

YASMINE NASH

Taken by the Baron  
Epilogue

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## Epilogue

Amanda hurried down the stairs from her chambers on the upper floor of Highmount Castle. She had awoken this morning alone in her bed—the first time in months that she hadn’t awoken with her husband’s arms wrapped around her. It had been a strange feeling.

Despite this unusual event, Amanda’s heart was full as she navigated her way through the castle’s circuitous hallways. Nearly a year had passed since she’d first arrived at Highmount a nervous bride. So much had changed in the intervening months. For one thing, many of Amanda’s renovation projects were finally coming to completion. Because of the castle’s sheer size, it would be a while longer before she had redone the entire place, but the most important rooms had been remade into more comfortable, cheerier versions of themselves.

Case in point: Amanda entered the bright breakfast parlor where they now took their morning meals. It was a cozy room, with large windows covering one wall, letting in plenty of sunlight during the mornings. Under Amanda’s guidance, James, the footman, had repapered the other walls with bright yellow wallpaper.

While she knew she could never remove the castle’s dark past,

Amanda was determined to do what she could to ensure all the future occupants were as happy as possible.

That goal had taken on an increased importance to Amanda lately.

For the past several days now, Amanda had been keeping a secret from her husband. A rather large secret, too. She had felt guilty about it, but there had been no right time to tell him. But now, there was no putting it off any longer. She had to tell her husband the truth.

She thought he would be pleased by the news.

Well, she hoped he would be, anyway.

Amanda entered the breakfast parlor, expecting to see Descamps seated at his normal spot, but her husband was nowhere to be seen.

This was getting more and more curious. Even in the early days of their marriage, before they had fallen in love, Descamps had always eaten breakfast with Amanda. It was one of the parts of their married routine she had grown the fondest of.

Amanda ate her breakfast in increasingly worried silence, only speaking to ask passing servants if they knew where their lord was. None of them did.

She had just pushed her plate away—Amanda hadn't had much of an appetite lately—when Sara, her lady's maid, ducked her head into the parlor. The servant had a mischievous look on her face.

"Good morning, Sara," Amanda said, brightening up. Sara was one of her favorite people at Highmount.

"Good morning, my lady," Sara replied. "I've been instructed to bring you somewhere. By his lordship."

Amanda frowned, but she acquiesced to the odd request.

"Just this way, in the garden, my lady," Sara said, leading

Amanda out the door.

The garden at Highmount, much like the rest of the castle, was wild and untamed. It had bothered Amanda at first, but she had grown to love the untouched, natural look of the garden and surrounding grounds. The season was late fall, and most of the summer greenery had faded away to brown by now, giving the landscape a haunting sort of beauty.

Sara paused for a moment. "Pardon me, my lady. But I've been instructed to ask you to close your eyes."

Her husband had the oddest notions sometimes, but Amanda was curious to see what this was all leading to. She closed her eyes without complaint, leaning on Sara's arm so the other woman could guide her.

They walked slowly for several minutes, until Sara came to a stop and gently disentangled herself from Amanda. A strong, masculine pair of arms encircled her from behind. She smiled and leaned back into her husband's embrace in contentment. Amanda leaned her head back and gazed into Descamps' gray eyes. She could happily stare at her husband all day long.

It seemed Descamps felt the same, for Amanda felt his arousal stirring against her back. She quirked an eyebrow at her husband and smiled. She was reaching up to kiss him when the sound of a throat clearing nearby made Amanda start.

"Apologies, wife," Descamps said, as Amanda gaped in shock at the people in front of her. "I should have mentioned we have company."

Standing in front of Amanda were her two younger sisters, Hettie and Mary. Amanda's face broke into a smile and she ran forward to gather the two into a fierce hug. She hadn't seen her sisters since her wedding.

"Did you do this?" Amanda asked her husband after their

joyful greetings had subsided, a huge smile on her face.

"I wanted it to be a surprise," Descamps said. "They spent the night in an inn just outside the village, so I rose early this morning to fetch them here myself."

"Your husband is quite the gentleman," Hettie whispered. "Not nearly as mad I had expected him to be."

"Well, since we're all here, I have a surprise to tell you, too," Amanda said. Her husband gave her a questioning look. Staring at him straight in the eye, Amanda said, "I'm pregnant."

Descamps stared at his wife in disbelief for a few seconds, while Amanda waited nervously for his reaction. He had always wanted children, she knew that, but she wasn't sure if he had wanted them quite this soon.

Descamps soon put to rest any questions Amanda had, however, for he strode forward and grabbed his wife into his arms. This time he did kiss her, not caring that Hettie and Mary were standing right beside them. When they broke apart, Amanda rested her forehead on her husband's chest, marveling that he could still make her feel the same sparks she had felt on their wedding night, all those months ago.

Now that she could see how happy Descamps was, Amanda's mind felt at ease. Before too long, small footsteps would be echoing through Highmount's halls, bringing even more laughter and joy to their home. She kissed her husband again, marveling at her luck.