

## STAINED STEELE

By Peg Daniels

SUMMARY: Is Lord Claridge the father of Remington Steele after all?

Author's notes:

- 1) Although the remaining approximately 24 pages are my own work, the direct dialogue on the first approximately four pages is from two scenes in Steele Searching Part II, the episode written by Michael Gleason, which aired Oct 1, 1985 (to set the time period for my story). The full transcription of the episode can be found on Nancy's site <http://remylover.topcities.com/season4.html> The direct dialogue from those two scenes is word-for-word from the aired episode, but I have inserted my own narration to go with it in order to show, in particular, what is "really" going on (in terms of *my* story, I mean). Then I took it from there.
- 2) The short companion piece (one page), Steele Beginning, appearing immediately after this story, is meant to be read as an integral part of it. The second companion piece (three pages), Steele Connector, rounds out the picture.
- 3) Feedback is welcomed and desired! E-mail: [drpeg2003@yahoo.com](mailto:drpeg2003@yahoo.com) . Group members, please feel free to post directly to the list.
- 4) Special thanks to Angie. Without her initial encouragement, I'm not sure I would have ever put pen to paper.
- 5) Thanks to my betas: Gary G., Jill Hargan, and Angie Nothdorf. Thanks also to Kathryn Marsh for her answers to questions on British, Irish, and noble matters. (I later verified her statements on the last with representatives of the Department of Constitutional Affairs (previously known as the Lord Chancellor's Office).) And thanks to all the RS fanfic authors, whose works have brought me such pleasure. I hope my stories will provide you with some of that same pleasure.
- 6) In my browser, at least, footnotes in the HTML version show up as boxes. Click on them for definitions of terms, further explanations, or citing of sources. Sorry, I don't know how to make them look much better. In the PDF version, they look like "regular" footnotes.
- 7) Rating: R(?): some graphic content

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*Dear God. Could he be my son?*

Lord Claridge stood at the far end of his study, awaiting Mr. Steele. He put his hand in his pocket, fingering the watch, the watch Miss Holt had brought to him. Of this he was certain: he would never forget his meeting with her just days ago. . . .

He had been in the gallery of his manor, admiring the portrait of Catherine, not yet his wife, when he had heard the knock at the door.

As he crossed the room, Miss Holt entered. He held out his hand.

She took it. "Your Lordship."

"How pleasant to see you again, Miss Holt."

"I was wondering if a . . . a friend of mine has been here. He's tall, rather good looking . . . with dark hair . . ."

Lord Claridge shook his head. "No. What would he want with me?"

"He came to England to trace his past. It can best be described as murky. He did, however, have one tangible link." She reached into her purse. "Someone sent it to him with the note 'Your father wanted you to have this.'" She showed him the watch in her hand, giving a questioning shrug.

"Oh my God," he whispered, turning and walking away a few paces. That watch. Missing for thirty-odd years, ending up with a man tracing his past –

"Um . . . the inscription is a little difficult to read." Miss Holt opened the watch and the Irish tune filled the air.

Not facing her, he recited: " 'To S.J. from K.L.' "

"I know on occasion you've used the name 'Kevin Landers.' "

"This friend of yours. How old is he?"

"Early thirties."

The age was right.

"Raised . . . where?"

"Ireland, for the most part."

A distinct possibility. He nodded his head. He had not moved from his spot.

She came to him, asking, "Do you know who he is?"

Dear God. Had he *another* son out there? A longing arose in him. "Very likely. My son."

The music stopped.

How soon must he face this? "Your friend. Where is he?"

"I . . . I don't know. I'm trying to find him."

*Very likely. My son.* The words had escaped his lips before he could give thought to where they might lead. Well, a lie woven from truths – the best kind of lie – would provide him with cover: intending she believe it was Sean to whom his earlier words had referred, he finally turned toward Miss Holt and spoke of the son for whom he *had* been searching. "All these years . . . all these wasted years . . . I was no more than a boy myself. There was a young Irish girl who worked on the estate – terrible disgrace. She took the child back to Ireland, refused any help. Eventually, disappeared. I only saw my son . . . once."

Another knock on the door. "Sorry to intrude, your Lordship, but there's a gentleman to see you. Something about a presentation at the wedding reception?"

He was relieved by the interruption. "Yes, yes, I'll be along in a minute." He looked again at Miss Holt. "May I have that?" he asked, indicating the watch. At her hesitation, he lifted up his palms in entreaty. "For a, a little while."

Miss Holt gave him a slight smile. "Of course." She placed it in his palm.

He had then left the gallery. He had needed time: time to absorb this new possibility, time to decide what to do about a son who was . . . not Sean.

Once again, Lord Claridge ran his fingers over the watch; then he removed his hand from his pocket and gently rubbed the new wedding band on his finger. He had been unable to make a final decision. In mere moments he would be forced to do so. He had prepared his role as best he could: he would continue with the story he had given Miss Holt, speaking to Mr. Steele as if he were speaking to Sean.

As for claiming him –

He looked up as the door opened. Miss Holt and her friend, Remington Steele, entered. Mr. Steele carefully closed the door and then looked at him, but he made no further move. Lord Claridge studied the man for a long moment and then slowly crossed the room toward him.

"Hello," Mr. Steele said softly, finally moving toward Lord Claridge.

Lord Claridge offered his hand and then an embrace – a tentative gesture on both their parts, a gesture of intimacy not yet felt. He began his deception: "You've no idea how many years I've waited for this."

Mr. Steele let out a long breath. "I . . . I think I do. . . ." There was a long pause, and then he continued, his voice wistful. "Ever since . . . I was a child, I realized that I wasn't like other children. Well, in the sense that . . . I had no parents, no real parents, no true home. . . . I was always trying to imagine what my real father was like . . . creating . . . recreating his image, you know, how he, how he talked, how he walked . . ." – Mr. Steele smiled and gave a small laugh – "how he smiled."

Mr. Steele's heartfelt manner, as well as his words, affected Lord Claridge deeply. It made it easy to slip into his role. "I regret many things, but none more severely than losing you."

"There's time. . . . There's much time."

Such sincerity. "Let me look at you. Firm jaw. Blue eyes." God. He had to look away. If only this man didn't look so much like her. But he clearly saw the resemblance – the coloring, the shape of the nose and mouth. Those eyes. This was her son. And likely his bastard son, one who would only be a constant reminder of –

"Your Lordship?" Miss Holt, who had stayed back by the door, now came toward him, breaking into his thoughts.

"What is it?" Mr. Steele asked.

He must distance himself from this man. To Mr. Steele he said, "Your eyes."

"What about them?" Miss Holt asked.

"They're blue."

"Is that a problem?"

He answered her but looked at Mr. Steele. "My son has . . . hazel eyes, like his mother."

"Are you sure? You said you only saw him once."

Mr. Steele raised his hand to stop further protests. "I . . . I don't think . . . a father could make that mistake so easily. . . . Could he, your Lordship?"

He heard the faint hope in Mr. Steele's voice. He feared he had betrayed some sign of recognition. He had been given one more chance to acknowledge the possibility Mr. Steele was his son – but he could not. "No," he said with finality.

"Are you saying he isn't your – but he's the right age, and he was raised in Ireland – and the watch? What about the watch?"

Lord Claridge returned smoothly to his story: he was practiced in the art of deception – it ran in his genes. "Well, the initials "S.J." stand for Sean James. The boy's name." Actually, the boy's mother had only said she was calling the baby "Sean," given him his first – and last – look at the boy, and left. He now picked "James" to fit the initial. "I gave it to a friend to make sure he received it when he came of age."

"Well, there you are," Miss Holt said.

"However, the watch was lost or stolen. And when you turned up with it, I naturally assumed it had found its way back to my son."

"Well, that would make sense," Mr. Steele put in.

"*What* does?"

