

A Steele She'd Beguile

Submission for the RSFic List Challenge #7, the Role Reversal Challenge

by Peg Daniels

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He must have died.

He must have died and been sent to hell.

He must have died, been sent to hell, and now he must pay for every sinful thought, word, and deed of his life.

It was the only explanation for what he was about to do.

Groaning, he pushed the warm, soft, willing body off him and struggled to sit up, only to have her push him back down, climb back on top of him, and stifle his moan by sealing her mouth over his.

Please, God. He wasn't this good a person. Forgive him his trespasses.

He felt her hands, trapped between their bodies, pushing his jacket open.

Strains of music filled the air.

With her hands on his chest, she pushed herself up a little and looked at him with teasing eyes, her soft brown hair tickling his face. "When I hold you close, I hear music."

As he forgave those who trespassed against him. He sighed and again rolled her off of his body onto the hay and again forced himself to sit up. This time, even though the faint sound escaping her lips held a note of mild exasperation, or maybe it was disappointment, she complied, sitting herself up as well. Thank you, God. There's only so much a man can take.

"So do I." He looked into her eyes, willing her to understand he meant it for all those times he'd ever held her. For all those times of which she was . . . no longer aware.

The corners of her mouth lifted in a faint smile; she gave a little shrug.

Message received but not comprehended. Dropping his eyes, he sighed heavily, reached into his jacket, and took out the pocket watch, playing its tune, "When Irish Eyes are Smiling," oblivious to his troubles.

Laura took the watch from him, examined the inscription, and began to softly sing the words of the song. When she got to the end of the chorus, "And when Irish eyes are smiling, Sure, they steal your heart away," looking at him with her own playful eyes, he couldn't take any more. He reached out, put his hand over hers, closed the watch, then took it from her hand and put it back in his pocket.

" 'To S.J. from K.L.' Who's 'S.J.'? "

"I don't know. Someone who knows 'K.L.,' I suppose." He shrugged and tried to sound flip, but there was an ache in his heart. Why did everything have to be so damned difficult? Why couldn't O'Rourke have simply told him who his father was, instead of sending this watch with a cryptic note?

And what, exactly, had happened to Laura? He glanced at her, bits of hay in her hair and stuck to her clothing, studying his face intently. He blew out a breath. It was the woman's own fault she was in this fix. Why did she have to follow him over here? Why did she always have to be so suspicious of him? OK, he admitted it. It was just a couple of weeks ago he'd snuck off to London with Daniel. But he'd been trying to get himself out of the jam his old mentor had put him in, nothing more. Why did he always have to prove himself to her? Why did she always automatically assume he was up to no good?

When would she remember he had to prove himself to her and he might be up to no good?

He started to reach for her hand but stopped. She'd misinterpret, again attempt to "renew the very, very, close acquaintance" he'd denied with his words if not quite with his deeds. And this time he'd be undone.

Then what would she think of him if – no! – when – she regained her memory? That he'd taken advantage of her. Acapulco Laura, absurdly passionate Laura, was not a woman he was privy to.

Besides, he wanted *his* Laura, not just her body. He wanted the Laura who challenged him with her impossible standards. The Laura who fought with him, fought for him, enchanted him, maddened him –

Oh, God. She'd remember him, wouldn't she? He'd spent most of his life being forgettable, unidentifiable.

Now the one person he wanted to know him had forgotten him.

The one time he came to find his true identity, it eluded him.

"Oh!" Laura jumped.

"Have you thought of something?" He searched her face, hoping.

"No. Someone just kissed my leg."

He looked over the edge of the hayloft to see a horse with a star-shaped blaze on its forehead, nuzzling Laura's leg as she laughed. "Well, he has taste, I'll give him that." His own laugh was strained.

Suddenly she stilled beside him. "Horses. It has something to do with horses." Her voice was low and she stared off into the distance.

He held his breath.

She raised a shaking hand.

He couldn't stand it. "Go on, go on." Please, please let her start remembering.

Her hand waved in agitation. "I'm trying, I'm trying, I'm trying – " Suddenly she broke off and her next words were soft. "Kerry . . . Kerry . . . Kerry." She looked at him, her eyes shining, her voice rising with excitement at each successive word: "That's it! Kerry Clare! I saw you in Kerry Clare!"

She's remembering him! His heart pounding, he kissed her impulsively, then backed away quickly. "Sorry."

Keeping the hand that was shackled to hers firmly on the loft, he swung down to the floor, knowing she must follow. And not lead him back into temptation. Oh! deliver him from evil, amen.

Amen! (Oops. I mean, The End.)

The RSFic List Challenge #7 was to pick an episode, or a scene from an episode, and switch

“what happened to whom.” I took a scene from the episode “Steele Your Heart Away.” Just like that episode’s title, the title “A Steele She’d Beguile” is inspired by a line in the song “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling.” The line goes “With such power in your smile, sure a stone you'd beguile.” And y’all are just lucky Angie warned me against putting all the lyrics into the story. Thanks for that, Angie, and the other tweaks you inspired.

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