In the beginning with you -4 Love scene now+ 3 new point of views+previews

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Summary

This is now 4 love scenes+ Murtagh, Dougal and Mrs. Fitz point of view in different time during the story + previews
All belonging as part of the big story, named: IN THE BEGINNING WITH YOU.
The brief is:
What if just before Culloden at the moment when Claire approached the stone circle to go back in time the soldier was coming to close for comfort for Jamie's taste, so he rushed to protect her with his body only to be whorled back in time to where the story all began.

Notes

O . K .
So you guys are the greatest!!!!!!!!!!
I was soooooooo nervous posting the love scene from the chapter "the way out" in my story "IN THE BEGINNING WITH YOU", that when it didn't work I said maybe it was a sign that I shouldn't post it at all.
You have given my so much love and reinforcement on both posts (the main one and this) so I wanted to post another love scene I just wrote after getting all this love and notes from you.
This will appear in the chapter after "the way out" (it having another section before it's finished) entitled "the Gathering" of course.

See the end of the work for more notes
He closed the door after her. Blasted thing couldna be locked from the inside.

He took a verra deep breath fortifying himself and went down the small flight of stairs.

She was leaning on the large table in front of the hearth.

Hands crossed at her lap, no looking at him and preparing herself for a fight.

"First thing first" he said and took her mouth to his, clutching her to his body.

She resisted at first, clenching her teeth and lips not allowing entry, he was relentless, and she was drunk.

Slowly, whatever force that was between them took control of her and she yielded to his touch and mouth, he was half leaning her on the table, methodically positioning her further and further on the surface of the table and putting himself between her legs.

He would scold and handle her in a minute, he thought, just first-

But once he started, he couldn't stop himself.

His hands traveled to support her back while his other hand went under her skirts.

Where he found that his wife's resistance wasna where her true feelings laid.

He went down her neck, kissing, biting, licking and getting verra excited, forgetting anger and insult.

He would forgive her anything, to be allowed to touch her so, to love her, to be hers.

Her heid was leaned backwards in ecstasy over his touch.

Good, he thought, recognizing the hunger and need in her, no other man touched her.

He removed the flap under the laces of her gown and freed her breasts, suckling on her nipples 'till her hand came to his hip, urging him to come closer.

He pressed himself to her, half atop of her, putting one hand, behind her on the table to still keep them leaning on the table but not lying.

Her legs wrapped themselves around him.

He placed his other hand under her knee and raised it almost to shoulder level. She was tight, wet and ready to be taken.

"Mine" he said into her ear lifting his kilt up. He was already, fully prepared for the proceedings at hand "mine and nobody else's"

Her head snapped forward from its inclined state "what??"

"Nobody else's" he repeated more firmly and guided himself between her legs.

Just as he was about to enter heaven, She braced her forearms which she was using to lean on the table with, and pushed her whole body, sending him staggering a step or two backward, jumped off the table and was furiously readjusting her skirts.

"Luke is it?" he was feeling all the anger come back tenfold "and who in the bloody hell is this Luke?"

"Luke is it?" he repeated more firmly and guided himself between her legs.

"This is what you find important to reply to, out of all the things I said!!!!"

"The others were lies, I choose to acknowledge the one thing that was verra real"

"Lies? Lies!! You were the only one that did that. You lied to me James Fraser!!!"

"Well it was either taking the bench and hitting him on the heid until I cracked his skull or lying to get ye alone to let ye try and explain ye'r actions. What would ye preferred me do?!!!"

"My actions?? My actions?" she was almost hopping up and down being so infuriated with him.

"Ye's it!!!" he bellowed into her face "what r'ye on 'bout touching and talking to other men as if ye're a free women. Christ Claire, they all ken ye're a widow and lining up men to find ye a husband, to make ye stay."

"I am a free women" she hissed at his face "and apparently so are you!!!" she pushed him back w' all her might, but being drunk and hardly as strong as him, he stood his ground.

He caught her wrists as she was curling her palms into fists, trying to pound his chest, pulled them behind her and held them tight making it impossible for her to move w'out hurting herself.

She would be fine as long as she doesna move or trash 'bout, and listen to him, as she should be
"You are not a free women. You do belong to me, I own you" he said every word fully expressed wi' high proper English dialect, to get it through her thick, stubborn heid once and for all.

"Ho aye, please speak to me as if I was your property, as if I was something that ye paid and bought for. A collector's piece that ye own, that belongs to ye and that no one's permitted to touch" she was mimicking his tone now "that always seem to go so well for you when you do!!!"

He tighten his grip on my hands, after a moment of looking at me as if he was about to break me in half.

He took both my wrists and clapped them together in one palm of his. The bloody man had huge hands.

His face came boring into mine, an inch apart that I couldn't see anything but blue orbs becoming one and flashes of red rising from his skin.

"Ye do belong to me and ye ARE my property. It's written in the law of T H I S time, ye are my wife!"

I shook the iron grip by flinging the entire weight of my body on his arm and twisting it, in order to be set free "Well lucky for us I'm neither at present time now am I?" I was screaming at the top of lungs

"I'll take ye where ye stand, put a bairn in ye and will see who will be forced to marry who, ye rag-mhuinealach, craicte air fad, Mo chreach!!!"

"YOU STUBBORN, CRAZY NUTTER yourself, and good heavens indeed!!" I roared back "and if you think that I will ever marry you again you have never been so wrong!!!!"

My throat was aching from screaming so loud.

"If ye dare to nay." "DARE? DARE? You wouldn't dare!!" sore throat be damned I would keep yelling at the bastard.

"Ho, I wouldn't!" his hands came to the clasp on his belt and was starting to fumble with it

"Ho no James Alexzander, Malcom, Mackenzie, Fraser, you can huff you can puff but this house isn't going down without a fight!!" I bellowed.

"What?" that took him completely by surprise, I guess the three little pigs did not yet build their houses.

"Never mind" I was in no mood to settle in for a bed time story, in fact there will be no bed in this story at all if I can help it.

What he put me through this past week was excruciating and I wasn’t about to let it slide only because my body screamed and pleaded to feel him again and let him take me to sheer happiness and forgetfulness.

Either from my threats or the bafflement from the pigs, Jamie did manage to bring some composure back to himself.

When he spoke again, although his hand were tight on the side of his body, clenched into fists and his entire skin seem to match his hair color, he still managed to speak in measured and quiet tones.

"Claire, please" he pleaded "threaten me wi' anything but yourself."

He took a long breath and shut his eyes "Ye can take anything o'me ye like- but nay you. Please, to hear ye say such things... It makes me mad and I go wrong in the heid wi' my action and my speech. But please anything but you"

As usual a word from him could break my heart.

This was not a metaphor. I was sure if one would look to the ground at my feet, right now, they would find the shrapnel of my broken heart.

"Then why?" my voice was shaky, sad and with no spirit left in it. That was gone with the anger.

Everything in the past two weeks came crushing down. I sniffed, trying to not fall apart.

I really should not have drunk so much, I mused to myself. But it was the o n l y thing that kept me from breaking into complete shambles when I saw him walk in to the hall, I reminded myself.
At my words and tone, he opened his eyes inquiringly.

"Why what?"

"Why would you do that, for another woman? Knowing what you know of her feelings for you? Of her intentions? Of what she did to someone you claim you love and cannot live without?" I sniffed again "why would you hurt me like that? and then disappear without a word" I looked straight into his face with all the pain and hurt and humiliation that were hiding behind my fury.

Whatever he saw made him rush to me, clasp me to his chest in a tight embrace and whisper

"Mo nighean donn, mo luaide, I will never hurt ye, you have my word, my oath, my heart, my soul all o'me" he kissed my forehead fervently and said into my skin "Please say ye believe me Claire" he distended me from him, lowered himself on the ground, one knee on the hard, cold stone floor holding both my hand in his, bending his head to our joined hands as in an act of absolution, pleading "please tell me you believe me Claire, I will die if ye don't!".

