



A ROMANTIC SUSPENSE FOR EVERY MONTH OF THE YEAR

CLARE REVELL

*Roses in
June*

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Dedication

For Amy Hinkson, an amazing, Godly woman.

What People are Saying

Times Arrow

The storyline beautifully melds the past and present, and creates circumstances that, while certainly not within the normal scope of reality, feels not only possible, but plausible. Kudos to the author for excellent characterization of the hero and heroine, and well-developed secondary characters, as well. I stand in awe of Revell's ability to pack an entire novel's worth of action and emotion into so few pages.

~ Author, Delia Latham

*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*

Roses in June show hope in a heart filled with gold

An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.

Proverbs 24:26

1

Never before had the first two lessons dragged so much. The bell sounded and Dawn Stannis gratefully made her way down the packed corridors to the staff room, where she could hide for a few minutes and replenish her flagging coffee levels. She pulled her rainbow striped cup from the cupboard and filled it almost to the brim with the fragrant black liquid leaving room for the dash of milk.

She released a deep breath as she sank into the corner chair and closed her eyes for a moment.

"I hear you got the short straw of organizing the careers fayre this year."

"Don't remind me," she groaned. She opened her eyes to find Jonathan Brooks, Headley Cross Secondary School's deputy head, opposite her. His questioning look prompted her to continue her train of thought. "I'm convinced it's going to be a flop. There's not enough on offer to keep the year nines happy. It all seems so..." She circled her hand trying to find a polite way of saying the word boring.

"Boring?" Jonathan asked saving her the trouble.

“Exactly.” Dawn sipped the coffee. “At least the plus side is I’ll never be asked to do it again. I used Mike’s list from last year. We have a physicist, geologist, someone from the RAF, a town councilor, doctor, vicar, firefighter, and a cop. So far that is.”

“If you find geology boring, then I pity your students.”

Dawn grinned. “I teach *geography* not *geology*—different subject altogether. Hmm, maybe I could get you to do a stand on teaching.”

Liam Page, head of English, dropped into the chair next to her. “Do you want the kids to come or not?” he chuckled. “You should have someone from the arts attend. Tell you what. You need to ask Gabriel Tyler. The kids would be breaking down the door to get in.”

“And who’s Gabriel Tyler when he’s at home?”

Liam shook his head. “Probably the same person he is when he isn’t at home. He’s an A-list actor. World famous—he got a Hollywood star last year.”

Dawn shook her head. “I’ve never heard of him. But if he’s that good, I’ll *never* get him to come to this in a million years.”

Jonathan winked. “He’s an old boy, so he’ll jump at the chance. His number is in the church directory.”

“Wouldn’t I have to go through his agent and book him? In which case, it’d cost a fortune the school doesn’t have.” Dawn took a long drink of her coffee. There was a Hollywood actor who went to the same church as her, and she didn’t know? Did she live on a different planet or something?

“Nah,” Liam drawled. “He’ll do it for free without the agent, trust me on that one. Go give him a call now.”

Dawn shook her head. “Later will do. For some

strange reason I can't fathom, I don't tend to bring the church directory to work with me."

Liam laughed. "I have his number in my phone. I'll let you have it."

"Does everyone know him bar me?"

"I don't think Jackie in the office knows him." Liam grinned and pulled out his phone. "His number is..."

"Hold on." Dawn tapped her phone screen. "Go on." She typed in the number Liam gave her. "That's his landline number?"

"Yeah."

She finished her coffee and stood. "Then I shall go and give him a bell."

Dawn headed down to her classroom, shut the door and hit CALL.

"Southby Manor." The voice on the other end was clipped and formal.

"Could I speak to Gabriel Tyler, please? This is Dawn Stannis from Headley Cross Secondary School."

"I'm afraid Lord Tyler isn't at home at present. I will tell him you called."

"Thank you. The easiest number to reach me on is 07986 667804." She looked at the phone as she ended the call. *Lord Tyler? What on earth have I gotten myself into here?*

The school bell rang, and she slid her phone into the desk drawer. Her year-nine geography class trooped in looking as enthusiastic as ever. She waited until they were sat before she stood. "So, who can remember what we were looking at last time?"

Jodie Philips's hand shot up. "Rainfall."

"Right. And what did we learn?" She looked around. "Vianne?"

Vianne Holmes grinned. "We get wet if we go out in it."

The class laughed.

Dawn smiled. "Other than that." She put the presentation up, and it projected on the screen, pointing out various things as she spoke.

A phone rang. She sighed. The kids knew phones in class were prohibited. "OK, who does that belong to?"

"I think it's yours, miss. It's coming from your desk." Jodie grinned.

Dawn pulled open the drawer and removed her ringing phone to giggles from the entire class.

"We're gonna have to give you a detention and confiscate your phone, miss. Can a parent come pick it up after school tonight?" Jodie asked.

