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Note: The text herein is from *Ambersley* by Amy Atwell but has often been cut mid-scene. Text may not make logical sense—it's here purely for illustrative purposes.

*Don't forget to include a
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if you want one.*

AMBERSLEY

(sample table of contents—often not used)

The Lords of London, Book 1

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Blank pages are often inserted in the front or end matter to force important pages—for example, Chapter One opening page—to be on a right-hand page of the two-page spread.

Let us know if you would like *every* chapter to begin on a right-hand page. This will often increase the page count of your book.

Part One:

Johnny

~ 1 ~

Body font below is Times New Roman 11 with single spacing

(Basic novel styling includes all indented paragraphs—look under Chapter 2 for some other options)

He'd simply done what any good man would do.

Thomas Bendicks repeated that to himself as he carried the small child along the forest path. Overhead, birdsong heralded the approaching dawn. He swore silently, afraid the bright light of day would bring regrets. Best not to think too closely upon the previous night's tragic events or the possible repercussions of his actions.

He adjusted his burden to gently shoulder his way into the cottage. "Martha?" She would know what to do next.

His wife bent over the stove in the dim light. "Is that you, dear? Go out and wash up. Eat something, then you can sleep your fill. You must be tired after last night." She turned toward the door and promptly dropped the loaf of bread she carried. "Tom, what's that you've got?"

He craned his neck and managed to whisper past the child's chokehold. "I found her just this side of the stream. I heard whimpering and there she was, all curled up under a rhododendron. When I pulled her out, she climbed into my arms. Now she won't let go." Awe tinged his voice, for he still couldn't believe this little being had trusted him. She clung to him like a vine to a sturdy oak.

He lowered himself into a chair as Martha approached to

peer at the child. The little girl could be no more than four years old. Cuts and scrapes reddened her chubby arms and legs beneath the torn and filthy nightdress. Sooty smudges marred a pale round face framed by a disheveled mass of long dark curls knotted with brambles. Her blue-green eyes overflowed with unspoken terror.

"Tom, why did you bring her here? You know she must be His Grace's daughter. Everyone will be searching for her."

He pulled the child from his shoulder and adjusted her across his lap. She nuzzled her head against his chest and closed her eyes, one tiny hand clutching his sweat-stained shirt. The smell of ash bound them as one.

"I was almost home when I found her." A poor excuse, he knew. "Besides, it's a right mess up at the Hall—the fire destroyed half the roof, the west wing is gutted, and I hear most of the inside is damaged." His voice dropped to a whisper. "The duke and duchess are dead, as is half the house staff."

Martha's eyes filled with tears, and she swept away the moisture with hasty fingers.

"I was told the child was dead, too," Tom continued. "Some daft story about her ghost sailing through the smoke last night. Nobody seems to know who's in charge or what to do next." His arm tightened about the child. "Look at her. She's so scared, I thought it better to bring her here for a day or two. I don't think she should see the Hall like it is now."

The little girl had fallen asleep against his chest. Gingerly, Martha reached over to smooth a stray curl from her face, bracing against old memories that swamped her. Poor little orphan, what was to become of her now? The title and the property would go to some male relative. Maybe he'd have a family—that would be best. It might be days before he arrived, and meanwhile...

She smiled. "Tom, you did the right thing. She needs peace, and she won't get it at the Hall. We'll keep her here with us until her relatives arrive. That shouldn't be nigh long, right?"

When he didn't answer, she realized he'd drifted to sleep, his grizzled cheek slumped upon the child's head.



Below text is Times New Roman 11 pt but now with 1.1 line spacing.

The child awoke screaming.

Her soprano shrieks brought Martha running to her makeshift bed. Violent nightmares had assailed the little girl these past four nights, and once again she sat erect amidst rumpled blankets. She made no further sound, merely trembled while tears trickled down her face. The terror within her huge eyes ripped at Martha's heart.

She reached down to offer comfort, but the girl raised her arms to Tom who gathered her close. He crooned a wordless melody in her ear until her trembling subsided. Martha retreated to the hearth and tried to ignore the pang that came each time the little girl turned to him for solace.

She stirred last night's embers in the fireplace. "Come, Tom. I'll make a pot of tea and some porridge. It's no use trying to sleep more." Fetching her woolen shawl and a pail, she went to the well.

