

Chapter one

He knew what was happening outside but still Samuells ran. It sounded like a war zone with artillery of great destruction, yet it was only 1708. Still he ran, along the landing and down the stairs of the wonderful Scottish manse. The Fothergill-Dyke estate was large and grand but much of it was now being raised to the ground. Another explosion knocked him to the quarry tiled floor. He scrambled to his feet and ran along the corridor. He stopped at one of the many doors within the wainscoted walls. Turning the round brass knob, he opened the door to the library. Inside was Lord Fothergill-Dyke, nervously pacing the well-polished floorboards.

“You came?” His Lordship sounded surprised. “I was unsure who I could trust”.

“I would never let you down, sir”, panted the loyal servant.

The well-dressed man walked to an adjoining room and was gone for just a brief moment. He returned with a large dusty brown book and a crude wooden sword. With outstretched arms, he offered them both ceremoniously to Samuells. “You know what to do”, he instructed. They both looked fearful. Samuells stared at his employer, then to the book. Slowly, he reached out ready to receive the offered items.

Fothergill-Dyke lowered them delicately into Samuells safe keeping.

“Yes sir. Thank you, sir.”

“Don’t thank me, Samuells. It is I who should be thanking you”. He glanced nervously out of the window, then turned and held his faithful servant’s shoulders. “From many, you are the only one to have proved your loyalty”. He half smiled and nodded to a secret passage within the bookshelves. “Now, go!”

“Yes sir”, he replied and hurried towards his covert exit.

“Samuells?” called the titled man as he stood slightly back from the window.

The book carrier hesitated at the opening and slowly turned.

“You’ve been a good friend. Goodbye”.

Samuells knew this was the last time he would ever see this man alive. He gulped, nodded respectfully, and then turned to make his escape.

Fothesque-Dyke walked briskly to the open section of bookcase and swiftly pushed it shut. He leaned against the books, closed his eyes for a moment and took a deep breath.

Suddenly, the noise outside ceased and all fell deathly quiet. The Lord was suspicious and slowly stepped into the middle of the room. There was a loud crash somewhere in the house but quite close by. The ten second pause seemed forever, but then, the door came flying off the hinges and tumbled uncontrollably across the library.

Lord Fothesque-Dyke stood upright and proud ready to face whatever was to come through the door.

“Ah! At last! I’ve been awaiting you”. He gulped and looked very frightened.

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Along the passage Samuells scampered, clutching his precious cargo. A disturbing scream echoing from behind, made him suddenly stop. Hesitating, he respectfully hung his head. He could not imagine the fate which caused such a sound, merely the fact it happened had saddened him. Visibly upset, he tried hard to hold back the tears. With such an important task at hand, Samuells knew that he must continue.

Exiting the secret tunnel he glanced back, knowing there was to be no return. The manse was now fully alight and engulfed in flames. The Fothesque-Dyke home, which he had known all his life, was no more. But finish the task he was entrusted to do, was priority now. A quaint building lay secluded close by, called, Dyke End cottage. He glanced around cautiously before entering by the front door. It was some time later when Samuells emerged. Again, nervously looking around before leaving via the same way. The shadows of flames flickered

across the front of the cottage name plaque. Samuells ran off to a new life.

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Chapter two

In the bright sunlight, shadows of tree branches flickered across the Dyke End cottage name plaque. “Great, isn’t it? I’ve always wanted a place in the country. It’s taken till 2013 but, I feel like I’m home”, announced Suzan. She stood at the back of the large removal truck gazing at their new property.

David pecked her on the cheek as he passed. “Anything for my sweetheart. Besides, it’s better for the accounts”

Suzan glared at him and could make those soft green eyes look quite hard at times.

“Only joking”, David smiled sheepishly. He collected another box and scurried off to the house.

The Haynes youngest daughter returned to the removal vehicle for another box. “Could have chosen a place with a better name. It sounds disgusting.” mumbled Briany, passing by with another carton towards the front door. She may have only been thirteen but she had quite an adult outlook.

Suzan stopped along the path. “What do you mean?”

“She means it sounds like a lesbian’s playhouse”, moaned Rooney. The elder daughter by two years, she was the rebel. She leaned against the van, popping air from a sheet of packing material rather than do any work. She felt it was beneath her to help.

“Rooney!” called her dad with distaste, as he came out of their new home.

“Well, it does!”

“Do you think?” replied Suzan, assessing the name sign.

“Don’t listen to her”, David grimaced at Rooney. “You know what she’s like.” He carried

another box.

“I suppose it does, now you come to mention it”, admitted their mother.

Briany smirked as she returned.

“We could change the name?”

“Yeah! Great idea, mum”, Rooney continued popping her sheet.

“No we can’t”, called David, emerging from the house. “It’s in the deeds”

Suzan turned and walked to the tailgate. “We’re stuck with it then. Sorry girls” She took another package.

“Are you going to help unload this stuff?” David growled impatiently to Rooney. Grabbing two containers, he called to his wife, “Where do you want these put?” Quickly following, he called louder, “Suzan?!”

The two sisters pulled faces at each other.

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An unreliable forty watt bulb with an occasional flicker, dimly lit the cellar. The steps were well worn stone and quite narrow. Suzan stepped off the last tread and placed her box besides several others. She turned and began to leave but hesitated. Her shoulders shivered as if she was being watched. Turning her head slowly she looked around over her shoulder.

Seeing nothing, her frown turned into a smile.

From the hall, Briany called, “Where shall I put these mum?”

Pointing behind her, she trod nimbly up the stairs. “Put them on top of the boxes on the right. Oh, and don’t drop them!”

“I won’t”, Briany snapped, but chose to walk carefully down to the next level just in case.

Placing it as instructed, she mumbled, “I must be good for something”

David followed her down. From the last step he stumbled and fell, sprawling across the soil floor.

“Are you all right?” Briany asked, bending to pick up her Game Boy.

Scrambling to his feet, David looked at his offspring and enquired, “Are you talking to me?
..... Or that thing?”

“Ah, oh! You dad, of course” She continued to brush dirt from her precious past-time and placed it back on the box.

“It’s very damp. I don’t think we should keep things down here for long”

“Especially that, eh dad”, she smiled, nodding towards her dads pride and joy.

David was devastated. “Oh, no! Who put that down here?!” He reached for his guitar and clutched it to his chest.

“Mum, I think”

“What did she do that for? She knows I love this more than anything”, he grumbled.

From the low timber beams, a large spider dropped onto David’s head. He instantly forgot about the guitar he loved more than anything and wildly thrashed around screaming, “Get it off me!!! Get it off!!”

Rooney casually strolled down and plucked the arachnid to safety. “Dad. You really are a wimp. It’s only a spider.”

David lay in a heap on the ground smiling nervously. A long exhale was heard as he began to regain his breath.

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