



Dark Streets Shineth

YOU'D BETTER WATCH OUT
YOU'D BETTER NOT CRY
SANTA CLAUS IS GOING TO DIE

SAY A PRAYER *Christmas* whodunit

CLARE REVELL

Dark Streets
Shineth

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Dedication

For everyone who wanted more Zander and Isabel.

What People are Saying

Convergence

Clare Revell never delivers a bad book. I've read many of her novels and found them all well-written and captivating. In my very humble opinion, she shines brightest on tales with a bit of an otherworldly slant – like this one. *Convergence* grabs the reader from the first page and doesn't let go until "the end." This is one of those can't-put-it-down page turners that every writer wants to deliver, but so few actually do. Way to go, Clare! ~ Delia Latham, author of *Destiny's Dream*

A Mummy for Christmas

Once again, Clare Revell has managed to tie up a Christmas romance with tinsel, silver and gold glitter, and a big, red bow! I love her writing, and *A Mummy for Christmas* does not disappoint. This charming novella perfectly demonstrates that God uses every circumstance, every joy, every laugh—and every heartache—to work for His good. I'm delighted to give this read an enthusiastic two thumbs up!! ~ Marianne Evans

Vegas Vacation

As the book progressed, I began to really feel for the spoiled aristocrat, and rugged Martin has a good influence on her ladyship. Don't you just love it when the characters grow and change? It takes an excellent writer to make us care about the characters even before they're entirely lovable. And personally, I like a character who's a little flawed, because aren't we all? ~ Jan Elder

1

Boaz Matthias glanced at his mother. "You don't have to get up this early every day, Mum. I'm going for a run. I'll be back way before breakfast."

His mother's face remained impassive. "Really? You're on holiday and you're running this early? It's still dark."

"It's a routine." He gulped the coffee. If he didn't get a move on, he'd be late. Setting the cup down on the draining board, he kissed her cheek. "And I have to stay in shape for work. I'll see you in a bit."

He jogged down the street at a brisk pace. Ever since he'd arrived in Headley Cross on holiday, he'd seen the same woman at the coffee shop each morning. From her attire, it was apparent she was a runner as well. Which meant she must be local.

Half of him wanted to speak to her, to find out her name, ask her for lunch or coffee, but the more sensible part warned him off. Holiday romances or romance in general never worked. At least not for him. In his line of work, he had to be more careful than most men. The last thing he needed was a date with a con artist. That wouldn't do his career any good whatsoever.

But he couldn't stop thinking about her. Dark eyes, a small amount of blonde hair that peeked out from under the woolly hat she wore. She had curves in

the right places. And there was something about her; something that brightened his day, even though he'd never spoken to her. Maybe today he'd pluck up the courage to say hi. At least find out her name.

He checked his watch. Good, he was early. He could pretend to be doing nothing when she arrived and perhaps strike up a conversation. Then he'd go home to take his mother shopping—once he'd put away another of her massive breakfasts. And Mum wondered why he went running every morning. He'd eaten more in the past few days than he had in the last month. If he didn't run, he'd be going back to work at least a stone heavier, if not more.

~*~

DC Isabel York pounded the dark, quiet streets of Headley Cross. Her breath hung in the chill late November air, frost glistened under her feet, but mercifully she hadn't lost her footing. Yet. Usually she ran with her partner, DS Zander Ellery, each morning. Something he seemed to insist on as they still shared a house together. They'd been doing so since the Prayer Slayer case had forced her from her home and into Zander's over the summer, so it was probably time she moved out and got a place of her own.

Lacking both time and inclination, she simply hadn't got around to doing so. Besides, the current situation suited them both.

She tugged her woolly hat further over her ears. Working and living together did have it's up and downs, especially with Zander's grandfather there as well, but they'd kind of drifted into a routine which suited them all. And Zander hadn't kicked her out yet,

so he wasn't that fed up with her.

