

CLARE REVELL

Monday's Child



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Cover Art by Nicola Martinez

White Rose Publishing, a division of Pelican Ventures, LLC
www.pelicanbookgroup.com PO Box 1738 *Aztec, NM * 87410

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Publishing History

First White Rose Edition, 2012

Print Edition ISBN 978-1-61116-173-1

Electronic Edition ISBN 978-1-61116-172-4

Published in the United States of America

*Monday's Child must hide for protection
Tuesday's Child tenders direction
Wednesday's Child grieves for his soul
Thursday's Child chases the whole
Friday's Child is a man obsessed
Saturday's Child might be possessed
And Sunday's Child on life's seas is tossed
Awaiting the Lifeboat that rescues the lost*

Dedication

For my son, Rhys.

Thanks to Ruth, for answering all my midwifery and technical baby questions; to Lynne for providing the emergency department/paramedic information; to Steph for making Luke speak like an American and not like a Brit and for putting up with my constant queries over what the American for this, that and the other is.

Praise for Clare Revell

Season For Miracles

Kyle and Holly came to life in this book with so much ease they hardly sounded fictional and so real. The pain and fear that Holly goes through is heartbreaking but I loved that with Kyle anything is possible. This is definitely a book worth reading for it has everything just right for the season: God and hope. Lena ~ Happily Ever After Reviews

If you enjoy romantic suspense, you'll love this fast-paced read. Suspense elements kept me turning pages and the well drawn characters touched my heart. I read *Season For Miracles* in one sitting, snow bound and cozy. Delicious. I recommend this book to anybody who enjoys a well written and balanced, inspirational romantic suspense. I can't resist a story that celebrates God's love and its miraculous power. ~ Author KM Daughters

Saving Christmas

Clare Revell does it again with this beautiful story of hope and redemption. *Saving Christmas* packs a lot of story into a limited number of pages, and draws the reader in from the very first line. It's a wonderful respite from the hectic holiday to-do list. ~ Author Mary Manners

1

Monday's Child must hide for protection...

Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my King and my God.
Psalm 84.3

*Just a perfect June day...*Sara leaned into Jamie as they walked the damp, dark streets toward the car. The movie had been great, her new husband's company magical, but the thought of the rest of the evening made her heart sing. Not even the drizzling rain could quench her joy. God had been gracious to her, by placing a wonderful man like Jamie Barnes in her life, at a time when she thought she was destined to be alone.

Jamie was a charmer, with dark curly hair and movie star looks to match. She wasn't sure what she'd done to deserve his attention, never mind his sudden proposal, but she wasn't complaining. He loved her, so she could overlook his foibles and long days he spent travelling for work.

A jarring thud jolted her as the bag twisted violently off her shoulder. "Hey..." She gripped at it to find herself flying through the air, her head hitting the ground hard.

"You all right, babe?" Concern flooded Jamie's voice.

"Yes...don't let him get away."

Jamie set off after the thief, as Sara struggled to her feet, seeing stars. Her head spun, and she felt sick. *So much for the perfect day.* She turned to see Jamie and the thief struggling under the streetlamp. A flash of metal, a swift upward

movement of an arm and Jamie hung writhing, looking down at his chest. She screamed his name, her heart pounding as a stab of fear and shock hit her hard. "Ja-a-a-a-m-m-m-m-i-i-i-e-e-e..."

The tall thin man turned to face her, the knife in his hand. He released Jamie, letting him slump to the ground. The man's piercing gaze, the hatred in his eyes, and the cruel thin hardness of his lips burned into her memory as Sara ran towards her husband's motionless body. Long greasy locks and fine rain outlined against stark white streetlight framed the assailant's face like a halo, reminding her of the angel of death.

The terrifying sound of a gunshot tore through the misty night air. The sound ricocheted off the alley walls, blue smoke expanding outwards little by little. Pain exploded through her as a bullet ripped into her body. Sara screamed as the blast knocked her to the wet ground. She landed hard, next to where Jamie lay in an ever increasing pool of blood, her breath coming in short gasps.

She grabbed her leg in pain as slow, deliberate footsteps squelched towards her. Black lace-up combat boots stopped in front of her face. There was a loud click as the hammer on the gun rose, but she wasn't as scared as she thought she might be. *Lord, if I am to die now let it be swift.*

Footsteps ran down the street towards them, shouts echoing. A closer voice called. "We have to go. Someone's coming."

The man gave her a cold stare. "You'll keep, doll. I'll be back for you. That's a promise." The threat in his voice echoed in the empty recesses of his eyes. Sliding the gun under his jacket, he vanished into the night, taking her bag with him.

