



A ROMANTIC SUSPENSE FOR EVERY MONTH OF THE YEAR

CLARE REVELL

*Violets in
February*

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Dedication

For Teddy Matinde, with grateful thanks for the
Swahili translations.

What People are Saying

Saturday's Child

To say I was hooked with this book would be an understatement. You get pulled in right away with Farmer Field and his belief that he could do things without God. I couldn't put the book down in spite of the heavy demon content. The power of prayer is clear throughout. Right from the beginning it moves you to root for the safety of all the characters. ~ Janny (Amazon)

Aussie Christmas Angel

Do you like to visit new places? Do you like Christmas themed stories? Do you enjoy a sweet romance? Then you might want to check out this tale, based on a condensed version of a true story as explained in the author's note at the end of the book. The major take-home value of this short story is a great one! God can use anything and all circumstances to bring about His purposes. ~JoAnn Carter

Glossary of Australian Slang

Ace – excellent

Ant's pants – the bee's knees, think highly of yourself

Aussie – Australian

Av-a-go-yer-mug – traditional rallying cry usually at cricket matches

Back of Bourke – a very long way away

Bail out – depart angrily

Beaut – great, fantastic

Belt up – shut up

Billy – tin container used to boil water in the bush

Block – do your block, get angry

Bloke – man

Bludger – lazy person

Bogged – stuck in mud or deep sand

Bonzer – great, ripper

Bowl of rice, not my – not my cup of tea, I don't like it

Brekkie - breakfast

Bulldust – rubbish

Bung on – put on

Cheers mate - thanks

Crook – sick

Cuppa – cup of tea

Cut lunch – sandwiches

Digger – a soldier

Dill – an idiot

Don't come the raw prawn – don't try and fool me

Drongo – an idiot or fool

Dunny – outside loo

Earbash – nagging, nonstop chatter

Flick – get rid of something

Galah – foolish, silly person after the bird of the same name

G'day mate – hello, traditional Aussie greeting

Hang on a tick – wait a minute

How ya going – how are you doing?

Kangaroos loose in the top paddock – crazy

Klick - kilometer

Knickers - underwear
Mongrel – despicable person
No worries – you're welcome
Oldies – parents
Pom, Pommie, Pommy – English person
Rack off – get lost
Ratbag – mild insult, friendly term of abuse
Sacked – fired from work
Sanger – sandwich
Session – long period of heavy drinking
Sheila – woman, female
She'll be apples – everything is going to be OK
Shonky – unreliable, suspect
Shoot through – leave in a hurry
Spit the dummy – get very upset, throw a hissy fit
Strewth – darn it, for crying out loud
Strine – conversation with a lot of Aussie slang
Tracks – make tracks, go home
Tucker – food
Useful as an ashtray on a motorbike – unhelpful or incompetent person
Ute – utility vehicle, pick-up truck
Wag – skip school or work
Whinge – complain
Whoop whoop – the middle of nowhere
Wobbly – temper tantrum, throw a hissy fit
Wowser – spoilsport, old fashioned
Zonked – really tired.

Carnations in January shake the foundations
Violets in February are an aid to salvation
Daffodils in March bring betrayal and loss
Sweet peas in April consume all the dross
Lily of the Valley in May brings danger untold
Roses in June show hope in a heart filled with gold
Water lilies in July a town will submerge
Gladioli in August love from the ash will emerge
Forget-me-nots in September are on the front line of
fear
Marigolds in October will test her career
Chrysanthemums in November show the burden of
choice
Holly in December lets a broken family rejoice

Violets in February are an aid to salvation

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:2

1

Sunshine poured through the open window of the small medical facility in the center of the mission compound deep in the jungle. The ceiling fan whirred overhead, not providing much relief from the heat or oppressive humidity of the day. The walk-in clinic was, as always, packed with everything from sick children to knife wounds to animal bites. Word had spread about the medical health center with its free medicine, and people would walk for days to reach it.

Dr. Lucy Boyd ignored the sweat trickling down her neck and scrubs sticking to her back, as she examined the tiny baby. She raised her gaze, meeting the worried mother's eyes with a smile. "It's not cholera," she said in the woman's native tongue, Swahili. "See here?" She pointed to a small mark on the baby's arm. "He's been bitten. I have medicine to help. He will be fine."

Relief crossed the woman's face, color returning to her dark cheeks. "Thank you, daktari."

Lucy smiled. She'd been in the mission field here

in the Congo for two years now. Despite being the only doctor for the last six months, she loved it. This was far more varied than anything she'd seen as an ED doctor back home. Most importantly this was where God wanted her and where she could serve Him the best. If they tried sending her home, she'd refuse.

She dreaded her upcoming furlough later this year. Maybe she could defer it again. There was nothing and no one in England she particularly wanted to see. Here she'd be of some use.

Just as the last patient for the morning left, the all too familiar roaring engine of the supply truck filled the compound, accompanied by the usual heavy metal music blasting at full volume. She sighed. It could only be one person.

