

THE DOCTOR'S DAUGHTER

The image is a book cover for 'The Doctor's Daughter' by Susan M. Baganz. It features a romantic winter scene where a man in a white shirt and dark vest and a woman in a white dress are about to kiss. The background is a snowy garden with a black wrought-iron fence and a brick wall. A festive garland with greenery, red berries, and gold bells is draped across the bottom, tied with a large blue bow. The title 'THE DOCTOR'S DAUGHTER' is written in a large, dark blue, serif font at the top. The author's name 'SUSAN M. BAGANZ' is at the bottom right.

SUSAN M.
BAGANZ

The Doctor's Daughter

Susan M. Baganz

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The Doctor's Daughter

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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, 2018

Electronic Edition ISBN 978-1-5223-9807-3

Published in the United States of America

Dedication

To Kaye S. for your love and support through every aspect of the journey that God has called me to. I'm grateful for our friendship.

Author's Note

Influenza has long been a feared and virulent disease through the ages. Appendicitis was something dealt with periodically even by 1812 where an English Doctor Parkinson started reporting cases of surgeries for this disease.

During the tempestuous years between 1800-1820 or the more specific "Regency" years of 1811 to 1820, it was common for the upper classes, especially the men, to drink various forms of alcohol as part of their daily life. A glass of port wine was often savored by the men after the evening meal. French brandy was considered superior and highly coveted even though England was at war with France. In these stories my characters do at times drink, and sometimes even to excess with serious consequences for their overindulgence. This is not in any way a recommendation on the part of the author or Pelican Book Group to advocate the drinking of alcohol or to abuse any substance. Laudanum is an opiate that was often prescribed medicinally (although many did become addicted to the drug). The use of these in the story are merely an attempt to use this period in history and its notorious excesses as a backdrop where appropriate.

*Lord, you know the desires of my heart,
please lead and guide me to my true home.*

Miss Silvia Burnett

help meet

עֵזֶר, ay'-zer;

aid:—help.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

And the Lord God said,

"It is not good that the man should be alone;

I will make him an help meet for him."

Genesis 2:18 (KJV)

1

Brighton, England 1815

Silvia paced as she packed up the remainder of her father's practice. His death had been sudden, and while she possessed some knowledge of medicine, she was incapable of filling the big shoes he'd left. The brisk November air sent a chill through her. She'd sold off most of his belongings but kept some of the older books on natural medicine. Although her father scoffed at some of the remedies, she'd found that many did work as she'd labored alongside him all these years.

She was out of time in this cottage.

Out of money.

Out of resources.

She needed to leave. Not only was the house no longer hers, but Sir McElroy's harassment had increased. The sooner she escaped his notice, the better, for she feared he would be ruthless in seeking to claim what he thought was his. She would never wed one such as he. His puffed-up consequence led him to believe that his station as a minor baronet meant she was his for the asking.

Her father always told her to follow God and listen to her heart. Her heart warned her that the baronet was dangerous, so she'd poured out her troubles in a letter to her friend Katrina. Her friend

offered her refuge and the position as a nursemaid in their household, should she want it.

The work was not beneath her, but she longed for a family of her own. The only man she could envision that with was Bruce, who years ago studied with her father. The late Dr. Burnett had held a deep respect for the younger man. The remembrance of the doctor who had swept her off her feet years ago, surprised her.

Bruce.

Dr. Bruce Miller lived close to Katrina. Would Silvia see him again? Would he remember her? Would the attraction which had blossomed between them still be there?

Recently, she'd gone beyond the pale and written to him, practically begging him to marry her based on a long-ago promise. Why hadn't he returned to court her when she'd come of age? She shook her head at her foolishness. How could he? He had patients to care for and doctors didn't have the freedom to go on holiday at a whim's discretion. Besides, her too-forward missive had probably put him off.

She shoved the last item into her crate and motioned for the servant to carry it out to the carriage. She was grateful that her friend sent one for her, insisting that she travel in comfort instead of on the stage.