Isabel turned left and jogged towards the coffee shop. Would *he* be there this morning? The tall, handsome stranger? This mystery man she couldn't help but notice each day? They'd been nodding to each other for over a week as they passed in the street or the doorway. Perhaps today would be the day one of them said hello.

She glanced at her watch. She was early this morning. The coffee shop wouldn't be open for another ten minutes. Oh, well, give her time to slow down and ease off the heavy breathing. Her phone buzzed and she answered the call. As always, she had one earphone in and one dangling inside her shirt. "Hi, Zander."

"You went for a run without me, again?" he complained.

"Well, you were snoring and so was Gramps." Isabel slowed to a walk. "I figured I'd go for a run and grab a coffee whilst I'm out. So, I won't need one when I get back." Her breath caught, already laboured with exertion, and her pounding heart sped up even more.

He was there, leaning against the wall, one foot braced behind him, gaze riveted to his phone screen. His short, dark blond hair stood up in a way that looked deliberate. His jacket hung open, and his white tee showed off his perfect chest and flat stomach.

Isabel automatically sucked in her stomach. Not that she was overweight, just not slim and sylph like. What she liked to refer to as curvy in the right places—at least that's what she'd been told a time or two. "I've got to go, Zander. See you in a few."

Ending the call, Isabel strode as nonchalantly as possible across the pedestrianized shopping centre. She

tried to drag her gaze away from his toned physique and the pair of fine legs that showed below the shorts...shorts? It was almost the end of November. No one she knew ran in shorts in the winter. OK, so the end of November was technically still autumn according to the meteorologists, but in her mind it was winter.

Piercing blue eyes met hers as Mr. Perfect put his phone away. His bright smile almost blew her away. "Morning."

"Morning. Aren't you cold?" Isabel couldn't help blurting out.

He raised an eyebrow. "Cold?"

"The shorts. It's a rather cold and frosty morning."

His smile turned into a broad grin, showed perfect teeth, and brightened his eyes. "Oh, no, I'm not particularly cold. It's force of habit from several years in the army to run in shorts no matter what the weather." His gaze ran up and down her clothing. "You, on the other hand, are dressed for the weather. Hat included."

"Zander insisted."

"Boyfriend?"

Isabel snorted. "No way. Umm, housemate." That sounded way better than partner, which would either require a detailed explanation, or give off the wrong impression. Again. And she didn't want Mr. Handsome to be put off at the outset by her job.

He held out a hand. "Boaz Matthias."

She took his hand, trying to ignore the backflip her stomach did. His grip was firm and warm. "Isabel York. Do you come here often?" She mentally kicked herself. "Sorry. That didn't sound half so corny in my head."

“Only for the past few mornings. I’m on holiday. My parents live here, so I’m staying with them. Killing two birds with one stone as they say.”

She sighed internally. Figured. All the good-looking ones were married, otherwise taken or on holiday. Oh well.

The shop door opened, and he waved a hand. “After you.”

Isabel shook her head. “You were here long before I was.”

“My mother always told me to put ladies first.” Boaz held the door open for her.

She smiled. “In that case, it’d be rude not to.” She headed inside the store. “Morning, Ceryn.”

The barista smiled at her. “Morning Isabel. Want the usual?”

“Please.” Isabel handed over her own refillable mug. “And whatever this gentleman is having.”

“That’s very kind, but you don’t have to,” he began.

“I know, but I’d like to.”

“Thank you. In that case I’ll have a large cappuccino to go, please.”

She’d honestly expected him to put up more of a fight but was pleased he didn’t. “I’m not getting Zander one this morning. He can get his own.”

Ceryn laughed. “Have you two fallen out again?”

“He won’t let me put the Christmas tree up.”

“I should think not. It’s November. Even if it is almost December.”

Isabel glanced over her shoulder to where the store tree sat with glowing lights and gaily wrapped presents underneath it. “Really? That’s been up at least three weeks.”

Ceryn glared at the tree. "Company policy. And it also had to be up before the council switched on the main tree and lights last weekend. Mum came and did this one because we won't let her have the tree up at home. You should see her desk. It's covered in lights and tinsel all year around. Along with a mini glass tree and carol singer ornaments."

