



A ROMANTIC SUSPENSE FOR EVERY MONTH OF THE YEAR

# CLARE REVELL

*Marigolds in  
October*

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## **Marigolds in October**

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## *Dedication*

For Mary and John of River Edge Lodges. Our favourite place to stay in Scotland. And my sincere thanks for allowing me to use your lodges and workshop in the course of this book.



## *What People are Saying*

### *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



*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*





*Marigolds in October will test her career*

*Yet when you seek the LORD, your God, from there, you shall indeed find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul. In your distress, when all these things shall have come upon you, you shall finally return to the LORD, your God, and listen to his voice. Since the LORD, your God, is a merciful God, he will not abandon or destroy you, nor forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them. ~ Deuteronomy 4:29-31*

# 1

Rain pounded against the third floor office window of Barrack Road Police Station, Perth. The weather and dismal grey skies of his Scottish homeland matched the mood of Detective Chief Inspector Craig Fraser perfectly. He tossed his pen to the desk and leaned back heavily in his chair. Stretching his arms over his head, he slowly brought his left hand down to massage the back of his neck.

Autumn had come early and it looked as if winter would be early as well. He twisted his desk chair towards the window and gazed out. Several stories below him, the traffic thundered past on the main ring road.

People scurried under umbrellas to St. Catherine's retail park adjacent to the police station. A car horn

sounded as the door reflected in the window creaked open. A faint knock on the woodwork preceded the head poking around the door frame by a nanosecond.

"Guv?" DS Vickery sounded almost apologetic. His white hair made him look older than he was, his blue eyes were dull and his suit again needed ironing.

Craig resisted a sigh. He'd tried telling his staff to smarten up, but it was like talking to a brick wall. "What is it?"

"They've found another one."

Craig spun his chair around. "Another one what?"

"They found the third kidnap victim. Dead. Still no sign o'the second one, but they're assuming she's dead, too. It's officially our case now. The Chief Super wants tae see you in his office, ASAP."

Craig closed his eyes momentarily, sending up a prayer for the victim's family. There was no way he'd count the second girl as dead until he'd found her body. No news is good news, as his grandmother would say. "Same MO?"

"Aye." Vickery held out the file.

"OK, you and Jameson get over there, assist uniform, find out what you can, and get me an update from the coroner." He took the file and glanced down at it. After a moment, he raised his head and stared at Vickery. Why was the man just standing there? "Was there something else?"

"No."

He wagged his fingers. "Then go; do some work. This case isn't going tae update itself."

"Sir." Vickery turned and left.

Craig dropped the file to the desk and rubbed his hands over his face. Days like this he wished he'd joined the navy instead of the police force. "Och, well,

better go and see what the boss wants." He pushed to his feet. Whatever it was, wasn't going to be good.

But first he'd send the rest of the team out to re-interview the witness and start on the legwork. It wasn't that he didn't trust the work already done, but a fresh pair of eyes on what was now *his* case wouldn't hurt.

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DI Milly Jenson trotted up the stairs of Manor Street Police Station, Headley Cross, towards her office. She still struggled with calling it *her* office. She was covering for DI Welsh who was taking a leave of absence to care for her son. How Milly ended up here, miles from her normal desk wasn't something she liked to dwell on.

Pushing open her office door, she stopped short. Her desk was clear of the files she'd left there last night. Even her in-tray, normally overflowing, was empty. Beside the desk was a cardboard box.

Backtracking, she strode down the corridor to the main squad room. She stuck her head around the door. "Nate, have you seen...?" She broke off.

DS Nate Holmes glanced up from the stack of files on his desk. Those files looked suspiciously like the missing ones from her office, but she said nothing.

Nate didn't even offer his customary smile. "The DCI was looking for you, Guv. He asked that you stop by his office when you get in."

"OK, thanks." She turned and stood in the corridor. That wasn't a good sign. She made her way to the stairs and climbed the one flight to the DCI's office. She glanced at Rose, his secretary, hoping to gain a

clue of some kind, but as always, Rose's face gave away nothing. "Is he free?"

Rose nodded. "Go on in."

Milly didn't bother to knock. She burst through the door, the uncomfortable feeling filling her spilling over. She wouldn't bother with the niceties of hello either. "What's going on?" She paused for an instant. "Sir."

DCI Reeves looked at her, setting the phone back on its base. "Milly, I was just ringing to see if you were in yet. Have a seat."

She perched on the edge of the chair. "What can I do for you?"

"I need you to go home and pack. I'm sending you to Scotland."

Milly's jaw dropped as shock rippled through her. "What? You're having a giraffe, ain't ya?" Her cockney accent was even more pronounced than normal.

The DCI's face creased in confusion.

"Giraffe...laugh," she translated, again wondering why not everyone understood rhyming slang. It wasn't that hard to pick up—especially with it being used a lot on one of the main evening soap operas.

