

**A
Rose for the
Duke**

by

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ISBN: 978-1-68181-814-6

DEDICATED

This Book is dedicated from the bottom of my heart to the Mother who did not give birth to me, but loved me anyway as her own daughter, her name is 'Lynn.' As a family we had many rough times to get through, but she loved and accepted me no matter what and she has always been there for me. I love you. Your daughter always, JSP

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shakespeare, William – Chapter 13

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CHAPTER 1

Anyone glancing in the room would think that the two gentlemen in the room might be asleep, for all the movement coming from them. One of the men was sitting in a brocade wing chair with one leg slung carelessly over the arm of the chair. The other man was propped against the mantle of the fireplace with a glass of brandy held unmoving in his left hand.

Silent as a ghost a third gentleman appeared in the doorway. He coughed rather loudly, but still no response. He tried again. Nothing! He proceeded to speak at the top of his lungs, "Dear Lord, one would think that the two of you were dead or something worse! I am not sure what could be worse than death, but I think the two of you have found it. What the hell is the matter with the both of you?"

Finally the gentleman at the fireplace moved and directed his very blue eyes at the man standing in the doorway, and as he spoke controlled anger was apparent in his voice, "Hunter you devil, where on God's green earth have you been? We have been waiting an eternity for you to show up?"

"Well Marcus, it was rather like this.....I came upon a bit of muslin I had been trying to claim as mine for an age now, when the opportunity suddenly was open to me. I of course had to jump on the chance, so to speak. What choice did I have?" Hunter spread his arms wide in a subjective movement completely like he really had no choice in the matter.

The other man in the wing backed chair suddenly came to life, voicing his opinion, "Of course Marcus, what choice did Hunter have? It seems perfectly plain to me also." Sheldon said this as if he too saw the situation plain and clear.

"You both seem to be clouded by the misunderstanding that I do not seem to grasp the importance of the situation, but I do. What I do not understand is why it could not wait for a bit so that we could be on time for the fight. We all have quite a bit of money to lose. I personally would think that you would like to be there for the outcome!"

Hunter just stared at Marcus like he had all of a sudden grown horns. "Why the hell are you staring at me like that?" Hunter seemed to be trying to get words out of his mouth, but it did not seem to be working properly, "Ah, I forgot?" Hunter was now sporting a ridiculous smile on his face as if that would explain everything.....no not really.

"Alright.....I am not sure how that could happen, since we have talked about nothing but this fight for weeks, and then about going to Thorne Castle, but with that so being said, can we go now so maybe we can catch part of the fight?"

All three men now standing, and in the typical manly way, smacked each other on the back like nothing had ever happened and headed out the door.

The boxing match was located outside of London not too far from Thorne Castle at an Inn called the Blue Hawk. The Blue Hawk was located in a smaller village called Langstone which was on the road they would take to the Castle, so they actually would pass it first on the way to Thorne Castle. The Duke had had each of them pack their bags which would be transported to Thorne Castle via the Duke's Traveling Coach. So, in choosing to ride rather than taking the coach, it would take them a small amount of time to get there, but they should still be able to enjoy part of the fight. Enough so that maybe they might win the bet they each had placed on it.

CHAPTER 2

It was a glorious morning, just a slight chill in the air, but in the distance a chance that a storm was brewing by the look of the sky.

Rose needed to get herself moving faster, with the possible impending storm, she had to get things done so she could get to the village to pick up the children for class.

Rose was dwelling on the weather as she worked in the home garden collecting all the vegetables that were ripe and needed picked. It would not do to let them stay, because if a storm did come up and tore all the ripe food onto the ground, it could damage it more than the unripe food still on the vine.

She was also in a hurry to get the eggs collected, and to milk their two cows, and their two goats. All this so she could bring the eggs and milk along in the wagon. Here, at the Manor House, in which Rose had lived all her life, their needs were not great. So, any extra food they produced, which also included the eggs, the milk, the gardens and the crops Rose would share and take with her to the village and give to the families that had more need than they did. They also fed the children breakfast and lunch at the Manor, so they needed some for those meals. The only people at the Manor were herself, her mother, plus the only helpers still with them, Nanny, Willa and Willy, the twins. They were all as family, not help.

Her family's past had many heartaches and tragedies, not unlike most people in their own respective lives, but Rose could not dwell on that now because she had to finish and get the wagon loaded, get the only two horses they possessed, Old Judd and Baby Girl harnessed to the wagon, and last but not least, Willa ready. Willa did not like to ride in the wagon, any wagon, but had no choice because Rose could not go alone.