"Are you ready Miss Burnett?" Sir Michael Tidley stepped inside and surveyed the empty room. She hadn't expected Katrina to send her husband to fetch her.

"Yes, I am. Thank you for your assistance. I hope I haven't delayed us too long."

"Apology unnecessary. We'll likely spend a night in a posting house which means I might get some

much-needed sleep."

Silvia grinned. Katrina had nabbed a good man with a quick wit. Silvia suspected her lamentations over Sir McElroy had caused her friend to take this precaution lest Silvia be detained by nefarious means. My, wasn't Katrina becoming dramatic? Silvia grabbed her cloak and hat and headed for the door taking one last glance around. This had been home for her entire life. She sighed. Adventure awaited, and if her prayers were answered, maybe even love.

"Let us be off, Sir Tidley."

He closed the door after she exited and rushed to open the carriage door for her.

"Miss Burnett!"

She groaned. Not him. Not now. She glanced at Sir Tidley.

"Is that the man?" he whispered.

Nodding she turned to face her erstwhile suitor. "Sir McElroy. I must hasten away." She put a foot on the first step to the carriage and Sir Tidley moved around to block most of her view and assist her. His cheeky grin reassured her that he was up to the task of helping rid her of this man.

"You cannot leave." The baronet posed with one fist on his hip and another holding a monocle to his eye, an affectation that frustrated her no end.

"I can, and I must." She took another step up and Michael handed her into the carriage, closing the door behind her.

McElroy's jaw dropped as did his monocle, falling into the dirt. He bent to search for it as Sir Tidley jumped up to take the reins of the horses.

"Good bye!" As she waved, the horses jerked the carriage forward against the weight of all the luggage

it carried.

"No!" McElroy stepped forward landing on the eyeglass and was so distracted by having ruined his pet object that he never spared her another glance.

Silvia settled back against the squabs, closed her eyes, and thanked God for His provision in time of need. Now if she could only overcome her anxiety as the unknown future loomed before her. For now, she had a place to be where she could be useful, but it wasn't a long-term solution. She sure hoped Bruce hadn't developed a tendre for any of the local women. She'd been afraid to ask Katrina about that.

~*~

Dr. Bruce Miller sighed as he slumped into his favorite chair in his humble abode. Silence surrounded him. Despair assailed him. His friends from university had all married, and he'd been there to assist with the birth of several children when the midwife was unavailable.

Here he sat.

Alone.

He reached for the stack of letters and began to thumb through them. One with a feminine script caught his attention. Women did not write to men to whom they were not related, wed, or affianced. Curiosity compelled him to open it. He slit the seal and unfolded the pages.

Dear Dr. Miller,

I am not sure if you remember me, but we were childhood friends a lifetime ago. I've heard wonderful reports of your practice in Didcot. Perhaps you recall your last visit here to Brighton? We talked and took walks. You were not

established in your practice as of yet...

Bruce let the letter drop to his lap. He closed his eyes, and the sound of waves crashing on the rocks and the gulls screaming in the air as he inhaled the salt water aroma that reminded him of Brighton were as fresh as if he were there now. Fanciful thoughts for a bachelor. The woman beside him in his dream was one he'd not thought of for some time. A sweet blonde, the daughter of the local doctor with whom he'd spent time shadowing. The estimable Dr. Burnett had taught Bruce much.

The doctor's daughter was a sage young woman, only two years Bruce's junior. He was surprised to see Silvia Burnett's name at the bottom of the letter. He'd thought she'd be wed by now to one of the local gentry. How could it be that she was still unmarried? He began reading where he'd left off.

It is terribly forward of me to write to you now, but we once spoke fanciful words that if neither of us had found love, we would wed each other should I remain unwed at age of five and twenty. Quite long-in-the-tooth though I am, I remember you with great fondness. I am planning a trip to your area in the near future to visit a friend, Mrs. Katrina Tidley.

I hope perhaps that we would further our acquaintance whilst I'm there.