Jed Gorman. The most irritating and intimidating heathen man the Good Lord had seen fit to put on the face of the planet.

He was the type of man she'd avoid like the plague given half the chance. And she definitely wouldn't want to meet him in a dark alley. The only blessing was the fact she merely had to see him for a few minutes every two weeks when he brought the supplies. And even better, she was never alone with him. Just the thought of that turned her stomach in dread.

She peeked through the window as the usual gaggle of children surrounded the truck, laughing and calling.

The driver turned off the engine, opened the door and unfolded his tall frame from the truck. His long dust-filled brown hair needed washing, never mind cutting, and his white shirt and khaki trousers, which had seen better days, could do with the same

treatment. The sun glinted off the metal stud in his left ear, and his beard looked even more unkempt than it had two weeks ago.

“G’day! How ya going?” His familiar, over cheery greeting made her shudder.

“Angels and ministers of grace defend us,” she whispered as she shook her head.

He handed out sweets to the waiting kids. He’d be better off giving them toothpaste. She tugged the top of her scrubs down, praying he’d remembered the vaccines this time. And the other things she needed.

The kids scattered, and as Tim Lawrence, mission director, made his way across the dusty compound to the truck, Lucy turned away from the window. She headed back to the exam table to start clearing up.

The less time she spent in Jed Gorman’s presence, or thinking about him, the better. Picking up a cloth, she began to wipe down the surfaces with antibacterial spray. She liked to keep her surgery spotless—far safer for all concerned, that way.

Heavy booted footsteps clomped up the wooden steps outside and across the verandah. The door swung open, and he crossed the room, no doubt bringing in dust and sand to cover her newly swept floor. She could smell him from here. The intoxicating mix of pine and woods and mint that almost conflicted with the tough guy image Jed Gorman held out around him like a shield.

“Dr. Boyd.” His Australian accent rang through the clinic. “What’s a good looking sheila like you doing in back o’ Bourke hole like this?”

“Working, Mr. Gorman. The same thing that you are.” Her answer, just like his greeting, never changed. She turned and ran her gaze over him. His sleeves

were rolled up to just above his elbows, exposing well-tanned, muscular arms wrapped around a crate. There was something about the man's arms and the way the long vein from elbow to wrist stood out, that set her heart pounding.

But enough of that. Her mind shouldn't go in such directions. Besides, Jed Gorman didn't count as a man or eye candy or anything other than a menace.

He grinned at her. "Where do you want me?"

Lucy jerked her head at a surface she hadn't scrubbed down yet. "Over there. Did you bring the vaccines this time?"

Jed hefted the wooden crate onto the counter and brushed his hands on his trousers, sending a further shower of sand everywhere. "I sure did. Along with every other item on your list. Oh, and a personal package as well."

Lucy smiled and pulled out the brown parcel. She ripped the paper, exposing the packaged gift wrapped in pink paper and well-padded to protect it. She opened it, ripples of pleasure making her smile widen. Dried violets, pressed into a glass frame. Along with a birthday card. She'd have to hide that or everyone would know.

"So, who's sending ya flowers? Boyfriend?"

She slid the card into her scrubs pocket. "My mother. I love violets, but they don't travel well." She set the frame down and continued to unpack the box.

Jed leaned against the doorframe, his eyes following her every move. "Don't you get bored out here, Dr. Boyd?"

She glanced up at him. "I don't have time to get bored. There's always plenty to do."

"Makes sense." His eyes glinted wickedly, and he

ran his tongue over his lips. "I mean, with you being the only woman in a camp full of men."

She scowled. "That is not what I meant. There are far too many sick people who need my help."

His grin turned into a smirk, and he shot her a comment that had her reeling back a step or two, wondering if she actually heard him correctly.

"I should slap you for even suggesting that," she managed.

He roared with laughter. "Like it rough then, darl'?" He turned on his heel and clomped back across the verandah to his truck.

Lucy waited until he was out of earshot before shutting the clinic door—firmly. She screamed with frustration. How could he do that to her, every single time?

Kinta, her assistant, appeared from a side room. "You shouldn't let him get to you so, daktari."

"I wish he didn't. Let's get this lot put away, then go grab lunch before the afternoon clinic starts." She tucked the errant strand of hair behind her ear and picked up the box of vaccine. There wasn't nearly enough, but perhaps if she ordered more now, it would come in two weeks on the next supply truck.

She could hear Jed from here, yelling and cursing at something. She shook her head. Couldn't he do anything without turning the air blue? His shouts got louder, ending in a cry that could be rage or pain or sheer frustration.

Running footsteps crossed the wooden verandah. Tim stuck his head around the door. "Luce, bring your med kit. Jed's hurt himself."

She grabbed the bag from the side and ran outside.

Jed stood by the truck, wrapping a filthy rag

around his hand, using every expletive she'd ever heard and a few that she hadn't.

"Mr. Gorman!" she yelled, crossing over to him. "That is no example to set the kids! Perhaps I should find you a toothbrush and some soap?"