Rose put all the food they could share, the blankets for the children, the canisters of warm milk, and the umbrellas all into the wagon.....then went in search of Willa. She was not easy to find, because of course she was hiding. Rose went through this each morning trying to get all ready to pick up the village children and bring them back to The Manor House so she, her mother and Willa could do their schooling for the day.

Rose finally found Willa in one of usually three or four places that she would hide. Today Willa was hiding in the chicken coop pretending she was collecting eggs which was all for naught, knowing that Rose had already done so. Silly girl, she really needed to find new places if she wanted to continue to hide each morning because Rose was pretty quick and totally understood Willa.

Finally everything was ready, Rose assisted Willa into the wagon then she herself climbed in. Rose put on her worn kid leather gloves, took the reins, gently pulled on them to let Old Judd and Baby Girl know to get going, and off they headed in the direction of Langstone village.

CHAPTER 3

Rose's father was Earl Langley. His holdings included the Manor House, choice lands, and surrounding properties, which also encompassed the small village of Langstone, which at one time the surrounding land and the village then known as Berrythorne had been a great deal larger and a part of the lands and properties of The Duke of Thorne. Many years before the Crown had great regard for the Langley lineage and the village of Berrythorne had been divided with the largest portion staying Berrythorne and still as part of the Duke of Thorne's holdings. The smaller portion had been given in concession to The Earl of Langley, and the name changed to Langstone. He had proved a worthy landlord, and took excellent care of the village of Langstone. They were his people, and a part of his responsibility, now all that fell on Countess Langley, and Lady Rose Langley.

Here in turn is where the situation gets so troubled. Rose's family, almost five years before consisted of her father, Vincent, Earl Langley, her mother, Harriet, Countess Langley, her oldest brother, Oliver, Viscount Langton, her youngest brother, The Honourable Bradford Langley, and herself, Lady Rose Langley.

Life was beautiful, beyond good, with not a care it seemed in the world. The Manor House was lovely, the grounds were breath taking, they had several servants, more than enough to spare in every way. Rose was sixteen almost seventeen and looking forward to the next year getting ready to make her come-out, and have her First Season in London and then off to the Marriage Mart in search of a husband. But, then the sun went behind a very large dark cloud and seemed to stay there.

Her youngest brother, Bradford decided he wanted to go find himself in America and make his own life, his own fortune. Being the second son, he really had no reason to do otherwise he felt with his father and older brother still alive, and both very healthy. Why not?

His leaving was so hard, particularly for Rose, she and Bradford had always been so close. But, she understood his need to be his own person, and not stand under the shadow of anyone. He had been gone for over a year and no one had heard a word from him, and had no idea where he was or how to reach him. Everyday Rose thought, worried and prayed for Bradford hoping one day he would come back to England.

Then the ultimate tragedy happened, Lord Langley, and Viscount Langton, father and son, her father, her brother, were killed in a carriage accident when their carriage was run off the road by another larger carriage and went off a nearby cliff with no hope for survival. Even the horses gave their lives. The worst day in their life, Lady Langley and her daughter, Lady Rose Langley, neither would ever be the same. No idea of who ever had done this was ever found.

That was four years ago, and still no word from the younger Langley, Bradford. No way still to find him, or even to know where he was. He still did not know of the death of his father and brother, and that he would now be Lord Langley, Earl of Langley. This is why Rose still had a great feeling of obligation to care for the people that resided here in, and around Langstone. Now it was for Bradford.

Rose was now over twenty and one, and by all the standards that could be measured, she was totally and completely on the shelf, heading on down the road to Spinsterhood, never to be seen again....such drama. Her prospects in every way were absolutely non-existent. Yes, as true a spinster as ever they come. Also watching other peoples' children, she fell into that category also, and probably never to have any of her own, as people like to whisper. Yes, all those stories that one hears of the life of a spinster.

Rose really wasn't angry or bitter over the way her life had turned out. Yes, she missed her father and older brother, and would for the rest of her life. She loved her mother, she loved her younger brother, and hoped one day he would come back to them, she loved her non-blood related family, Nanny, Willa and Willy. She loved the people in their small village, and loved teaching their children. She loved every part of life and nothing was going to prevent her from going on living and existing, and cherishing every moment of every day. It was not in her to give up, but to keep going and making life better for herself and all the people around her. She was a survivor..... Always!

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