"Then why?" I asked again sounding so cold to myself, I felt numb after feeling so much pain and insult.

He looked up at me.

"I told ye then and I tell ye now, it would have shamed the lass to be beaten like this-

"Why do you care so much for her?" I burst out.

"I dunno!" he exclaimed angrily, but then reined himself in "I told ye what happened to me at sixteen in the castle, Claire. How I was beaten for all to see and me a lad and nay a lassie. I canna imagine such a thing for a lass, I wouldna go to dinner for a week after it was done, only Mrs. Fitz coming after me dragging me from my ear screaming 'go on Jaime, go on wi' ye'rself and eat' that finally brought me 'oot" His imitation of the dear Mrs. Fitz made me smirk, but because there were tears on the surface of my skin it came out as a watery snort through my nose.

Jamie did smirk at that, rose to his feet, took out is, always ready kerchief and blow my nose.

"There, there, a ghraidh, ye silly lass, do ye no remember what happened next?" he returned to embrace my tightly.

"What?" I said muffled, face still buried in his kerchief.

He removed it, lifted my face with a finger under my chin to look into his eyes and smiled. "Do ye no remember what happened after the beating in the hall?"

My face must have shown my incomprehension.

"Ye came to me, mo chridhe, ye came to me and tended me. Holding my face in ye'r, bonny hands, such" and he cupped one hand to my cheek caressing, with the other one moving a curl from my face and tucking it back.

"Ye caressed my so gently, so lovingly, I would have gladly taken a beating every day after that to ha' ye touch me so" his thumb was now caressing every inch of my face slowly and softly "when ye told me ye would be leaving the next day I thought… I canna describe it. It was like a hole was opened inside me and I thought it couldna be so. God wouldna make me feel so to ye and take ye away, I was…. I was…"

"Heartbroken" I ended for him.

"Aye, I was. Still am, for ye no coming after me this time"

"What?"

"Aye, why do ye think I waited so long to come into the hall?"

Again the vacancy in my face compelled an explanation.

"I ha' been fighting like crazy wi' Dougal and Murtagh and the lot, to be allowed to see ye. Saying how my injury needs looking after and how I might die if they no let me see ye. I had to finally stop because they were growing so wary. When it was finally time for the hall, I knew once I saw ye I would run to ye and hold ye, the hell, wi' our plan and the future be damned. But my mind kept telling me how that was no good and I couldna do so, or I might lose ye forever.

So I resigned myself to come at the last minute, knowing that once the beating was done I will have ye, for a little while, even if it will only mean ye caressing my face and naught more" His hand came around my shoulders and drew me in "Beside" he said when he finally let go for a moment so we could catch our breath "wi' all we done, they were growing so suspicious of us, that I had to do something to make them lose our scent."

"I need ye so, a ghraidh" he whispered into my lips, his entire body pulsing with mine and shaking with desire.

"Beside" he said when he finally let go for a moment so we could catch our breath "wi' all we done, they were growing so suspicious of us, that I had to do something to make them lose our scent."
"What do you mean?" I said, breathless but feeling so relaxed then I felt in a very, very long time. Having him like this was everything.

"Weel" he looked a little shy all of a sudden "twas only I throw a milking chair at Murtagh when he said he willna let me go and see ye and I called Dougal a lot of verra bad things to his face when he stood at the entrance to the castle and said that me and my big careless mouth werea to go anywhere near ye"

I wrinkled my nose and laughed "Really? What did you call him?"

He smiled, kissed the creases of my nose and sighed in contentment.

"I dinna remember, I was so angry I just opened my mouth and according to his face and those around him it was verra bad. One man crossed himself at some point" he frowned trying to recall what his head came up with. He had a good grasp of curses in many different languages.

"Really?" I smiled wholeheartedly, feeling giddy cupped in his very warm, very large arms.

"Aye, I tried saying afterward that it was the pain and I couldna think straight but that dinna seem to convince anyone"

"And you thought-?"

"I thought letting them think I just had a wandering eye and will go to any lassie around, weel, I thought that will make them think me just a young lust crazed lad, no need to worry 'obout" he kissed my forehead again and tighten his grip.

"Do ye forgive my love? As ye see I go crazy w' the missing and loving ye and no being able to be w' ye" he then distanced me a little to look at me and with a solemn face said "I would ne'er ha' touched ye w'oot ye saying so!"

"I know that Jamie" I said, tightening my own grip on him "I didn't think before, when I spoke as well, I am yours" I looked at him with a plea for forgiveness as well "Being without you, I thought I couldn't bare it for one more moment, and it made me think all these things about you and laog….well, I was mad too"

I cupped his face in my palms this time "I would never leave you" I stretched my body on to his deepening myself into him as if wanting to become part of him "and I can't wait another minute to be married to you and back in your arms".

He sighed so deeply I could feel the oxygen drain itself from every tensed muscle he had been holding.

"it's now the two of us, that got the wrong idea regarding the other" I said taking my thumb and caressing the sides of his slanted eyes, the high cheekbones, gliding the tip on that full bottom lip, his entire body was humming to my touch.

"We, really, must stop behaving as two horny teenagers that cannot control themselves"

"Horny what?" he frowned bewildered.

"Never mind, I just mean we need to think and behave more rationally and stop letting our emotions get the better of us and most of all talk to each other before jumping to the wrong conclusion, instead of playing pin the donkey in the dark!"

"WHAT??"

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"What did you want to do to me, last time?" I said pulling back for his embrace.

He was whispering Gallic words to my hair, while we stood there swaying together.

Not willing to let each other go.

"Mmmm?" he played coy, pretending he was half asleep.

"You just said something about, wanting to do something or have it done, I didn't understand that part, but something about my-"

"Naughting, naughting, I said nay a thing" he wanted to pull me back to him "I talk nonsense from the missing ye, that is all"

"Well, we are alone" I pulled back from his, reluctant to let me go, arms.

I thought it was only curiosity to where I was going with this that won me my release.

"Aye?" he rubbed his finger to the bridge of his nose, intrigued to where I was headed.

"This was a nice little moment we had here, last time I mean" I added seeing him not grasping.

"Aye, I remember" his fingers tappet his thigh gently.

"And I didn’t quite understand what you said, but it was about the last time we were here" I was walking to the table we only a few moments ago left. I ran my fingers lightly caressing the worn-out, cracked surface.
It still held the heat of our bodies in it. It ran a shiver down my spine and I could feel goosebumps forming all over my body.

"Is that what you were doing with me before?"

I asked, circling the table to the far end, all a while caressing it lightly with my fingers feeling the pleasurable tingling feeling return to me.

I peaked at him around my shoulder to allow him to see all I was experiencing in my face.

The tell-all face have one, very good advantage when it comes to telling one's spouse what you are thinking without a word.

Jamie started walking, or should I say shuffling is legs toward the table. Toward me, as if he wasn't even aware he was doing so.

He were now standing on opposite sides of the table. Both holding to either side of it; so tight I was sure I could hear the wood cracking.

Jamie was holding on to his end so hard I saw his knuckles whiten and was sure that if he let go of it, I would be able to see his big paw print cemented forever into the wood.

The thought of him doing that to me, made my gasp for air quietly in my throat and my hands came to lightly to touch my nipples through the opening Jamie widened when he 'handled' my laces.

That made him growl, his nostrils flared and now I was sure I could hear the wood crack under his fingernails, he seemed to resemble an ox. An ox, ready to charge.

And me, with not a single red fabric on me.

"If we were to stop or be interrupted this time-" he said growing more and more red-faced with restraining himself.

I came very slowly to his side of the table, fearing he would actually drag me across the table to him, or leap on me and on to the floor.

"No one will stop us this time. Don’t you know by now Jamie. Its only you and me. Only you and me, Jamie, it's all I can see“ and I reached my finger to gently caress his cheek.

He grabbed and lifted me to the table spreading my thighs with his torso and placed himself precisely between my legs. He did it in such a skillful, surgical one-sweep motion that it made me release a small “hoop" and left my feeling very lightheaded.