*With fondness,
Miss Silvia Burnett*

Silvia was coming here? She was a friend of Katrina's? How had he not been aware of that?

His malaise lifted. A Christmas gift, to be sure, as

an often lonely season now held hints of promises to be kept and fulfilled. He kissed the letter and rose from his chair to go to bed. They were too young all those years ago, and she'd been right; he'd only begun to establish his practice when they'd left each other last. But now...perhaps God had brought an answer to his loneliness, heightened by the familial bliss so many of his friends experienced.

~*~

Bruce worked nonstop as an outbreak of influenza overtook the village. There was too much illness for one man. He was carefully washing his hands with every visit, before and aft, in an attempt keep himself healthy. Despite the harried frenzy of patients and babies due, there were just as many times where he longed for a quiet night in front of the fireplace with a cup of tea and a book.

Not that he had anyone with whom to share that moment.

Would Silvia be the one? Such foolishness to make promises like that to each other when they were both so young and starry-eyed. The world hadn't taught them hard lessons yet. But he'd seen too much pain, heartache, and death to not be pessimistic about his chances at finding love and happiness. Life was fragile and precious.

He wearily guided his horse down the lane and back to his home. Exhaustion overwhelmed him, and he was practically asleep in the saddle. Good thing his horse knew the way.

The sound of horses' hooves and the wheels of a carriage caught him off guard as he turned a corner in the lane.

"What ho!" shouted the driver as he pulled the carriage to a stop. "Well met, Dr. Miller."

"Sir Tidley? I'm sorry, I should have been watching the path more closely."

"You appear burnt to a socket, my good man," the knight proclaimed.

"An apt diagnosis. I'm for home and bed. Sickness has spread, and I've been busy."

"I am sorry to hear that. Anything serious?"

"Influenza has struck early and it's a virulent strain."

"You've not been to my home, have you?"

"No, Sir Tidley. Your family are all well, and I've not seen them for some time. Thank you for not running me over." He pulled his horse off to the side of the road, so the carriage could pass.

"Good day, Bruce. Rest and stay well." He snapped the reins and the horses pulled forward again.

As the carriage passed, the visage of a young woman appeared in the window. Her gaze held Bruce's, and she smiled.

Silvia? His heart welled with hope as he turned his horse to home. He needed to rest. Tomorrow he hoped to visit the Tidley home to meet their guest. Tonight, perhaps he'd have happier dreams.

~*~

Silvia could hardly believe her eyes as she'd watched the interchange between Dr. Miller and Sir Tidley. Poor Bruce appeared tired, but he was still attractive. A sudden shyness kept her from leaving the coach to speak to him herself. She could hardly wait for him to visit. She hoped the invitation in her eyes was enough for him to get the message. She smiled to

herself, her hopes buoyed.

After arriving at Hart Manor, a groom let down the steps and assisted her from the carriage while Michael gave orders for her luggage. She stepped into the courtyard as Katrina rushed out of the house. She greeted her husband with a warm embrace that caused Silvia to turn away from their display of affection in order to afford the couple some modicum of privacy.

"Silvia!" Katrina called her name and approached. "I am so glad you've come. I apologize if I made you uncomfortable, but I am extraordinarily fond of my husband and missed him terribly."

"You needn't have sent him. A servant would have sufficed."

"Ah, but your arrogant suitor might have bested a mere servant. My husband, however, is wily and clever. It seems he managed to spirit you out of Brighton without incident."

"Well, the incident was minor, only because Sir McElroy dropped his monocle during a pose and stepped on it." She giggled. "His vanity allowed us time to escape without being importuned."

"You are here now and safe from puffed up aristocrats. Even Lord Remington, my cousin, is as wonderful as you could wish, and he's a viscount. His brother Jared was knighted last year as well. You have friends a plenty here to keep you safe and occupied."

"Katrina, dear," Sir Tidley interrupted them. "We spied Dr. Miller on his way home. He said there's been an outbreak of influenza in the area. Is everyone well?"

