel in his plan, he'd provided her with a piano so she could play as much as she wanted.

He sat down in a nearby chair to listen to the music. He'd lived in Wensworth House ever since becoming an adult, but only in the last year had it started to feel like a true home, a welcoming place where he looked forward to his future there—a future with his beautiful and loving Cam and now with music filling its rooms.

Sometimes it scared him to realize how close he'd come to never meeting this woman of his dreams. If he'd taken his normal route home that day last winter, he wouldn't have seen her rental car stopped on the side of the fogged-in road, he wouldn't have invited her home for shelter, and he wouldn't have had the chance to fall in love with his auburn-haired lass—her spunk, her zest for life, her soft beauty and kind heart, her dancing hazel eyes, her quick wit, and now, her music.

His father had requested they not marry until they'd known each other for a full year, but it would soon be winter again, and he looked forward to the day he could kneel and present her with his sword as he swore to protect and provide for her always.

"Is this bothering you?" asked Cam as she finished a piece and turned towards him.

"Not at all, lass," he answered truthfully. "I think it makes the house just perfect."