Isabel beamed as she paid for the coffee. "That is a fantastic idea. I shall do that to my office desk today as soon as I get into work."

Boaz glanced at her. "I hope your boss approves."

"Me, too, but too bad if he doesn't. It's my desk. Besides, it's usually fairly cluttered, so no one will notice."

Was that a grimace that crossed his face for an instant before he covered it? "So, what's your drink of choice this early in the morning?" he asked.

"Gingerbread hot chocolate, extra hot, with marshmallows and cream. Then a really long run to burn off all the calories." Her cheeks warmed as his gaze ran over her again.

"So, Isabel, this may sound forward, but would you like to join me for lunch later? My treat, as you got this."

"Sure." Her voice replied before her head could say no. "I should be free around half twelve. Do you know the Three Sixteen?"

Boaz shook his head. "No, but Mum will, and I'll get her to give me directions. I will see you then. Thanks again for the coffee."

"You're welcome." Isabel took hers. "Thanks, Ceryn. See you later." She headed out into the chilly, dark morning. It wouldn't be light until at least 7.45AM. And she must be mad. A date with a total

stranger. Not to mention one who was on holiday. She took a long drink as she began jogging again.

Her phone rang. "Hello."

"It's me." This time Zander used his serious work voice. "We have a call. I'll pick you up from the Lytham Road car park in ten minutes."

"I'm not dressed."

Zander laughed. "You're running in PJ's?"

"You know what I mean."

"I'll throw your work stuff in the car and you can change whilst I log out the service vehicle. Grab me a coffee, will you? It'll be a long morning."

She turned around, heading back to the shop. "OK. See you in ten." She pushed the door open.

Boaz held the door open for her, cup in hand. "That was fast."

"Got called into work, so I have to get Zander's coffee anyway as he said he'd take me in." She headed back to the counter. "Can I have a large Zander special, please, Ceryn? Extra strong and extra hot."

"Sure."

Isabel paid for it. "The desk decorating has to wait for another day. The boss gets a reprieve." Three minutes later she was in the car park waiting for Zander. She sipped her drink, her thoughts turning to whatever case they'd landed this time. To be called out before 6AM was never a good sign.

Boaz jogged up. He stopped and swigged his coffee. "See you at half past twelve."

Isabel bit her lip. "Hopefully. Depends on how bogged down I get in this new case at work."

"Surely you are allowed a lunch break?"

She angled her head. "Good point. They are always complaining about my desk lunches, so yeah.

Here's my lift. See you at 12:30."

~*~

Boaz's mind whirled as the car drove away. Did he really just ask her out? Did she say yes? He was only here for a couple of weeks, precisely seven more days before he went back home. What did he hope to accomplish in that short space of time? He had to be certifiably crazy. He knew nothing about her apart from her name. Isabel. Oh, and that apparently, she loved Christmas so much she wanted to decorate her desk.

Good job she didn't work under him. She'd have another think coming if she did. He didn't do Christmas. Which was why he hadn't spent it at home since he was old enough to move out and volunteered for the on call or duty shift, or both. However, he'd agreed to put up his parents outside lights this year—purely because Dad had threatened to stand on a ladder to do them himself. And at sixty-five that couldn't happen.

He headed back towards the house, loping silently along the quiet streets. Isabel. Such a pretty name. Only now all he could think was that really awful joke. *Isabel necessary on a bike? Yes, if you don't want to get knocked off.*

As he opened the front door, he could smell bacon and sausage cooking. No matter how much he protested, Mum always cooked for him. Way too much and way too early, but he ate it anyway. "I'm back. Just need to change and shower and I'll be down."

"Breakfast will be in five minutes. Your Dad would like you to take him to the DIY store later this

morning. He wants to paint the bathroom. Oh, and the hall, landing, and stairs.”

Boaz mentally rolled his eyes. That would be another job for him to do. “Sounds good, but no orange this time. Those kitchen cabinets still give me nightmares.”