"We're all fine here. Poor Bruce. He's probably overly-exhausted. We should invite him soon to tea. Silvia's father was a doctor, so they might find some common ground. Come. You've had a long journey

and I'll take you to your rooms, so you can refresh yourself. I've held back dinner in anticipation of your later arrival." Katrina kept up her chatter as they ascended the stairs to the suite Silvia would call her own.

"I thought I was to be serving as your nanny. I should be in the servant's quarters."

"That was a ruse to get you here. I don't really need a nanny but will gladly accept help. My offer of wages stands. You are also an honored guest and I'm so sad that you were left in the lurch, as you were. Are the men in Brighton blind to have not seen the treasure before them?"

"I am educated, Katrina. Well-read and assisted my father in many cases. Many men find that intimidating."

"Well, I for one am grateful for your presence. I will admit that my husband is hoping you can assist with the children at night. The youngest has trouble sleeping, and Michael wakes whenever I do."

"I'll do whatever I can but I should be closer to the nursery."

"The baby's bassinette is in our room, but we could move it into your sitting room if you were willing to take the night duty."

"Whatever it is you desire of me. I suggest you let me meet your little ones first."

"Freshen up. We'll eat dinner and tomorrow we can talk more about any duties you would assume and meet the children. Tonight, you can rest from your travels."

"But then you and your husband don't..."

Katrina smiled. "True, but with you here tomorrow we could always take a nap if we need to."

Silvia surveyed the room. "This is a lovely place. I appreciate your gracious hospitality."

With a hug, Katrina left Silvia to change, sending in a maid to assist.

2

Bruce awoke the next morning with a pounding head, fever, and intense abdominal pain. *Doctor, heal thyself.* He'd feared that with the little sleep and the amount of illness he'd been encountering, this might happen. He struggled out of bed and a wave of dizziness assailed him. He latched on to the post, managed to dress, and wandered to the kitchen where Mrs. Wilson prepared breakfast.

"Doctor?" his cook asked as she saw him enter and collapse in a chair.

"I'm sick," he rasped. "Willow bark tea if you would."

"Back to bed with you now and I'll bring up the tea. As a doctor you should know better than to be haring all over creation to take care of every little snuffle and hangnail. Plumb wore yourself out, you did." She shooed him out of the room and back up the stairs. He followed her orders and climbed back into bed, but still wearing his trousers and shirt. Soon the tea arrived, and he sipped it until it was gone. A cool compress was provided, and he was again left in blessed peace to rest.

~*~

Silvia enjoyed afternoon tea with Katrina. She'd met the children and took the grand tour of the home.

The butler came to the door. "Lady Remington to

see you, ma'am."

"Show her in, Montague." Katrina replied.

A dark-haired woman burst into the room. "Katrina!" She stopped short at spying Silvia. "I forgot you were expecting company. I'm sorry to intrude."

"Lady Remington, let me introduce you to Miss Silvia Burnett from Brighton. Her father was a doctor there and recently passed away. She has come to stay with us to help with the children."

"'Tis a pleasure to meet you, my lady," Silvia stood and curtsied.

"Please don't stand on ceremony with me. Sit. Sit. The daughter of a doctor, you say?"

Katrina frowned. "Yes. Why?"

"One of our staff has grown ill and we sent for Dr. Miller, but it seems he's fallen to the same illness spreading throughout the village and surrounding area. Marcus is inquiring about procuring someone else from another village, but it seems this illness is so widespread there are no doctors to spare."

"Your mother..." Katrina sympathized.

Lady Remington sniffed. "Yes. My mother died of influenza, so it has me at sixes and sevens over this. I worry for Dr. Miller as well. Who cares for the doctor when he is ill?"

Silvia frowned. "We experienced outbreaks of this in Brighton. I have helped my father treat this illness."

"Have you ever grown ill from it yourself?" Lady Remington asked.

"No. My father did once, and I nursed him back to health."