His eyes were fixed on me; his gaze penetrated into me so intently, that when he moved toward me, I leaned back not even knowing why.

The feeling of unbearable anticipation was spreading all over me.

He made another step, and I took both hands to the back of me, leaning on them for support and to signal he could do anything he liked.

Still he didn’t move further but stared as if he was still planning his massive elaborated plan. I swallowed hard, he saw that.

But still he didn’t move. It was as if he was studying everything about me.

His eyes were moving slowly from my eyes, to my lips, to my flaring cheeks and burning skin,

To breasts that stood taut in close proximity to their master, to one part of a nipple that peeked from the now half open front of my dress. It stood hard from wanting to be touched.

The all experience was agony. Why won't he touch me already?

"I think I was mistaken in asking…." I said letting out air I was holding inside me, waiting.

"Sssshhhh" he placed one finger on my lips silencing me.

"Ye asked a question. It is polite to wait for a reply" he said and continued with his observations.

Well two can play that game, I decided.

I opened my mouth and bit the finger on my lips, sucking at all the nerve ending at the tip.

Remembering from my nurses schooling, that a professor once joked that one could ensued pure ecstasy or frenzy only by applying pressure just right on it.

He apparently, wasn’t wrong, by the look of the man attached to the finger in my possession.

He straightened bolt up on his feet, forgetting his examination, almost rising on his tippy toes.

His mouth opened slightly and he drew in his breath as his other hand came on to my thigh and enveloped it with one big palm pressing hard.

"Well" I said releasing his finger after a moment "you aren't speaking”

He seemed completely lost regarding what I meant or even who he was.

"You said to be quiet and you would answer. but you are not answering”.

"Ho, aye" he was staring at the, now released finger and seem to be still experience the sensation.

I was done waiting any more. I pushed him back, got off the table, crossed by him and stood at the
spot near the stairs were we first stood when I checked his wound and he gave me that look.

"Well if you won't tell me yours how about I tell you mine?" I said peeking sideways at him and beckoning him with my finger to come to me, which he did half hypnotized, dragging his feet on the floor.

If there would have been anything in front of him, he would have fallen straight on his face.

He stood in front of me not moving, and I began to loosen his jabot and opening his shirt front, all a while explaining myself.

"Now, if I remember correctly, we were standing right here" I positioned him right "and I was opening your shirt, like so" I demonstrated "to check on your-yes, still healing, nicely scabbed, no drainage wound" I moved the bandage to check.

No point to not make sure given the opportunity "You big liar, I'll get you for that" I warned teasingly, he didn't move.

Then I started moving my hands lower and opening his shirt further finding his nipples.

They were completely erected. His all body, it seemed, was.

Although completely immobile, it was stirring. His hair was standing on ends, every kind of hair, I saw.

Muscles were pulled back and tensed.

"You, on your part" I continued, while letting my hands roam, skim and undress "were staring into me… yes exactly like that" I said looking up at him to see the same expression of intense hunger looking back.

"Hardly moving" my hands caressed his shoulders and down his arms "I was sure you would say something but I didn’t even feel your breath on my, and I was standing close enough that I should have" I took a closer step to him.

"Do you have anything to tell me now?" I inquired, his chest heaved himself up and down very slow, his mouth was closed, pressed lips and both hands closed very tight into fists to the side of his body, but yet he said nothing.

"Well if you don’t, I suppose you leave me no choice but to do what every physician does when his patient is uncooperative" I gave him a very licentious look, he moist his lips and straighten himself further "I would have to examine all of you to make sure there aren't any more injuries I must have missed."

I lowered myself down on to my knees "I'll start at the bottom shell I?" I caressed his naked shines above his boots "This should really be done when the patient his naked, but will have to do" I remarked in my most professional voice.

I traced his knee remembering to apply light pressure on a spot behind them, a small whimper escaped him "no that seems all right"

I massaged his thighs advancing slowly higher and higher up "my, my quite a healthy strong lad you are, aren’t you?" I said feeling his solid, firm, very well shaped muscular legs.

His fingers were fumbling themselves over and over again closing themselves tighter and tighter every time, his knuckles gone completely white by the time I reached….

"Ho may I think I found something that does require my attention" I said sometime during the presiding "A VERRA, VERRA GOOD WIFE” he said somewhat during the presiding "A VERRA, VERRA GOOD WIF…holly mother of god and all her…..” he let out a short gasp, and I peeked from my hiding place, smiling very innocently "was that something in the lines of what you had imagined?"

He was panting quite heavily but managed to blurt out "I couldnna have imagined ye even had I kent such a creature as ye exists!"

"I think we should go to our… my room now, don’t you? This room doesn't lock, and I don't rely on us not being disturbed again. Do you think you can walk?"

"Yes" he said fervently.

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We were stumbling through the hallway so carelessly entangled in one another.
When we reached the first corner, I peered from it to see if the next stretch of the passage was clear.

Jamie was pressed behind me, nibbling at my nape, at my ear, biting, kissing, Licking lightly at my clavicle. I could feel his desire pressed to my back and not for the first time wondered, how was he able to move so athletically fully aroused.

He was making it very hard to keep a watchful eye to insure our safe arrival to my chamber.

When we arrived at another bend in our path, he pinned me against the wall and took my mouth.

"If you behave as such we will be caught!" I said when he finally released my mouth to go further south of my body.

"No we won’t" he said muffled, his mouth on my laces "ye'r keeping an eye, no?" "Well I can't do that while you are doing this" I said seeing only the crown of his head while he was now using his teeth to untie any string that his mouth came across.

He growled in displeasure and stopped his treatment of me, looking around "what good are ye, then?"

"Why you…oohhh!" He hoisted me on his shoulder as a sack of grain "Sàmhchair, no sound now!" he ordered slapping my buttocks lightly. I slapped his shoulder blade back in indignation "Now which way to ye'r room?" he twisted himself to one direction and then the other. obviously losing his way over his handling of me before.

"To the left" I said exasperated, after realizing that my pointing was futile, him not having eyes at the back of his neck.

"Aye" not that it matter, he had already realized where we were and began to stride with me still on his shoulder in the direction of my room.

"What if someone will se…"

"There all at the great hall, and if ye'll be quiet I could listen for footsteps. Christ do ye want to get caught? I tell ye Claire the way ye'r acting" he smacked my bum again "Me?!?"

"Shah!!"

I crossed my hands and kept my mouth shut. Creating 'the lack of any sound' he ordered of me before.

Serves him right if we were actually caught. And if so, I wasn't giving him any more ammunition against me!

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We reached my chamber quickly and safely.

Jamie, as always, knew every secret passage, safe route and contingent escape plan, at every place he resided.

I should start doing that as well; I mused to myself, but was interrupted by being flung on the bed quite abruptly.

A boot flew across the room its twin soon joined him. Watching this and other clothing items being hurled in different directions I said "You'll never find them back in the dark like this?" "The HELL with the lot of them, never wearing clothes again" he growled which was followed by a clash of his dirk hitting the floor.

"Innhh" he was making noises and indicating with his head that my garments should receive the same treatment, all awhile bunching his face as all men do when fighting to remove their collar. "Innhhaa" he repeated when I did not comply forthwith.

He was unbuttoning his waistcoat, that flew all the way to the other side of the room, lawn shirt that landed straight inside the ewer, belt, sporran half ripping them off himself, as I stood on my knees on the bed completely mesmerized by the tableau and hypnotically untying my attire.

I lowered my gaze for a second to undo a knot and when I lifted my gaze back up, I was confronted all at once, with an image of a well over six feet tall, stoic, red- mane (red everywhere I remarked), Viking warrior - naked as the day he came into the world.

Jamie was cupping the very bare, aroused part of him that differed greatly from the childish, hungry-eyed, anticipating expression he seemed to possess at this moment.

I smiled at the image and he disapprovingly wiggled his fingers at me, indicating he found the fact that I was not as nude as him very insulting!

Apparently once he would start, he wasn’t tolerating anything that will slow him down.