Dawn fixed her teacher stare on Jodie, and the teen squirmed but didn't comment further.

"Hello?"

"This is Gabriel Tyler calling for Dawn Stannis." The deep voice was chocolate smooth and vaguely familiar. Maybe she'd heard a voiceover commercial he'd done.

"Speaking. One moment, please." She looked up. "OK, answer the questions on page fifteen of your textbooks. The diagram on the board should help you with the answers. I'll be right outside; keep the noise to a minimum." She left the room leaving the door slightly ajar. "Sorry about that."

"Did I ring at a bad time?"

"Not at all."

"How can I help you?"

"I'm organizing a careers fayre next week for the year nines at Headley Cross Secondary, and I was

wondering if you'd be able to come and take part. It involves sitting at a table and talking to any kids that come along and stop there to ask about your career, why you do it, what you enjoy about it, etcetera."

There was a brief pause.

"Yes, I'd love to."

Dawn straightened in shock. That was the last thing she'd been expecting. "I haven't told you when it is yet."

"I'll do it. I can rearrange my schedule if need be."

"It's Thursday, June first. The first session is two until five, and the second is six until nine so that parents can attend as well. There's a buffet meal provided between the two sessions. I'm also hoping to do a preview session during assembly that morning, but I don't have anyone lined up for that yet."

"You do now."

She could almost hear his smile down the phone. "Really? I wasn't fishing, honestly."

"I just pulled up my calendar, and I'm free all day. I'd love to do it."

Her heart leapt for joy. She honestly hadn't thought it'd be that simple. "Thank you; I'll pop the details in the post for you."

"Email is probably faster and safer. My addy is gabrielyler@tyler151.co.uk."

"I'll send the details at lunch. Thank you so much, and I'll see you on the first." Dawn hung up and went back into class typing his email into her address book before she forgot it.

"Put your phone away, miss," Jodie called.

"Who was that, miss? Was it your boyfriend?"

Dawn shook her head. Chance would be a fine thing, but she wasn't going to tell the kids that. Nor the

fact that as much as she'd love a boyfriend, she didn't have one. "No. It was related to the year nine careers fayre. I may just have scored the coup of the decade, if not the century." She paused. "Who's heard of Gabriel Tyler?"

Every single hand shot up. And now Dawn really did feel like a dinosaur suddenly transported into the twenty-first century.

"He's an absolute dish, miss," Jodie informed her.

She grinned. "Well, guess who just agreed to attend?"

Screams of delight filled the room. Dawn gave them fifteen seconds then held up a hand. "But for now, we need to get back to the thrilling subject of rainfall. Swap books with your partners, and we'll mark them."

At the end of the lesson, Dawn tidied up the classroom. What did Gabriel Tyler look like? She could pass him in the street and not know it. In fact, she could sit next to him in church on a Sunday and be none the wiser.

She headed to the office and emailed the documents to him and then went for lunch.

She chose the main course and sat at the teacher's table. Liam and Jonathan were already there, and they looked at her expectantly. "I got him," she said. "He'll do both sessions and the assembly in the morning."

"I told you he would." Jonathan sounded triumphant. But then if he wasn't right, he'd sulk and make everyone's lives unbearable, staff and pupils alike.

"What's he like?" Dawn asked in between mouthfuls. She was hungrier than she realized.

"Haven't you met him or seen him in church?"

Liam asked.

She shook her head. "Would I ask if I had? I don't think I've seen anything he's been in."

"Seriously? You haven't seen *Time Tunnel*?"

"No."

"*North and South* or *Warwick High*? The remake of *Five Hundred*?"

"No, no, and no."

Jonathan frowned. "*Persuasion* has just started on TV. He has the lead role."

Dawn picked up her glass of water. "No."

Liam rolled his eyes. "You need to get out more. Or stay home and watch the TV occasionally."

She laughed. "Only if you do my marking and lesson prep." She looked at Jonathan. "So which fortunate bloke is making up the fourth for my field trip next week?"

"I am," he said. "I quite fancy a week in Derbyshire keeping you and your year tens in check."

Dawn rolled her eyes. "You might just live to regret that."

~*~

Gabriel Tyler sat at the dining table reading the papers from the school. Around him, the footmen prepared to serve dinner, a tradition he hated, but his mother, Dowager Countess Florence Tyler, wouldn't hear of doing anything different to the way it had been done for generations.

His mother's heels clicked across the tiled floor. Even the way she walked showed her disapproval of him reading at dinner. "Really, Gabriel, must you work at the dining table and not your study? I hope those are

estate papers.”

The only people who called him Gabriel were his mother and the people he worked with. The staff, those in authority and in the House of Lords, called him Lord Tyler, Sir, or Your Lordship. He preferred his friends to call him by the shortened version of his name—Gabe. At least that way he could keep his career and personal life separate. His mother refused, said it wasn’t worthy of someone of his standing, either as a child and especially now that he was the earl.

