

POST CARD



NAME AND ADDRESS



Welsh Wildfire

CLARE REVELL

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Contact Information: titleadmin@pelicanbookgroup.com

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Dedication

To all the doctors and firefighters out there.
Thank you.

What People are Saying

Vegas Vacation

Vegas & Royalty? Sign me up. I've never been to Las Vegas, but Clare Revell put me smack-dab in the middle of the strip using her trademark combination of romance, wry humor, hope, and suspense. Don't miss it! ~ Marianne Evans

Thursday's 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

Pronunciations

Betws-y-Coed – Betsy Coy-d

Angharad – Ann-ha-rod

Olwyn – Oll-win

Dai – Die

Geinor – Gay-nor

Bryony – Bri-oh-knee

Broderic – Br-od-er-ick

Ceryn – Ker-ryn

Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. Isaiah 40:27-28

1

Quaint wasn't the word to describe the small Welsh villages Josh passed as he drove in the heat of the day. Tiny was a better word, and if this were the main road that—combined with the lack of air conditioning in his rental car—was almost enough to make him turn around, head back to the airport, and catch the first plane he could find to Oklahoma City.

Almost—but not quite. Because anywhere in the United States was the last place he wanted to be right now. He didn't need comfort. He didn't need caring family. He needed to be alone. And Wales, with its odd and unpronounceable towns, seemed a good place to find solitude.

Josh drove around yet another bend in the road, desperately hoping he wasn't going to meet an oncoming tractor. The last encounter had been scary enough, and he'd been fortunate to find a passing zone just in time to avoid embedding his rental car in the hedgerow.

He glared at the GPS app on his phone. Did the

thing even know where Betws-y-Coed was? All the sign posts were in Welsh, with what he sincerely hoped was the correct English translation underneath, and according to the map on the front seat, the town was somewhere along the A5, on the edge of Snowdonia National Park. He intended to climb Mount Snowdon whilst he was here. It was the highest mountain in Wales and the third highest in the UK. His self-imposed exile had to have some perks.

The countryside was a far cry from the huge city he left twenty hours ago. He'd somehow managed to find a job in Wales before he left the US—assuming he ever made the meeting on time. He'd done a telephone interview, but his prospective boss, the governor of the local firehouse, wanted to meet him face to face before he signed the contract.

He would be a retained or volunteer firefighter, not a full-time one, but that didn't matter. The job was the same whether he was stuck in a firehouse for the duration of his shift, or on the other end of a pager—and he'd only ever been a retained firefighter, doing it along with his day job. That had been enough of a battle with his employers and his father, but one that he'd won. His father had since said how proud he was of him serving in that capacity.

And this was just a temporary position to cover a leave of absence—only six weeks. But that suited him fine. While he needed solitude, he also wanted to keep busy and this job would help him do that. Too much time on his hands would lead to him thinking, and that wouldn't be a good thing. Maybe after six weeks here, he'd know what direction he wanted to take the rest of his life.

Finally, Josh drove past the town boundary and

followed the signs that read *canol y drefor* or town center. He pulled into the first parking lot he found and assumed by the lack of meters that he didn't have to pay. Just as well as he didn't have change. The ATM at the airport had only given him bills. And no meter reader or parking attendant was ever going to believe the line he had to go and buy a paper to get change.

Josh eased his long frame from the car and rolled his shoulders in the sunshine. Birds sang in the trees, a cool breeze ruffled his hair, and he closed his eyes, taking in the fresh air. No city smog here. Just clean, fresh mountain air.

He pulled the backpack containing all his paperwork from the car and locked it. Sliding the keys into his pocket, he consulted the map in his other hand. The firehouse should be just off the High Street, wherever that was. He began walking. Maybe there'd be a coffee shop somewhere. Thirsty didn't even begin to describe how he felt. Josh turned a corner. Ahead a building was covered in scaffolding. The signs read *Morgan Construction*. It could almost be a total rebuild they were undertaking.

Josh allowed himself a small smile. He hadn't done construction in years. He paused, admiring the stone work along the top of the bricks. He nodded to a guy in a hard hat. "Nice work."

The man studied him. "Thank you. You know about this stuff?"

"Aye." As usual, Josh managed to speak in a combination of Scottish and American, a throwback to his mixed heritage—although his Scots accent only came out when he was tired, stressed, or having trouble keeping his emotions in check. "I trained in stone masonry and worked with stone for several

years. I did some of the restoration work on a cathedral some years back." He indicated the rock the man was sculpting. "Those cornices look pretty complicated."

"They can be, but that's the beauty of the work." The man held out a hand. "Dai Morgan."

That made him the boss. Josh shook his hand. "Josh Wilson."

"You must be pretty good with the stone if you've worked on a cathedral."

"It's been a while, but there's nothing like it." Josh sucked in a deep breath. "I'm about to hand in my papers at the fire department—uh, fire station." He corrected himself quickly.

Dai tipped his hat back. "A retained firefighter is a fair jump from carving stone."