"Well, mine those take a bit more time on my own, are you sure you wouldn’t like to help?" I asked letting another part fall off the side of the bed and into the floor.

Still very naked, Jamie was rubbing his knuckles on his mouth, signaling that I needed to take care of my own and eyeing appreciatively while I did so.
"The door, did you lock it?" I said removing yet another vestment, teasingly enjoying the look of him every time another glided off my flash.

He tore his gaze, reluctantly from my body and for a minute couldn't quite understand the meaning of words.

"The door" I repeated slowly pointing at our only protection from nosy eyes. By this time, I only had my shift and bodice on me, and was toying with the strings.

"Ho, aye" he side-walked to the door not able to remove his eyes from me. Groping blindly behind him for the latch at the door and locking it.

"I do wonder" I said examining him. "About what?" he said licking his lips as he came close to the bed in such a way I found myself lowering myself from my knees to a half lying position on the bed as if preparing myself for what seemed to be a very long ride. "Well, about the virginity" I said, mind not realizing what my mouth was saying.

That, made him stop dead at his tracks. "Yours?" he asked pointing astonishingly at me. "No" I said playfully "I wasn’t a virgin when I first went through the stones. You were!" I added teasingly.

I only meant it as a joke but he seemed slighted by that. "No. I was just wondering that's all" I said hastily trying to explain. "About what?" he straighten himself and looked down at me. "Haaah?" I asked back trying to play dumb and distract him by releasing my curls to fully cascade all around me, gliding from my corset and allowing my shift to slide off my shoulders and exposing my breasts.

I was launching all my missiles full torpedoes ahead. "You were wondering, what about my virginity?" he clipped every word not being distracted after all, though he still managed to extract a very distinct tilt to his head surveying what unfolded in front of him, rubbing his chest and making appreciative sounds.

He was not in the mood for stopping himself once he'd started but he wasn’t about to start until I spill it. "Ho…” I said complying finally "really nothing important only I was wondering flippantly….”

Trailing my words hoping he'll let it go "If it nay important it willna trouble ye to say it, no?" he growled. The effort of holding himself at bay, questioning me and each time getting nothing, was taking its toll, and between reddened skin, flaring nostrils, shaking hands and more.

It was quite obvious that I had to let the cat out of the bag and now. "Well, it's only because I saw you naked without the new, I mean the new-old scars that I only wandered, well, if the return of your former physical state includes also….” He towered over me, I sank myself into the bed apprehensive to what I got myself into "if you are technically-" "Something like" I stuttered "if according to all the facts is something really or exactly…. It means I was wondering if-you-were-a-virgin-again" I blurted hastily almost as one syllable.

"What's that, tekhanikaly?" he asked irritated. This was no time to say things he couldn't understand.

"No..." I said complying finally "really nothing important only I was wondering flippantly…..”

"It really wasn’t your fault, it’s what happens the first time, it’s physical, I think, I mean I don’t know for sure…. I mean that’s why I wondered, if it was because you never… o God, I should really shut up right now”. Too much too late I thought shamefully at myself.
Helplessly I plunged my buttocks back on the bed feeling much deflated, staring down to the bed. 
"I really did like it" I added feebly.

"Open your legs to me, Sassenach" a firm masculine voice came from above me "and we shall see how will be the one to last".
I looked up to see that the insult now became a challenge.

The look he had was replaced by a look that left no doubt that I would be the losing party at this case.
Although technically, me losing would mean I would be winning, I kept my mouth tightly shut. I was in no position to articulate anything to him right now.

He came to the side of the bed where I sat parallel to it.
Seized both my ankles and yanked, I was pinned to the bed by my shines, pressed to the mattress, sprawled on my back.
Then he let go of me and clutched the hem of my shift pulling it right off, through my legs, as if this was a magic trick were the magician pulls the table cloth from underneath all the dishes leaving the table completely bare and still, which was exactly the state I found myself in.

He gripped my hips on either side of me, as he came into the bed leaning on his knees.

"I am your husband, Sassenach and it's my duty to keep you satisfied. From the first time to the last, Ye'll nay want or need another.

"Jaime" I hastened to apologize.

"No Sassenach, ye'r mine now" he spread my thighs with his knee, lowered himself as one hand came near my head, the other guiding himself into me.

Then his hand came to the other side of my head and he sheathed himself fully into me in one clean trust.

"Lord Jesus Christ," he cried out.
I gasped curling myself to him with both my hands coming, by themselves, to cradle his head to me.

I had imagined the sensation during our forced celibacy.
But no imagination could hold against the real thing moving inside of me, with me, whispering "O Lord I need ye so".

I climaxed almost instantly.
I could almost feel my blood bursting into every cell in my body engorging them to their full extent, causing them to push their way up against my skin, affecting it to redden and steam.
The craving of my body and soul to him did not fully reveal themselves until this point, and were now blissfully exploding inside me in streams of exhilarating electric currents.
I could almost not contain the sensation fully and could certainly not carry it for long.

Jamie was getting his stride and now instead of us gliding with each other, he was plunging into me as if this was a fight and not an act of love.
It wasn't. This was a forcible encounter of needs that were too long not met.

At some point I could hear him say "ye feel so good Sassenach, how do ye feel so good?"
I was wondering the same of him.

A moment later and I heard his pleasure become a struggle "Haaaa…. 'GOOD LORD, GIVE US COURAGE IN TIME OF TRIAL'"
He invoked any prayer he could think of, trying to hold on.

He shock violently every time he was near, which was every second thrust.
I could have told him what will happen if he continued as such.
A moment later and he was rocking atop of me, red faced and holding his breath, still trying to not end this.

"Jaime its fine~"
"No, be silent a nighdean" he said through clench teeth.
I wanted to explain to him it had nothing to do with his virginity or manhood.

We were apart from each other for so long (for us anyway) that the feeling of us joining was too arousing to last.
"Jaime-" I tried again

"Cha" he replayed and was pushing himself to go on and giving himself no pleasure.

Resigned I sighed and squeezed the inside of my thighs tight and drew my fingertip very gently near his backside.

He roared, spilled himself completely and collapsed over me, his mouth sinking exactly where my nipple was.

We laid like that for about an hour, I assumed, by the changing dark shades coming from the window.

Jamie's body seemed to relax further with every stroke of my hand.

I ran my fingers through skull, nape, backbone, vertebrates, and buttocks.

When he could form words again, he said into my nipple "That wasna fair."

"Well they do say all is fair in love and war" I quoted and added my other hand to caress the crown of his head.

"Why did ye do that?" he asked, his face still buried in my chest, tongue flicking playfully at my nipple.

"Because you have not been sleeping or eating properly" I said, which I shamefully only noticed in hindsight "I don’t know what’s been going on in your life but with all that was happening in mine and what happened tonight. I didn’t need for it to be long and neither did you, next time."

I stretched myself fully as he went to my other nipple "mmm...that feels really good" I shuttered.

"Ho, is that so?" at my vocal approval he was now hastening his pace and applying himself more industriously to his task.

"Mmmm" I nodded "one of these days you will have to tell me, how was the one that taught you how to use your mouth like that"

"That good is it?!" he smiled into my skin.

"mmm" I nodded more vigorously this time "your...ho..."

gooseflesh rippled all through my skin, causing me to squirm, unable to lay still.

"Your dreadfully good with that...hooo..." he lowered himself between my legs chuckling at my rackets, which awarded him a kick to his side, only half not intentionally, over the vibration it stirred in me.

"Jaime, please" I gasped for breath "please come to me, come to me now!"

"arrre ye surrrre?" he was rolling his R's on purpose and I rose almost sitting up fully, my hands clutched to his head, crying out "please Jaime, I need you.

When he entered me this time, He mumbled something in my ear that I couldn’t comprehend except for "...So wet...o Lord so wet".

He slid into me, time and again his body contracting and spreading atop of me. I bore my fingers into his buttocks hard for anchor.

He was enjoying himself following me with his gaze, while he moved inside me.