When she returned, she found Tom and the child seated on the chilly floor, where the little girl played silently with two cornhusk dolls he'd fashioned. Setting the kettle to boil, Martha's eyes stung as she recalled her first husband and little son, both lost to the pox years ago. Her son had been just this age when... She busied herself. Tom had offered her marriage, provided her solace for her loss, and asked for naught in return but that she prove a good wife. How she wished she could have given him a child—he was so obviously smitten with the little girl.

"She smiled at me," Tom said in a church whisper.

Martha raised her brows at him.

“She speaks not a word, and her eyes carry that haunted look still. Do you think she’ll ever forget the fire?”

Martha knelt on the floor with them, although getting back on her feet would be no easy task. She stroked the little girl’s shorn curls—cropping them close had been the only way to remove the briars.

The child responded with an upturned face and solemn eyes. Martha barely dared breathe. Then, with an exhalation of breath, the girl returned her attention to the dolls.

Martha closed her eyes in a watery blink.

Tom stood and bent to help Martha to her feet. He followed her to the hearth and watched as she prepared the porridge for their breakfast. “I’m sorry she—” he began.

“No need apologizing for her. She is what she is and no harm done.”

“I think she only turns to me because I found her.” Tom swallowed. “I could take her up to the Hall, if you think that’s best.”

“I’m glad you found her, Tom, and I’m glad you brought her here. She’s frightened and she’s hurting, poor dear.” She handed him a bowl of porridge. “’Twill do her no good to go traipsing up to the Hall. I saw the place yesterday, and it’s a sorry sight. And who would look after her? Her nursemaid’s dead. The poor child would be nothing but a burden to the butler or the housekeeper.”

“I hear the duke’s solicitor has left to find the heir.”

Martha nodded. “Very well. She stays with us until the new duke arrives. She trusts you. You cannot betray that.”

She went to the child and led her to the table. The girl sat docile as a lamb while Martha fed her small spoonfuls of porridge.

“Her appetite’s improving,” Tom said.

“Aye, ’tis. And yes, I think someday she’ll forget. But the pain is deep and may take time to heal. We need to be patient.”

Below is Bell MT 11 pt with 1.05 line spacing.

As the weeks passed, the child's nightmares became less violent. She still clung to Tom for comfort, but whenever he left the cottage, she followed Martha about dog-like, silent and watchful. Martha laid her own ghosts to rest by clothing the little girl in her son's old shirt and breeches. The clothes fit well and even Tom approved, for it made her look less like an invalid. They spoke to no one of keeping the child—after all, they had no right to make themselves her guardians. Yet they believed they did what they did for the best.

One night at the table, Martha pushed her spoon through her stew. "Do they say anything about Miss Amber?"

It was the first time either of them had spoken the child's name in her presence, but she showed no sign that she recognized it as she ate her bread and honey.

Tom leaned forward on his elbows. "Only to say they cannot find a trace of her. But Mr. Pritchard told me the duke's solicitor planned to visit Bow Street while he was in London. There's tales someone may have set the fire deliberately."

"Why?"

Tom shrugged.

Ill at ease, Martha climbed to her feet. "Come, Johnny, help me with the dishes." The girl obediently rose and followed Martha with her plate.

Tom reached for his pipe. "I'm not sure it's right to call the child that."

"We must call her something." Martha added gruffly, for it had been her son's name, "It brings me peace, and she doesn't mind, do you, Johnny?"

The child looked up at once.

"See? I can't get her to look at me when I call her Amber."

The child cleared the table with no regard to her own name.

"Tom, is it possible she doesn't remember?"

He rubbed his nose in thought. "I suppose even though she doesn't have any burns, Miss Amber may hurt inside."

Stokes said he's heard of cases where people who have bad experiences sometimes forget all about them—they even forget everything about themselves.”

Martha snorted. “What does Stokes know? He's a footman.”

“Ah, but he once worked for a physician in London.”

This silenced Martha. She scrubbed plates while the child rinsed them with a pitcher of clean water. With a sigh, Tom rose from his chair to dry the plates and place them on the shelf. Preoccupied with their thoughts, silence hung like a thick fog while they worked.

While wiping down the table with a sodden rag, Martha paused. “Tom, are you telling me she might not know who she is?”

He watched the little girl on the floor with her dolls. “’Tis possible. No way to know until she starts to speak. And Martha, if she has forgotten, Stokes said that this, *amnesia* I think he called it, isn't always permanent. Sometimes people wake up one day, and they remember everything again.”

(Note that the scene break option below has more white space above and below than the one that appeared earlier in this chapter.)



