



A ROMANTIC SUSPENSE FOR EVERY MONTH OF THE YEAR.

# CLARE REVELL

*Daffodils  
in March*

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## **Daffodils in March**

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Dedication

For Mum and Dad.



## Praise

### *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

### *Thursdays Child*

This is the best one yet. What a great story! Ms. Revell keeps you on the edge of your seat either emotionally or in suspense throughout the story. Every emotional tug between Jared and Niamh will pull at your heartstrings. Your heart will break for them, hoping she will recover fully and he can reclaim her heart.

The suspense, the mystery, the danger — it's all as hot as the worst fire he battles. You won't want to put this one down! Oh, and keep those tissues handy. ~ Donna B Snow



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.





# 1

*Daffodils in March bring betrayal and loss*

*Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments. Deuteronomy 7:9*

“I don’t think so. Marc doesn’t need a live-in nanny.” *Nor do I.* David Painter tossed the morning newspaper to the table and looked at his widowed sister in despair. He’d spent the best part of the last two years undercover, and the assignment was now starting to take its toll on every aspect of his life—physical, mental, and spiritual. Rage filled him almost constantly these days. It threatened to surface once more. He flexed his fingers as he calmed the pressure cooker of his emotions, managing not to show his displeasure in any way other than his voice.

He prayed for help and reached for his coffee mug. Clenching it tightly, he refilled the cup, needing the extra caffeine to get through the day. Marc, his six-month-old nephew, had kept him awake most of the night again. Being tired wasn’t helping his reactions any.

Hanna Jameson, five years his junior, shook her head. “I need a nanny. The day nursery just isn’t working out, and I have this conference in Manchester

for work coming up soon.”

“So I’ll drop Marc off at the nursery and pick him up in the evenings. I already do that for you some days anyway.”

She shook her head. “You work all hours. I never know when you’re going to be around in the evenings.”

He pushed his hand through his hair. Did she think he couldn’t manage a week with the baby? “I’ll find a babysitter when I have to work, but there isn’t much I can do with the hours being somewhat unpredictable at the moment.”

“I never said your hours are at fault. It’s the job you do that’s the problem.” Hanna’s voice rose a little as the familiar argument began.

David grabbed up his bowl and spoon and strode to the sink, depositing the dishes in the basin. Turning on the tap, hot water sprayed everywhere, including over his new silk tie. He didn’t want to get into this now. Better to concentrate on the first matter. “Why can’t you hire someone to take Marc to daycare, or even better, simply do the babysitting when I need to go out?”

“Pay both a sitter and daycare? Yeah, like I can afford to do that.” Hanna muttered. “Besides, I don’t trust the staff at the daycare. He came home with another bruise on Friday. How much longer before something even worse happens?”

“He’s starting to roll over and get mobile now. Kids get bruises all the time. You were notorious for that. If there was a wall or chair within a ten-mile radius, you’d crawl into it or fall of it.” He brushed off her concerns, refusing to admit he had enough of his own on that score. He ignored the scowl she shot his

way as well, deflecting it with his usual aplomb. "You are overprotective; you do realize that? Look, why don't you ask Eric's parents to have Marc for the week? I'm sure they'd jump at the chance. They dote on him and would love to spend more time with him—probably spoil him rotten. In fact, why don't you go and live there? You know they want you to move in. Marie said as much when Eric died."

Hanna shook her head. "This is my home. I'd rather have someone look after him here in the house." She gave him the look he knew so well; the one she always used to get her "own way."

David groaned. "Han, you know how—" he paused trying to find the right word "—*delicate* things are right now."

"Your choices have made them *delicate*. I can't rely on you to help with Marc anymore and that's OK. Hence the *need* for a nanny. David, things will be fine. I'll ring the agency today and find someone. I've already written the letter giving the nursery notice. I'm going to hand it in this morning."

He turned his back on her. If only she knew the amount of hassle that nursery had caused him in the first instance, trying to get both it and the staff vetted without her knowledge. His fingers tweaked the flowers in the vase on the window sill—daffodils—on both kitchen and lounge window sills. Fortunately, the local florist, *Carnation Street*, was coming up trumps in that department.

He scanned the view from the window, taking note of which cars were parked where. Relief filled him when he only saw the same ones as always. "You'll have this nanny come in daily, I assume?"

"No, she can live in."

“No. I will *not* have a stranger living in my house.”

Hanna scowled. “It’s not just *your house*. Dad left it to the both of us. Besides, at least that way if Marc is sick, I don’t have to take time off to be with him. And it’ll save you finding and paying a babysitter while I’m away. And if you need to leave at a moment’s notice for work again, it won’t matter. You can just go.”

David sighed. “Staying in with the kids when they’re sick is called being a parent.”

She blinked hard. “Don’t you think I know that? I have to work, especially now. My choices got taken away from me when Eric died. You think I *want* to live here, especially now?”