He shook his head. "Nothing funny about this whatsoever. You're going to Scotland."

"Are ya transferring me? Firing me?" She frowned, trying to get her head around this. "I thought I was doing OK here. It ain't easy working with them lot, especially with DI Welsh bein' such a hard act to follow. Is she coming back? Is her kid better? Has someone made a complaint? They weren't happy about me coming here in the first place."

DCI Reeves cleared his throat, tapping a pile of files on his desk. "DS Holmes will be acting DI for the

duration." He offered her the top file. "Get up to speed. DCI Fraser is expecting you tomorrow at noon."

Milly didn't move, still trying to get her head around this. "Scotland. You're sending me to Scotland?"

"Barrack Street, Perth, to be precise." He waved the file. "All the details are in here."

She snatched it. "I don't Adam and Eve this," she muttered, using the full slang for his benefit, knowing he'd fail to understand her otherwise. "Have ya booked me a hotel? And a flight?"

He shook his head.

"Then what have I done?" she demanded. "Ya don't just kick people out with no reason, and I have a right to know what that reason is."

"Read the files, Inspector. And then report to Barrack Street station at noon tomorrow. Don't be late. That's a pet peeve of DCI Fraser, and it's best not to get on the wrong side of him at the outset."

Milly walked from the office, her heels tapping on the tiled floor as she accelerated down the hallway. Other officers scattered out of her way. Rage filled her as she marched into her office and shut the door firmly. She dropped into her chair and opened the file.

Rage gave way to nausea as she read. The case was horribly familiar. She dropped the file to the desk and rubbed her hands over her face.

*It can't be him.* The single thought resonated over and over as she sucked in several deep breaths, in a vain effort to restore her equilibrium. *He's dead. I saw him die.*

She flipped on her computer monitor and did a search for flights. The cheapest was almost two hundred quid. Car hire for a month would add at least

another six hundred to that. The train would be three hundred, plus said car hire. And that didn't include a roof over her head of any description. "Forget that," she muttered. "I'll drive."

She hit the search engine one last time to get the post code of the Perth police station and tapped it into the GSP locator in her phone's sat nav. At least that way she wouldn't get lost driving up there. She looked at the screen twice. Almost five hundred miles.

Milly shut down the computer and stood. Folding the file, she shoved it into her bag. "I'll worry about a hotel when I get there," she muttered. "Maybe there's a cheap bed and breakfast close by. Just hate driving long distances."

"Driving where, Guv?" Nate asked from the doorway.

"Scotland. I'm being transferred as from now and you're it."

Nate at least had the courtesy to look shocked. "I'm sorry?"

"I'm going to Scotland to assist on a case. You're acting DI until either I get back or DI Welsh does." She tossed him a set of keys. "Keys to the filing cabinet. The middle drawer is a tad temperamental. Hit the top right corner a couple of times and then it'll open. Don't have too much fun without me."

She eased past him and took the stairs two at a time to the ground floor. She swiped out and handed over her pass. She wouldn't need it where she was going. Reaching her car, she headed home to pack, her mind going over the drive ahead of her. A404, M40, M42, M6, M8, M90. How hard could it be?

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Craig sucked in a deep breath as he stood outside the Chief Super's office. He knocked and opened the door. "Sir?" His voice tailed off as he caught sight of the two uniformed officers sat by the desk. OK, this wasn't good at all.

Chief Superintendent McCaskill stood. "Fraser, come in and have a seat. You ken Chief Constable Doone, of course."

Craig nodded, shaking hands, shoving aside the thought that Chief Constable Burnett Doone had a name more suited to an arsonist than a top ranking police officer. "Aye." He sat. His mind worked overtime, trying to figure out the connection between Perthshire's most senior officer being in the room and his case. Or maybe he'd done something wrong and was about to get the worst dressing down of his career.

"So, Craig, where are we on this case?" Chief Superintendent McCaskill asked.

*We?* "Which case?" He laced his fingers, so as not to tap them on the arm of the chair.

"The kidnappings and murders."

He cleared his throat. "*We're* no anywhere with it. I was given the files and summoned tae your office at the same time. So right now, my men are oot redoing the interviews, retaking witness statements, and generally familiarizing themselves with the case notes. From what I've read there are three victims, all seemingly unrelated by anything other than the same MO—second one still missing. If anything I would say it's a copycat of a case that happened doon sooth a year or so ago. I remember reading about it."

"*Four* victims."

Craig caught his breath. Surely he'd misheard.

"*Four?* When did this happen, and why am I only just hearing about it?"

"Sandy Tanner was snatched from her car an hour ago." Doone's voice was quiet. "Same MO. She's my daughter."

A bolt of sympathy for the man shot through Craig's heart. He couldn't even imagine. "Then with all due respect, you shouldnae be here...Sir."