He brought his mouth to my face, which were, twisting all around. Side to side, up and down "Ye' like it then?"

"Yes Jamie, yes, please don’t stop, forget what I said, please don’t ever stop" and with that I cried out from the wave of ecstasy that crashed into my body.

"I won’t" he chuckled in my ear and continued.

He brought me to fulfillment twice more and took his by the last, rolled down off me, gasped and fall straight to sleep, with his always sweet smile, that this time didn’t disappear but stayed whispered on his full red, much used by now, lips.

When my own breath slowed back again I realized that he will not be going anywhere tonight, as we agreed that he should; in order for us not to be discovered.

I confirmed with the list inside my head of things that happened before, making sure it will be all right. Took another deep breath myself and fell limp, satisfied and happy to find my own sleep.

A moment later I felt a whisper in my ear as he curled to his side and gathered my spoon fashion "Good lassie, I wouldn't have moved if the Pope was coming in the morning".
A love scene from THE GATHERING (the last moment before the start)

Chapter Summary

So as DG does this a sneak peak at what's to come in the main story entitled "IN THE BEGINNING WITH YOU"  
(please don't think I'm comparing myself to HERSELF)

Chapter Notes

It's not as sultry as the previous one I was going for more of a feeling kind of a thing,

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I was standing between his legs completely bare, as Jamie quite bare himself, sat on the edge of the bed and kissed every one of my breasts.

Slowly he opened his mouth taking more of me into him.

He skimmed his hands along my hips, thighs until he reached just below my knees. He applied a small tug to them, which made them buckle ever so lightly, but enough for him to lift and bring me to straddle him.

I let my hand come between us and guided him inside me.

He let out a very warm soft breath, which spread all over my bare chest, making me grab the back of his head and interlacing my fingers into his hair.

I began rocking into him; slowly bringing him to lie on his back on the bed.

His feet still stayed rooted on the ground and I felt his thighs stiffen and press themselves on to it so as to not thrust his hips into me.

He intended to keep his promise of softness to me no matter what.

I leaned back placing my hands behind me, taking anchor in his upper thighs, taking a firm hold on them and scraping them to add to his pleasure.

Jamie bit his lips at the sensation and moaned with delight.

His hands came to my hips, but he let me lead and decide the pace and way things will be.

He let me be in complete control; he dared not move.

I began riding him, moving my hips.

I rode him slow and fast at will. Caressing his thighs, squeezing slightly, scratching as my heart desired.

My head was tilted backward and my eyes closed as I allowed only the sensation to indulge and guide me.

I was a bit sore still, but Jamie never failed to feel good inside me and this time was no different. Apparently I was the same to him, for I heard him gasp a few times and twice he cried out my name.

"Claire" he said again for the third time in a choked wi' emotions whisper.

His deep Scottish lilt -burr of my name echoed in my ears and resonated inside my body until it seeped to my center.

It compelled me to bring my hands to his chest, still wi' my eyes closed and galloping my stride faster now.

I had no time to lit the hearth before all the events of tonight transpired.

And I was experiencing a very odd contradictory sensation of having my body frozen from the waist up from the chill in the air, to having a sultry, searing-hot male body between my thighs warming me from the waist down. This did not feel unsatisfactory to say the least.

And where cold and heat collide, steam arise.

When it was done I leaned forward, sweaty and slippery, letting my curls cascade themselves all over his chest.

At a small after thought I bit his nipple, flicking it with my tongue at the end.

Jamie's hips jerked up then, unable to control himself any longer at my chosen move. Then he and every other part of him fell heavily back into the mattress.

He let out his breath in an explosive sound, sighed and his hands came to wrap themselves around me; he moved my hair from his face and placed his chin atop my head.

"I almost let ye go" he shuddered, letting out another heart wrenching long breath.

"What?" I rose from him, using my hands on his chest for support.
"I almost let ye go" he repeated ruefully.

There was a marked trail made by a tear that ran down along the side of his right cheek and his face was contorted from holding so much pain under its skin.

"Why would you think of that, right now?" I asked terrified.

"Because I am falling more inlove wi' ye just now."

He answered sounding so matter of factly that I let out a small snort in response.

"What?" I asked again puzzled and apparently not very articulated.

"I'm falling more inlove wi' ye at this verra moment" he said as if this explained it.

"Dinna fash, it happens once a day, every day. I would be lying, standing, working, fighting….. Loving ye" he smiled lightly at that, as if remembering how it all transpires.

He took one long curl that laid on my shoulder wrapping it around his finger as if it was the coil of time itself; doing this so very gently and cautiously as to almost allow the curl to wrap itself on him.

"Sometimes 'tis when ye're wi' me, sometimes 'tis when I'm alone. But 'twill happen every day and wi' no warning."

Another tear came from the side of his eye, without him ever blinking to extract it.

"I would look, think or hear ye and I would feel an ache in my chest as if my heart would be breaking, but I ken 'tis only breaking to be rebuilt, bigger, stronger to hold a greater love for ye".

"Every day?" it was a stupid question but I couldn't think of anything else to ask.

"Aye" he chuckled lightly at that and the vibration of his body reminded me that we were still linked.

"Even if ye're mad at me or even if we're apart"

He opened his eyes wide to me and smiled amusingly as if revealing a secret and said "It started long before we were even wed".

He rose on his elbows now, which brought his face closer to my own "It has to be so, mo chridhe, or I'll die wi' the loving o' ye" he smiled softly "There must be more room in my heart, a ghraidh. For my love for ye spreads constantly".

"Then why-?" I blotted the single tear that was near his lip by now.

He smiled wholeheartedly at that.

"For I would've gone on loving ye more and more each day even if ye left that day I sent ye away" he lifted his eyes to mine. They were filled with sadness, fear and pain now.

"Only ye wouldna ha' been here wi' me to share it. Ye wouldna be here for me to offer it to ye. And that I think, Claire, I think that would be the end o' me."

There were a few tears falling from my eyes now as well. They ran from my cheek and on to my bare breast.

One landed squarely on my nipple and was glistening from it, which made him laugh, a real warm laugh.

"Dinna be sad, mo maise, for we are nae apart, we are together. And my tears are just the shadows o' a pain that willna come."

He pulled me off his lap and out from our connection and on to the mattress.

"NEVER."

He said, as he laid me on my stomach and spread himself behind me almost laying fully atop of me but still letting the bed hold most of his burden.

"I willna let it" he fortified his promise to me, as he spread himself further over every inch of me, all through the back of my body.

It made me feel reassured and safe to have his weight on me.

"We are together and never again apart" we whispered, took my hand that rested near my head and wove it with his.

We laid there together, watching the rain, which began to drip loudly on the window’s glass, cocooning us from the rest of the world and all the other noises the gathering’s celebration, which were still in full swing, brought from the outside.

A moment later I felt him shift a bit to his side, exposing my rear, smacking it ever so lightly and then kissing the spot softly.

"Why did you do that for?" I snorted a laugh.

"Someone gave his word this evening that by the end o' this night I will either lay in a bed o' pleasure or at least be thoroughly kissed, wondering how I ever lived wi'oot the woman that I will do so wi'."

Well…”

He stretched himself further atop of me, regaining his previous position

"Giving that I ha' done all that, I just wanted to make sure that m’ word as to what I’ll do to ye tonight willna be broken either."

He concluded with a satisfied smile, kissing my exposed shoulder blade and cuddling back on to
"You first class barbarian fool!" she berated him as she was feeling his shoulder for damages.

"You knew this will happen and yet you went on and got yourself hurt" she went on wi’ her scolding.

In his current mood he liked it just fine.

"Why were you even at that game? You knew he would come out of the woods looking for a fight" she glared at him as she stumped through the hallway they entered the castle from, pushing him forward through smacks at his back and head.

She has done so since the moment they left Murtagh’s sight, after he informed Jamie no one won in the shinty match.

Too bad he had performed some choice moves during that game and this time he had her to play wi’ as weel.

