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Kisses from  
Heaven

by

Clare Revell

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## **Kisses from Heaven**

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# 1

The bell above the door tinkled as Kady Harris entered the Priory. She had almost expected the vet's office to be empty. Winter had arrived with a vengeance—two feet of snow blanketing the south of England overnight. She *didn't* expect to find the drop dead gorgeous practice owner behind the counter playing receptionist.

"Top o' the morning to you." Rory O'Leary's Irish lilt brought a smile to Kady's face and warmed her chilled body, setting her heart racing. "It sure is cold out there today."

"It is. But even the snow showcases God's beauty in nature—someone once called snowflakes 'kisses from heaven'. Just think of all the millions of unique snowflakes out there. Millions of God's kisses covering the world with His love."

"That's very poetic."

"Thank you."

She put the empty cat basket on the counter, pulled off her gloves, and rubbed her hands, trying to bring the circulation back. Warmth blasted from the radiators, a welcome relief from the frigid temperatures outside. "I've come to collect Willow."

"And there I was thinking you'd come to see me and give me someone to talk to. It's been cold and lonely here all morning with just Cain to keep me company."

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*Are you flirting with me, Rory O'Leary? Or do you do that to every woman who comes in.*

"Well, you're here and I'm here...Question is, is Willow?"

"She's all ready and waiting. Just be sure to tell Kevin to keep her away from cut glass vases in future."

Kady chuckled. "That's easier said than done. Willow's a wild thing and Kevin's away more than he's home. Still once he's married, Willow will be Alicia's problem, not mine."

*Now why does that hurt? Apart from the fact that I won't have a reason to see you—Other than sitting across the balcony in church on Sunday.*

"Kevin's getting married?" Surprise filled his eyes. "I thought he was already married—to you."

Kady laughed. "Kevin's my twin brother, supposedly the oldest and wisest of us, but I'm not convinced. Why did you think we were married?"

The red hue on his cheeks only made him look more attractive. "The ring on your left hand for one thing and your parents surname is Brooks. I just assumed because you and Kevin were Harris, that you were married."

"This is a purity ring. We both have them. As for the surname? Dad died in Iraq when we were six months old. Mum remarried when we were two. Pete Brooks is the only Dad we've known. He adopted us, but insisted we keep Harris so our biological father isn't forgotten."

"That's a lovely gesture. Will you miss Willow when Kevin takes her with him?"

"No...She's too fond of stealing my chocolate biscuits and crisps to miss. She literally sneaks up, snatches them from my fingers and then streaks away

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before I realize.”

“Sounds like my aunt’s cat.” Rory laughed and slid a sheet of paper towards her. “Just sign here and she’s all yours.”

She signed the papers and slid them back. Electricity sparked as her fingers touched his. Glancing up, her gaze met his and held. *Had he felt it too?*

He coughed and moved his hand. “I’ll go and get Willow.”

Kady nodded, her heart sinking. *Apparently not.*

\*\*\*\*

Fluffy white snow covered the pavement, hiding a lethal layer of ice. Kady gasped as her feet slid out from underneath her. Arms flailing, she briefly touched the lamppost before ending up in an undignified heap face down on the ground. Her outstretched left hand took the brunt of her fall with an audible snap. Willow’s basket flew through the air and landed upside down on the path, an outraged meow of protest erupting from it. Pain shot through Kady’s arm. She closed her eyes tightly, trying to stifle the involuntary scream.

Cold and damp seeped through her jeans, but didn’t go any way towards chilling the heat of embarrassment. Of all the stupid things to do, this topped the list. At least there was no one to witness her fall. The pain didn’t peak, and nausea rose from her stomach, threatening to engulf her completely.

*Help me, Lord. I can’t stay here. Give me the strength to get up and get home.*

Pushing herself onto her knees, Kady whimpered and cradled her left arm to her chest. She edged slowly

to where the cat basket lay. "You OK, Willow? I'm sorry I dropped you."

The cat glared at her, ears flattened back against her head, hissing and spitting.

"I'm sorry." Somehow, Kady found her feet and picked up the cat basket. Perhaps she should go back to the vets. Ask Rory to make sure Willow was all right. Cautious steps led her back the way she'd come. She prayed with each step that she hadn't undone Willow's surgery.

Kady pushed open the door to the vet's. Rory still stood behind the counter, chatting on the phone. She took one step over the threshold, the basket clattering against the wood work.