Josh nodded, not going to bring up what he'd done between the two jobs. "Aye, it is." He paused. Masonry was hard, mind-numbing work. Why couldn't he do two jobs? He needed a distraction. And the money wouldn't hurt either, even if he didn't need it. "I don't suppose you have a vacancy here?"

"Are you American?"

"Dual nationality, so I don't need work permits." That was another blessing to having a UK passport as well as an American one. Plus, it meant not needing a visa to enter the country.

"Come up and take a look." Dai offered him a hard hat. "If you're as good as you say, I could always use another pair of hands here for the duration."

Josh set his pack down and followed the tall, dark-haired man up the scaffolding. He listened as Dai explained what they were doing. It sounded great, restoring what carvings they could and replacing the rest. He ran his hand over the granite. He could almost

hear it speaking to him.

He'd found God in the stone many years ago.

And now he was running from Him.

"This one looks beyond repair," Dai said. "It's on the list to be replaced."

Josh glanced up. "He doesn't need that. I think he needs a wee bit taken off here. Then he'll be right. See where the curvature doesn't match the other side? It won't show from the ground, but I believe in making the stone sing, and this one can't sing if he's not perfect."

Dai handed him the tools he would need from the belt around his waist. "Show me."

Josh hefted the chisel and mallet for a moment, taking in their weight and feel, then let his skill take over. He transferred what he could see in his mind to the stone. Before long he had adjusted the stone until it was perfect.

Dai smiled. "That's amazing. The job is yours if you want it. The contract is only six weeks I'm afraid, as the job finishes by then. Come down to the office and we'll do the paperwork."

Josh stood. Six weeks would tie in nicely with the firehouse job. "Thanks. I appreciate it." He followed Dai to the ladder. Above him something fell, clashing against the metal pipes of the scaffolding.

"*Byddwch yn ofalus*. Look out!" The warning shout came almost immediately.

Josh caught sight of something sharp tumbling towards Dai, and he instinctively reached out to deflect it.

Pain shot through him as a falling chisel sliced across his hand. He cried out, clutching his palm tightly.

"Sorry, *ffrind*. I dropped it." Booted feet landed heavily beside him. "Are you hurt?"

Josh bit his tongue. Swearing wasn't an option.

"*Ivor, rydychyn idiot. Gallech fod wedi lladd rhywun,*" Dai yelled. He took Josh's hand, carefully looking at it. "This needs stitching."

Josh groaned, pain spearing him. "So much for my new jobs, but I guess it could have been worse. Had it been a chunk of stone we could have been killed."

"That's more or less what I just told him," Dai said.

"I'm really sorry," Ivor apologized again. "It was an accident."

Dai looked at him. "Go fill in the accident paperwork to cover the insurance and health and safety issues while I take Josh to the doctors." He led Josh to his car and helped him in.

Josh leaned back in the seat, cradling his hand.

Dai started the car. "I don't suppose you want the job now."

"If you're still offering it, and if I can work one-handed for a day or two, I'll take it."

Dr. Olwyn-Jessica Thomas reached for the box of sticking plasters. She'd decided long ago that Olwyn-Jessica was too much of a mouthful for any sane person to cope with. Her parents called her Olwyn and everyone else called her Jess. Or Doc. Or a combination of the three, which at times was confusing, but she'd gotten used to it over the years.

She stuck a plaster on eight-year-old Bryony Jones's knee. "There. That's you sorted. Now for

Oswald." She picked up the teddy and sat him on her lap. "Did he fall off the swing as well?" She spoke in a mixture of speech and sign.

Bryony nodded, the tears still evident on her face as she snuggled close into her mother.

Jess checked over the teddy. "Well, he has a bumped head and a nasty cut on his arm." The stuffing was peeping out and she knew that wasn't from the fall, but she wasn't going to say as much. A well-loved teddy bear always fell to pieces in the end, especially one as old as Oswald. She and Angharad, Bryony's mother, had grown up together so she knew his age.

She looked up. "I can bandage his head and sew up his arm."

Angharad smiled. "Thank you. I've been meaning to do it for weeks, but she won't let him out of her sight long enough, and I've always forgotten again by the time she's fast asleep."

"No problem." Within a few minutes, Oswald sported one fabric bandage on his head and another over his neatly stitched arm. Jess looked hard at him. "Now, Oswald," she continued speaking and signing, "you take care on the swing in future, look you. No more jumping off it. Do you promise?"

With Jess's help Oswald nodded.

She gave him back to Bryony. "Good. And does Bryony promise as well?"

The bear and Bryony nodded.

"Tidy." Jess scribbled on a piece of paper then ruffled the child's hair. "Now go and give this to Nerys at the desk, and she'll give you a sticker."

Bryony looked at her mother for a moment, waiting for her to agree before running from the room.

Jess looked at Angharad. "She'll be fine, but any

problems, just give me a call. I assume she isn't speaking yet?"

Angharad shook her head. "No. I wish she would, or at least give me some sign that she can hear me. It's been three years now and nothing doing." She sighed.

Jess touched her hand. "She'll do it in her own time, but like I said, I can always organize some tests if you and Sam want. How are you doing?"