"My father probably stole the watch," Mr. Steele told Miss Holt and then gave a slight, self-deprecatative smile.

Playing his part, Lord Claridge smiled sadly in return. "I'm truly sorry, Mr. Steele. For both our sakes." He offered his hand again. Mr. Steele took it, smiled sympathetically, and then clasped him in an embrace meant to offer comfort.

Mr. Steele turned to go. "Shall we, Miss Holt? I think we have a long way to go. Good day to you, sir."

Miss Holt reached out and touched Mr. Steele's arm. "I'm so sorry."

Mr. Steele looked back at him one last time, raising his hand, and Lord Claridge smiled quietly in farewell. The smile left his face as the door closed behind them.

Fortunately, both Mr. Steele and Miss Holt had been so thrown off-balance by the whole affair that they were taken in by his story. He took the watch from his pocket and let his thoughts drift back to a time more than 30 years ago.

Shawna, the love of his life. She and her family were recent arrivals to London, she had said, though she had never allowed him to meet her family. She was a pretty, Irish girl – tall, slim, with long, dark hair and blue eyes. She had a small, cherished collection of pocket watches she brought to show him one day. She said the first was from her beloved "grandda," the second was from her favorite "uncail," and the last, a recent sixteenth birthday gift, was from her parents.

They met secretly, for he was twenty years old and she said she didn't think her parents would approve of the relationship. He felt that he was so much more worldly than she. He thought her girlish, innocent, but he was filled with a passion that nearly overwhelmed him. His kisses had grown increasingly urgent, he had tried to fondle her, but she always pushed him away. Lately, he had been growing angry at her refusals. He tried to keep it in check, but it was hard. To make amends, to win her over, he bought her a gold pocket watch that played "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" and had it engraved.

He went to meet her.

"Shawna," he whispered, gathering her in his arms. He loved speaking her name, always using it more than one should. The kiss was gentle, sweet. He pulled away slightly, reaching into his pocket. "I have something for you." He took out the watch, placed it in her palm, and closed her fingers over it.

"Ohhh . . . it's lovely." She opened it, smiling as the tune played. She read the inscription aloud, "To S.J. from K.L.." Puzzled, she looked at him.

" 'S.J.' – you know – 'Shawna Jones.'" He grinned broadly, knowing the effect it would have on her.

She laughed with delight. "That part I be knowin', your Lordship," she teased, "But K.L.?"

"Kevin Landers. A name I use sometimes." He was fond of calling himself by different names as the need arose. "This way, should you ever be careless and your parents come across it, they won't be able to trace it back to me."

Although she still seemed a little taken aback by the false name, she gave him a small smile.

As he looked at her, desire again suddenly overwhelmed him. He pulled her into his arms, kissed her, softly at first, but then the restraint he had resolved to exhibit vanished, and he kissed her deeply, his hands roaming her body, pushing at her skirts. Dropping the watch, she sought to break away. He wouldn't let her. She struggled against him, refusing to yield. Angered, he raised his hand to strike her but stopped, shoving her from him. She fell to her hands and knees, scrambled away, made her way to her feet, and began to run. He stood there, panting. "Irish bitch," he hissed under his breath. He stooped, picking up the watch.

He found himself in a dingy pub in an unfamiliar part of the inner city, putting away pint after pint. He was in a poor, ethnically diverse area, and the patronage reflected that. Her voice drew his attention first: it was Irish, an accent so strong he could barely make out a word. She was *very* young, tall, and thin almost to the point of malnourishment. . . . A whore . . . Fury rose in him as he thought of Shawna. He approached her, gave her money, led her out into the streets, and found an alley. In the dim light, for the first time, he looked closely at her face. He blinked in surprise: had she been able to take care of herself, she could have been beautiful. Her skin, though unnaturally pale, was flawless. Her black hair, with lovely brown undertones, could have been luxuriant. He memorized the shape of her mouth, her nose. He allowed himself to be drawn, momentarily, into those blue eyes. He wanted to remember his "first." He took her, gently to start; then he became rough. He clamped his hand over her mouth, stifling her cries. Then he hit her. And he hit her again. And again. Finally he came out of the alley, straightening his clothes, and made his way home. Then he realized the watch was missing.

Soon after, he was attracted to an Irish girl who worked on the estate. Unlike Shawna, she didn't refuse him. He wasn't passionately in love with her, as he had been with Shawna, but the baby, *his* baby, Sean, had captured his heart.

The occasional rages he still felt toward Shawna he took out during forays into various parts of the inner city. As time went on, it became less and less about Shawna. It was just rage. It had drastically escalated five years ago and had gotten way out of control. Also, he had made the mistake of returning, again and again, to the same area, Whitechapel. The authorities could not look the other way. They dealt with it discreetly, however, insisting that he leave for his family's holdings in Canada. His saving grace had been falling in love there, with Catherine, now his wife.

Lord Claridge looked down at the watch in his hand, opened its cover, listened to the tune, and then closed it with a decisive snap and left his study.

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He was being chased. Four older, heftier boys were in close pursuit. He passed a pub just as a man and a woman were unlocking it. He heard the woman cry "Paddy, it's he!" The boys quickly caught up to him and began pummeling him mercilessly. He raised his arms to ward off the blows: he was an expert at the move. For some reason the barkeep waded in to help him, pulling the boys off him. He caught a glimpse of the woman standing nearby, terrified. For a brief moment he ceased his struggles. She seemed . . . familiar. But then he went into a frenzy as he heard a copper's whistle and the call "What seems to be the trouble, Mr. O'Rourke?" He wriggled free and took off.

Remington sat up with a start, bathed in sweat. He settled back onto the sheets, letting his heartbeat slow as he realized it was just a dream. He reached his hands out to the sides, caressing the Italian-made cotton sheets, reassuring himself of his present reality. He gave a small, rueful laugh. "Ahh, the creativity of the human mind." They had just returned from London and their encounter with the Earl of Claridge. He had managed to weave Patrick O'Rourke, the sender of the watch, into a not atypical scene of his boyhood. He gave a small smile as he got up to wash off and to change his silk pyjamas.

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Lord Claridge stared at the canopy overhead and shifted uncomfortably in his bed. He was dying. He had never found Sean, the boy who meant so much to him. A few months ago, when he learned he had not much longer to live, he told Catherine of Sean, of his indiscretion with the girl who had worked on the estate, and of his intense desire to find Sean before he died. Until now, however, he had closed his heart to his other son, known as Remington Steele. He had spent years thinking of Sean, longing for him; he had felt no connection to Steele. Why would he want to acknowledge a boy who had been conceived in hate and rage and was a crushing reminder of all the cruelty he had inflicted then, and later? He wished that watch had never reappeared in his life a year ago.

And yet . . . he could have a son – a flesh-and-blood son – if he would but acknowledge him. More important, he realized, he could give Steele his father, ending his search – he knew the pain of such a search. Perhaps by finally putting Steele's needs above his own selfish ones, he could atone, to some small degree, for all the suffering he had caused in his life.

"There's time. There's much time," Steele had said. But there wasn't. Finally, Lord Claridge decided to – *needed to* – reach out to this boy. . . . Man.

And he knew just the man who might serve as a bridge between him and this son. Daniel Chalmers, along with Remington Steele, had saved his life at his wedding to Catherine. He had offered Mr. Chalmers the position of Chief of Security for his estate at that time, and Mr. Chalmers had accepted on a provisional basis. He had become aware of Mr. Chalmers' close relationship with Mr. Steele. Lord Claridge hoped to make use of it now. With that in mind, he called his dear wife, Catherine, and Mr. Chalmers to his bedside.



He spoke without preamble. "Catherine, Mr. Chalmers. I believe Remington Steele is my son. I would like you, Mr. Chalmers, to contact him. Tell him I have news of his father and want to speak to him personally about it. Stress to him the urgency – I have not long to live – but reveal no more. I wish to do that myself. And if he will allow it, I will acknowledge him publicly and leave him – and Sean, if he is found – land and property."