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Johnny blossomed during her first year with Tom and Martha. The nightmares were forgotten, and the bright, happy child was accepted by all at Ambersley. One evening, after receiving the child's token of battered daffodils, Martha asked Tom if he thought Johnny would ever remember her past and tragic loss. Tom shrugged and lit his pipe. They both tried to remain detached, but as another spring progressed to summer and the second anniversary of the fire passed with no sign of the Ambersley heir, they realized Johnny had become an

integral part of their family. They loved her as their own, and she loved them as any child would her parents.

Johnny adored the gardens and the conservatory that were Tom's domain—especially the rose garden. He let her play in the churned up dirt, only warning her to mind the precious roses and their protective thorns. Her other favorite spot was the stables; it was a special treat when Tom would suggest they pluck some clover for the coach horses.

One day, after they'd fed and petted the nose of one of the dappled grays, Rory the groom asked Tom if Johnny wanted to see a litter of kittens only two weeks old. The kittens were soft mewling balls of orange striped fur, and the mother watched with tail twitching as Johnny stroked them. Rory showed her the difference between the little boys and girls, let her touch their tiny but sharp claws and explained that their uniform blue eyes had only opened two days before.

As they walked back to the cottage, Johnny asked, "Tom, am I boy or a girl?"

Tom longed for his pipe as he sought an answer. He looked down into Johnny's troubled face with its firm chin and trusting blue-green eyes. He'd grown accustomed to her wavy chestnut curls pulled back into a shoulder-length queue, and it no longer seemed odd to him that she dressed in boys' clothes.

"You're a girl, Johnny." He said it gently, as if somehow he had to soften the blow.

She looked at him earnestly. "But I'm dressed as a boy. You always call me your foster son."

"I know. 'Tis the only way you can stay with Martha and me. Come home, and I'll explain everything." Tom offered his hand and Johnny grasped two of his fingers.

Tom explained the situation to Martha as soon as they arrived. She pulled the stewpot away from the fire and went to Johnny seated on the table's bench.

CHAPTER TWO

Heading above is Big Caslon 22 pt with Small Caps.

*Body font below is Baskerville 11 point, line spacing 1.05
(Here we show the first paragraph as left margin flush.)*

Nigel Minton tried to appreciate the irony that his search for the Ambersley heir had led him, after three years of traversing the length of the country, to a man owning a London house that stood not more than a mile from his own solicitor's office. Tracing the late duke's lineage had proven more difficult than Minton had anticipated, but he'd finally revealed a seventh cousin who was a direct descendent of Ambersley's original Vaughan male line.

"And, God willing, may this be the end," he said as he opened the wrought iron gate.

A gloomy dusk did little to enhance the townhouse's features, its marble grimy and chipped. The backlit windows with curtains drawn reminded him of the awkwardness of the hour, but like any good hound, he was eager to tree his quarry. Perhaps he could leave his card and arrange to call properly the next morning. He knocked and waited, anticipation growing.

The door opened to reveal a lad with black hair and icy blue eyes that quickly narrowed in scrutiny. Minton pegged the lad at perhaps a dozen years, clearly too young to be the butler

or even a footman.

“Do you have business with us, sir?” The boy marred his neutral tone by jutting out his chin in an obstinate manner.

Minton cleared his throat. “Indeed. I wish to speak with Reginald Vaughan.”

“Father’s dead,” the boy answered flatly. “Been dead nigh three months now. Did he owe you money, too?”

Disappointment struck Minton, but he rallied with the hope that before him stood a male heir. Much too young to take active control of the dukedom, but given time—

“Curtis, whatever are you doing?” From the shadows, an elegant woman clothed in mourning approached to stand behind the lad, her hands on his shoulders. The two shared a striking resemblance, not the least of which was the unfriendly look mirrored in both their eyes.

Minton smiled. “Lady Vaughan? Forgive my intrusion at this hour. My name is Nigel Minton. I’m a solicitor, and I have business to discuss with the heirs of Reginald Vaughan.”

“He wants money just like all the rest,” Curtis said, clearly bored by Minton’s brief speech.

“Hush,” his mother hissed. She took hold of the lad’s ear and pulled him backward. “Return to the schoolroom, and if you run off on Miss Trent again, I will be very displeased.” She released him, and the boy fled deeper into the house, swallowed by the dark interior until only his footsteps could be heard clomping up the stairs.