Sara's whole body shook with pain, but she pushed it aside. "Jamie..." Reaching out she clamped her hands over his shirt in a vain attempt to staunch the flow of blood.

"Somebody help us, please." She peered up into the growing crowd around them. "Please, phone an ambulance."

"It's on its way." Someone in the crowd spoke.

"Sara." Jamie's voice was so faint, and his breathing so labored, she had to put her ear to his mouth to hear him. "It...was...Austin..."

"Jamie, hold on. Help's coming."

He shook his head and groaned, putting his hands on top of hers. "I...do...love...you. Remember..."

The sirens wailing in the distance grew closer. "I love you, too. They're coming. Just hold on a little longer."

"Ohhh...Sara." Jamie's eyes opened wide for an instant, then glazed over. His body went limp, and his eyes closed.

Tears spilled down Sara's face, and her stomach twisted within her. "Jamie, no, don't leave me."

Pain from her leg raged through her. Her heart broke, and huge sobs shook her frame. Tears welled up and spilled out, mixing with the blood on the path. Pulling him into her arms, Sara's fingers clutched him tightly, as if that alone would bring him back, calling his name over and over again. "Jamie. Jamie."

Three weeks later

Sara stood unsteadily on her crutches, tears running down her face. Dressed in black, she'd come straight from the funeral to pack. Every room in Jamie's apartment reminded her of him: from the chair he sat in; his coffee mug that stood on the kitchen counter; his shaving mirror and razor in the bathroom; to the new double bed that remained untouched, ready for the first night back from their honeymoon. All her clothes and few belongings had been moved into his place the week before the wedding.

Sara blinked back tears as Aunt Mary came from the bedroom, carrying a small case. "Is that everything?"

Mary nodded and wrapped her arms around her niece. "All they'll allow you. I'm going to miss you."

Sara leaned into her. "I don't want to go. I want to stay

with you.”

“That’s not possible, Sara. The police explained all that.”

“But I can’t write, text, email or even take my mobile phone. I’m the victim. Why do I have to go away?”

Mary hugged her, her voice taking on a firm, no nonsense tone. “Frank Austin killed Jamie and wants you dead. If this ‘witness protection program’ is the only way to keep you safe until he’s locked up, then it’s what we must do. You just have to trust God will work this for good as He promised He would.”

“Jamie’s dead. His killer is running around the country free, and I get locked up. Where’s the good in that?”

“Mrs. Barnes, we need to leave.”

Sara glanced at Detective Constable Lomas and inclined her head enough to show she agreed, despite her feelings. She hugged her aunt. “You take care, Aunt Mary. I love you.”

“I love you, too, dear. Take care of yourself. Go on now.”

Unwilling to leave, but unable to stay Sara took firm hold on the crutches. At least she’d lose these in another four weeks or so. She let the police officers lead her out to the car. As she did so, she entered the witness protection program, did what the police wanted and vanished.

November

Detective Lieutenant Luke Nemec, LAPD, pulled up the handle on his suitcase, grabbed his weapons case, slung his rucksack on his shoulder and exited into the arrivals hall at Heathrow Airport, London. Scanning the crowd for the person meeting him, he spotted the card with his name on it and headed in that direction.

Thank You for bringing me here safe, Lord. Oversee the liaison with the British police. We both want the same thing, despite our different ways of going about it.

“Lieutenant Nemec? I’m Detective Inspector Wilcox.

Welcome to England."

Luke shook the offered hand. "Thank you." He followed the dark-haired officer out to the car, trying not to yawn. He didn't sleep on planes, and the fifteen hour flight was starting to tell. All vestiges of sleep vanished as Wilcox explained the change in his assignment.

He wants me to do what? "I'm not protective services, I'm narcotics." Luke baulked. "Excuse me for being blunt, sir, but can't one of your own cops do this?"

"The Chief Constable and Captain Harriman both agree you would be the best choice. Having spoken to him, I agree."

At the mention of his commanding officer's name, Luke sat straight in his seat. "You spoke to Captain Harriman?"

"I did. You know Austin, and you know how he works, which makes you the ideal choice. Your original assignment still stands. We need your expertise on this. Sara is extremely headstrong. She spent three weeks in hospital and the last four months in a safe house, with just a guard outside, as she refused anything else. Things have changed. I want you with her at all times. As far as everyone is concerned, you're man and wife."

"Sir, with all due respect—"

"It's not up for debate, Lieutenant. You'll move in and not let her out of your sight."