Daniel's eyes lit up.

Catherine, however, was stunned and upset. "I don't understand! How can Remington Steele be your son? Who is *his* mother?"

Lord Claridge hesitated.

"I think I have a right to know." Her tone was gentle but firm. She took his hand in hers.

"His mother . . . I don't know her name. She was a prostitute . . . She must have picked my pocket the night I – " he didn't finish that thought. "She must have taken my watch . . . a watch that Mr. Steele traced to me. That was when I became aware of his existence. He is the very image of her. Of that I am not mistaken."

Catherine bowed her head. She then got up and left the room without looking back. Lord Claridge looked after her with deep regret.

Daniel, however, was delighted. After all Daniel's scheming, Harry was truly related to royalty and would be set for life! If only they had found this out earlier, so would he have been. But with his heart condition, he, too, would not be around for long. He would not reap the benefits. How disappointing. Daniel was sure Harry could live with the knowledge that his mother was a prostitute, particularly given that his father was an earl! Despite Harry's tall tales that he descended from Irish Kings and British generals, Daniel knew Harry expected his parents to be of the humblest of beginnings at best. "Your Lordship," he said.

Lord Claridge turned toward him.

"I would be pleased to contact him for you."

Lord Claridge spoke again. "Please, Mr. Chalmers, tell me about . . . my son, how you met." He settled back onto his pillows.

Daniel looked at Lord Claridge, reading the same wistfulness in his eyes he had heard in his voice.

The precise truth wouldn't do. Lord Claridge might take exception to Harry's *colorful* past, and Daniel couldn't chance that. Harry's future was at stake!

"I was in Brixton on some matters of . . . security, when I bumped into this young lad. He was hustling on the streets," – a bit of truth to make it believable – "and I could see he had talents that could be used in much better ways. I persuaded him to try his luck with me."

The truth was far more complicated. Daniel let his tongue do the talking to Lord Claridge while his mind was engaged with his recollections of his first encounter with Harry and of where that had led. . . .

He had been in Brixton for his *own* security, after one of his schemes had had some unfortunate results, and the boy had literally bumped into *him*, expertly picking his pocket. Daniel had been in immediate need of a partner with the talent to get him out his predicament. Unaware Daniel himself was a cannon<sup>1</sup> and had quickly recognized his loss, the boy was overconfident. Daniel easily followed him to an alley, where he was attempting to secrete his "earnings" behind a loose brick. Daniel had the element of surprise and greater strength: he spun the boy around and pinned him to the wall. Even so, if Daniel hadn't been waving a fistful of money, taken from his moneybelt, in the boy's face, the lad would have no doubt wrested himself free.

"Easy, easy. I need a light-fingered lad like you for a bit of help, my boy. I'll pay you *this*" – he waved the money under the boy's nose again – "and an equal amount upon completion of the job."

The boy's eyes widened as he looked at the money, and he licked his lip. Then his eyes narrowed. "What do I have t'do?"

Daniel couldn't quite place the accent – plenty of South London in there, to be sure, with the dropped "h" and the blunted final "t," but also an underlying current of something else. "Oh nothing too complicated, if you think a slight lad like you can pass yourself off as a 'toughie.' "

The boy bristled. "I can fucking do it."

Daniel released him. "Good lad."

The boy licked his lower lip again, put his hands in his pockets, and cocked an eyebrow at Daniel. "I need t' get a few things. I'll take half the rest" – referring to the final payment – "now. After all, *mister*, if you're desperate enough t'be asking for me help, chance is ya won't be around for me t' collect, will ya?"

Daniel had caught the appraising look. Cheeky lad – he had to give him that. Amused, he agreed.

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<sup>1</sup>Master pickpocket

He gave the boy his instructions and the money. The boy stuffed the money in his pocket, gave Daniel a grin and a wink, and took off. Daniel wasn't at all sure his trust was well-placed. The lad, however, more than rose to the occasion. He showed up in heavy bovver boots, turned-up jeans, a knee-length overcoat, called himself "Kevin" and played his part to perfection. The plan went off without a hitch.

After that, Daniel used the boy off and on for other "jobs." Each time, the boy insisted on using a different name and immersed himself in a different character, but he was limited to those suggested by his impoverished background. Daniel was both amused and impressed, though the boy's cockiness caused them more than one close call.

Still, all those names. Even when not on a "job," the boy never seemed to use the same name twice. In exasperation Daniel told the boy he couldn't keep up with the "nom du jour" and to please just pick one for Daniel to call him when they weren't on "business."

"Mmmm . . . 'Harry,' " the boy told him, as usual dropping the 'h.' "Did ya know Humphrey Bogart played four different 'Harry's', five 'Joe's' and a 'Joseph', and four 'John's'? I save 'John' for certain occasions, and I don't want t' be a fucking 'Joe'." He seemed disturbed but didn't elaborate.

To know the boy, even in passing, and that seemed to be the only way to know him, was to know of his passion for films: it seemed as if he worked at least one into practically every verbal exchange. Bogart was his favorite actor.

" 'Harry' it is, then."

Over time, observing the boy's malleability, creativity, and lightening-quick ability to improvise and considering the success of their undertakings thus far, Daniel devised an audacious plan. He would turn this boy into a gentleman, teaching him all he knew. The two of them would conquer England. The Continent. The possibilities were endless.

Harry turned him down with a flat "no fucking thanks." So until nearly a year later, they continued with their usual arrangement. Daniel went down to meet Harry. The lad had just lifted another wallet. Turning, he saw Daniel, grinned widely, pushed his cap back, and stepped off the kerb to make his way across the heavily-trafficked street toward him.

Suddenly, Daniel heard the shout "There's the mick<sup>2</sup>!" He saw two older boys run toward Harry, who took off like a shot. By the time Daniel made it across the street, they were out of sight. Daniel half-ran in the direction the lads had gone. He was afraid he had lost them but then saw the older boys exit an alley. They were dividing up and pocketing Harry's take, laughing and punching each other in the arm. When they were clear, Daniel ran into the alley. Harry lay there,

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<sup>2</sup>An Irishman. From the popular Irish name, Michael. Generally offensive

face-down, unmoving. Kneeling, Daniel gently turned him over. Blood was coming from his nose and lip; bruises were already forming on his face.

“Harry,” Daniel called softly, absently sliding his hands down the boy’s torso. Feeling wetness, he lifted the boy’s shirt. Harry had been knifed. Frantic, Daniel ran out to the street, hailed a cab, threw large bills at the driver, yelled at him to wait, returned to the alley, scooped the lad up, and took him to the closest Casualty<sup>3</sup>.

Though his condition was serious, Harry eventually made a full recovery. Daniel paid all hospital costs, getting a brief “Ta<sup>4</sup>” from Harry in return. The next time Daniel brought up his proposal, however, Harry agreed to a trial period of “being Eliza Doolittle,” as he put it, this time affecting Rex Harrison’s accent and immediately supplying the annotation in perfect imitation thereof: “My Fair Lady. Rex Harrison, Audrey Hepburn. Warner Brothers. 1964.”

“I saw to it he was given a well-rounded education,” Daniel told Lord Claridge. Perhaps not in the traditional sense, but well-rounded, nonetheless.

Educating Harry had been a challenge from the start. The boy could barely read or write. Intelligent and a quick study, he was also quick-tempered and sometimes reacted violently when frustrated with his studies or otherwise. Not so surprising, given his background, but hard to take, nonetheless. More than once, Daniel found books and drawings defaced or destroyed. On one occasion the boy actually took his knife to the clothes Daniel had bought for him, ripping them to shreds, and then disappeared.

Even with the help of an ingratiating character named “Chalkie,” it took Daniel a full two weeks to track the lad down. He found him sitting in an alley, his ear pressed to the rear door of a fleapit<sup>5</sup>, the sounds of a film lulling him to sleep.