Lady Vaughan turned back to Minton. She was a tall, handsome woman, mature but not old. He estimated her age to be ten years shy of his own five-and-forty. Unpowdered raven curls haloed her face in the latest style while the dark clothing she wore accentuated her pale face and angular features. A half-smile curved her lips, but her pale blue eyes remained aloof. “Forgive the boy. He’s still distraught from Reginald’s death.”



Body font below is Century Gothic 11pt, single space

A fortnight later, Rosalie Vaughan reclined against the plush squabs of the ducal coach and barely repressed a satisfied purr. All her toil, her infinite patience, was to be rewarded, and by the Duke of Ambersley, no less. If only Reggie had lived to see this day and make her a duchess.

Like so many things in her life, she had dealt with her disappointment privately. Turning her head, she watched as Curtis steadied little Olivia, who pressed her nose to the coach window. As much as Rosalie loved her daughter, her hopes were pinned on her first-born. Curtis would secure their future at Ambersley without question. Her son had inherited a dukedom.

If only she could convince this solicitor of that. He insisted on initiating a search for Derek and refused to publicly announce her family's claim to the title, despite having a valid heir in his grasp. Minton's timely invitation to reside at Ambersley saved her from the embarrassment of creditors dunning her, but if Derek returned, she and her children would be subject to his whims. It irked her to think of Derek inheriting this prize he so little deserved.

But then, they'd had no word from him in the past seven years. She rather hoped he'd died out there in the wilds of India after the way he'd abandoned them all. With great care she'd urged Reggie to look upon Curtis as his true heir. Everything had been progressing nicely until Reggie learned that Derek had become a highly prized officer with Wellesley.

Glancing sidelong at Minton, Rosalie pursed her lips. The solicitor need not know *that* little tidbit. Let him search the globe for Derek—it would take months. Meanwhile, she would lay her own plans while she and her children remained at Ambersley. Rosalie closed her eyes, imagining herself as chatelaine of the ducal estate.

"Ah, here's Ambersham," Minton said.

Rosalie opened her eyes with a blink, unsure if she'd drifted to sleep or closed her eyes only moments before.

Curtis, his lip curled in dissatisfaction, turned his attention from the window to Minton. "The town is little more than a hovel."

"Aye, it's a small village," the solicitor replied, unperturbed.

Rosalie peered out the window to see thatched-roof cottages, what appeared to be a cooperage and a girl not much older than Olivia herding a flock of geese. The agitated birds gave voice to unmelodic honking as the carriage rolled past. A putrid odor warning of cattle nearby made her withdraw a perfumed handkerchief to cover her nose.

"How very...rustic," she said after they'd cleared the town.

Minton's lips curved in a gentle smile. "We prefer pastoral, but I'll admit it's a far cry from London."

To say *the least*. A bounce jostled her, and she barely had time to steady Olivia. Apparently, the quality of the roads was *pastoral* as well. They continued on in silence.



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(first five words of the opening paragraph in a scene as small caps)

JOHNNY'S EXCITEMENT OVER THE ARRIVAL of the Vaughan heirs was quickly doused by the tumult surrounding their first week at Ambersley. Though she didn't understand it, she sensed the undercurrents of change rippling through the staff. Tension and formality replaced the casual camaraderie around the massive servants' table during Sunday supper in the Hall kitchens.

"Mrs. Chalmers, I hope you didn't find this meal too taxing for you," the housekeeper said as they took their seats.

"Not a bit, Mrs. North," the cook replied. "'Tis indeed a pleasure to prepare a meal for people who know my name."

Mrs. North leaned across Johnny to whisper loudly in Martha's ear. "Lady Vaughan has taken to calling her 'Cook' to her face."

"And she's entitled to do and say as she pleases," said Mrs. Chalmers as she set down a platter of roasted hares. "But I was retained here long before she married into the family and birthed any heirs. The late duchess accorded me a certain level of respect. It was very ladylike of her."

Johnny watched heads around the table nod in understanding.

"She's not truly the dowager." Mr. Pritchard said before swallowing a forkful of peas.

Everyone stopped eating to look at the late duke's secretary.

"Didn't you know? Mr. Minton explained to me that Lady Vaughan is the heir's stepmother. Master Curtis and Miss Olivia are the duke's half-brother and half-sister."

Mrs. North shook her head sadly. “Oh, the duke lost his mother, poor lamb.”

“Miss Trent, the governess, mentioned the duke’s mother was hanged as a murderess.”

“Good heavens.” Paget drew his napkin to his lips. “Baroness Vaughan. What a notorious scandal. She was such a distant relation, I never thought it would taint Ambersley.” Briefly, he recounted the facts of the trial and her hanging.