Rory glanced up. Concern flooded his face and dropping the phone, he vaulted the counter. "Kady...what happened?"

Everything faded and Kady leaned against the doorframe. Strong arms caught her, cradling her gently. She whimpered as he jostled her arm.

"Take it easy. I've got you." Rory guided her to one of the orange plastic seats lining the walls. He sat her down, sitting beside her. "What happened?"

"I slipped and fell." Her voice seemed to come from a long way off. "I dropped Willow. Can you check her over?"

"We will do, but right now I'm more worried about you." Warm fingers moved expertly over her left wrist. She gasped in pain. His gaze met hers. "How much does it hurt?"

"A lot..." Tears filled her eyes. His fingers closed over her other wrist, taking her pulse.

"We need to get you to a hospital. Can I call your parents to take you?"

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"They're away...Willow..."

"Don't worry your pretty little head over the cat. Cain will take care of her. Just sit still a moment."

Kady leaned back against the cold wall, watching as Rory's partner, Cain, picked up the basket and took Willow out the back. Nausea flooded her and she closed her eyes. *Why won't this pain just peak and go away? How can it hurt so much? Please, Lord, let Willow be all right.*

A gentle touch jerked her eyes open. Rory's blue eyes regarded her, his rugged face creased with concern. "Not zoning out on me are you, Kady?"

"Sorry—just dizzy." Her lips felt dry and cracked and she ran her tongue over them, tasting grit and blood.

Rory's strong arms went around her, drawing her to her feet. Her vision blurred for an instant and her knees buckled. He swung her into his arms and cradled her against his firm chest. "I've got you. You'll be OK."

Kady glanced up, trying to keep her eyes focused. His heartbeat pounded in her ears and combined with the swishing of her own. Her head dropped on to his broad shoulders and her eyes closed.

"Don't you fall asleep on me."

"I'm not." She felt safe in his arms and comfortable despite her injuries.

## 2

Rory carefully carried Kady to his car and strapped her into the front seat. Guilt mixed with the heady excitement from holding her. He glanced back at Cain. "Hold the fort until I get back."

"You should call an ambulance."

"By the time it gets here, I could have driven to the hospital myself. I'll stay until they've treated her. And pray she'll be OK."

Rory drove as fast as the roads allowed and parked as close as he could. Once more cradling Kady in his arms, he carried her into the heaving Emergency Department. *She's not married. Lord, how did I miss that? Sure, she wears a ring, but a purity ring didn't cross my mind. Please don't let me have missed the boat here.*

Three swift strides took him to the desk. Relief briefly coursed through him as he recognized the receptionist.

"Rory?"

"Hey, sis. This is Kady Harris. She fell on the ice. She's broken her left wrist by the feel of it. She's complaining of dizziness."

"Bring her straight though."

Two hours later he was still sat in reception. He didn't like being on this side of the National Health Service. Although vets weren't NHS health care professionals, he'd rather his hands were working at

healing than sitting idle.

He left phone messages for Kady's parents and brother. Not that Kevin would get it until his plane touched down at Heathrow. *If* the airport was open. Then he paced and prayed constantly that Kady would be all right.

Having assumed she was married, he'd pushed his feelings for her to one side for too long. But now, it made sense. Kady's parents had invited him to Sunday lunch so frequently. Not to mention the way his heart did stupid things like miss a beat when he saw her. Why hadn't he said anything when he didn't see her wedding photos on her parent's mantelpiece?

*Because you're a coward, O'Leary. Always playing it safe. And look where it's got you. Your brothers and sisters all married with kids and you have no one. Kady is available. It's time you act on your feelings.*

"Rory O'Leary?"

Rory stood and made his way over to the nurse. "That's me."

"You can see Kady for a few minutes. She's fractured her scaphoid. We're taking her up to surgery soon as they're ready for her."

Rory eased into the chair next to the bed, never an easy task as the standard NHS chairs weren't designed for his rather broad frame. He took Kady's hand in his, not liking her pale complexion. "Hey."

Her eyes flicked opened. "You still here? How's Willow?"

"Willow's fine. No harm done. You just worry about yourself."

"You're a good man, Rory. Should have tried fainting on you years ago."

His heart leapt, and he did a double take. "I'm

sorry?"

"It's the drugs talking." The nurse looked over the chart at him. "She's on morphine and pre-meds."