Only Claire dinna seem to share this specific past desire o’ his at the moment and was chastising him proper.

"Come" she ordered “We’ll go to the surgery before he’ll come and I could examine if you need some patching up” she said leading the way exasperated wi’ him.

"What’s ‘first class’ mean Sassenach?” he stood himself taut to her back as he pulled her tight to him nae giving up on the idea to fulfill a past craving.

"I thought you said it was fighting that gives you ‘Mmphm’ afterward" she said, striving for subtlety, inclining her stare to his lower parts, which felt naughting but subtle at present time.

"Was this something that arise after the first time you played as well?” she inquired getting his meaning.

Well it was hard to miss it in such close proximity.

’Twas a bit crass, but he needed to make sure she kent subtlety wasna the course to follow at the moment.

"Weel, as ye saw, I was fighting quite fiercely” he said and turned her to him. He walked her backwards to be pressed now between the wall at her back and him at her front.

“And aye, after the match last time, when I lifted my eyes and saw ye looking at me, knowing ye saw me winning such. Weel…” He kissed her fervently.

Although it wasna the fighting or the game or even the rush that follows such occurrences that currently supplied him wi’ the firm cock-stand he was experiencing at the moment.

’Twas the woman that came ‘oot of the woods saw him and then Dougal, who was bursting ahead to knock Jamie ‘oot and force him to yield.

Claire gasped in worry, pivoted and turned her back to him and the game, cradling her arms tight to her chest, wincing at every noise, worrying it was Jamie’s bones being broken that made the racket she heard behind her.

Every grunt or shout or even the slightest noise made her grimace and burrow into herself wi’ fear and concern for his weel-being.

She hated seeing him hurt vehemently.

Once the game was over, she strode furiously to him and Murtagh and clouted him one across his ear.

“You senseless coot, you imbecilic halfwit absurd…” She searched for more insults

“Scot” both he and Murtagh concluded for her.

Against his usual response, Murtagh dinna frown at the spectacle this time but seemed amused.

Unfortunately ‘twas becoming common knowledge that Claire jumped ‘oot o’ her skin every time Jamie had a scratch on him.

“You’re injured!” she berated him “Why would you do this if you’re on the mend? I don’t even know why I bother to fix you anymore, maybe if I leave you damaged you won’t get yourself hurt anew to replace the old ones.

Maybe you find it a funny game in that barbarian head of yours.

Well Come on already let’s go get you sorted”

“But I thought ye said–” Jamie teased
“You be quite! You have lost all speaking rights at the moment. Come already!!”
She ordered in her best stern doctor voice, half dragging him after her to be looked and cared for.

She was most unhappy wi’ him. He on his part always seem to feel quite happy wi’ the scolding that continuously followed his wounds. Wonder why? He mused as he tried to take her berating lips into his.

“Jamie you reek of dirt and sweat” she turned her head waving her hand under her nose, but he could tell it was said in jest

“What ye’re smelling Sassenach is a man. A big strong” he lifted her by the waist tight to his body “passionate man” he bit her neck

“And apparently a hungry one to boot” she said swaying her feet in the air “Put me down you big oaf, someone will see and this cannot be good for your shoulder”

“Ouch, I’ll do” he said wanting to go on playing wi’ his wife. But then he reconsidering it, placed her back down and said “but if ye feel we must go and ha’ it tended to, fine, lead the way” he let go of her and bent gallantly to allow her pass.

She kent his mind

“If you think anything else will happen there but first aid” she said narrowing her eyes at him.

Of course ‘twill he hadna had her fully in the surgery yet and they were leaving tomorrow. ‘Best nae leave anything undone for tomorrow, what ye can do today’ his da’ always said

“You are about to be set wrong” She said stating a fact wi’ her hands on her waist.

“What’s first aid?” he queried smiling lasciviously “For I do find myself in need o’ some aid and I do find it must be tended to first and foremost”

She shook he head from side to side and said while trying to stifle a smirk “Never mind, I just meant, Dougal remember? We can’t do anything, he is probably already on his way to the surgery and I doubt very much you would like me to miss my invitation to join the wedding par… I mean the rent party “ she said unable to hold her smile at bay anymore.

Then she glanced down at herself in disapproval and said “Last time I had a chance to change before he came. Now look at me I smell and look as bad, if not worse, than you do”

“I am” Jamie said in admiration “I always look at ye”

Chapter End Notes

As always please let me know what you think. And who knows maybe if you guys think its a good idea i’ll post here upcoming small bits that will show in the main one.

P.S: As always all new prompts ideas are welcomed if you would like to see me write some more stuff :))}
THE GATHERING continues

Chapter Summary

So I posted chap’ 10 in fragments to those that missed some of it, here it is fully

I was standing in the stables caressing and getting to know my fair Brimstone anew.

"Poor thing you are" I said placing a sweet kiss on her forehead "Named either for a sulphury hell-fire or for a troublesome and angry woman who disturbed some silly public peace by arguing and quarrelling with her surroundings too much"

I caressed her behind the ear just as Jamie taught me and smirked to myself "I wager they call me that behind my back here as well" I said.

As if sympathizing with me. Brimstone gave me a light push on my shoulder.

"Yes, a fine pair us two make" I kissed her again

"Although according to Old Alec YOU have done nothing to deserve such fame" I sighed with the acceptance of my 'never being able to freely say my mind and opinion without such repute and there for retribution' stature, in this time.

"Tell you what" I jested "you’ll keep me safe during this preposterous Tynchal tomorrow and I promise you I won’t let no one put a scold’s bridle on you, to keep you from speaking your piece” As I knew was done in Scotland for punitive or even preventive measures for dealing with women of this time, which were considered an offense and a nuisance to society. That is when they didn’t place them on the ducking stool or throw feces at them.

I had no regrets regarding my decision to stay with my heart, but my head did sometimes wonder about all I left behind.

Who I could have been, what I could have done.

I sighed again.

"There stands, my friend, in yonder pool,
An engine call’d a ducking-stool;"

I quoted dear Benjamin West to the snuggling, friendly brown snout under my palm.

"By legal pow’r commanded down,
The joy and terror of the town.
If jarring females kindle strife…”

Every hair in the back of my neck suddenly stood erect, my breath came short and I could feel myself standing taller as if a spring was coiled inside me and I was set to jump from my little jack in the box.

"Brimstone!!! Ye thought o’ escaping on Brimstone???”

I let my breath out of me, not looking back but feeling his steadfastly, warm presence, closing at my back.

His silent laugh washed over me as warm echoing water droplets being poured under my garments drop by drop and slowly becoming waves.

It had been a long two days without him.

His hand came to caress the horse and placed itself by mine. His fingers lightly touching-not touching me and the 'Jack' was released as lightning inside my stomach.

"Jamie" I said a little breathless.

I had just enough sense of mind to glance sideways to the far entrance of the stables where Alec and Roderick, the stable-lad, were currying a black horse. There were four box stalls between us and them and they were tucked deep inside the one they stood at, so-

"You are supposed to be in hiding! We agreed that you would return from your trip with Alec and make yourself scarce" I whispered, knowing that if I turned around I would be forced to jump into his arms, compelling him to catch me and kiss him with all the energy that Hooke’s law could ever come up with, in my springy state.

"Weel I hid here last time too” he pointed logically, as his manifestation made its way closer to me "Just behind ye there's the wooden door that leads to a verra ghastly, foul, rain-sapped cubby where I am staying this time as t’was the last time” I heard the smile in his voice “I only came 'oot last time, during the Gathering to sleep dry and warm in the straw, when a sprite fell into my lap” he was one inch closer, I could feel it in the rumbling of his laugh "Dinna weigh as a fairy though, when she landed atop o’me”

He was so near, I griped the wooden fence, to force myself to not turn around.

"Heard ye talking to yourself” he said and I felt his breath on my nape as I swallowed hard, forcing all my desires down my larynx.