His story sent a shiver up Johnny’s back.

Beside her, Tom sipped his ale then broke the silence. “When will the new duke arrive?”

“He’s in India,” Paget announced in his deep voice.

Not to be outdone, Pritchard offered more details. “At least, those were his last known whereabouts. He left London years ago. Lady Vaughan claims he *abandoned* his father.”

“It could be months before he returns,” Tom said. “The voyage is so long, he might not make it home at all.”

“Then keep him in your prayers,” Pritchard said. “For if he dies, young Master Curtis will inherit.”

Johnny wanted to ask a dozen questions. *Where was India? What was the new duke like? What did Mr. Pritchard mean the duke had abandoned his father?* She squirmed with the effort to keep silent for it wasn’t her place to talk at table.

Martha chewed a bite of rabbit. “The boy is so young. Lady Vaughan would control Ambersley.”

“Humph, she already acts as though she owns the whole estate.” Mrs. North buttered a piece of bread.

“What makes you say that?” Martha asked.

Mrs. North set aside her bread untasted. “After one night at the Dower House, she demanded the keys to all the storage closets.”

“As is her prerogative,” Paget said.

Mrs. North lifted her chin. “Indeed, and is it her prerogative to demand all the spare linens be given to her maid for safe keeping? I fear the china will disappear next.”

“Then there’s this matter of dining late.” Mrs. Chalmers settled her hands on her broad hips. “She never eats supper before eight. I’ve burned more candles in the kitchen this week than in the past year.”



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(different initial cap – a different font or size.)

Martha always helped Mrs. Chalmers with the baking, but curious to see the Lady of Quality first-hand, she offered to help prepare luncheon the following day for Lady Vaughan and the children.

“She don’t keep country hours,” Mrs. Chalmers said as she put a cover over the platter of stuffed chicken. “Luncheon never before two. As if any of those London dandies are going to pay a morning call.”

Martha considered the luncheon platters. “Only three plates? What about the governess?”

“Lady Vaughan never shares meals with *the help*,” said Mrs. Chalmers. “After I serve in the dining room, I take a tray to Miss Trent and the maid.”

Nodding, Martha hefted a tray and followed Mrs. Chalmers to the dining room where Lady Vaughan and the children were already seated. Martha set her platter down and lifted the cover in unison with Mrs. Chalmers.

Instead of acknowledging their services and the appetizing aroma, Lady Vaughan’s lip curled. “Cook,

you cannot expect the children to eat only poultry in the middle of the day. There should be a pudding or at least a ham or some beef."

"Begging your pardon, my lady, but we're very limited on meats. Most of the livestock is owned by the tenants, and we would need to barter a pig or a cow from them." Mrs. Chalmers grew flushed during her speech.

"Then tell Broadmoor to do something about it. I am accustomed to having veal on Fridays, so find a way to slaughter a calf by then."

"But, we'd have no way to cure and store the leftover meat —"

"Dispose of it, if you must. Lud, you cannot convince me the former duke and duchess lived in anything but top style. I expect no less. I left London to take possession of this property, and I must say I'm constantly disappointed at the staff's inability to resolve even the most minor problem. I fear I must discuss staffing with Minton."

"Yes, my lady," Mrs. Chalmers said with a nod.

Lady Vaughan seemed to notice Martha for the first time. "You, you're not the new serving maid, are you?"

"Me? No, ma'am, I'm Mrs. Bendicks, the gardener's wife." Martha dropped a knee-creaking curtsy.

"Thank heavens. You wouldn't do at all." Lady Vaughan turned back to Mrs. Chalmers as if Martha ceased to exist. "Cook, remind Paget that I want another six servants hired. There's far too much to do around here for any of you to manage."

Martha delivered the other luncheon tray upstairs and returned to the kitchen to find Mrs. Chalmers chopping vegetables for supper with a large knife and a strong arm.

The cook vented her spleen along with her energy.

“She’s always like that. There’s no convincing her we’re all living hand to mouth. Did you know she’s going to London to buy new gowns? Wants to have all the latest styles when she comes out of mourning. I only hope Mr. Minton can talk some sense into her.”

“Would she truly replace the staff?” Martha asked quietly.



Below body font is Palatino Linotype 11 point, single space

(Drop caps can be used—in the same font or a different font.)