Daniel gently shook him awake. Harry started, reflexively threw up an arm to protect himself from the blow that never came, and then looked at him, eyes wide with fright.

“Harry, would you be interested in starting horseback riding lessons tomorrow? A gentleman must learn to play polo.”

Harry’s look changed to one of disbelief followed by bafflement. He then got up and followed Daniel back to his flat without a word. After that, from time-to-time, when, evidently, the pressures of becoming a gentleman or the need to not get too attached to anything or anyone had

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<sup>3</sup>Emergency room

<sup>4</sup>Thanks

<sup>5</sup>A dilapidated building usually housing a movie theater

grown too great, Harry might still unexpectedly disappear for a few days, but he always returned. His violent outbursts became less frequent as time went on.

Thank God. Daniel wasn't sure himself why he put up with the boy those first few months – the hostility, anger, aloofness, arrogance. The disappearances. But rare, unguarded moments, like the time Harry caught sight of a father and son walking together, the father's hand on his boy's shoulder, touched him. Harry made no secret of his anger toward his *own* father, saying he didn't know who he was and graphically describing just what, exactly, he would do to the cunt if he ever found out; so Daniel was totally taken by surprise when Harry just stood watching, completely still, looking so wistful, so sad. When Daniel touched his arm, however, the boy angrily shook him off, said he had “business,” and once again disappeared for days, leaving Daniel feeling a curious mix of exasperation and pity.

There was also the quick wit, the charm he could turn on. And after that first crisis had passed, there was the boy's refusal to give up, his determination to bash on until he got it right, even though his hotheadedness might still temporarily derail him. There was that wide grin of delight when he did get it right. And he *got* it right, more and more. Daniel's initial intuition about him was proving to be correct: the lad would be a great asset to Daniel's schemes. Moreover, Daniel had to admit, he found an unexpected pleasure in teaching Harry. For the first time, Daniel found himself caring about someone other than himself. Turning this lump of coal into a diamond gave a deeper meaning to his admittedly hedonistic life than he had ever known.

“He excelled in English and art,” Daniel told Lord Claridge.

Irish. That was what he had been detecting in the boy's accent. Daniel had had a devil of a time toning down Harry's Brixton-Irish bastardization of the Queen's English and eliminating the obscenities – not to mention his . . . *colorful* . . . Irish slang. Daniel inwardly winced, recalling the first time he brought Harry to his flat. Upon asking him if he were hungry, the lad had replied, “I could eat a babby's arse tru the bars of a cot.” Harry still never used two words when ten would do, but other than that, there was little resemblance between the way he spoke then and the way he spoke now.

Art, much to Daniel's surprise, had turned out to be key to Harry's metamorphosis. One time when Harry began to act up, Daniel, on impulse, shoved a drawing pad and pencil into his hands with the command “Draw!” Harry glared at him and then, as if in defiance, began to sketch furiously. Daniel left the room while Harry filled sheet after sheet with graphic, violent images, splashing his feelings onto the paper with vehemence. When Daniel reappeared over an hour later, Harry was still drawing, but calmly. Harry had his back turned to Daniel, and his work so absorbed him he didn't even notice him. And he was talking to himself, telling a story about what he was drawing. After that, Daniel frequently encouraged Harry to draw: he found it helped the boy to control his impulses, to channel his frustration and anger without hurting anyone or anything and without fearing reprisal. Harry hadn't let him look at most of his drawings, and, after accidentally getting a look at some, he hadn't wanted to. Many of the ones that were true-to-life

depicted scenes to which no one, certainly not a fourteen-year-old, should have been exposed. The ones he did share with Daniel, however, showed that he had a real talent, and Daniel arranged for him to have lessons. It had been a natural way for Harry to develop an interest in other ventures close to Daniel's heart.

"In fact, he developed a passion for fine art, precious artifacts, and gems. He's an expert gemologist." Daniel smiled with pride. Daniel had also refined Harry's lock-picking and pickpocketing techniques and had taught him how to open safes – a skill in which he soon outshone his teacher – to better enable him to pursue those passions.

"His physical education wasn't neglected, either." That was much easier. Harry turned out to be naturally gifted in that area. What took some work was his posture, learning to carry himself like a man of breeding. Now, a proudly erect carriage was one of his trademarks. But so was putting his hands in his pockets. Daniel had never been able to break Harry of the habit.

"I saw to it that he had lessons in fencing, polo, tennis. He loves game shooting and fox hunts." Daniel wasn't sure of the latter but threw it in anyway – that's what a lord of the manor did, after all; Harry could always improvise.

"We took the gentleman's tour of the Continent, during which I taught him about fine wines, fine cuisine – he's now an excellent gourmet cook, himself – and introduced him to the mysteries of the fairer sex. He's skilled in dancing and in charming the ladies." Though not as strikingly handsome as he became as an adult, the transformed Harry had still turned heads. Daniel had feared it would be a great struggle to teach an oik<sup>6</sup>, in the throes of adolescence, how to be a gentleman when surrounded by a bevy of admiring young (and not-so-young, for that matter) females. Harry, however, proved surprisingly shy among the ladies and accepted Daniel's guidance in that area eagerly. He took to these lessons with enthusiasm.

"He also does rather well at the gaming tables." Especially when the two of them rigged the game.

"After a few years, Harry – sorry – Remington – struck out on his own. He is well-traveled and has sampled a variety of occupations" – smuggler, boxer, gold prospector, art thief, jewel thief, and heaven knew what else – "in his desire to broaden his horizons. We've kept in touch as best we can; our paths cross occasionally. Currently, he is a 'private detective', as you know. An extremely highly regarded one, I should add." Might as well play that up. It could only elevate Harry in Lord Claridge's eyes.

Daniel glanced over at Lord Claridge. With a small smile playing upon his lips, the Earl of Claridge had fallen asleep. Daniel sighed with relief: no need to dance around any pesky details Lord Claridge might wish to know. He went out and set about making his plans.

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<sup>6</sup> An unsophisticated, uncultured, and objectionable person. Derog.

If he played his cards right, he would see Harry not only invested with the authority suitable to a member of the peerage, but also divested of the authority of Linda. He knew full well her name was “Laura.” By calling her “Linda,” however, he denied her any legitimacy in Harry’s life, just as he rejected the legitimacy of his former protege’s present role, calling him “Harry” despite his declaration to Daniel “the name is Steele, Remington Steele.” Hell, even Linda didn’t grant him the legitimacy of *that* name.

Harry, he was sure, would come to see the advantages afforded to him as son of the Earl of Claridge – wealth, glamour, easy living, having the pick of women ( and why restrict oneself to just one?) – far outweighed anything life, or Linda, could offer him as Remington Steele.

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Daniel had difficulty, however, putting his plan in motion. That secretary – what was her name? Melba? – said something about Mexico, about not disturbing them. She wasn’t too forthcoming with information. Then, certain matters involving his scheme with Marissa Peters, already set in motion, intervened and could not be put off. Now, all hell threatened to break out concerning Lord Claridge. At first, Daniel just saw rumors concerning his hasty departure to Canada six years ago surface in the tabloids – they had focused on Lord Claridge due to his imminent death. Then, somehow, one of the papers, perhaps with a contact in Scotland Yard, unearthed the real reason for the arrangement of that departure, his beatings of prostitutes during drunken rampages in Whitechapel. Soon after, rumors of such beatings over a more than thirty-year period circulated. They were unsubstantiated, but Lord Claridge had been shattered: he had lapsed into a coma and died within a few days.

This turn of events troubled Daniel. He just couldn’t tell Harry now, not the way the press was digging for dirt. He could just see *those* headlines. The great detective Remington Steele, bastard son of the Earl of Claridge. Son of a whore. Son of the whore-beating Earl of Claridge.