"A lovely man."

"You're not bad looking yourself."

"Finally got your attention..." Kady's eyes closed.

"Oh, you got my attention all right, Lady Kady." Rory lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it. "Fainting on me most certainly got my attention."

"We need to take her up now. She'll be some time."

"If I leave my number at the desk, can someone call me when she's up on a ward?"

"Sure."

"Thanks. I'll do that." Leaning down, he kissed Kady's cheek before heading back to the desk. "Hey, Teag."

"How is she?"

"They've taken her up to surgery. I said I'd leave my number so they can call me when she gets out."

"Consider it done."

"Thanks, sis. I'll be at work until five then at home."

\*\*\*\*

Back at The Priory, Rory's mind was elsewhere. Kady occupied every thought, heart beat and movement. *Good job it's a slow day—although maybe a busy day would be better.*

He checked on Willow. She'd stay in the kennels until Kady went home or Kevin got back.

His phone rang. *Maybe it's the hospital.* He grabbed it. "Rory O'Leary speaking."

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"Hi. It's Kevin Harris. You left a message with the airline asking me to call. Is something wrong with Willow?"

"Hey, Kevin. Willow's fine. It's Kady. She fell on the ice and is in Headley General. They're operating on a scaphoid fracture."

A sharp intake of breath hissed down the phone. "Oh no, poor Kady. It explains the pain in my arm for the past few hours. I'm stranded in Manchester. Nothing can get into or out of London until tomorrow. With Mum and Dad away, she'll be alone."

"Kady'll be in hospital overnight and I can pick her up in the morning and take her home."

"Thanks, Rory. Did you find her?"

"No. She came here for help after she fell. I'm afraid I don't have any more up to date information."

"I'll ring the hospital. Thank you."

"Welcome."

\*\*\*\*

Five hours later, Rory drove back to the hospital. Going up to Kady's ward, he charmed the nurse on the desk. "I know visiting is almost over. Can you let me in for just a couple o'minutes, please?"

"Let me check with her. She's very tired."

As he reached the bed, Kady looked exhausted. "Rory?" One side of her pretty face was covered in grazes and steri-strips and her smile was marred by a wince of pain as he sat.

"How're you doing?"

"Sore and tired."

"I won't stay long. I spoke to Kevin on the phone. He's stuck in Manchester overnight. Your parents send

their love. They asked if you want them home sooner."

"No...don't want to ruin their holiday."

"OK."

"Thank you for earlier."

"You're welcome." Rory winked at her. "Did you mean what you said or was it the drugs?"

Kady turned wide eyes on him. "I'm sorry?"

"You were rather, shall we say, complimentary about me."

"Oh—I'm sorry, I don't..." She looked flustered in a very cute way.

"It's OK. We'll blame the drugs." He pretended to tip his cap at her. "But thank ye kindly anyway."

Kady worried her bottom lip. "Did you—"

"Did I what?" He grinned as color flooded her face and she shrugged. "Out with it woman. Did I what?"

"It's probably the drugs...but did you kiss me—kiss my cheek?"

The bell rang for the end of visiting and Rory stood up. "I'd better go. I'll come and pick you up in the morning when they let you out o'here. And before you argue, I promised Kevin I would."

"You didn't answer my question."

"Yes, Lady Kady, I did." He pulled his hat on and blew her a kiss before backing to the door, grinning at her.

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Kady watched Rory leave, dozens of questions filling her still befuddled mind. *If I didn't dream it, then why didn't he do it again? Lord, you know I've liked him for a long time now and often prayed he'd notice me. He makes my heart sing and spirit soar. He loves You the same way*

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*that I do. Is he the one You have planned for me? If so, show us both.*

Footsteps stopped by her bed. She opened her eyes. "Did you forget something, Rory?"

"My gloves." He picked them up and turned to go.

"Why did you kiss me?"

"Because I wanted to."

"You're so full of it."

"Do you mean blarney or the luck o'the Irish?"

"Both."

"Mam tells me I'm full o'it, too." He grinned at her. "So, may I see you tomorrow, Lady Kady?"

"Why do you call me that?"

"Because it rhymes." He took her good hand and ran his fingers gently over the back of it. Her skin tingled under his touch.

"What rhymes with Rory?" With her skin on sensory overload, and the drugs slowing her down, her mind was sluggish. "Oh, I know — snory."