It was a LONG two days and I kept myself so busy, not allowing for one moment of peace, one
moment of rest, so I wouldn’t worry or yearn for him.
I even refused to know the location of where he would be at, during the Gathering, as to not be
tempted to come to him.

I fortified myself mentally and physically to not see him for the total of four to five days, after we
parted and he rode out with Alec.
I told myself I will not see him until the rent party will ride on her way; out of the castle walls and
away from the manipulations of her dwellers.

But here loomed his apparition at my back, seducing me to turn and see my heart's desires and at a
time I resolute myself to live without him for a while.
Despite the not knowing when or how we would find the opportunity or the time to even glance at
one another during our voyage around the Mackenzie’s land.
But I kept my needs at bay, recognizing it will mean our happiness and prosperity in the future.

So I knew with all certainty and no doubt that if I turned around at this moment, he would be
molested.

“So here I stand answering the bean bhàsail call, to find she wouldna even turn to take my pitiful
soul to the abyss” his deep Scottish voice came so close to my ear, my eyes shut themselves
without my saying so.

“She can’t” I said breathlessly “the siren is lured herself and could not be held accountable for her
actions at the sight of her prey”
He laughed and the depth of his sound rippled into my body in a way I wanted to show him every
Mata Hari inducement I read she practiced on her poor objectives, twice.

“Aye, but one should inform the temptress that trying to get away from her game by riding
Brimstone is verra ill-advised and will only end wi’ her capture”
Jamie said placing his hand on the fence, right atop of mine.

“And what do you mean by that?” I said, as my hand clenched itself to his, interlacing our fingers
to one's another.

I was going to turn to him eventually, but the seduction dance began to free its pleasures and I
wished every sensory and move to be felt and savored before its end.

Hearing was already established, touch was being explored, the smell of dried hay, masculine light
sweat, the dries apples I forced him to take on his trip and Jamie's bouquet were rich in my lungs.
Sight and taste will soon join in; to leave me dwindled completely of my self-composure and
restrain.
And by his tone I wasn’t the only one enjoying the slow renew acquaintance.

“The mare is known for never crossing Leoch's boundaries” he said sounding very amused.

“What?!!” I was snapped back to myself at this new divulgence.

“She never fails to halt a few feet from the edge o’ the border” Jamie said almost gigglng at me
“and if one tries to push her to much, she just turns ’oround and comes right back to the stables if
ye like her to or nay”

“What? Why on earth… are you just making things up to laugh at my thwarted attempt of escape?
Which you are probably to blame for its ill-fated outcome” I demanded and accused crossly.

“Me?! Forbye. The horse is the laughing joke o’ the whole castle, mo nighean donn. Only given to
children on their first ride alone” he was chaffing me in such derision, I found it completely safe to
turn and glare at him, feeling only a slight weakening at the knees from seeing those summer misty
blues look back at me and the crooked curve of his full lips pulled slightly up…. Ouch who was I
kidding?

My hands cupped his cheeks and forgetting to even side-glance at the other occupancies in the
stables, I closed my lips on his, almost swallowing him whole.

His body pressed on mine in less than a second, pining me to the fence, which he held on either
side of me, fastening me to it and to him even further.

My hands came to bury themselves in his soft copper-auburn locks while his took a handful of my
rear, which he used to almost pick me up my feet, finding some way to tighten my body to his
even further.

“Finally Sassenach” he said, closed eyes, smiling in contentment and without the slightest taunting
in his tone when I released him “I missed ye badly”. I pulled back, moistening my lips to one another, smiling in triumph and satisfaction myself.

“Welcome back” I replied picking up his teasing tone “Now what were you saying about
Brimstone?”

“Once on a wager” he opened his eyes still smiling with contentment “Hamish tried to goat her
further” Jamie went on illuminating me, peeping to the front of the stables, making sure that the
most welcoming acts on my part, caused no unwelcome consequences.

“He was pulling at her reins, loosening her girth every time she went forward, as if she would be
let free if she only cross the damn line” he laughed wholeheartedly at the memory “End up getting
head-butted quite forcefully and went tumbling into a bog”

He returned his gaze to bore into me and his smile spread

“So ye see, mo maise, I wanna the only one who plotted to keep ye here”

“Why Alec that little -” I glared at his direction, wanting to say a word to the conniving horse-
master.
"Weel, for his defense, she was probably the only horse here who wasna claimed for the Tynchal
tomorrow and he thought ye no need to go further than Leoch's terrain"
"I bet he did" I said disbelievingly.

"Wonder why she does it though" I pondered, letting go of my pique as I looked at what or who I got,
from such machination being performed at my expense.

"Look" he whispered, inclining his head to a spot further into the stables.
Where right at the edge of the last stall there was something I have not seen since my childhood
years living between the pyramids in Egypt.
He stood there grazing; the most beautiful purebred Arabian stallion I have ever seen.

He towered over; so unlike the Clydesdale breed of draught horses around us and all over
Scotland.
All the steeds here featured broad foreheads and wide muzzles, high withers, sloped shoulder,
but most of all the thickest, sturdiest bulky muscular legs and hooves, to match their heavy hauling
and logging throughout Scotland's marshlands and crevasses scenery.
All were features that granted them the appearance of the gaiety, amicable, mild-mannered, sweet
beasts that they were.
In complete contrast, there stood poised and proud before me, a tall, concave profile, refined
wedge-shaped head, small muzzle, long arched neck, finely chiseled bone structure
with the leanest muscled mass enveloping it, ending with a high-carried tail and hindquarters-
Arabian stallion.
He was painted in a chestnut-roan coat with rubicano patches.
He was truly a magnificent sight.
To the untrained eye, a comparison between the two breeds might end with the findings of the
roan stallion lacking; perhaps over his skinny poor appearance when equated to the others.

But I have seen his kind before.
"Scheherazade" I said transfixed by the sight.
"What?" Jamie puzzled
"Well she was the storyteller from 'One Thousand and One Nights' but what I meant was, that in
our time in Egypt;
mine and uncle Lambs that is, that's what the locals used to call them, the thoroughbred anyway.
They said they served the realm just as she did when she made the king fall in love with her and
by doing so, calmed his murderous temper" I said, marveling at the sight of the steed and from the
memories the vision of him awakened in me.

"If ever we took one to ride on, we needed to pay for two more guards to keep them safe.
'Worth more than their weight in gold' we were always told, made us sleep with them in our tents
so they wouldn't be stolen"?

"Aye 'tis a fine horse" said a very confused Jamie over hearing too many references he couldn't
place and we were far from being in the proper time or place for him to inquire or for me to begin
to clarify them all.

"They run like a blazing sand storm" I said recalling "No horse is faster than them; I actually did
see one outrun a real sand storm. I used to watch them in awe all the time.
Once they were free from their restraints and saddles they would just go.
Uncle Lamb even took me to the race tracks one time to watch them at all their glory.
Ho Jamie, you should have seen them run, the earth shook under their hooves from the power of
their speed and you could see every muscle in their body springs and pulse as they dashed".
I laughed recalling "And they are very clever to; over living with people as part of their families.
I think I actually saw one read a newspaper once or at least look at the pictures" I laughed again,
at the memory of a white horse using his snout to flip through the pages.

"Aye, only in the Highlands there's hardly a place flat enough to let them truly roam and gallop" He
said, obviously feeling bad for the beast.
"Colum found him as a foal near his deid mater" he explained the horse existence here "looking so
frail and hardly standing on his legs.
I figure he felt sorry for him o'er his shaking slimly legs so he took him in"

"But what does he have to do with Brimstone?" I quarrled
Jamie smiled patting the mentioned mare
"After he was brought here, they curbed him near her, so they could clean him from all the blood
and dirt he was covered at.
Brimstone being newly birthed herself was fed handsomely to build up her strength and had lots
of hay in hand by her, so naturally he came to stand closer at her side and…. And that was it" he
concluded in a knowing tone.

"No one kens what transpired between them, but from that day on Brimstone would nay leave
Leoch's grounds.
Contrary to your experience, yon stallion is much a brainless wee thing. Ye see, once freed he
would run and nay stop.
Colum used to say if one wanted to cross the whole of Scotland in one ride, that be the horse to do
so on"?