Not that it would be all bad. Surely it would be just the thing to get him out of the clutches of Linda. He would give up his “Remington Steele” persona, returning to that noblest of professions, professional confidence man, supplementing his income with whatever Lord Claridge left him.

The problem was, Harry would no doubt have his face splashed all over the tabloids, and not just in the British Isles. It might spread from there to Europe. After all, Harry had become known there – especially to the police – after that Hapsburg Dagger affair. And Los Angeles papers would naturally carry the story, Los Angeles being the home-base for Remington Steele Investigations. With the public’s thirst for sensationalism, who knew how far the news would travel and how many papers would carry his photo. Harry was very photogenic. That sort of thing was rather a threat to the anonymity required by a confidence man.

No, this would close that road to him as well. And the peerage would never accept him under these conditions. He would be left with nothing, not even Daniel himself. Daniel sighed. No, he

wouldn't tell Harry he was the son of Lord Claridge.

In fact, he had a better idea. He, Daniel, would be Harry's father. He would tell a story of a woman who had loved him. Daniel concocted his story:

Instead of seizing the moment, he had tried to pull off a caper – and had ended up in prison. While there, he found out that the woman had been pregnant with his child and had died giving birth to it, and that the baby had been put up for adoption. After serving his time, he had no idea where the baby was. He searched, but it wasn't until that day in Brixton that he finally found the boy. By then, the boy had built up so much hatred against his father that Daniel thought it better to be his mentor than to identify himself as that father.

Telling Harry *this* story would surely be better than telling him he was the son of a prostitute and the Earl of Claridge, a man whose past seemed to be filled with atrocities. Yes, Daniel liked this story better and better. Harry would have his parents. It would be his final gift to Harry.

Daniel went to tell Lady Claridge that he was not going to inform Harry – Mr. Steele – of his possible relationship to Lord Claridge – after all, that hadn't been his obligation; that, in fact, he felt it best his former protegee end his search for his father, a search that, if the truth were uncovered, could only lead to unhappiness for all concerned, especially for Mr. Steele; and that, in fact, he had just the way to see that search was ended. With consummate skill he persuaded her to his thinking.

Then Daniel learned that Lord Claridge had, in any event, willed Ashford Castle in Ireland to Steele; that Mr. Smithers, solicitor for the Earl of Claridge, had found Mr. Steele in London, on a case, and had turned the castle over to him with the words Lord Claridge had instructed him to say: "He always had a real bond with you, Mr. Steele. In a certain sense, you were that long-lost son. Which is why he remembered you in his will"<sup>7</sup>; and that Harry was on his way to the castle now. Daniel left for the castle.

Unfortunately, Marissa Peters found out he was on his way to the castle and waylaid him there. Though Daniel would rather have concentrated on his task with Harry, he felt he had no choice but to continue with the deal he had made with her as well. He also discovered Harry had married Linda. He couldn't say that fact pleased him. Too bad he wasn't going to be around much longer to continue vying with her for Harry.

Finally, the time came when Daniel "admitted" to Harry he was his father. He *almost* didn't go

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<sup>7</sup>Steele Hanging In there Part II <http://rsepguide.topcities.com/hanging02.html>



through with it. But then – it was best for Harry.

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Catherine sat in the large and lonely mansion and watched the televised military funeral for Daniel Chalmers. It was hard to believe he was dead: just a few days ago he had been so full of vigor and spirit as he induced her to go along with his deception of Mr. Steele. But that deception, no matter how well-intentioned, had begun to trouble her more and more. Of course she had been upset by her husband's revelation, but Mr. Steele had the right to know the truth . . . didn't he? Her husband's last wish had been to reveal his connection to him. Surely she was obligated to honor that?

Daniel's death removed any last hesitancy she felt about approaching the Steeles. But she would be discreet: she had no wish to harm anyone else's reputation. She called the castle after the broadcast. The line was busy. She tried a couple of times soon after, but the line just rang, and rang, and rang. She would try again in the morning.

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"Hello?" Laura answered the ringing phone.

"Mrs. Steele? This is Lady Claridge – Catherine. I have some . . . rather important news that concerns your husband."

"He's not available right now. We're preparing to leave for London." Laura didn't want to mention that the purpose of that visit was to legally turn the castle, left to Mr. Steele by Lord Claridge, over to the servants. Last night had been magical: they'd always have the memory of that blissful first union of their bodies as they gave themselves to each other completely. But other memories conjured up the castle – servants handing them bills that hadn't been paid in fifty-nine years and . . . Daniel's death here – caused this place to lose its charm for them. They were ready to leave. "May I ask what this is about?"

"It's about . . . my late husband . . . and his relationship to *your* husband."

"His relationship?" Laura was immediately on the alert, eyebrows lifting.

"My husband was certain he was . . . Mr. Steele's father."

Laura sat down abruptly. "You have proof?"

"Perhaps it would be best to meet when you're in London. Then I'll explain as much as I can, all I know."

Laura paused, considering. "All right. I'll contact you once we're in London."

"Mrs. Steele, please be discreet. I'm afraid the tabloids here have been digging up my husband's past. Mr. Steele would suffer public humiliation, I fear, if the connection between him and my husband were to become known at this point in time. I'll explain more fully when we meet."

Laura didn't understand but wasn't about to risk the public humiliation of Remington Steele. "All right" was all she said. She hung up the phone. She saw no reason to tell Mr. Steele – she couldn't help it, she just couldn't wrap her mind around calling him "Remington," or anything other than "Mr. Steele," for that matter – about Lady Claridge's call. First, she would listen to what Lady Claridge had to say, getting all the facts she could. Then, if those facts justified it, she would tell him herself. She sighed. He had been deceived. Not only by Lord Claridge, but also by Daniel, who he now thought was his father for god's sake. The lousy conman. If he were alive, she would have killed him. She sighed again. When it came to life with Mr. Steele, was anything ever going to be easy? She shook herself, got up, and continued preparing to leave for London.

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Lady Claridge was right: the tabloids certainly had been busy. Lurid headlines leapt out at her from the newsstands Laura walked by, as she made her way to her meeting with Lady Claridge. She stopped, read the related article in one of the reputable papers, and gasped. The authorities acknowledged they had substantiated that the Earl of Claridge had been the perpetrator not only of "the Whitechapel beatings" six years ago, but also of similar beatings throughout the London area over a more than thirty-year period prior to that. Lady Claridge must be devastated.

At their meeting Lady Claridge looked strained but remained remarkably composed. She told her story about the watch, about Lord Claridge's insistence of the likeness between the prostitute and Mr. Steele, about Daniel's scheme, and about certain legal matters of inheritance. She answered Laura's questions as best she could. She told Laura that, upon her husband's death, she had some of his blood drawn for the purpose of paternity testing. It was under refrigeration, and if Mr. Steele agreed to it, the testing could easily be done.

Laura felt the pieces fit well enough so that they should be presented to Mr. Steele. And paternity testing would give objective results. You couldn't argue with objective results. Laura rose, thanking Lady Claridge. She didn't return immediately to the flat they had rented. Mr. Steele wouldn't be back from his meeting yet anyway, and she needed the time to consider just what she would say to him. She also wanted to go to the lab where Lord Claridge's blood was being kept, so that she could find out about this relatively new procedure and, especially, about its accuracy.

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Just as Laura's meeting was getting underway, Remington opened a sleepy eye to check the

clock. "Oh no . . . ," he moaned. He had overslept. He was exhausted from the night train trip back from Ireland, from recent events, from . . . Daniel's death. He hadn't even had time to absorb that, really. He smiled sadly as he recalled how, immediately after Daniel's death, he had taken up where Daniel had left off in his scheme involving Marissa Peters. His expansion upon Daniel's original plan had led, ironically, to the burial of Daniel as a military hero. In two places. The ultimate con. He deserved no less.