"Snory Rory?"

"Yes." She giggled, gasping in pain and then yawning. "I'm sorry, I'm tired. I think it's time I got some sleep, Snory Rory."

Rory raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. "Aye. Sleep well, Lady Kady. Sweet dreams. See you tomorrow."

Electricity shot through her, leaving her speechless as he relinquished her hand. Her head spun as he made his way down the ward. As he reached the door, he turned and waved.

*You're full of blarney all right, Rory O'Leary. Thing is, I think I've fallen totally for you and I have no idea if you feel the same way or if you're just flirting with me.*

### 3

Kady couldn't make Rory out. He visited her in hospital. He drove her home and stayed until Kevin got in. But in the six days since, she hadn't seen him at all. Except across the gallery in church on Sunday. He'd waved but made no effort to come and talk to her. Maybe he was insulted by the nickname she gave him. Though to be fair, she'd been doped to the nines at the time.

This morning she'd waved Kevin off as he left for a long haul flight to Bermuda. Then she'd sat at the window and watched the local kids build a snowman. That was something she hadn't done in years.

She looked at the kitchen bin and sighed. She meant to ask Kevin to empty it before he left, and forgot. Somehow she managed to pull the overflowing bag out one handed and tied it. Willow wound herself through Kady's legs. "You're not helping. And this is your fault. If I hadn't gone to get you, I wouldn't have fallen and therefore would not be stuck in a cast and sling for six weeks. At least being between jobs means I'm not missing work."

She lugged the black sack to the back door and took a small tentative step outside. Not having a spare hand to catch herself, the telegram prayer *don't let me fall, don't let me fall* repeated over and over in her head. Laughter and screams came from next door's garden.

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At least someone was enjoying the snow.

Kady put the black sack by the dustbin and straightened up. Something hard hit her back. Turning around, she looked up to see a snowball fly over the fence, this one hitting her good shoulder. "Hey!"

Rory's head popped over the fence at her. *He must be standing on Mrs. Hampton's decking.* An innocent smile lit his face, but she wasn't falling for it. "Hey, Lady Kady. Did I hit you?"

"Yes you did. And what are you doing next door?"

"Visiting my aunt—it's her birthday. More to the point, what are you doing?"

"Putting out the rubbish. It doesn't do itself."

"Hmmm." His head disappeared and a muffled thud came from the other side of the fence. A minute later the gate connecting the two gardens opened and Rory came through. He waded up the snow filled garden and took the lid off the dustbin. "I distinctly remember the doc saying no lifting for a while."

"It won't put itself out. Kevin left for Bermuda this morning and Mum and Dad don't come home for a few more days."

Rory put the lid back on the dustbin and turned deep blue eyes on her. "Is there anything else you're after wanting doing?"

"No, thank you for asking. Aren't you meant to be visiting your aunt?"

"She won't miss me for ten minutes." He grinned at her. "So, snowballs?"

"What about them?"

"Are you any good at them?"

"I used to be." Kady looked at the sling, the cast poking out of the edge of it. "Not anymore."

Rory leaned in closely. "Why's that?"

"Because I only have one hand."

"And that's going to stop you because...?" He bent down and picked up a handful of snow, tossing it at her.

"Stop it."

"What if I don't want to stop it?"

"Then I go inside and leave you to it." She turned her back on him only to have another snowball hit her. "You really are the most irritating man, did you know that?"

Rory laughed. "You only just worked that one out? Danny could have told you that."

"Danny is..."

"One of my brothers."

"One of? How many do you have?"

"Three, and four sisters." He tossed more snow at her. "There's Danny, Rowen, Teagan, Ian, Sinead, Caoimne, Aoife and me. They're all next door playing in the garden. My six nieces and five nephews are eating ice cream and watching TV."

"That's a huge family. You're the youngest?"

"Pfft, you wish." More snow hit her chest. She had to admit his aim was very good as he missed her sling every time. "So, Lady Kady, are you going to play with me?"

Kady looked at him. "Play?"

"Yeah. Something you obviously don't do enough."

"How can I play with a broken wrist?" She headed gingerly to the door, but had gone no more than three steps when those strong hands closed over her arms again. "Rory..."

He turned her around and studied her. "Kady,

when did you last do anything for fun?"

"I don't do fun. Not since Kevin started flying planes and dating Alicia."