He pushed away from the counter as the baby cried over the monitor. “I have to go. I’ve a meeting at nine.”

“Will you be in for dinner? I’ve got chicken out to defrost. I could make your favorite.”

“I don’t know what time I’ll be finished. Save me some anyway, please.” He kissed the top of her head. Since Eric’s unexpected death, they’d never left on a cross word. “Have a good day, sis. Love you.”

“Love you, too.”

He slid into a leather jacket and headed out to the car. Slowly, he checked it. He knew every dent and scratch. He tapped the tires with the toe of his shoe, harder than he normally would. Then, he climbed inside the vehicle and slammed the door. He really should get it fixed so he didn’t need to slam it, but as a morning session with the punch bag in the garage—now crammed full of Hannah’s furniture—was out of the question as a way to ease his frustration, slamming the car door would have to do.

He shoved the keys into the ignition and pushed

back into the seat. If she hadn't been in the maternity wing of the hospital with dehydration, she and Marc would have been killed in the same accident that killed Eric.

After that, despite David's protests, she'd moved in with him, taking over her old room. But she didn't know how deep a mess he was in this time or how dangerous the people with whom he "worked" were. He took risks on a daily basis. And simply being around him put her and Marc in danger.

Now she wanted a nanny? Someone new coming in would upset the already delicate balance he had to string between work and home, and that was something his undercover status couldn't allow.

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Eden Jameson propped her chin on her hand. Tea steamed from the cup on the table. She studied the situations vacant column in the paper. The upbeat music in the background only served to make her mood worse, although she hadn't thought it was possible for her heart to ache any more than it already did.

In the café around her, cups clinked, conversations rose and fell, and life continued as normal. She drew a thick, black circle around another possibility. When she got up that morning, the sun was shining, spring was finally starting after a very long, cold winter, and everything had been normal, even down to the bus arriving five minutes late with standing room only as a result.

Then, she arrived at work to find movers packing up the house.

The family she worked for were moving—to Australia.

On Friday.

In. Five. Days.

Five very short days.

One hundred and eight hours to be exact.

*And they hadn't bothered to tell her.*

Incredibly hurt, Eden had been tempted to resign on the spot. But instead, out of a sense of duty, nothing more, she'd taken the eldest of her charges to school and now sat in the café job hunting while the twins, in highchairs, shredded cake and spilled juice over the trays.

Eden sipped her tea. There was no way she could find a new job in a week. It had taken long enough to get this one. But her employers had promised to give her a “glowing” reference.

The phone in her bag rang, and she pulled it out. She didn't bother to check the screen. It didn't really matter who it was. “Hello?”

“Hey, Eden, it's Hanna. How are you?”

Eden forced a cheerful smile into her voice. Hanna was her best friend and sister-in-law. Between Eric's death and David's issues, Hanna had enough problems of her own without Eden venting her woes as well. “I'm fine. How are you?”

“I'm doing OK. Wish Marc would sleep all night, but, you know, maybe one day. Like when he's twenty.”

“And then it'll be you up all night wondering where he is, what he's doing, and whether or not he remembered his front door key.”

Hanna laughed. “Probably, yeah.”

“In all seriousness, is he still not going through the

night at six months?"

"No. Anyway, the reason I'm calling, I need the number of a nanny agency. Are you registered with one?"

"I wish." She looked down at the paper, glancing down the list of advertisements. "Tinies is meant to be one of the best around." She took a breath and tried to speak as nonchalantly as she could. "I'm actually planning to register with them later today, I can check them out if you'd like."

"OK, thanks." Hanna paused. "Wait a second. You're doing *what* with them?"

"Nothing. Hold on." Eden sighed. "Rupert, no..." She grabbed a handful of serviettes and wiped the food a giggling Rupert had thrown at her. *Et tu, Brute?*

"Don't give me that." Hanna's tinny voice took on a reprimanding tone. "I can tell when you're upset."

"You've known me too long." Eden sat back in her seat, watching the twins.

"First day of school and ever since. So, talk to me."

"The Fishers are moving on Friday. To Australia."

"Oh." Shock resonated down the phone. "Why didn't you tell me? We could have arranged a goodbye party or something for you."

"I didn't know about it, OK?" Tears she'd been fighting since she found out spilled and fell. "As of Friday, I'm out of a job. So I'm sitting here, looking at the paper, trying to find a new job for Monday."

Hanna squealed.

*Hanna was...happy?*

"That's perfect. I've just had the most brilliant idea."

Eden rubbed her sleeve over her eyes. Shocked and trying to work out Hanna's meaning. There was

nothing perfect about her being jobless. And in today's climate she'd stay that way for months. "What?"

"You're a nanny. I need a nanny—one starting on Monday as it happens."

She did a double take. "You need a *what?*"

"The nursery isn't working out, so I want a nanny for Marc. And you'd be perfect."