Gabe put the papers on the empty chair to his right keeping his irritation to himself. “Only whilst I was waiting for you, and no, it’s nothing to do with the estate.”

His mother sighed. “Another script?”

He shook his head. “Not this time. I’ve agreed to speak at the school careers fayre next week.”

Horror etched over her chiseled features. Her hand rose to stop the footman offering her the plate of meat. “You’ve *what?*”

Gabe resisted the urge to roll his eyes. He beckoned to the footman for the soup he’d requested Mrs. Jessop make him tonight. He was hungry even if his mother wasn’t. “You’ve been telling me for months to get involved in the community—ever since Dad died and I became Earl of Elton in his place. So this is me getting involved.”

“Are you opening this *fayre?*” Her tone carried her disgust for the word.

“No. Miss Stannis, one of the teachers, has asked me to speak on being an actor.”

His mother fluttered a hand over her face. “Angels and ministers of grace defend us.”

“Mother, please.” Gabe sighed and took a

mouthful of his soup. He swallowed and looked at the footman. "Pass my compliments on to Mrs. Jessop. This is amazing, as always."

"Is that all you're having?" Countess Florence finally loaded her plate. "You're not eating enough to keep a flea alive right now."

"You know very well I'm losing weight for the new role. Besides, thousands of people survive on less than this a day."

"It's not good for you, and it's high time you settled down to run the estate properly. Not to mention find a nice woman to marry and start a family with."

At that comment, Gabe did roll his eyes. "Not this again."

"Yes, this again." Countess Florence cut her meat into tiny pieces, the knife grating on the bone china plate. "Your father has been gone six months, and you still have no heir. What if something happens to you? You're nearly thirty. You were three by the time your father was the age you are now."

"If something happens to me then the title will go to Blake. Like I said, my career..."

"Don't even get me started on that. You think I take pleasure in seeing you plastered all over the television and billboards in who knows what costume, or none at all? And being chased by those paperzillas all the time..."

"It's paparazzi," he corrected, eating his soup.

"Paperzillas and never given a moment's peace? And to be connected to who knows how many unacceptable floozies? Draping yourself all over them, hands everywhere." She didn't even pause for breath. "How are you meant to settle down and raise a family? What woman would be willing to put up with that sort

of behavior?"

"It's called *acting*, Mother." Gabe finished his soup and reached across for his papers. "At least this way, the moment I do find someone, you'll know instantly because it'll be headlines in the tabloids. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go and learn my lines for tomorrow's shoot. And it's an early start again, so I will see you at dinner tomorrow night assuming we're finished in time." He pushed his chair back and stood.

"Gabriel."

"Mother," he replied.

"Don't forget the estate—"

"—manager is coming at three," he finished. "I know. I'll be here, and if I'm not, I'll call him." He went into the hall and leaned against the wall. Looking down, he studied his shoes wishing his problems were as easily cleaned away. His mother was getting worse. The doctors had warned him of this. Early onset Alzheimer's would lead to mood changes, irritability, and other things before the woman he knew was lost forever. It seemed she was becoming the person she'd been in her thirties, the woman his father had changed for the better through their marriage.

He couldn't put her in a home, and the staff were great, but the time would come when she would be too much, and he'd need to get in a full-time carer.

When he raised his head, the potted palm tree on the other side of the checkered hallway mocked him. He glared at it.

"Sir?"

Gabe looked up into the poker face of Hardy the butler. "I thought I gave instructions for that monstrosity to be put outside on the terrace."

"Lady Tyler insisted it came back inside, sir."

Gabe harrumphed. "So put it upstairs in her ladyship's room. If she's that fond of it, she can live with it."

Hardy's eyes twinkled. "I'll get right on it, sir."

Gabe tried not to smile. "I have a three-thirty call tomorrow morning with the car coming at four. So, I won't need breakfast."

"Do you want a tray of coffee brought up at half past three?"

"Certainly not. Just because I have to be up at stupid o'clock, doesn't mean I expect you or the kitchen staff to be up then as well. I'm perfectly capable of finding the kettle and putting it on myself." He grinned. "Just don't tell my mother I said that. She'd have a blue fit and go up in smoke."

A brief smile crossed the butler's face before he masked it. "Very good, sir."

Gabe headed to the huge wooden staircase. Its central span divided into two half way up. His style of leadership being *lord of the manor* was vastly different to his parents and grandparents. But times changed. Servants were human beings, too. Yes, he expected the same level of service, loyalty, and respect as his father and grandfather, but not at the expense of their dignity and health.

His thoughts returned to the careers fayre and Miss Stannis.

What did she look like? Blonde, redhead, brunette? Tall, short, fat, thin? It was impossible to tell from her voice. He reached his room and threw the papers onto his bed. He pulled out his phone and speed-dialed his brother.

"Cherry Tree House, Blake Tyler speaking."

Gabe gave a short laugh. "Did I ring the main