

POST CARD



Vegas Vacation
CLARE REVELL

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Dedication

For Steph

In memory of Jill Bratcher, a friend, a sister in Christ.
Much loved, will be much missed. We'll meet again
one day.

Other titles by Clare Revell

Season for Miracles

Saving Christmas

Cassie's Wedding Dress

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Monday's Child

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Wednesday's Child

Thursday's Child

Friday's Child

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Sunday's Child

Fairytale of Headley Cross

Shadows of the Past

Turned

Praise

Monday's Child

The blend of romance and suspense is superb, and the depth of emotion is so very touching. I am eagerly looking forward to the rest of the books in this series. Clare Revell is truly a master novelist. What a treat! I highly recommend *Monday's Child* to anyone looking for a GREAT story. Mary Manners

Tuesday's Child

Clare Revell...puts the EEP in creepy! TUESDAY'S CHILD has it all—deaf heroine, cop hero, orphaned child, and terrifying killer. This book kept me reading late into the night (with the doors locked and the brightest light on!). B. Norris (Amazon review)

Fairytale of Headley Cross

I love being swept away through Revell's writing. She expertly sucks you in and allows you to fall in love with each character as God's love and grace shine brightly. I really enjoyed this short read. It includes romance, excitement, humour, a slight thrill and most importantly, God's Word. Great Christmas read. TSuckoo (Amazon review)

No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ~ I Corinthians 2:7

1

Shoving her hands deep into her pockets, Tamlyn Bradshaw followed the uniformed police officer across a roomful of Las Vegas detectives, to a desk piled high with a mixture of papers, used coffee cups, and other assorted rubbish.

So far, since arriving in the US late the previous evening, she'd seen the airport, customs, immigration, a taxi, or cab as the Americans called them, and her hotel room. Not forgetting the hotel lobby, an ambulance, a very busy emergency department, and now a police station.

The officer indicated the fake leather chair to one side of the desk. "If you sit here and wait, Lady Bradshaw, Sgt. Ames won't be much longer."

She raised an eyebrow. *Lady Bradshaw* was her grandmother, not her, but she probably shouldn't shoot the messenger as that wasn't particularly friendly. Instead, she shoved down her irritation and used the tone she kept for the servants at home. "Define *much longer*, please. I've already sat at the front desk for forty minutes."

"Sgt. Ames is in a meeting, ma'am. If you could sit here and wait."

Tamlyn sat down gingerly on the seat, her fingers automatically running over the gold cross hanging around her neck. She'd planned her holiday down to the last detail...only this wasn't in the design at all.

Raised voices came from the glass-fronted office at one end of the room, the words echoing across the squad room which rapidly fell silent. Two silhouettes were visible, one leaning on the desk, the other standing next to it.

"Martin, you're the only person in the department with the security clearances and the experience to do this."

"I haven't worked protective services for over three years and for good reason. I'm five weeks from early retirement, and I don't want to spend them running around after a spoiled heiress."

"Did I ask what you wanted? This woman's father is royalty and I just got off the phone with him—"

Tamlyn cringed in her seat, her cheeks burning. This was a bad idea. She'd go back to the hotel and trust God to protect her. No one knew who she was; she was just one more tourist in a city of thousands.

The angry voice continued its tirade in the office. "*Royalty?* In that case, I'm sure she can afford a replacement bodyguard. Even better...ask the British Embassy to provide one. My days of babysitting people are over."

"Unless you want to be fired five weeks before your retirement date, your assignment for the next three weeks is to be Lady Bradshaw's bodyguard. There's the door. She's by your desk waiting for you."

The door flung open, and Tamlyn glanced down. She focused her gaze on her fingernails. Maybe she could just pretend she hadn't heard.

Heavy steps crossed the room as muted conversations started up again. They stopped by the desk. "*Lady Bradshaw, I presume?*"

She looked up into the most intense, glittering pair of blue eyes she'd ever seen. His hair was pulled back in a long black ponytail, and he leaned on a cane. *They had to be kidding. A disabled cop?* His navy blue shirt and tie at least gave an appearance of professionalism. Although the gun holster on his shoulder made her shiver.

She stood, grateful he couldn't read her mind, because she was already regretting that first thought about his gorgeous eyes. She held out a hand. "I am. You must be Sgt. Ames."

He nodded and shook her hand briefly before indicating the door. "Let's go. My car's around back." He grabbed his jacket from the back of his chair and shrugged into it.

She followed him to the door and out into the street. He had more than a slight limp. *What had happened to him?*

Moving with him to the car, she automatically stood there, waiting for him to open the door, then glanced though the window. Did he live in it? Coffee cups and burger wrappers littered the passenger seat, which he swept to the floor. *Good grief, it's worse than that desk.* She shook her head as she lowered herself onto the seat and swung her legs inside. Her nose wrinkled at the smell as she slid her feet in between the rubbish on the floor. "When did you last clean in here?"