Luke scowled out of the window. "I know what witness protection involves, sir."

I just chose not to work it. Does doing two jobs mean double pay? And a pretend marriage? She won't like that idea any more than I do.

Wilcox smiled as he parked outside the chalet. "Good. I'll take you over and introduce you."

Luke stifled a yawn. "Do I have time for a shower first, sir?"

"Of course."

Luke followed him inside and carried his hand luggage though the minuscule apartment to the bathroom. He could fit the whole place into his living room.

Knowing from past experience warm water would just make him more tired, Luke jumped into a freezing cold shower. The additional assignment made no sense to his sleep deprived brain no matter which way he looked at it. *Lord, I trust You have a reason for this change in the workload. Show me what it is and work it for the best outcome for all concerned. Be with this woman I am meant to protect and help me to do my job to the best of my ability.*

Sara pushed away her plate, feeling sick again. She laid a hand on her swelling stomach. "Another meal bites the dust. Maybe one day I'll manage to eat something you like, podling."

She let out a shuddering breath. The nickname she gave her unborn child didn't sound silly anymore. The hospital ran a routine pregnancy test before her first surgery, and the nurse had hustled over and waved a clipboard at her. "Sign this consent. We got the results, and we're taking you to surgery, anyway." Obviously they'd expected her to lose the baby. She hadn't. Jamie's child had survived the shooting, the three subsequent surgeries and the grief filling her. She was now five months pregnant with a honeymoon baby, who would never know his father.

She rose, threw the sandwich into the bin, and then washed the plate. Picking up her coffee she smiled and leaned against the counter. Under normal circumstances, she wouldn't drink coffee if someone paid her, but again, these were hardly —

A sharp knock on the door interrupted her train of thought, and she went to answer it, coffee in hand. "Good afternoon, Inspector Wilcox."

To her annoyance, Wilcox and the man with him came in uninvited. He shut the door and looked straight at her. "Sara, I'd like you to meet Lieutenant Luke Nemec. Lieutenant Nemec will be your new protection officer. Lieutenant, this is

Mrs. Sara Barnes. Sara, things have to change. Lieutenant Nemec is moving in here with you. The cover story is that you are man and wife. You'll take his name. The papers are being done now."

Luke smiled at her and offered his hand.

Sara ignored it, staring aghast at Wilcox, shock resonating through her, and not just at his abrupt tone. Was there something wrong with her hearing? There was no rank of *lootenant* in the English police force, for one thing. Or leftenant come to that. For another, he didn't look like a soldier, and—wait a minute, did he say *marriage*? "I'm sorry?"

"Lieutenant Nemec will be with you on a full-time basis. As far as the world is concerned, you'll be his wife. First name terms only."

Furious, Sara shook her head. Her eyes narrowed and her lips set. "Oh, no. There is absolutely no way, either in this lifetime or the next, that—"

"Sara—"

"Don't you Sara me. I am not going to live with anyone, Inspector. Especially someone I've only just met. And I am definitely *not* marrying him." She glanced at Luke, deliberately pronouncing his title the English way. "No offence, Leftenant Nemec."

Luke slid his hands into his pockets. "None taken, but my name is Luke. If it helps any, I was just told myself."

Taken aback by his accent, Sara did a double take. "You're American."

"And you're British." He tilted his head, flashing his teeth in a broad smile.

Sara scrutinized the American cop. He was everything Jamie wasn't. He was taller, at least six feet. His shock of pale brown hair stood upright in places, almost spiked, and he could do with a shave. He had at least a day's growth there. Not that this look was bad, but it was definitely different and rather unprofessional.

Running her gaze over his taut figure, Sara took in the way his shirt hugged his broad chest. His body tapered in at

the waist and out at the hips. She raised her eyes back to his face. He was eyeing her the same way. Her gaze met his blue, fathomless one. He was taking Jamie's place as her protector. This whole marriage thing turned her stomach. She'd lost her husband, their home, and now his name. How much more could she take? *Lord, if this is Your idea of a joke, it's a pretty poor one.*

Sara turned back to Wilcox. "I'm not *marrying* anyone."

"This marriage is in name only and just on paper. You won't need an annulment or a divorce when this is over. But I am going to have to insist on the first name terms—at least in public."

Sara huffed and wrapped a protective arm across her stomach. No way was she calling Leftenant Nemec by his first name. Ever. "The spare bedroom is that way, Leftenant. I'm going for a walk."

Luke hefted his bags. "Give me two minutes, and I'll come with you, Sara."