Over the following week, Johnny learned to prune the delicate rose bushes. Tom taught her to define the plant’s shape while not pruning back so far as to stunt its growth. Together they collected the rotting carcasses of the forgotten blooms and watered the plants that had withstood Lady Vaughan’s pillaging.

Tom gave Johnny the added responsibility of continuing their care. “I must return to my other tasks, but I want you to look after the roses every day. Can you do that?”

Johnny agreed with all the gravity of her seven years.

Daily she visited the rose garden, if only to watch the bees lazily hover above the blossoms. After her chores one afternoon, she lay upon the grass to listen to the insects and birds, and inhaled the scent of the roses she’d rescued. The sun warmed her, and the grass tickled the back of her neck. She pulled down her tricorne to shade her eyes as she squinted at the clouds.

"Hello."

The little voice made Johnny sit up so fast her vision swam.

Standing a few feet away, a little girl almost Johnny's age wore a yellow dress with a white pinafore. A matching bonnet covered her raven curls. "What's your name?" the girl asked.

"Johnny."

"I'm Olivia."

"I know." Johnny scanned the garden, but they were alone. "Where's your governess?"

Olivia giggled. "I don't know. Curtis is always giving her the slip, and today I snuck away, too. She was reading to us about how Spain declared war on us. Do *you* know where Spain is?"

Johnny shook her head. In truth, she didn't know *what* Spain was, much less where it was or why it would want to declare war on Ambersley. Fortunately, the subject seemed unimportant to Olivia.

"I see you up here with the roses sometimes. Mama brought back armloads of them for our house. They smelled so pretty, but then they all died." Olivia reached out to pull a stem toward her and sniff at the pink rose.

"Mind the thorns." Johnny scrambled to her feet and showed Olivia how to feel along the stem to avoid a painful pricking.

"Miss Trent said you're the gardener's apprentice, and that I shouldn't talk with you because my older brother's the duke. I think that's silly, but she said it would make Mama mad." Olivia's nose wrinkled in disdain of her elders' opinions, then she sighed. "There's

no one to play with here. It's boring."

Johnny recognized sadness in the girl's voice and cast about for something that might entertain her. "Would you care to see the kittens at the stables?"

Olivia brightened immediately. "There are kittens?"

Johnny laughed. "Always. Rory likes a stable without rats. Come along." There was no sign of Rory in the stable, but Johnny went unerringly to the harness room and showed Olivia where the cat and her latest litter lay wedged behind a barrel in the corner.

Chapter 3

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Body font below is Cambria Math, 11 pt, with line spacing of 1.1

On deck of the East India ship, Derek Vaughan drank in his first bittersweet sight of London in eight years. From the throng on the docks—more active than an ant colony—to the chimneys belching smoke into the gray sky, he'd once thought London the most exciting city in the world. But after living in the panorama that was India, his homeland appeared dingy and overcrowded.

He turned to the burly giant beside him. "Home again, Cushing. Are you eager to return to dry land?"

His servant shuddered at the gentle gibe. "To be sure. I've never been so seasick in my life. May we never again make such a harrowing journey."

"Aye," Derek agreed absently as he gripped the rail and stared out over London again, besieged by long-buried memories more turbulent than the stormy seas they'd traversed. "It's time for us to forge ahead with our lives."

They continued to stand their watch over the hive of activity on the dock while the ship was safely moored. Even

without words, the older man's presence buoyed Derek. Slightly past his prime, Cushing stood strong of limb and broad of girth. Though he laughed readily and was always the first to join in song, creases etched in his leathery face hinted at personal loss. At five-and-twenty, Derek understood loss too well, and so had never pressed for details.

"Two more morose men I shall never hope to see."

Derek glanced over his shoulder at tow-headed Harry Coatsworth. Tall and lean with arms akimbo, his cousin radiated the happiness of a man about to debark on his native soil—a man assured of the open-armed welcome of his family. Where Derek found it difficult to uproot the joy in life, Harry tended to trip over it.

"Two more morose men you shall never find," he responded. He waved Harry to join him at the rail where Cushing, silent, flanked his other side. These two men were all the family and friends he had—or needed. He would always remember they'd both been by his side when Harry delivered his painful tidings.

'Tis your father. He's dead.

The memory of those simple words sent a swift searing pain through Derek's belly, much like a gunshot. Though he'd left London convinced he would never again see the man he'd called father, the finality of those five words had caught him unprepared. That Harry, with little more than a score of years to his name, had taken it upon himself to travel halfway around the world to deliver the news still astonished him.