"I wasn't expecting company." He closed the door and got in the other side. "So where to?"

"The Stratosphere to begin with. Apparently you

can see miles from the top of it.”

Sgt. Ames raised an eyebrow as he started the car. “I meant your hotel. Where are you staying?”

Perhaps it was her accent. “I’m on holiday,” she said slowly. “I’ve no intentions of spending it in my hotel suite. Today I want to go up the Stratosphere. Tomorrow I have tickets to a floor show. I also want to start going around the Vegas Monopoly board.”

“Lady Bradshaw.” An air of grim resignation echoed in the cop’s voice. “The captain assigned me to protect you. The best way to accomplish that is from the safety of your hotel room. Now, which hotel are you staying at?”

Tamlyn scowled. “And I thought Raleigh was boring.”

“Excuse me?”

“My bodyguard. The hospital thinks he has food poisoning. That’s the reason I’m stuck with you.”

“It might be...but it might not. Which hotel are we going to?”

Tamlyn listened to the car engine turn over for several long seconds before taking a deep breath. He wasn’t going to budge. She should at least give him half a chance. “The Bellagio.”

“Room number?”

“It’s the Grand Lake suite, but I have plans.” She leaned back as the car finally began moving out of the car park.

“Your snooty attitude may work with the hired help, Lady Bradshaw, but not with me. Until I am told otherwise, you will stay in your hotel room.”

Tamlyn’s jaw dropped. “I beg your pardon?”

“I said your snooty attitude—”

She cut him off. “I heard what you said. No one

speaks to me like that.”

Sgt. Ames stared at her for a moment before maneuvering the car into the stream of traffic. “Lady Bradshaw, I’m sure you find your beauty, your position in society, and your money have gotten you most of what you wanted in life, right? Well, not on my shift. We’ll swing past my apartment and pick up a few things. Then we’ll go back to the hotel. There I’ll call your father who has requested security for you and the hospital to check on your hired help. Once I touch base with both of them, then, and only then, will we leave the hotel.”

Tamlyn scowled. Her fingers went back to her necklace, playing with it. She hated being patronized. She got enough of that at home. “Fine.”

“Fine? You’re going to give in that quickly?”

Angling herself so she couldn’t see him at all, Tamlyn nodded. “Sure, I mean, what’s the point in arguing? Your reasoning is sound...insults excluded. Besides, you seem to be the type who once you’ve made up your mind won’t change it for toffee.” So *there’s no point wasting my breath any longer.*

Back at the hotel, Tamlyn headed toward the lifts. She glanced over her shoulder at him, and slowed a little. “Am I going too fast for you?”

“Not at all.” The lift came, and he allowed her to enter first, then followed.

She folded her arms across her stomach. “I don’t need a babysitter, no matter what my father thinks. It’s food poisoning. Besides, you’re dis...”

“I’m what? Is it the cane, the limp, what?”

Tamlyn took a deep breath. Honesty was the best policy, wasn't it? "I thought they'd give me someone who's a little..." She waved her hands in the air as she struggled to find the right word.

"Fitter? Able-bodied? Or someone who isn't going to ruin your schedule because you don't think they can keep up with you?" Was that hurt or anger that tinged his voice?

A shaft of guilt hit her stomach. "Sorry."

The lift doors opened, and she exited quickly, heading down the corridor to her suite. She knew what her father's reaction to this whole mess would be, and may as well start packing.

She opened the door to her suite and stood to one side to let Sgt. Ames in first. She looked at him, a slight smile on her face. "Do you want me to wait out here while you sweep the room for bugs, listening devices, and villains in ski masks?"

"Not this time, Lady Bradshaw. Inside, if you please."

She rolled her eyes, the title still grating on her nerves, but she did as he asked. "The suite has two bedrooms, with their own bathrooms. Your room is the one on the left."

"What's your father's number?"

"It's in the book by the phone in the sitting room. It's under *D* for Dad. If you'll excuse me, I want to call the hospital and see how Raleigh is doing." She pulled her phone from her bag and disappeared into her bedroom, closing the door behind her.

The nurse she spoke to wasn't very forthcoming and told her nothing she didn't already know. Tamlyn sighed and shoved the phone back in her bag. *God, please take care of Raleigh. I may not like the bloke much,*

but...

Pushing herself up, Tamlyn moved over to the door to the sitting room. Sgt. Ames was going ten rounds with her father on the phone. She took the pen from the desk, then chewed it for an instant before scrawling a note. After propping it against the nightlight, she grabbed her bag, and then headed for the door.

Sgt. Ames said not to “leave the hotel,” so she wouldn’t. This hotel was like a small town—one she’d not had the chance to explore yet. She’d go down to the mall and walk around some of the shops.

2

Martin ended the call more than a little confused. Lord Bradshaw had been far more concerned about the bodyguard than his daughter, to the point where the guy came across as not caring about her at all.