"Noted."

"Is this why the case was moved from vice?"

McCaskill nodded sharply. "Only the first three girls worked the streets. Mrs. Tanner definitely didnae. We need you tae find her, Craig. Alive."

*Nae pressure then. The first and third girls wound up dead after two days, so mibbe the second will as well.* "Are you increasing the budget for overtime?" he asked.

McCaskill shook his head. "I cannae do that. However, you *are* getting an extra officer. A DI Milly Jenson from Headley Cross, England." He handed over a folder.

Craig scanned the file. "Wait a second. It says her actions resulted in the death of the hostage and three officers, as well as the perp."

"For which she was disciplined, and demoted from DCI to DI." McCaskill tapped his finger tips on the desk.

"And ye call that an asset?" Craig asked under his breath.

"She's got experience in this type of case. And as you think it's a copycat, you can have an officer from the original case tae help. Her mobile number is in the file so you can give her a call before she leaves."

Craig scowled. "If that's all?" As McCaskill nodded, Craig stood and headed to the door.

Doone coughed. "Find my daughter, Detective Chief Inspector, before it's too late."

Craig glanced over his shoulder. *And should I fail, will you demote me?* He kept the thought inside as he drew in a deep breath and straightened his shoulders. "What I need is overtime for the team I trust and work with already. No some Sassenach plod who only kens how tae kill police officers by making idiotic decisions."

McCaskill raised an eyebrow. "She's driving up. Make sure she has somewhere tae stay when she arrives."

"And when's that?"

"Midday tomorrow."

"Great," Craig muttered.

McCaskill nodded. "Dismissed."

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Craig locked Milly's file in his desk and left the building. He needed to think, to let off steam, and to get used to the idea of having an English officer thrust upon him. He walked briskly towards the closest park in the chill damp air, turning up his coat collar. At least it had stopped raining.

Reaching the North Inch, he headed for his thinking spot, a bench with a direct line of sight across the park to Kinnoull Hill. He sat heavily and pulled out his phone. He dialed the number he'd been given. It rang several times before it was answered.

"Hello. I can't talk for long, I'm driving." The broad east end of London accent was just like off a TV soap opera.

He rolled his eyes, disliking the woman from the

get go. If she had such blatant disregard for the law, then there was no way he could work with her. "Then you shouldnae be answering your phone at all. You ken better than most that it's illegal."

There was a pause. "Who is this?"

"DCI Fraser from the Perth and Kinross Area Command, Police Scotland. I assume I'm speaking tae DI Jenson." There was a screech of brakes and a pause. A clunk and several clicks followed.

Concern tinged his irritation. "Are you all right? You didnae crash?"

"No," came the breathless reply. "I pulled over into a layby. Yes, this is DI Jenson. And yes, I should know better, but I had the phone connected for GPS so it's on the dashboard on speaker."

"That is no excuse and you ken it. I just thought, as the Chief Super told me to ring you, I should do so. Have you been told about the case?"

"A little and it's very much like a case I worked a year ago. And honestly, there is nothing I can't tell you over the phone. I don't need to drive five hundred miles..."

Craig scowled. He'd have that song stuck in his head for hours now. "Your familiarity with the case would be *why* command are sending you here. I'll wait for you in my office tomorrow at noon and brief you then. Drive safely now." He hung up and had taken barely three deep calming breaths before his phone rang. Not bothering to look at the screen, he answered the call. "Fraser."

"Guv, we've got a new cop joining us." Vickery sounded as irate as Craig was at the news.

"Aye, I ken we do."

"It's a woman and one with a reputation for

getting officers killed.”

“I ken that as well.”

“It’s bad luck.”

“You think I dinnae ken that also,” Craig snapped. “No that I do luck. The Chief Super thinks we need a DI on this case and she’s it. Clear the office at the end of the main room for her.”

“But Guy, that’s ma office...”

“And she outranks you, sergeant, so dinnae argue with me. We have our orders.” He hung up and tapped the phone on the palm of his other hand. The next problem was where to house this woman while she was here. He needed to find some place respectable, yet close by, and preferably not his front room.

There was a place, self-catering lodges, right near where he lived. Ideal. And best of all, it was run by a friend. He just prayed Mary would have a vacancy.

Dialing quickly, he watched the sun peek from behind the clouds, sending a shaft of light over the orange leaved trees.

“River Edge Lodges.”

“Hi, Mary, it’s Craig Fraser. I was wondering if you have a lodge free. It’s kind o’short notice, but I have an officer who needs accommodation from tomorrow for a few nights. I’m no sure how long for, could be anything up tae a month.”

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Milly finally pulled into the car park of Barrack Street police station. She was exhausted. The drive had taken her seventeen hours, including the few stops she’d made for coffee and other necessities. She’d managed to grab a couple of hour’s kip in a car park