He sighed and then made to get out of the bed. Laura had already left; he couldn't quite remember where she had gone off to. He got ready as quickly as his penchant for immaculate grooming would allow. He took a less leisurely than usual shower, toweled off, shaved, brushed his teeth, styled his hair, slipped into his dressing gown of finest Chinese silk, and made his way to the kitchen. The larder and refrigerator were stocked to his specifications. Ingredients were organic whenever possible. He set about making one of his favorite breakfasts. He carefully brewed a pot of English Breakfast Tea<sup>8</sup>. He allowed himself a small pat of exquisite deep yellow Jersey butter with which to fry some button mushrooms. He grilled slices of tomato. He poached a single brown egg to perfection. He toasted two slices of wholemeal bread, supplied by one of the finest bakeries in London. These he spread with Harrods Raspberry and Redcurrant Conserve, his favorite jam. He concentrated on his meal and felt quite virtuous that he wasn't lingering over the Times with a second cuppa.

He washed up and then fussed some more in the bathroom – one couldn't stint on good grooming – before carefully dressing for his appointment. He wore his Brioni suit, his shirt from Bond street, and his shoes from Church's<sup>9</sup>. He felt – and looked – like a million dollars. Whistling, he left the flat. The driver he had prearranged was waiting. He was driven to his appointment in a luxury limo. He went straight to the appointment with Mr. Smithers, solicitor with Bumbridge, Cleasthorpe, and Cogswaite. He was late.

Afterwards, as Steele was leaving, Mr. Smithers remarked it was "a shame about Lord Claridge." Mr. Steele agreed, though he thought it a bit late to be bringing up Lord Claridge's death again. As he exited the offices, he finally took in his surroundings. It was a beautiful day – "jacket weather," Americans would say. Headlines at the newsagent<sup>10</sup> caught his eye. Every one seemed to be a variation of "Earl of Claridge, longtime whore-beater."

"Oh my!" He picked up a paper, began to skim the article, and then bought the paper.

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<sup>8</sup>a blend of the finest Indian and Ceylon black teas, supplied by Jackson's of Picadilly

<sup>9</sup>top British bootmakers

<sup>10</sup>Newspaper stand

Remington had changed into more casual – for him – attire. He had also undone the top buttons of his shirt and rolled up the sleeves. In celebration of unloading the castle, he had decided to treat Laura to a meal featuring traditional British fare. He was making a clear soup, a salmon mousse with roasted tomato sauce, oven-roasted potatoes, spring vegetables, and a pudding<sup>11</sup>. Hearing Laura enter the flat, he came out of the kitchen into the dining room, wiping his hands on a towel and removing his apron. He greeted Laura with a light kiss.

"A good thing I'm *not* related to Lord Claridge, eh?" He nodded toward the paper that lay open on the dining room table. When she didn't respond, he leaned to the right, ducking his head to try to catch her eye. "Laura?"

She looked directly at him. "You'd better sit down."

He hesitated, noted her look, and then sat at the table. "All right, I'm sitting."

She took a few paces away from him and then turned, saying, "One time during a case you told me that it was one thing to conceal your past by design, another to have it concealed from you."<sup>12</sup>

"Yes."

"At the end of that case, however, you said there are bits and pieces of your past that are obscure to you, and at moments you realize they're less painful that way."

He shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

Laura's voice softened. "Would you want me to fill in a bit of your past, knowing you will find it . . . painful?"

A reflex arc was activated: "walk out – don't find out – run away." Overridden. "Just tell me, Laura."

She hesitated a moment longer, and he swore he could read her thought: *Icy Calm*.

"I met with Lady Claridge this morning. Lord Claridge believed, and it's entirely possible, that . . . you *are* his son."

He didn't know what he had expected, but it certainly wasn't that. "What're you talkin' about, Laura? Daniel – " He stopped when he saw her shake her head, when he saw her conviction. He

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<sup>11</sup>a type of cake with custard over it

<sup>12</sup>My Fair Steele

dropped his eyes, took a breath. Step-by-step, mate, step-by-step.

He focused on her words: Lord Claridge's son. So. He *had* seen recognition in Lord Claridge's eyes that day. He looked back up at her. "Lord Claridge believed me to be Sean James, after all." His voice was even.

"No," Laura said softly.

No?! His voice rose. "Then who the bloody hell – "

"The son of Lord Claridge and a . . . a woman whom, he said, you look remarkably like. 'The very image' were his words."

"Who was she?" His voice became very soft. He had only been told that his mother had died at his birth.

Again that hesitation.

"A prostitute. That's all he knew."

Some unknown prostitute. His breath caught; then, involuntarily, his glance fell to the newspaper on the table before him, and he winced as further implications of her words hit him. Abruptly, he pushed away from the table, stood, paced away from her, turned, and began again, angrily, though he wasn't exactly sure toward whom his anger was directed, "No. Why would Daniel lie to me, what possible reason – "

"This was coming out," she said, gesturing toward the paper. "He told Lady Claridge you should be spared connection with it."

He looked down, licking his lower lip. His shoulders slumped. "Frankly, I prefer the story Daniel told me at Ashford to all this."

"Perhaps he knew you would."

He turned away. He knew he hadn't asked all the pertinent questions to fill in all the gaps. But right now, he just couldn't. Right now, if Laura thought it possible, that was good enough for him – she would have grilled Lady Claridge thoroughly. Laura he trusted.

Turning back, he looked directly at her. "Do I have a name?"

"If you do, Lord Claridge didn't know it."

No name. How fitting. He felt like Tantalus, straining for the fruit always just beyond his grasp.

Absently, he wondered if there was a movie annotation for that. Laura was speaking; he forced his attention back to her.

“He didn’t know about *you* until I showed him the watch. . . .”

He merely nodded. If Lord Claridge was his father, then he *hadn’t* been abandoned, as he had always believed: one can only abandon what one knows one has. That was hardly a comforting thought.

Laura had paused and now continued. “Lady Claridge had blood drawn upon Lord Claridge's death . . . for paternity testing. . . . You could be tested. Being illegitimate, you couldn’t inherit his title<sup>13</sup>, of course, but if you are his son he wanted to acknowledge you. In his will he provided for a large amount of unentailed property to go to –”

Abruptly, Steele turned and strode from the room and out the door. He heard Laura call "Mr. Steele!" as he closed the door with a bit more force than necessary.

Laura hurried toward the window and watched as he moved down the street, hands in pockets, head down, shoulders forward – not his usual proud military bearing. Exhausted, she sank onto the couch and stared into space, no longer the controlled, objective Laura she had needed to be just moments ago – not only for herself, but for him.

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Remington strode along as if he could somehow outpace his thoughts and feelings. Eventually he slowed, began to breathe again. The swirl in his mind slowly coalesced into recognizable thought: a father. For more than thirty years he had gone without one. Now, in a space of days, two men – two ghosts – had laid claim to that title; one had already been unmasked as a pretender.

Remington stopped walking. He reached into his pocket, pulled out the watch, opened its cover, and began to listen to the tune, “When Irish Eyes are Smiling.” Memories of his last day with Daniel overtook him.

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<sup>13</sup>I received word from the Department of Constitutional Affairs (previously known as the Lord Chancellor's Office) that a child born out of wedlock cannot inherit a title (and, furthermore, in order to be legitimized his parents would have had to have married, but even then he could not inherit the title).

Daniel had stood before him in the master bedroom of the castle. Giving him Lord Claridge's pocket watch, Daniel said Harry had been right – his real father *had* stolen the watch – and “confessed” to being that father. Believing that Daniel, for the past twenty years, had selfishly kept this from him, thus essentially – *needlessly* – depriving him of his father for that time, simply in order to avoid his anger, he lashed out at him, flung that bloody pocket watch back at him, and left the room. He then walked the estate for hours.

