
Chapter 1

Liz Gordon waved as she spotted her daughter exiting customs with her luggage.

“Over here, darling!”

Cam grinned broadly and hurried over to her mother as fast as her bags would allow.

“It’s so good to see you,” exclaimed Liz as she gave her daughter a bear hug. Then, looking down, she added, “It looks like your ankle’s all better now.”

“It is. Devon was like Nurse Ratched about making sure I followed the doctor’s orders.”

“Then I guess I owe him a thank you since I know from experience that keeping you immobile isn’t an easy task.”

As they left the building, Cam stopped briefly to take in the pleasant afternoon. “How far is the car?” she asked, enjoying the feel of the sun.

“Not far at all. Why don’t you stay here with your bags, and I’ll go get it and come pick you up?”

Ten minutes later they were leaving the airport and turning onto the highway heading to Cam’s condo. Two years ago her parents had given her the down payment for a two bedroom two-

and-a-half bath unit in a new high-end building called The Sorrento just north of University Park, the prestigious Dallas neighborhood where Cam had grown up and where the Gordons still lived. It was a most generous gift, but from her parents' point of view it had been about safety. There was monitored limited-entry parking for the residents as well as excellent building security, both very important to her parents.

As Liz pulled into guest parking in front of the colorful mid-rise Italian-style building Cam said, "I hope my poor little car will still start after sitting unused for almost two months."

"It should be fine," Liz reassured her. "If you have any problems, just give AAA a call."

They each took a bag and rolled it into the building's front entry, and then, as they waited for the elevator, Liz continued.

"You know, darling, I'm dying to hear more about Devon. Anyone that handsome has a lot to live up to."

Cam smiled mysteriously. "I know, and he does."

"You should have brought him back with you for a visit."

"He couldn't come. His father's going into the hospital next week for some heart stuff, so he had to stay there."

Cam let them into her apartment, where they left the bags in the living room.

"I thought you could freshen up and then come over for dinner," said her mother. "I put a few things in your refrigerator, but you're basically out of everything."

"Thanks, Mom. Have I told you yet this week that you're the best?"

Cam and her mother had always had a good relationship, something for which Cam was deeply grateful. She'd listened to her friends hold forth for hours on their problems with their own mothers, and while she sympathized, she didn't really understand it as she'd always been happy to spend time with her own mother.

"I'll be over in about an hour," Cam said as she walked her

mother back to the door. "Do you want me to pick up anything on the way?"

"Everything's taken care of, thanks. We're doing simple tonight—spaghetti and garlic bread."

"Oh, yum! I haven't had any Italian since I left. Make sure there's enough garlic bread."

Liz chuckled. Cam had always had a good appetite and was lucky she didn't have a problem with her weight. *Maybe I'll pick up an extra loaf of bread on the way home*, she thought as she headed out of the parking area.

"I'm home," Cam informed Devon when the Skype connection was made. It was late over in Scotland, but Devon had been waiting for the call.

"So I see. How was the trip?"

"You know, trip-pish."

Devon laughed. Just in the one day she'd been gone he'd already missed her upbeat manner and always-surprising turn of speech.

"It was quite dull here without you, lass," he continued. "Even Parker complained."

During her unexpected month-long stay in Devon's home Cam had become good friends with Parker, the unusually colored border collie Devon had rescued six months prior.

"How about Parker's boss?"

"He's quite lost here alone in the house."

Cam laughed. "Poor baby!"

Devon frowned slightly but didn't say anything. Before meeting Cam he'd never been called 'poor baby' by anyone, and he really didn't care for it, but his comments on the subject hadn't made much of an impression. He knew it was just Cam being Cam.

“Are you wearing your bracelet?” he asked, and in response she held up her left wrist so he could see the slender 18-karat gold band on it.

“Did your mother see it?”

“Not yet. I’m going over there for dinner, so I can talk about you then.”

“Remember to be nice when you do, lass.”

Cam gave a mischievous little laugh, making Devon ache to hold her.

Devon desperately wanted to put a ring on her finger rather than just a bracelet, but he couldn’t yet formally propose to her. Not only had he not yet discussed it with his father, the Earl of Strathmore, but Cam still had qualms about committing to a life in the Highlands.

“I hope I remember which side of the road to drive on when I go to my parents.”

“Well, since you spent so much of your time here with your foot up, you probably didn’t drive enough to imprint a new pattern on your brain.”

“Thank you, Doctor.”

Devon shook his head slightly. Not only did he already miss her companionship, but he was also going to miss spanking her for her cheeky ways. Their relationship had quickly developed into one that included frequent spankings, something that brought out an intensely passionate side of Cam. More nights than not he’d spank her, and then they’d spend hours making urgent love. He had never experienced with another woman the kind of physical connection he had with Cam, but now she was thousands of miles away.

It was imperative that he find a way to move their relationship forward. While he knew that the conversation with his father might be a difficult one, he didn’t shy away from it. He did, however, have to wait, because his father had ongoing heart problems, and he was going into the hospital in the coming week

to have more tests and another stent placed. Much as Devon was impatient, he needed to wait for a better time to talk with his father.