~*~

Jed glared at her. All he wanted was to get out of here. Now. Preferably ten minutes ago, but his blasted Ute had other ideas. If he ever found out which mongrel had let the tire down they'd be sorry. He finished tying the rag around his hand. All it needed was to hold until he reached civilization tomorrow.

"Well, pardon my French," he growled. "They don't speak English anyway."

"That is beside the point." Lucy set the bag on the edge of the bonnet. "Tim said you were hurt. Is your hand all right?"

He muttered another expletive. "Does it look all right?"

"That rag is filthy. If you've cut or burned your hand, it'll get infected."

"It'll be apples." He bent and picked up the tire iron. "I don't need your help. I need this tire changed."

"Are you afraid of doctors, Mr. Gorman?"

He scowled and turned his back on her, fitting the tire iron. He needed to finish changing this wheel and he could bail. "No, I just don't want you fussing." He hissed in pain.

He could feel her eyes on him and wasn't surprised when she didn't drop it. He glared at her reflection in the Ute window.

"You're shaking," she said in that annoying

matter-of-fact voice of hers. "Does it hurt?"

"Of course it blasted well hurts!" he snarled. "I just have no intentions of letting a sheila touch me." Talking and flirting was one thing, part of the game. Actual physical contact was something else altogether.

She frowned. "Then we have a problem, because I'm the only doctor for miles. The question is, Mr. Gorman, are you going to look like a coward in front of the kids?"

Pain and anger tore at him. He detested being called a coward even more than he hated having a sheila touch him. But he had to concede, albeit reluctantly, that she did have a point.

He needed to get out of here, and he couldn't do that with a duff hand.

Sucking in a deep breath, he reluctantly held out his hand. "Fine. You may look."

Lucy snapped on a pair of medical gloves and unwrapped the cloth. Her brows furrowed and her cold fingers probed the cut. "It looks deep. What did you do?"

He rolled his eyes, swearing under his breath. Was the sheila blind? Couldn't she see what he was doing? "Flat tire." He hissed as she examined the wound. "Do you have to be so rough?"

"I'm sorry, I thought you liked it rough," she muttered, straight-faced.

He glowered at her, but before he had time to shoot back an even ruder reply, the kids giggled and chattered. "What are they saying?" he demanded.

She glanced up. "They think you're a baby making a fuss over nothing."

He scowled, growled low and deep, and took a step towards the group of kids. "I'll give them baby!"

Lucy kept hold of his arm as the kids scattered. "You'll do no such thing. And you can't drive like this either. This needs stiches. Now hold still, and let me work."

He glowered at her and swore, the full force of his anger and pain focused on her. "What are you talking about, woman?"

"Do you mind not swearing? Didn't your mother teach you anything?"

"Don't you bring my mother into this! I'll darn well swear if I want to."

"You need stiches," she repeated slowly, her ice blue eyes staring into him. "Now, sit down, shut up, and let me work."

He slumped into the driver's seat on his Ute and fell silent as the blonde doctor began to clean and stich his hand. There was only one thing in this forsaken world he hated more than being shown up, and that was Christians. He hated this part of his job more than anything. Being forced to have close contact with them. This doctor in particular. There was something about her that set his teeth on edge. And not just his teeth either. Every nerve he possessed went into full blown alert mode. She was dangerous.

He swore as the pain in his hand increased. "Blimey, woman! How tight do you need to pull them?"

"Almost done."

He glared at the top of her head. The sooner he was out of here, the better. The world would be a far better place if it weren't full of do-gooders. He'd had enough of those when he was a kid.

"All done." Lucy looked up at him. "With one exception. When was your last tetanus shot?"

He shrugged. "Don't know. Don't care."

"Then you need one."

"Oh, no." He pushed up. "I need to—"

"—have this shot," she continued. "We can either do it here or in the surgery. Unless you don't like needles, either."

The kids laughed again. Were they laughing at him or his reaction to her?

"You just stitched me up with a blasted needle, woman," he muttered. He pushed his sleeve further up his arm, exposing the edge of one of his many tattoos. "I'm not afraid."

"Good. So, unless you want me to do it out here, I suggest we go inside."

Jed's face burned and he had a sudden pain in the pit of his stomach. "Strewth. You have got to be kidding me, lady. There is absolutely no way I am gonna drop my pants for anyone."

The doctor didn't even have the decency to meet his gaze as she closed her bag. "Your choice. But lockjaw isn't a pretty death. It starts with muscle spasms in your jaw which spread throughout your body and sometimes prevents breathing. In some cases, they do a tracheotomy or hook you up to a ventilator to keep you alive. It also causes heart failure, pneumonia, bone fractures..."

He held up a hand. "All right, all right. After you." He followed her inside the hot, airless hut, muttering under his breath and using every cuss word he could think of and then some.

She moved over to the side, and pulled a vial from the fridge.

Still cursing, Jed undid his belt and zip.

She glanced over her shoulder at him. "Just the