His mother’s laugh rolled through the kitchen door. “It’s not the 1970s anymore, dear. I have a colour chart to show you over breakfast.”

“OK. And I was thinking. Once those outside lights are up just leave them. Put a timer switch on and simply turn it off on twelfth night. That way Dad doesn’t have to worry about them next year.” He headed up the stairs, finishing his coffee. He really ought to invest in one of those reusable cups. Much better for the environment. And by the looks of what Isabel had paid for her fancy coffee, having one’s own mug got a discount as well.

He grabbed a change of clothes and headed into the bathroom. He hadn’t packed his suit. It made a nice change not having to wear one. He even planned to dress down for church on Sunday. He was sure God wouldn’t mind just this once if he turned up in cords and a jumper. So long as he turned up at all.

The best part of his parents having retired to Headley Cross was the fact that no one knew him or what he did for a living. And that was a relief. For once he could be incognito. And after the month he’d had at work, that was a very good thing.

~*~

Isabel glanced at her watch. 12:20PM. She closed the folder and grabbed her bag from the bottom

drawer of her desk. "I'm going for lunch."

Zander glanced up. "Give me a second, and I'll come as well."

She paused. How did she dissuade him without hurting him? Ever since the Slayer case in the summer, he'd been overprotective. As nice as it was, just this once she needed him to stay here. "One of us should be here in case the coroner rings."

Zander stood. "Arend isn't doing the post-mortem until tomorrow, you know that. Besides, how often do you want to lunch out?"

She looked at him. "I also have a few things to do. Like go to the chemist and the hairdresser and...You'd get bored. Seriously."

Her partner raised an eyebrow. "Are you going on a date, Is?"

Heat rushed to her face.

He laughed. "You are, aren't you?"

"What makes you think that? Anyway, my hairdresser is very married. I'll see you at the briefing at two. Besides, it's your turn to write the press conference spiel." She hurried out before Zander could insist and come with her. She wanted to meet this bloke alone, and she needed an hour or so away from work. The case they'd been given was horrible. Yes, she worked in major crimes, as the squad was now known, so every case was nasty, but this was a child and...

Isabel forced her mind to think of something else. The weather was frosty. Frigid air filled her lungs as she left the building. She tugged the hat over the blonde hair which she planned to change back to brown. She preferred it dark, and now the danger was passed, the Prayer Slayer off the streets and behind

bars, hopefully for good, she could return to her natural colour.

A brisk ten-minute walk later, via the two shops she'd needed to visit, she pushed open the door to the Three Sixteen café on the High Street. Christmas music filled the air. Lights twinkled around the pictures and counters and on the huge tree in the corner. She glanced around the seating area. Was he here already?

A fine figure, clad this time in a Fair Isle jumper and cords, stood and raised a hand.

Her heart sped up and the heat in her cheeks had nothing to do with the warmth of the café. She drew in a deep breath. Nothing ventured, nothing gained as Gran used to say. And for once the memory of Gran raised a smile, not a tear.

2

Isabel smiled and wove her way through the tables towards Boaz. She couldn't believe he was actually here, or that she was actually doing this crazy, stupid thing. "Hi."

Boaz pulled out a chair for her. "Hi."

"I'm not late, am I?" She sat down and slid out of her coat.

He shook his head. "Right on time. I was early." He sat and offered her the menu. "How was your morning?"

She kept her gaze on the menu, even though she knew what she'd have. "If you don't mind, I'd rather not talk about work. I just want to do something else for forty minutes, before I have to head back to the office."

He nodded. "Work is right off the table, for both of us." His wink warmed her as she glanced up. "Besides, I'm on holiday and don't even want to think about the *W* word. Hmmm, think I'll go steak and kidney pie, chips, and beans. What do you fancy?"

Other than you? Isabel put the menu down, just managing not to voice the thought. "Jacket potato with cheese, and beans, please. And tea. One of us can order at the counter and they bring it over. We just give them the table number."

"I'll go order, then." He went to the counter.