His cousin leaned on the railing and held his peace for fully a minute—half a minute more than Derek would have thought possible. "Are you yet sorry you returned?"

He turned to lean against the rail. "No. 'Tis my filial

duty.”

“Duty?” Harry snorted. “It’s your inheritance.”

Derek remained silent. Any bequest meant little, but he couldn’t as casually discard the notion of repaying a debt of honor. Reginald Vaughan had raised him, though Derek had been no more than a cuckoo in the nest. Despite a notorious wife whose public and outrageous liaisons had culminated in murder, the man he called father had always treated Derek with the utmost respect and paternal love. Always—until that final day when Derek had confronted him with the truth.



(Below is an example of block paragraphs with space between. Often used for non-fiction books.)

As dusk descended, Harry and Derek handed their hats to a porter at White’s. The addition of a tip that amounted to pure bribery prompted the servant to usher them directly to the gaming room where, despite the early hour, the top tier of Society drank and gambled in earnest. A few gentlemen conversing in groups or lounging in chairs heeded their entrance with little interest before returning to their own pursuits.

With relief, Derek noted that while some of the older men wore wigs or powder in their hair, the younger generation had adopted the fashion of the simple queue. His “well-cut coat” might not be the latest in style, but he need not feel inferior.

“Vaughan, is that you?” A gentleman detached himself from a group at one of the gaming tables and came forward. Though older and grayer, Derek immediately recognized the Earl of Montrose, his father’s closest friend.

Derek made a brief bow. "Lord Montrose, you're very kind to acknowledge me after all these years."

Montrose waved away formalities by clapping him on the arm. "Nonsense my boy, I'm glad you're here. Hasn't been the same without your father around. It's good to see a Vaughan in the place again."

"Thank you, sir, though I confess I'm here under pretense. My cousin and I are just returned from India, and neither of us are members."

"Consider yourselves my guests," said Lord Montrose. "You've heard about your father then?"

"My cousin brought me word."

Montrose nodded with understanding. "Reggie missed you. Not that he spoke of it, but I could tell by the way he read every word the papers printed about India. He hungered for word of you but was too proud to write." Montrose perused him. "I suspect the apple falls not far from the tree, eh?"

Derek tensed as his face flushed with warmth. "Never far."

The benevolent approval in Montrose's eyes made it clear the older man had no idea Derek had fallen from a different family tree altogether.

"Lord Montrose, do you know where my father's wife is?"

"Rosalie?" Montrose frowned. "She left London some time last year. Reggie fell deep into debt before he died. The gossips say she's living at Ambersley and that the duke shall make good all of her family's debts. The duke hasn't stepped forward to dispute her claim, and so her creditors wait."



(Below styling shows an option for a ragged right margin.)

Despite the following day's heavy mist, Derek threaded the streets around the Chancery and Temple Church before successfully locating Tallis Street to contemplate the shingle, "N. Minton, Esq." Glancing once again at the signature scrawled in the mysterious note, he opened the door to the solicitor's office.

A bell heralded his entrance with a tinny clamor. As Derek's eyes adjusted to the dark interior, he detected a figure hunched over a desk at the far corner of the long room and made his way toward it.

A young clerk, lit by the sputtering remains of a single candle, stopped scratching out words with quill and ink. "How may I help you, sir?"

"I'm here to see Mr. Nigel Minton."

"Mr. Minton's away from Town," the clerk replied.

Derek accepted this latest delay with fatalistic calm. As if to punctuate his thoughts, the lone candle died with a wisp of smoke and the strong scent of beeswax.

"One moment." The clerk unfolded his limbs and reached atop a high shelf for a fresh candle, which he inserted into the melted remains of its predecessor. "Perhaps I may be of assistance?" He struck a match, casting welcome light about the dark wood walls and desk.

"Yes." Derek held forth the note. "I'm Derek Vaughan. I received this from Mr. Minton requesting I introduce myself at the earliest opportunity as he has urgent business to discuss with me. I arrived in London yesterday, and—sir, take heed, you'll *burn* yourself." Derek grabbed the young man's skinny wrist and shook the match from it. It fell to the desk where it scorched the edges of some papers before dying.

The clerk stared at Derek, mouth agape, until he finally regained his voice. "You're Derek Vaughan? From India?" To Derek's answering nod, the clerk flushed to the roots of his hair, swept a deep bow and murmured, "Your Grace."

Derek stood for a moment, confused, then glanced over his shoulder to be sure no one had entered the office behind him.