She tapped her watch. "That's one minute and fifty-five seconds, Leftenant, and counting."

Sliding the chalet door shut behind her, Sara locked and double-checked it. Her new cop had been exactly one minute and fifteen seconds—prompter than the previous one. Which was a plus.

The sea beyond the cliff tops glistened in the winter sunlight as she slid the key into her fleece pocket and zipped it shut. She glanced at the leftenant as he pulled shades from his pocket and put them on. Her heart pounded as his good looks and smile seared into her. Sara shook her head. Jamie had only been dead a few months. She had no right to think that way, and she wouldn't cheat on Jamie's memory by eyeing up some other man. She stiffened her shoulders and walked faster. "It's November, and the sun sets soon. Won't shades be a tad useless in the dark?"

Luke raised an eyebrow at her. "Not at all."

She shook her head, veering past the chalets and onto the huge playing field. In the summer, the sights and sounds of the children playing usually thrilled her, but not this year. It was hard to be happy when her husband had been murdered right before her very eyes, and she had to go into hiding until the murderer was caught.

Now it was autumn and the children had long gone. The forlorn cry of the seagulls soaring above her, and the soft footfalls of her escort filled the air. Sara took a deep breath. "I can almost taste the salt from the sea."

"You love it here, don't you?"

Sara sighed and kicked at the sand, lifting her face to the sky and the breeze. "Aunt Mary brought me here every year when I was a kid. It's nice to be back, even if slightly ironic. Of all the safe houses in the country, they pick this holiday park. I just wish the circumstances were different."

"I can't blame you for that."

This was her fourth month in protective custody, and she was tired of all the agents on duty. "How much longer will I be stuck here? What if they never catch Austin?"

"We will." The confidence in his voice gave her the first glimmer of hope in a long time.

Sara took the steep path down the dunes on the East Anglian coast of England. She crossed the valley floor, with its harsh grassland and windswept bushes nestled between the two sets of dunes. She tried not to let things get her down, but some days it was two steps forward and one step back. But with the lieutenant's confidence, maybe today she could take three forward and one back. That would be progress, right?

Her leg ached. "It's going to rain later."

He glanced skyward, then at her. "How do you know?"

"My leg is a pretty good barometer."

"Does it hurt?"

"Aches when it rains or when it's going to rain, but other than that, the scar is the only sign of what happened. I lost the crutches three months ago."

Why hadn't the shooter fired again and shot her in the heart when he had the chance? He'd hit her in the leg, shattering the bone, then he'd stared down at her and smiled with an evil twist of his lips. Then he'd walked away. When would he come back for her? Before the trial? At the trial? Of course there'd never be a trial if they never caught him.

The wind picked up strength as she got nearer the sea. The dune in front of her rose sharply, but she made short work of the exhilarating climb, enjoying her freedom.

Luke's voice shattered what little peace she found. "We should head back, Sara. It'll be dark soon."

She glanced at him, hating the way her name sounded so good coming from his foreign tongue. *And they thought only British blokes had cute accents.* "We've only just got here. I've been stuck inside all day. Half an hour, I promise."

"Sara..."

"Leftenant, there's no one for miles. It's you, me, your radio and several other officers within screaming distance. What could possibly happen? Unless that huge seagull up there is carrying a rifle and has me in its sights?"

Luke's shades hid his expression, so she had no idea whether he meant the sarcasm in his voice or not. "Maybe it has, and it couldn't miss you in that red coat you're wearing. Very well. Half an hour, no longer."

The wind gusted, taking her breath away and whipping her long brown hair into her face. Jamie liked it long. Those few nights they were married, he'd brush and plait it for her. As much as she hated waiting seven hours for it to dry, she couldn't chop it off and lose another memory. Not yet, not unless she didn't have a choice.

Jamie would have loved it here at Winterton. He'd have chased her across the sand, trying to throw her into the water the way he did at Bournemouth on the day he proposed.

Sara closed her eyes and twisted her head around in a circle, trying to relieve the tension in her aching shoulders as she brushed away the tears. It didn't matter what she did, every single thing reminded her of Jamie.

"Are you all right, Sara? Do you need a hand?" Luke offered his assistance as she turned to climb a steep, but low hill covered with loose sand.

"I can manage, thank you. I've done this almost every day for the last few months." She ignored him as she climbed the sand dune and headed down the beach to the sea.

"Don't go in the water," said the low warning voice behind her.

She shivered at his deep baritone and rolled her eyes. "Like I'd go and get my clothes wet in November."

"I don't want to have to jump in there after you."