"Perhaps it is Providence that brings you here now. I am so sorry to hear of your loss. Your mother?"

"She died in childbirth twenty years ago, and my

brother along with her."

"And you have no other family?" Lady Remington inquired.

"None close enough to provide shelter or assistance to me. I would like to help but it wouldn't be wise if I'm caring for Katrina's children as well."

"I can continue to care for my children if you can step in to help out with the issues in the village," Katrina reassured her. "But stepping into Doctor Miller's shoes is not without risk."

"True, but not if people seek me out. Do either of you have a stillroom where I could work?"

"We both have one, but they are unused and not well-stocked," Josie said.

"We've always relied on Dr. Miller for those things. There is no apothecary, so he compounds his own medications." Katrina added.

Silvia pursed her lips. "I would hate to intrude in his private space. I brought a few things with me from my father's still room. Perhaps I can start there before I bother the doctor while he recovers."

Lady Remington leaned forward. "Will you be able to come and help our servant? And perhaps check on Dr. Miller?"

"Servant, yes. Dr. Miller? Only with someone to accompany me lest he fear I'm entrapping him."

Katrina grinned. "You'd be perfect for him." She nudged Lady Remington. "Don't you think?"

"No matchmaking machinations from either of you."

"And why not? Wouldn't it be wonderful, Katrina? She understands about doctoring, and they are of a similar age."

Silvia shook her head. "Please. Stop. If I am to get

a husband let it be in an honorable way.”

“I can respect that. I hope none of the other single women try to render treatment to our poor ailing physician.” Katrina sighed.

“You are incorrigible. Excuse me while I retrieve my bag. I can accompany Lady Remington home.” Silvia rose, and with a small curtsy quit the room and went to her own suite.

She closed the door behind her, found the crate she sought, and began to put necessary items in her father’s doctor bag. How was she to go about doing this as a single woman? It was highly improper. Assisting women in giving birth was vastly different from listening to the lungs of a grown man. *Scandalous!*

Perhaps Sir Tidley or Lord Remington could think of a solution that would not include forcing Bruce to propose. While she hoped that he would be a suitable husband for her, she would never want him to regret or experience pressure to wed. Could future happiness ever be part of such a union?

She did, however, fully intend to minister to the needs of her ailing friend. She was duty-bound. She hoped he would not resent her interference in his life and work. While she was eager to help, she hoped that in doing so, she didn’t scuttle her chances with him.

Her bag packed, redingote and hat on, she took measured steps down the stairs trying to calm her nerves. She entered the drawing room and the women stood.

“I am ready to depart whenever you are, Lady Remington.”

Katrina smiled. “Silvia, I am so glad you are willing to help. It’s as if God planned the perfect time for you to arrive.”

"Perhaps so." Silvia squared her shoulders as Lady Remington put on her hat.

"Let us depart with all haste. We'll find someone to accompany you to Dr. Miller's. Perhaps my husband, since he and Bruce knew each other at University. It was Marcus who invited Bruce to take up the practice in Didcot."

"Michael was acquainted with him there as well." Katrina stated. "Dr. Miller has been a blessing to us all, in and out of the sickroom. I pray you can help him, Silvia." Katrina gave her friend a hug. "Here you've just arrived, and we've conscripted you into serving us all. Thank you for your willingness to do so."

"I was raised by a doctor, Katrina. I could do no less when the need is great." Silvia turned to follow Lady Remington to her carriage.

Once seated inside, Lady Remington turned to Silvia. "You've not said so, but I suspect you are acquainted with Dr. Miller."

"He trained with my father before moving her to take up his practice in Didcot."

"A mutual attraction?"

"Between he and I?" Silvia's hand went to her chest as her eyebrows rose.

"Yes."

Silvia sighed. "Attraction on my part, but we were younger. I cannot testify to his sentiments on the matter."

Lady Remington sat back and smiled but said nothing.

"What?" Silvia asked.

"You could bring him up to scratch by Christmas if you tried."

"I... I..."