"Then you should play with me." His eyes softened. "You don't have to come and join in the chaos next door. We can play here."

A head appeared over the fence. "Hey, Rory, you coming back?"

"In a few. I'm going to help Kady with her chores."

"OK." The head vanished.

Rory grinned. "That was Danny. So, play with me?"

"One handed?"

"Yeah. You can at least try, right?" Rory made a snowball and offered it to her.

Kady took it and threw it at him, missing.

"That's the spirit." He offered another.

She threw it, missing again. "At least I'm not left handed."

"Even so you're a rubbish shot." He tossed one back, hitting her.

Kady scooped up a handful of snow and threw it at him. This one hit. He immediately returned fire and she squealed as snow covered her. She hurled more snow at him, managing to make pretty decent one handed snowballs.

They were both covered in snow and laughing when Rory winked at her and sent several snowballs sailing over the fence.

A shriek followed by a disembodied voice. "Rory, is that you?"

"It might be." Rory winked at Kady. "Or it could be the one armed lady that lives here."

"Hey, don't blame me, mister."

"No, don't blame her. A one armed lady couldn't possibly throw snowballs over the fence and hit someone." Three snowballs flew back over, each hitting Rory square in the chest.

"Now that sounds like a challenge to me, Lady Kady."

"It does rather, Snory Rory." Kady picked up a handful of snow and made it into a ball. "But seven against two isn't fair."

"Seven against one and a half, actually."

"Oy!" She threw the half formed snowball at him. "If you're just going to insult me all the luck in the world won't help you."

"Hey, Danny. You, Aoife and Ian come over here, even things up a little."

Within seconds of their arrival, a full scale battle broke out. Snow flew thick and fast and Kady laughed harder than she had in years, the pain in her arm all but forgotten. She bent to pick up more snow and took a step back to avoid the cat. Her foot slid from under her and for a heart stopping moment, she started to fall.

Strong arms surrounded her. "Are you throwing yourself at me again, Lady Kady?"

"I have to get your attention somehow, Snory Rory. Nothing else works." Blood pounded in her ears, his nearness accentuating her emotions.

"Snory Rory?" Raucous laughter echoed.

"Now you've done it."

"Done what?"

"Told them."

"Tell us, Kady," Ian asked. "Why Snory Rory? Though he does snore something chronic."

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"I do not."

"Yes you do. I've shared a room with you for thirty-five of your thirty-seven years and you do snore—loudly."

Kady grinned. "Because it rhymes."

Rory didn't let go of her. "Oh, you're in trouble now."

"Oh really?"

"Yes, really. Or was that my name?"

"Snory Rory O'Really," she teased. "Sounds good."

"You forgot the letters after my name."

"You have letters?" she teased. "MRCVS isn't it?"

"Aye. Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons."

Kady tilted her head. "Nope. Maybe Rory Can be Victorious at Snowballs."

Rory laughed. His hand came up to cradle her face, his thumb gently stroking her bruises. "I'm glad you're OK." His voice was barely more than a whisper. "I thought I'd missed my chance."

"Chance at what?"

"Winning your heart." He leaned down and captured her lips with his. One hand moved through her hair, the other slid down her back pulling her close.

Kady rose on tip toes, losing herself in the kiss, parting her lips and allowing him to deepen it. Her arm went around him and everything faded. All she was aware of was him.

## 4

Kady sat by the fire, Rory's arm around her. She could hear his heart beating, his light warm breaths on her neck and her spirit sang with joy. A tall glass of hot apple cider sent steam upwards. Inhaling deeply she took a tentative sip. "Wow. This really is good."

Rory chuckled. "I can't believe you've never had it before."

"Cold cider on a hot summer's day, yes. Hot cider, nope. I'm more of a cocoa girl."

"I'll have yours then."

She laughed and moved it out of his reach. "Oh, no, you don't. You've got your own."

"Fair enough." He ran his hand over her arm. "Do you believe in the luck o'the Irish?"

"Nope. Don't do luck. I would rather believe in God's love and His plan for us. I was actually considering throwing paper planes across the church at you to get your attention. Nothing else had worked."

"You'd gotten my attention all right. But even when I knew you weren't married, I just wasn't sure how to act on it. Despite praying constantly for almost a week, I wasn't sure you felt the same way. I should have trusted more, huh?"

"Yeah. God knows what we need, better than we do ourselves."

"He sure does."