Angharad rubbed her swollen belly. "I'll be glad when this one is born. Only a few more weeks, I hope."

"It could be any day now. You're thirty-seven weeks, which is term."

"I know, but after last time...what if something goes wrong again?"

Jess nodded. "It won't, but I'll be there and at the first hint of trouble I'll call in the flying squad. We can have you airlifted to the main hospital in twenty minutes, maybe less. Let's see you out." She led her friend back to the waiting room. "I'll see you on Friday for your usual checkup."

Jess glanced over the waiting room. Not too busy for once, so she may actually finish on time for a change. She picked up Mrs. Hughes's notes and was about to call the old lady in, when the door burst open.

Two men came in, one very obviously injured. Dai, she knew; his companion, she didn't.

The tall, dark-haired, and bearded man had his rather handsome features creased with pain. He cradled a bloody hand to his chest, supported by his good hand.

Jess glanced over at her next patient. "Mrs. Hughes, do you mind if I see to this gentleman first?"

"Not at all, dear. I'm in no rush."

Jess nodded. "Thank you. Come on through, Dai."

Dai followed her into the exam room and sat the other man down on the chair by her desk. "One of my workers dropped a chisel," he explained. "If it hadn't been for Josh's quick thinking, it would have got me."

"Ah, I dinna ken about..." The stranger broke off in a hiss of pain.

"Are you registered with us?" Jess asked.

He shook his head. "It's ma first day in town. I have nae even been here two hours yet."

Dai looked at her. "I need to go and call Geinor. Although no doubt someone has already told her I'm here."

She grinned. "News travels faster than a beating drum in this town. Can you ask Nerys for the new patient paperwork, please?"

He nodded and headed out.

Jess turned back to her patient. She didn't like his color at all. "Let's take a look at this hand, Josh...?"

"Wilson," he grunted. He extended his hand, supporting it with the other. "I got hit by a flying chisel."

Jess gently took his hand, her fingers moving to check his pulse. "Your heart is racing."

He shrugged. "A pretty doc will do that every time," he quipped.

Jess frowned. Part of her instantly put that bravado down to a typical male reaction. The other part knew he was hiding something. "Can you lie down on the exam couch for me?"

Yes, she could stitch his hand perfectly well with him sitting up, but she really didn't want him passing out in a heap on her floor, and lying down would hopefully reduce his heart rate a little. She turned to the instrument trolley, and by the time she'd gotten it

across the room, Josh lay on the couch, his eyes closed. If he was anything like the other construction workers she'd treated over the years, he hurt a great deal and just didn't want to let on.

Making the most of it, she took hold of his wrist again. Relieved his pulse was slowing a little, she took a few seconds to admire his physique as she checked him over. The bloke really was ruggedly handsome. His dark, wavy hair framed his face, giving him a boyish, roguish look. Normally she didn't like beards on a man, preferring strong, clean jaw lines, but this man was different. His dark beard was neatly trimmed, his brow creased with pain.

She began to clean the wound on his hand.

The blue eyes flicked open. "What's the damage?" His intoxicating and intriguing accent filled her small exam room. She couldn't place it, as it seemed to be neither one thing nor another.

She shot him what she hoped was a reassuring smile. "You're going to be fine. Just lie still and let me finish up here." She picked up his hand to finish her exam. "Your hand is going to need a couple of stitches, and you'll need to keep it clean for a few days."

Jess pulled over the tray of equipment and his color drained again as he gazed at the needle.

Jess shook her head and laid a reassuring hand on his shoulder. "Big strong bloke like you isn't afraid of a little needle, surely?" she asked, making light of the situation.

"Aye, maybe I am," he drawled, sounding Scottish again this time.

"So close your eyes and think of home," she told him. "I won't be long. Small scratch first as I'm going to numb your hand. That's an intriguing accent you

have. You're not from around here, are you?"

"No. I was born in Scotland, but spent my life all over. Most of it in the States." He stared at the ceiling as she stitched.

"Sounds like a fascinating story."

"Not really."

Jess finished with a bandage. "All done." She scribbled quickly, grateful the local pharmacist could read her handwriting. It was a standing joke that all doctors' handwriting was illegible and hers certainly was. "Here's a prescription for antibiotics and painkillers. When was your last tetanus shot?"

"Five weeks, three days ago." The answer came back firmly and swiftly.

"That's very precise."

"It isn't something I'm likely to forget in a hurry." His gaze swung from the ceiling back to her face. "They use needles in the States too."

"OK. Go and see Nerys on the desk, and she'll give you the forms to fill in to register you here. Make an appointment for next week to have the stiches removed. Either with one of the nurses or with me, depending on whom you'd rather see."

"Thanks, Doc."

"You're welcome. Take care now."

Jess cleared up for the next patient. Her pulse pounded, her chest tightened, her stomach was doing somersaults and her head throbbed. Anyone would think she was in love.

Pfft. Jess shook her head. She could give herself several very good reasons why love was *not* a good idea. She marked them off on her fingers as she listed them.

"One—he's a patient. Two—you've only just met