Mildred came upon him. He had to force himself to stop when she ran to catch up to him. He couldn't hide his distress, and, when she asked what was wrong, he told her of Daniel's “revelation.” She played devil's advocate, saying Daniel hadn't been there for him when he had needed him most, urging him to “make him pay.” When he started to walk away again, she grabbed him, saying, “Oh, Boss. Boss. Hey. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Is this the way you want it to go down?” And he knew it was not. The past was over. Gone. Pffffft. But the future . . .

He went back to Daniel's room, briefly observed him, unseen, and, after a few moments' consideration, plunged right in, recalling the con he and Daniel were playing the time Daniel bought the suit he was now wearing. Daniel turned toward him, relieved. Smiling and laughing, they briefly reminisced about some of their other cons together, feeling their way back to each other. Then they held each other in a tight embrace – the first as “father and son.”

He had turned to pour the two of them a celebratory drink, saying to Daniel, “Perhaps there's something you can finally tell me. Lord knows, Laura's been bothering me enough all these years – anyway, what I'd like to know is . . . what's my real name?” Turning back, drinks in hand, he had discovered that Daniel, sitting in the settee across from him, had quietly died in the space of those few moments. . . .

The music stopped playing. Remington looked down at the watch in his hand. It needed to be wound. He closed its cover and returned it to his pocket without doing so. He started walking again. Daniel had certainly caused him to run the gamut of emotion that day. Now, he just felt numb. Daniel hadn't meant to hurt him. He knew that. Daniel could just never comprehend that, over the past few years with Laura, his “Harry” had come to fully embrace his “Remington” persona, a man who, in the end, preferred a hard truth over a more comfortable lie.

And it certainly was a hard truth, if truth it were. His thoughts turned to Lord Claridge . . . and to his mother.

He could accept her being a prostitute. He himself had been a throwaway child; it was painful, but not surprising, to discover that apparently his mother had also been one of the disposables of society, and he knew the activities to which such turned when faced with no other means of survival. *That* he could understand.

As for Lord Claridge . . . Remington had known about Whitechapel. He and Laura had each separately learned of *those* beatings a year ago: he, while tracking down the owner of the watch; Laura, while tracking down him. Before he had first been presented to Lord Claridge, Laura had told him Lord Claridge was a reformed man, thanks to the love of Catherine. And he had been prepared to accept, indeed to welcome, Lord Claridge as his father, if such was the case. After all, he had told himself, he himself was an example of the change a woman could precipitate: he was hardly in the position to cast stones.

But . . . did this reformation truly outweigh all that had come to light since that time? Could he accept a man who for more than *thirty years* had sadistically battered women? Could he forgive a man who, in all probability, had beaten his own *mother*? Could he embrace a man who had sought his illegitimate son Sean desperately, but had rejected *him* – his mother’s “very image” – on sight, likely *because* of that sight, and had only had a change of heart as his life had drawn to a close?

Weren’t all these questions moot? A “yes” to them could mean he’d inherit some property, but, though he could hear Daniel turning over in his grave, that didn’t matter to him. He had only sought his father to have that simple, human bond and to know a part of whom he himself was. A “yes” could not make that possible with Lord Claridge, even if he were still to desire it.

His answer to these questions really only mattered in here – he put a hand to his chest.

He stopped, bowed his head, and closed his eyes tightly. He knew what the answer of a saint would be. He just didn’t think he could be that heavenly-minded.

Taking a deep breath, he lifted his head. At the end of his life, Lord Claridge had become desperate enough to claim him as a son, but *he* was not desperate enough for a father to claim Lord Claridge.

He started walking again.

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He had walked for hours. Without his being aware of it, his feet had taken him to Brixton, where he had lived in the streets, alone, during his young years. He stood there, hands in pockets, and took in the sights and sounds. It was changed yet familiar. The memory of his first meeting of Daniel came unbidden to his mind. He gave a small half-smile. He had picked the toff’s pocket. Daniel. Not an auspicious beginning to a friendship. Daniel, nevertheless, saw potential in his fourteen-year-old self and took him under his wing, away from his dreary hand-to-mouth existence. Educated him. The stated purpose being to qualify him to help Daniel pull off his cons of the wealthy, of course, but true affection had developed between them – though young “Harry” would have denied it.

That chance meeting had changed the course of his life – just as had meeting Laura. His smile



broadened. Also not a promising beginning, trying to steal the jewels she had been hired to protect. But a beginning that had shifted the direction of his life again, and he was finally “on course.” He was truly thankful for these two people who had taken the gamble to involve him in their lives: Laura, now his wife; Daniel . . . after all was said and done, the closest thing to a father he had ever had.

The numbness finally left him. Blood circulated again around his heart.

He shook himself and gave a small, mirthless laugh. Enough of this. All in all, he was a man who lived in the present.

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It was very late. As Remington entered the flat, he remembered the meal he had been making. He stuck his head into the kitchen, prepared for the worst. Well, Laura had at least thought to turn off burners and put the food in the refrigerator. He wouldn't attest to her actually having salvaged it. She wasn't much of a cook. She had even washed up. He would have to make it up to her. He went through the bedroom into the shower, grinning as he thought of just how he could make it up to her. . . .

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He didn't want to wake her now. He slipped beneath the covers, trying not to disturb her, but pressing his whole body as close to hers as he could without actually touching, savoring her nearness.

Laura, of course, hadn't done more than doze off now and again, and she turned to face him. They gazed into each other's eyes as the soft moonlight filtered into the room. Then they made love tenderly, not saying a word. Afterwards, Laura felt wetness on his cheeks and tasted the salt of tears. She held him in her arms as he wept in near silence.

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Almost immediately upon their return from London, Lady Claridge informed them that the team of detectives Lord Claridge had hired in a last, desperate attempt to find Sean had finally managed to trace him. He had died, at a young age, of tuberculosis.

Six weeks had passed, and things were back to normal at Remington Steele Investigations in Suite 1157 of the Century Towers. Laura and Steele had gone out to meet with a client, but Steele returned to the office early. He needed to prepare a few notes for the luncheon address he was going to give in a few hours. Or so he had said. Mildred was out running errands; consequently,

he was the only one there when the postal worker arrived.

He flipped through the post. Bill, junk mail, invitation, junk mail, client payment, junk – no – he looked again at the return address. This was the laboratory report on the paternity testing. This would give him the percentage probability he was Lord Claridge's son.

He took the envelope into his office. Placed it on his desk. Took out the watch and placed it next to the letter. Turned. Looked out the window, hands in pockets.

The End.

Endnote: Though I would love to be able to say the words are entirely my own, the line about blood circulating again around his heart owes its inspiration to something PB was supposed to have said concerning the mourning period after Cassie's death.

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#### STEELE BEGINNING: A COMPANION PIECE

By Peg Daniels

She made her way back to Ireland. After the attack, all she wanted was to go home. Her parents, from whom she had run away, took her back in. When they discovered she was pregnant, they nearly turned her back out. Instead, they punished her more cruelly.

It was a hard birth, probably due to complications from the beating she had received. She was too weak and ill to prevent them from taking him from her.

“I baptize ye in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” Too ashamed to have his existence publicly acknowledged, they didn't have his birth recorded, but being good Catholics, they didn't deny him baptism, which they performed themselves. They didn't name him, saying that whoever took him in could name him what they would. They sent him on to a relative who knew a family willing to take him in, at least temporarily. When the burden of caring for him became too great, he was passed on. And passed on again. And again.

She begged to see him, and, occasionally, on condition that she not make known her relationship to him and stay in the background, she was allowed. Not that there was much of a chance he would remember her: her visits were too infrequent, the child was too young. Each time she saw him, he was with a different family, being called by a different name. What remained the same was the uncaring attitude. He was not wanted.