She leaned back in the chair, hoping her cheeks weren't bright red and it was just warm in here. Her phone buzzed and she glanced at the screen. Zander, not really a surprise. What did he want this time?

You sure it's not a date? Z

It's just lunch. I needed out of the office and away from the case for a little bit. See you at two. Is. She dropped her phone into her bag and dumped it by her feet.

Boaz came back with a tray. "Food won't be long." He put the tray down and sat. "I want you to know that I don't make a habit of this."

"Inviting strangers to lunch?" Isabel placed the empty cup and tea pot in front of her. "If it's any consolation, I don't often buy them coffee at O-dark-thirty either. Not quite sure what came over me this morning."

Boaz spooned sugar into his drink and stirred. "Me, either. I was hoping to say hello, rather than just nodding, but this?" He waved his spoon. "A little out of my comfort zone."

"Me, too." She poured the tea and added a dash of milk. "You said your parents live here?"

"They retired here. Mainly to be near my brother. He runs the Christmas tree farm just outside town."

"I've always wanted to go there. Might go this weekend."

"Honestly, I've never been either. That's the plan for this afternoon. My parents want to go and pick out a Christmas tree, so figured I'd do both at the same time."

"Do you and your brother just not get on, or do you live that far away?"

Boaz leaned back as the waitress brought over the

food. "Thank you. No, we get on fine. Work is pretty full on most of the time, and family is one of those things that gets pushed aside. That is something I want to change, however."

Isabel silently said grace, and then picked up her knife and fork. Her stomach rumbled in anticipation. "Where do you work?"

"Buckingham." He raised his fork to his mouth. "But I didn't think we were talking work."

"We're not. Well, not intentionally." She smiled. "So, I like juice rather than soda, chips, rainbows, Christmas, and long weekends at the beach."

He raised an eyebrow. "I prefer beer, mountains, and sunrises. And running in all weathers."

"Even the rain?" She glanced up in surprise. That was the one time she'd stay in rather than go out. Unless she had to.

He nodded; his mouth full. Once he'd swallowed, he replied. "Being in the army meant having to run in all weathers. Just a habit now to go out every day at the same time. No matter what."

She grimaced. "Not fun in the rain or a lot of snow though."

"Easier to run in both of those than sand."

"True." She ate for a moment. "Did you serve overseas?"

"Several places. Including two tours in the desert." He held her gaze. "Lost a good mate out there."

"Is that why you left?"

"No. I finished my ten-year enlistment and took a job on civvie street. And we're back to work again. If there's one thing I don't ever do, it's mix business and pleasure. In my experience office relationships never work." He dug the fork into the steak and kidney pie.

“Mum’s given me a huge list of things to do. I’ve done the outside lights and taken them paint shopping this morning. They want almost the whole house painted before I go home.”

Isabel laughed. “I’d ask you to come do mine, but it’s not my house. Plus, it was redone fairly recently.”

He grinned. “I have enough painting to keep me busy for months, never mind a week.”

She glanced at her watch as she finished her potato. “Look at the time. I’m afraid I have to eat and run. I’m due back at the office and have a meeting at two.”

“I can give you a lift if you like.”

“It’s kind of you to offer, but it isn’t far. Thank you ever so much.”

He smiled. “Would you like dinner tonight?”

She hesitated. “I...”

“We can go Dutch if you’d prefer.”

That was better. More of a friendly meal with a nice chap than a date with someone she hardly knew. Isabel nodded. “I’d like that. Thank you.”

“I can pick you up?”

“OK. 19 Silver Fox Road.” That probably wasn’t the wisest decision, but at least Zander would be there and see her leave.

Boaz rose as she got to her feet. “Then I’ll pick you up at seven-thirty.” He held out a hand.

She took it, surprised when he kissed her fingers rather than shook it. And just like that, they were back to a date. Was that so bad? She had plenty of time to find out more about him—well seven days at any rate. “Thank you for lunch. See you later.”

He let go and nodded. “Yes. See you later.”

Isabel headed outside, the echo of his touch