"Can't you swim?" If it were August, she'd wade in up to her waist with the sole purpose of annoying him. Did he really think she'd drown herself? "Or is it too cold for you?"

"It's too cold for either of us, but I can swim with the best of them. Dad insists I could swim before I could walk."

Sara smiled slightly. "Cute." The view ahead appealed to her artist's eye as she took in the pale blue and grey of the sky and sea. The sun was beginning to set, casting pinks and oranges over the low, threatening clouds.

"Wow. Look at that sky." Pulling out her camera, Sara took several sets of photographs. The sun set fast at this time of year, each passing moment giving a different aspect to the hue on the horizon.

She'd come down with her oils at some point. The scenery had 'paint me' written all over it. The height of the dunes and the golden sand, set against the deep blues, greens and greys of the sea, would make for a wonderful landscape painting. Sunrise or sunset would be the best time.

Neither time would sit well with the lieutenant, but he could sit and watch and keep out of her hair. She wasn't the criminal, and she was sick and tired of being treated like one.

Sara kept shooting until the sun disappeared below the waves, and a discreet cough sounded from behind her.

"I'm coming." Sara shoved the camera into her pocket. As much as she wanted to stay out late tonight, she didn't have the energy to argue. Cops always had an answer for

everything and got their own way to boot.

She was stubborn, but even she could learn a thing or three from the protection officers on the art of being immovable. In fact, stubborn wasn't the only word to describe them. There were several alternatives, including inflexible, bolshie, and boring.

She stifled a laugh. The lieutenant wouldn't appreciate any of them, or the joke being about him. Sara glanced at his set jaw. "Are we going shopping in the morning? Constable Lomas was originally taking me."

"I don't think so."

"Fine, I'll give you a list of the lingerie I need, and you can go buy it. I like it lacy, preferably white, and I dislike red and black." She didn't quite grasp the meaning of the expression that crossed his face, but maybe he was merely reacting to her baiting him. He seemed different than the other officers somehow and a small surge of guilt filled her. Was it possible he didn't like the 'marriage' idea, either?

"I'll check with the people in charge here and with my boss in the States. I need to see if any progress has been made with the case, but as I have orders to move in with you, I assume Austin is at large. So I doubt they'll want you out and about." His tone left her in no doubt as to how serious he took his job.

Sara pressed a hand into the small of her back, rubbing it. She'd be doing that a lot more soon. Not just because she'd spent the day on her feet cleaning the chalet, and the evening walking over the dunes on the beach. "I haven't been able to get to the gym because of my leg. Never mind the fact there isn't a gym within ten miles of here, and I'm not allowed to breathe without permission. Now my leg's healed, I need to buy new clothes."

"What's wrong with the ones you have? You look fine to me."

"I'm gaining weight because I'm not exercising." She paused, thrown by his compliment. Should she tell him the truth? No, she needed at least one piece of her marriage left, at

least for a little bit longer. "I could go alone."

"You will not. I'll talk to Detective Inspector Wilcox and let you know what he says." The reply was instant, short and sharp. She wouldn't have expected anything less.

They reached the door of the chalet. Luke insisted on going in first. Sara shook her head at him then followed, shutting the door. She bent to turn on the small heater before tossing her fleece jacket onto the chair. She really didn't want to cook for two, but she was hungry and wasn't about to let the officer starve or eat in front of him.

She pulled open the small freezer. "Do you want chicken curry or lasagna for dinner?"

"Either."

"That's no help." She pulled out two dinners at random. She heated one, put it on a plate, and handed it to him. He'd made himself at home on the sofa, his feet up on the coffee table and the remote control in his hand. "Here you go."

He smiled, showing a dazzling row of perfect teeth that only the Americans had. "Thank you."

"Welcome." Sara went back into the kitchen and heated hers. She ate it at the small bench, then set the plate in the sink. That could wait until morning.

She settled down in the arm chair, not really paying attention to what was on the TV. She watched in order to avoid the male presence on the other side of the room. Just after nine, she rose and announced she was going to bed. Not giving Luke a chance to respond, she headed quickly into her bedroom and shut the door, shoving the chair in front of it. As she removed her watch, she caught sight of the date. Her breath caught. Jamie died five months ago to the day.

Tears fell thick and fast and Sara gave into them. She curled up on the bed with a pillow, her knees pulled as close to her chest as the baby bump would allow. She sobbed as her heart once again broke within her, the pain inside building to a crescendo that would never peak. Why did Jamie have to die? Closing her eyes against the tears, she poured out her heart to the Lord.