Lord, I don't understand this. He's her father and there isn't one iota of love in his voice. If she were my daughter, I'd be out here in a flash. Not that I will ever know what that is like unless You find me a wife and by some miracle we have children. That lack of parental love must be so hard for Lady Bradshaw, but am I the right person for this job? Perhaps someone else...definitely not some scarred, burned out cop.

People like Lady Bradshaw were one reason he no longer worked protective services. He'd rather deal with villains, than snobs who thought they were above him just because they'd been born into money. Having said that, sometimes babysitting was fun, he'd gotten to be a fly on the wall for the behind the scenes moments. But that entertainment was far outweighed by the bad.

It was more than a little ironic he'd left protective services, where he deliberately made himself the target to protect people, and then gotten hurt within six months of being back on the streets.

His cell rang before he had a chance to check on the bodyguard. It wasn't good news. Martin moved over to her bedroom door and knocked on it. "Lady

Bradshaw?" There was no answer.

Martin opened the door and sighed when he found the room empty. He grabbed the note leaning against the nightlight and read it. His stomach burned. Five minutes on the job, and he'd misplaced her already.

He stormed back to the book by the phone and thumbed through it, searching for her cell number. Maybe he'd find it listed under *B* for Brat? If not there, maybe it would be filed under *A* for Annoying, or even *C* for Cute?

He stopped himself short.

Cute? Where'd that come from?

T for Tamlyn. He programmed the number into his phone, dialed, and waited for a reply.

Tamlyn pulled her phone from her bag. She looked at the unfamiliar number and frowned. Not Dad then. Half tempted not to answer it, she let it ring several times before finally taking the call. "Hello?"

"Lady Bradshaw, where are you?" His intriguing American accent sounded even deeper on the phone. One of those 'to die for' voices—and they thought only British blokes had cute accents.

"Hello, Sgt. Ames. What can I do for you?"

"Where are you? I told you to stay here."

"Actually, you said not to leave the hotel without you, and I haven't. I'm in..." she paused, glancing around, "...the big garden thing with the fountains in the hotel mall."

He sighed. "Stay right there. I'm on the way."

"Whatever." Tamlyn hung up, then realized how

rude that sounded. She'd apologize when he got there. She shoved her phone into her bag and walked over to the bar. "Can I have two cokes with ice and a slice, please?"

The bartender looked blankly at her. "A slice of what?"

"Lemon." Tamlyn resisted the urge to shoot back a rude reply or roll her eyes. This truly was like being on a different planet. She'd ordered pizza and chips the previous evening and gotten crisps with her meal instead of thick rectangular slices of fried potato.

She slid the money across, took the drinks, and carried them to a table by one of the potted palms. She slowly moved the straw through the drink. What had Raleigh drunk to make him so sick so soon after they arrived in Vegas? Because he hadn't eaten anything.

And why did she care so much about someone who only protected her because he worked for her father?

Sgt. Ames, on the other hand, didn't, but likewise had orders to protect her. Maybe one day she'd find someone who had other reasons to keep her safe. The sergeant's cologne washed over her as he slid into the chair opposite. She took a deep breath, and then looked up. "I'm sorry. I was rude, and it was uncalled for."

"Apology accepted."

She pushed the other drink over to him. "I got you this. What did Dad say?"

"He wants you to go home."

"No way, José."

"My name's Martin."

Tamlyn almost smiled. A cop with a sense of humor. "Have you any idea how long it took me to persuade Dad to let me come in the first place?"

"No, but I'm sure you'll tell me."

"Ten months. This is my first ever holiday without him coming with me. There must be some other way."

Sgt. Ames sipped his drink. "He did offer to send someone called Garth to protect you."

Tamlyn picked up her drink and stabbed the ice cubes with the straw for several long moments before replying. "No way. Garth is Dad's most trusted, omnipresent, top security person." She took a long sip, the cold liquid sliding down her throat. "He thinks he's God's gift to women, but he's sleazy with it. I don't like him. He works out way too much."

"Not your type then?"

Tamlyn rolled her eyes, not sure why she'd just told him all that. "Oh, no, no way. He's more boring than Raleigh."

"Is *no way* your answer to everything?"

She tilted her head. "Usually. Is that going to be a problem?"

Sgt. Ames poked the lemon with his straw and pulled it out, setting it to one side. He looked at it much the same way the bartender had looked at her when she asked for the lemon. "That depends on what you want to do, Lady Bradshaw."

"I don't know. But I'm not going home, and I'm not having Garth babysit me, either. When I was younger and he caught me sneaking in or out of the house, I'd get a rollicking from him as he thinks it's his right to stop me from doing things. He'd tell Dad, and I'd get another rollicking from him. Dad would ground me as well, and then the whole cycle would start over. I'm sick of it."

He smirked, amusement in his voice. "The hired help grounded you?"