"Hector, don't throw things." Eden bent down and picked up the sippy cup and set it on the table with a sigh. "Han, can I call you back once I've managed to get the twins asleep? I've been asked to stay out of the house today so they can pack."

"Nope, I have a better plan." Hanna, as always once she had an idea, was like a dog with a stick, refusing to let go. "Come over tonight after work, and we'll talk about it more. Call it an interview."

"Interview? I haven't even applied for the job, yet."

"Please, Eden. It'll solve all our problems in one go. We can discuss terms, money and so on. Come over about seven. Marc should be down by then."

"OK, see you at seven." Eden slid the phone back into her bag and turned to clear up the mess the twins had made.

Work for Hanna? It would be an answer to the constant prayers she'd been sending up for the past several hours.

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Eden took the tea cup from Hanna. "Thank you." She settled back into the couch. "So why change your mind about the day nursery? I thought he'd settled there now."

“He has, but it’s not working out time wise. I have this conference to go to the week after next in Manchester. I’ll be away a whole week. So you being made redundant is providential. I need a nanny from Monday, which is the exact day you need a job for. God’s timing is as perfect as ever.”

Eden shifted on her chair. “Why can’t David take Marc to nursery and pick him up?”

“His hours are even more, um, erratic than mine at the moment—hence he’s still not home. Sometimes he’s underfoot, others he’s out all the time or gone for days.”

Curiosity piqued. David had always been so reliable and his timekeeping impeccable. What could have changed? “What does he do?”

Hanna rolled her eyes. “All sorts of stuff. None of which he likes to talk about. He’s gotten really secretive about work the last few months. Anyway, I thought a nanny would be easier in the long term. Especially as I have to work now. I’d love to be a ‘stay at home’ mum. You know that was the original plan, but nothing ever works out the way we intend.”

“Tell me about it. I’d thought the Fisher’s would need me for at least another five years. More if they had another baby. I still can’t believe they didn’t even mention the move in passing.”

Hanna nodded in consolation as Marc’s cries echoed over the baby monitor. “Here we go again. That child is seriously allergic to bed time. Which, by the way, is still my favorite time of the day.”

“Can I go?” Eden put her cup down on the coffee table.

“Be my guest. He shares my room as he’s still waking at night.”

Eden stood and took the stairs two at a time. She pushed open the door. The room hadn't changed much since they were kids and played up here. It was still pink. She crossed to the crib and picked up the baby. "Hey, what's up little man?"

She held him gently, rocking him, stroking his face. "Why so much noise from one little person, Marc? Do you need changing? No?" She moved him to her shoulder and smiled as he burped. "So, that's the problem."

Eden sang quietly, and Marc drifted back to sleep. Maybe looking after him wouldn't be so bad. Just for a couple of weeks until Hanna's work thing was done. Then she'd review things. After she laid Marc on his side and covered him, she tiptoed from the room, and quietly closed the door.

Eden made her way downstairs, and paused as hushed voices drifted up from the kitchen to meet her.

"Hanna, I can't have someone else, another woman, in the house. How many times do I have to say this?"

"Am I one woman too many?"

"That's not what I meant—" David's voice rose. "—and you know it."

Eden reached the foot of the stairs. She didn't want to listen, yet fancied interrupting them even less. Caught between the metaphorical devil and the deep blue sea, she stood in the hallway, the conversation ringing in her ears and burning in her stomach.

"Well, it's tough, David. Eden's my friend as well as being Marc's aunt. Therefore she's not only a qualified nanny; she's family and the ideal solution. I don't see what your problem with her is. You two got on well enough once."

“Not anymore, Han.”

“What went wrong between the two of you?”

“That is between me and Eden and no one else.”

There was a long pause; presumably, he was pacing the room like he always did when he was angry or irritated. Then, he started speaking again, his voice too low to hear.

*Really?* He hadn't even given Eden a good reason for them breaking up. One minute things were fine and the next he wanted nothing to do with her. Problem was her emotions didn't just switch off as easily as his. Part of her still loved him and probably always would.

Eden pulled her jacket off the peg in the hallway and shoved her arms into it. She put her bag on her shoulder. Twice, as the strap immediately fell down to her elbow. Best she left rather than be the cause of any more strife for Hanna. There was no way she'd take this job. No matter how much she wanted and needed it. It wasn't worth tearing apart what little family her best friend had left.

“David, please be reasonable,” Hanna's voice rose as Eden reached the front door.

“I am being reasonable. Marc is fine at the nursery—I can work around him while you're away. This is exactly why I didn't want you here in the first place.”

“And you've made that perfectly clear. However, my husband died and the military housing went with his job, you know that. And this place is half mine. I will do what I want with my half and having Eden here looking after Marc *is* what I want.”

Eden opened the front door and slipped out into the dark. Her cheeks burned as she trudged down the path. Reaching the bottom, she sent Hanna a text. *Bye*