Turning back to the red-faced youth, he could think of nothing to say. "I beg your pardon? I think there's been some mistake."

"No mistake, Your Grace," the young man's head bobbed in earnestness. "Father was very thorough in his search, and you're definitely the heir."

Derek's stomach knotted. "The heir? To what?"

"The Dukedom of Ambersley."



(Below font is Garamond, 11 pt. This is the standard font used in CreateSpace templates.)

"You're *what*?" cried Harry, back at the hotel.

Still trying to accept the news himself, Derek said nothing as he crab-stepped past his cousin's trunk and portmanteau to reach the sideboard and uncork the wine.

Harry cursed his heels. "Derek, you're not shamming me, are you? He called you the Duke of Ambersley? It's—it's—extraordinary. This calls for a toast."

Derek tossed off a meager portion of Madeira then poured a more liberal splash without offering his cousin any.

With entire good humor, Harry waited his turn at the bottle. Lifting his glass, he proclaimed, "To my cousin, the duke!"

Derek stopped his agitated strides to stare down at the drink pressed between his palms. A title, a home, an income—this was a future beyond his reach. How many in London recalled his mother's scandalous behavior, her notorious crime? Even as a youth he'd not escaped the whispered rumors surrounding his paternity. Whether or not anyone had *proof*, he knew he carried no Vaughan blood. No, he had no right to contemplate, even for a breath, accepting the Ambersley peerage. But the dukedom could provide for the children, and that was key.

He recalled his mother. Blonde, lovely, heartless. She'd had all the golden good looks of the Coatsworth clan, but none of their warmth, certainly none of their honor.

"What was I thinking getting saddled with a child?" she'd

said to him one day. She'd studied him as though he were a hat she might buy. Or not.

He'd been no more than six at the time.

She'd never held him, never comforted him, never engaged in conversation directly with him. If not for Father taking an interest in his upbringing, Derek might have rotted away in the nursery on Harley Street.

He hadn't shed a tear for her when his father sat him down to explain that she'd been imprisoned and charged with murder.

"Did she truly kill a man, Father?" he'd asked. At the age of ten, he'd understood enough about death to fear it.

"I don't know. But Derek, you must always remember this—she's a good woman. She sacrificed for both of us. You must always remember that and always love her." Father had left the room, his tears barely suppressed.

Derek sat for a long time and contemplated his mother, but no matter how he tried, he couldn't find a reason to love her.

Father remained steadfast, even when she tried to accuse him of murdering her lover. No one believed her. Her trial was the talk of London, especially when she publicly named every man she'd ever bedded in an attempt to exonerate herself. In the end, they'd hanged her.

No, he refused to pass along her blood to future generations of Vaughan peers.

"Derek, you're wool-gathering again." Harry sounded amused. "I've proposed a toast, and you won't even drink your own health."

"I was thinking of my mother."

Harry sobered at once. "Don't torture yourself."

"I grew to hate her, you know."

"So did my father," said Harry. "And he was her brother. He believed a fit of madness took her."

Derek wished he could believe that, but she'd always been too cold, too calculating. Still preoccupied, he allowed Harry to push him into a chair.

Chapter 6

Above Luminari, 28 point, left flush

The trip into Gloucestershire took the better part of a day by mail coach. Arriving at a noisy inn yard in the late afternoon, Harry suggested they get a good night's sleep before turning Ambersley on its ear with Derek's arrival.

Long after the inn quieted, Derek lay awake anticipating the next day's meetings. By morning, his nerves were taut with indecision, for 'twas impossible for him to know what was best to do until he understood the situation more clearly. A dukedom should provide well for Reginald Vaughan's children, but not if mismanaged. He could hand it all to his half-brother, but Curtis was hardly more than a boy, and if gossips were to be believed, Rosalie had buried two bankrupt husbands.

His concerns mounted as he and Harry trotted their hired hacks along the winding drive flanked by pruned trees not yet in blossom. Derek noted vast meadows stretching to forest, a small lake and rolling slopes dotted with ornamental hedgerows and pockets of trees and shrubbery. As they rounded a bend in the drive, he took in his first view of Ambersley Hall situated atop a hill as imposing as any monarch on his throne.

CHAPTER 3

Above Felix Titling, Small Caps, 22 pts. right flush

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Below shows some options for glyphs used between scene breaks.

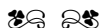
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FELIX TITLING

Great Vibes

Barmbrack

DIRTSTORM

Imprint Shadow

Harrington

Cutiful

WILD ROVER