She was there in Dublin the day he ran away. He was in trouble, again. She watched as he got caught nicking<sup>14</sup> an apple from a display stand while his current “guardians” were haggling with the shopkeeper. He never looked as if he got enough to eat. They were whipping him with a switch when he suddenly broke away, running as if for his life. Perhaps he was.

A half-hearted attempt was made to follow him but soon abandoned. With a mother’s determination, however, she kept him in her sights. He made his way to the docks, ran onto a ship, and disappeared. She followed, concealing herself as well. When the ship docked in London, she made her way off, searching for him. But she could not find him. Her nine-year-old son.

In London she resumed her old “profession” and continued to search. A few years passed. The barkeeps in the seedy parts of town became familiar with her as she wandered the city, plying her trade, searching for him, growing older. One in Brixton, in particular, a barkeep named Paddy O’Rourke, became her friend and confidant. She told him of her son. She even showed him the watch she had kept safely with her all these years and told how she had lifted it from the man who was her boy’s father.

And then one day, in her twenty-eighth year, as she and Paddy were together unlocking the bar, a lad, thin, and tall for his age, came racing toward them with several older, heftier boys in close pursuit. “Paddy, t’is he!” she cried. The older boys caught up to the lad just in front of the bar and pummeled him mercilessly. Paddy joined the fray, trying to rescue the young one. She looked on, terrified. Her boy, despite his bloodied face, looked more like her than ever. As soon as he could wriggle free, however, he was off, running with the speed only a burst of adrenalin could supply. Unfortunately, Paddy was unable to pursue him: one of the older boys had now pulled a knife on him, and he was on the defensive. Only the bobby’s whistle, sounding closer and closer, finally caused the boys to disperse.

Paddy walked back to her, put an arm around her as she stood there trembling, and then drew her back into the bar. She never saw her son again. That winter, feeling herself succumbing to the cold, to the hard life on the streets, she gave the watch to Paddy.

“Promise me, Paddy, if it ever be in your power, you’ll give this watch to my gossoon<sup>15</sup>.”

Paddy held her in his arms as she took her last breath.

The End

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<sup>14</sup>Stealing

<sup>15</sup>Young boy, lad

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## STEELE CONNECTOR: A SECOND COMPANION PIECE

By Peg Daniels

Paddy stared at the watch, swinging from the chain he held in his hand, and then looked down at the blank piece of paper on his desk. After all this time, more than twenty years since her death, he knew who her son was: the former pupil of Paddy's friend, Daniel Chalmers.

Paddy had left London close to five years ago and had returned to Kerry Clare, where he had been brought up. He had been sickened, at that time, to discover the identity of her boy's father: Kevin Landers, the "K.L." of the watch. Paddy had been a barkeep in Whitechapel then. He was ashamed of himself as he thought of how, before his discovery, he had shielded the man from the police. Landers had had the nasty habit of getting bolloxed<sup>16</sup> and then gleefully beating up prostitutes. He had paid Paddy *very* well for his protection. Paddy had greedily obliged, inuring himself to the plight of the prostitutes.

But that had all changed. . . . Paddy recalled the events leading up to his current task, beginning with that night at the bar.

It had been after hours, and Paddy had looked over at Landers, still sitting there, as drunk as a l— . . . very drunk.

Landers asked Paddy if he had ever told him about his "first," an Irish whore who was no more than a child. About how good beating her had felt. About how it had led him to seek out that same thrill time and again. Paddy tried to hustle him out the door, but the bloody sot became furious, grabbed hold of him, and forced him to hear every sordid detail. His only regret, Landers said, was the damned bitch had stolen his watch. "It played a lovely tune," he slurred. "When Irish Eyes are Smilin'. It was inscribed, too. 'To S.J. from K.L.'" He was too drunk to consider that this might be an incautious admittance.

Paddy's heart nearly stopped. He was finally able to wrench himself away, tearing his shirt. He went to the jacks<sup>17</sup>, vomited, and then continued to retch for a good half-hour more. The next day, he made an anonymous call to the police, identifying Landers as the perpetrator of the

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<sup>16</sup>Very drunk

<sup>17</sup>Restroom

Whitechapel beatings, threatening to go to the papers if something wasn't done about it. He later learned Kevin Landers was none other than the Earl of Claridge. He left soon after for Ireland.

Once there, he took to drinking too much and drifted aimlessly from job to job. He spent most of his time down at the tracks, becoming involved in some shady dealings there. Occasionally these dealings took him back to London and to the racetracks there. On one of those trips, he met Daniel Chalmers and became involved in one of *his* schemes. Daniel was out of his league, of course, when it came to cons and scheming, but Paddy proved useful enough. He and Daniel became friends and hooked up from time to time when they were both in London.

This last time, Daniel invited him back to his flat for drinks. Paddy, once again, drank too much. In the course of trying to find his way back from the bathroom, he ended up in one of the bedrooms. It looked essentially un-lived in – devoid of the usual personal touches one might expect. Except for a remarkable framed sketch. He recognized the quay in Dublin, drawn from the perspective of a departing ship. The artist somehow managed to convey both a sense of loss and hope.

Daniel came in. “Wondered where you wandered off to. . . .”

“This is amazin’.” Paddy gestured toward the picture.

“Harry, my former protege, drew it. I have a few more of his drawings. Would you like to see them?”

Paddy nodded.

“I’ve got them well hidden. Perilous, you know, for a man in my profession to keep around items of too personal a nature.” He left the room and returned a few minutes later with the drawings.

Paddy was looking through the half-dozen or so drawings when he stopped short. It was she. He sobered immediately.

“Yes, I like that one too. Harry said it was just a woman he had seen in Brixton one day. He discarded it, as he did with all his drawings. But it was one of the ones I salvaged. I was struck with the similarities he had drawn to himself.”

“Do you have a picture of Harry, then?” Somehow, Paddy just knew.

“Not really a picture. Too dangerous. But I *do* have a scrapbook of newspaper clippings from all over the Continent, devoted to stories of rare artifacts. There’s one on the Hapsburg Dagger that has Harry’s picture. It doesn’t look out of place there.” Daniel retrieved the scrapbook and showed him the picture.

It was her boy, the one he had tried to “rescue” outside his bar in Brixton that day, long-ago. “Remington Steele,” he read from the caption under the picture.

“That’s what he’s calling himself these days.”

“How did you meet him? What was his background?” Paddy hoped his questions wouldn’t seem too prying.

But Daniel, slightly tipsy, didn’t seem to notice. “Oh, he was a half-wild street urchin when I met him, in Brixton. He’s never told me much of his background. Said his mother died when he was born. Knows nothing of his father – harbors a great deal of anger toward him, I can tell you that. Said he was passed from family to family as a young boy in Ireland. Ran away. Jumped a ship. Ended up in London when he was nine or ten, he thinks.”

Paddy had excused himself as quickly as he could thereafter.

Now he sat, trying to compose a note. “Your mother wanted you to have this,” he wrote. He crumpled up the paper and took out another sheet. He wanted to entice Steele to see him. Steele thought his mother dead, so although that note might arouse some curiosity in him as to how Paddy knew his mother and what he could tell him about her, Steele would probably just ring him up. And what Paddy had to tell him, he didn’t want to say in a telephone conversation. His mother *had* died, though not in the manner Steele thought. Paddy couldn’t lie about that. That would be too cruel. But if he put “Your *father* wanted you to have this,” Paddy could make sure they met face-to-face, if Steele wanted to pursue it. Then Paddy would tell him Lord Claridge was Steele’s father. And if Lord Claridge wouldn’t recognize Steele and give him an inheritance, then Paddy would further tell Steele about the hushed-up Whitechapel beatings, about Lord Claridge having beaten Steele’s own mother. *That* would anger him enough to blackmail Lord Claridge into giving him his rightful inheritance. One way or the other, his mother would be avenged.

Paddy scribbled the note and then sent it and the watch by the next post.

The End

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