"Give Parker a kiss for me," Cam said, "and I guess you can give his boss one, too."

"I don't plan on kissing myself, lass," replied Devon looking amused.

"Maybe you can get Parker to give you one in my place."

"I see a day of flying makes your cheeky gene flourish."

Cam laughed again. "Could be." She looked at her watch and made a little sound. "I need to go shower, Devon. I told my mom I'd be there in an hour, and that was forty minutes ago."

"Are they far away?"

"No, only about ten minutes, but I still have to shower and all that."

"All right, lass. Go take care of yourself. I'll be thinking about you tonight in my lonesome bed."

"I miss you, too."

She started to close the call, but suddenly Devon called, "Wait! I forgot to tell you something."

"What?"

"I have an appointment tomorrow with a private investigator."

"Wow! You didn't waste any time."

"No. I'm quite serious about wanting to find the information."

"I know you are. I told you, you care more about it than I do."

"Perhaps," he agreed, smiling noncommittally. "In any case, you need to get ready now. We'll talk tomorrow."

Cam blew him a kiss, which he returned, and then they closed up.

Cam had Scottish roots on both sides of her family, and not

simply roots but roots in the peerage, a fact Devon thought might be useful in talking to his father about a future marriage.

Her father's side was clear-cut: Back in the early eighteenth century the Baron Gordon had bought his second son a commission in His Majesty's military, and the young officer had gone to the New World to fight in the French and Indian War. Afterwards he was awarded land there by the crown and so stayed on, later fighting for the colonies in the Revolutionary War. Devon had mentioned this to his parents and had noted that his father seemed pleased with the information.

The story on Cam's mother's side was both more recent and more confused. Cam's great-great-grandmother, the daughter of a high-ranking peer in the north of Scotland, had run away in the early years of the twentieth century with a commoner, a lad from town, or so the story went. They married and escaped to the States, but little more than that was known. Whatever paper trail had existed was buried with old papers or even no longer existed, so not even the girl's full name was known.

The story had greatly aroused Devon's interest because he hoped that more evidence of a solid background might well soften his father's opinion of Cam as a partner for the Strathmore heir. His father was a reasonable man, and Devon felt sure he would prevail in gaining permission to wed Cam, but the more receptive his father was, the better. Devon didn't want to bring up the subject until after the current situation with his father's heart was resolved, though.

Having grown up inside the peerage, Devon was genuinely interested in which family Cam's mother was descended from and hoped that a private investigator could uncover the missing information. Meanwhile, Cam was going to make an effort back in the States to find the relevant old family papers. Perhaps working both sides of the ocean they could piece together the mysterious story.

“Hi, Daddy!” called Cam as she saw her father enter the kitchen where she and her mother were getting dinner ready.

Russell Gordon crossed the room and hugged his daughter. “Hi, peanut. It’s good to have you home again. I hope you haven’t forgotten how to eat with mere mortals.”

“I’ll figure it out,” answered Cam with a little laugh.

“So, what I don’t understand is how you went to Scotland for a month of traipsing around and instead ended up living with a viscount.”

“Not that I’m sure I even understand what a viscount is,” put in Liz.

“I told you before,” answered Cam. “There was this awful fog and I was stranded, and then Devon came and knocked on the window and offered help. I didn’t know he was a viscount then. Anyway, I would have only been with him a couple days, but then I hurt my ankle, so I ended up staying for a month.”

Her father frowned slightly. “Isn’t that overstaying your welcome?”

“Yes. I kept saying that, but he wanted me to stay. He told me about the rules he learned when he was little, kind of like a chivalry code, and protecting people that need it is an important rule.”

Russ Gordon still wasn’t sure he was comfortable with the whole thing, but Cam was almost thirty and had a good head on her shoulders, so he trusted her judgment. In any case, she seemed none the worse for wear, and according to his wife, there was even a romance brewing there now.

“I think the amazing thing is that this Devon actually managed to get Cam to stay off her foot for several weeks,” commented Liz. “He must have some kind of magic potion that goes with being a viscount.”

Cam smiled to herself. If only they knew Devon's secret for ensuring her cooperation!

"So, what are your plans now?" asked her father.

"A little of this, a little of that," Cam answered easily. "I have to make some plans for my summer course I'm teaching, but I think I'm going to take a trip to South Carolina and see if I can find some old family papers I'm looking for."

Her father looked puzzled. Cam and her mother had kept fairly much abreast while apart, but much of what they'd talked about hadn't been passed on to her father.

"What kind of papers?" he asked, "and why are they in South Carolina?"

"Oh, long story," replied Cam, rolling her eyes slightly. "I thought Mom would have told you."

"She probably would have, but I've been absent a lot working on a large case we started last week," he answered. "Don't worry about it, peanut. Tell me when you want."

That was one of the things Cam loved about her parents: They were totally supportive but not pushy or invasive. She was lucky and she knew it.

She only hoped they'd be as supportive with the idea that their only daughter might just pick up and move to Scotland.