"I should have taken him for my escape plan" I said joshing.
Jamie cocked a brow at me conveying his displeasure at the idea of me being allowed on anything
that could distance me so from him.

"Aye" he said with a glare at me, but returned to his story "Only we canna truly free him, never.
For his own good that is." He said defensively for him hindering such a creature.
"His mane willna survive the Scottish cold and the poor thing is too tall for his own good to roam where there are too many hills and drops of land. We let him out a bit each day, unfortunately we canna do so wi' no tether." He turned his attention back to my docile mare, speaking with such affection "Brimstone on the other hand would go and do as ordered in such a way you'd swear she spoke our tongue. Why, she kens what she is told and what's needed wi'oot the telling, she recognizes voices and faces. Aye, the smartest mount I ever did see, but-"

"But she won't leave without him" I said looking up at Jamie.

"Aye, nay further than the grounds that is. Colum once tried to trade her, but she was returned after reaching the ground's end and no matter how they tried to pull her or budge her, she willna come across. Alec brought her back claiming they were thrashing her senseless so she would go athwart and he wouldna have it.

"If she finds this place home and him the cause o'it he said 'she will be deid in a matter of days o' a broken heart, even if they managed to make her pass. And then Himself will be found in a real swivet, needing to explain the selling of a failing horse'" Jamie ended the recite with a reverent expression to all the ploys old Alec maneuvered on her behalf.

"He went on saying how Colum would ha' a blemish on his reputation as the best breeder and grower 'round these parts-" he laughed "I tell ye Sassenach, when it comes to his beasts the man is as guile as the best o'them. So Colum returned the coin and Brimstone was returned home" he concluded giving her another warm pat.

"His her True North" I said looking at the beautiful Mediterranean stallion, so uprooted from his place and climate here. "I dinna ken what that means also and ye will be telling me later" he rubbed his chin dubiously "But I do remember, when I was here at sixteen, trying for the life o'me to realize what could possibly have happened between the two in those few minutes" he smiled and his eyes deepened their color to the color of a tranquil loaches in sunset as he looked at me.

"And now?" I asked looking up at him, feeling the heat of his body radiate through his clothes to me. He smiled with such tenderness "Now? Nay Sassenach, I havna wondered for some time now 'bout such a thing. Now I simply ken".

There was a shuffling of feet from the stall that held Roderick and Alec and I turned to face Brimstone again, to hide the blush on my tell-all-face. I placed my hand on her neck to the side that was opposite to where they stood, so my palm and Jamie's, who took my meaning and added his on mine, were hidden from the outside world.

We stood, his face to my back, only palms touching lightly. Brimstone helping a kindred spirit brought her head forward to almost block me completely from view. I wove my hand in his.

"Ye will come to me tonight" he determined "Ye Ken the way that none will see ye?"

"Yes, through the kitchen basement, where there is a hidden tunnel that will lead me next to the stables entry, but Jamie we said-" I said, whispering with no breath, closing my eyes, very willing to let his voice in my ear persuade me differently than our agreed upon rules.

Instead though, I felt as if a gust of freezing cold wind attacked my back, making me stagger forward a bit from the impact.

"So made a new friend did ye now?" said a gruff, cracked, deep voice at my back "had me a feeling ye'll strike a liking to her"

"Yes" I turned to Alec smiling "Seems as we were destined to meet and share a fate" I said enigmatically and took my leave politely.

I stared at my reflection, twirling a bit in my floral and plaid dress with an l'anglaise style back and lace trim ruched sleeves. My pearl ear bobs dangling from my ears, my hair pulled up quite nicely, I might add and a striking neck ribbon tied neatly in a butterfly knot at my nape. I felt pretty and all dolled up.

I was marveling at the notion of letting Jamie see me fully, this time around, instead of being all swaddled up under my cloak as last time.

He always made it clear he liked to see me all swathed in splendid attires.

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I was marveling at the notion of letting Jamie see me fully, this time around, instead of being all swaddled up under my cloak as last time.

He always made it clear he liked to see me all swathed in splendid attires.
Although I couldn't for the life of me understand it.

Jamie was fast acting in getting me out of everything I wore and very forthright about telling me, in what condition he would prefer to see me when I did wear something.

Once, in Paris, as we returned from one or another of our many evening engagements and were preparing for sleep;
He watched me begin to undress and said he would most want to have enough coin in order to buy an isle so we could roam freely naked on it, with no other people around.

He was most gracious at sighing and saying that if I insist, he might be persuaded to allow me to keep a shift or two.

I laughed and said "With all the Robinson Crusoe characteristics you possess, I must agree we could live and thrive on such an isolated piece of land by ourselves"

He missed the joke.
Although already published and highly acclaimed Daniel Defoe was absent from Jamie's reading roll.
A mistake he corrected two days after, coming to me and then laughing at my joke.

"Fine Adam and Eve than?" I adjusted myself to the times and company.

"I dinna Ken Sassenach," he grinned "for I canna for the life o'me resolve whether ye are Eve or the snake"

"What?" I said a bit miffed

"A temptress as ye. Ye could make me do"
He came behind me to kiss my nape

"Say"
He slid the dress off my shoulders.

As usual, not noticing the fine French handiwork or embroidery details.
Not caring the slightest about the fact that it pooled at my feet wrinkling and particularly not noticing as his boots stomped on the costly garment as he gathered me from it, lifting me to the bed

"Or eat anything ye wish me to" he said as his smiling face disappeared between my legs.

I shivered at the memory and observed myself in the glass again.

"Perhaps for the two seconds I would be in possession of my clothes this time, he would enjoy the spectacle".

For all my 'don't tell me where you'll be' or protestation to meet tonight.
I found myself since his departure, inducing a game of pull sticks to relieve myself of one shadow, gathering Valerian roots to dispose of the other and asking Geillis if next we meet, could she afford me some port, which I received with a very discordant, unpleasant exchange of words between me and her.

It varied from inquiries regarding all the cheeses, bread and fruits I gathered, this time, for a hungry, wet and cold husband (as if one needed more proof of my preconceived intention for tonight), it shifted to subjecting me to a cruel and ruthless dialogue in respect to Frank and her need for me to acknowledge my husband's death, which I found myself unable to say this time.

I truly felt I could not say such a thing, when my mind only regarded Jamie as my current husband and will not allow me to jinx his well-being by saying such words.

So I settled for divulging that my first husband is indeed dead at this time insisting not to say any more on the subject, over the sorrow it caused me.

As much as it pained me to admit, Jamie was right, Geillis's attitude did alter from last time. She was much forceful in her tries to uncover information in relation to myself, my marital stature and my fertility state.

At the very least that was the one subject that hurt less this time, knowing that soon Jamie and I will be able to start our family.

But through all her questionings, I did still see my friend try and advise me to walk the new path I was given and reach my 'bonny' new place.

When she warned me of how the Highlands are no place for a woman to be alone at,
I had to grasp the table's edge as to not grab her arm and warn her back for what's to come.

But I swore my oath to Jamie and he in return came to me one night with a first attempt for a solution regarding her situation.
He said he spoke to Ned Gowan, in passing of course (I missed dear Ned and couldn't wait to re-acquaintance myself with the lawyer that held a heart of a poet, during our ride with the rent party)
Jamie said there was a law called 'To plead one's belly' which meant an execution will not take place, if the defendant is with child and once the capital punishment was discarded, the perpetrator could plead to be transported and not killed, no matter what was the accusation.

I remembered looking at Jamie standing stark naked by the bed, bursting with pride and joy at his found solution.

He hated Geillis, zealously and vocally and was sure that in the future our endeavors to save her will come back to bite us in the arse.

"For wicked does as wicked does and a snake as loyalty to no other but himself" were his exact words.

But there was nay doubt in his mind that it would be OUR endeavors.
If I felt it was worth the fight, he will fight it right by my side.
He made sure I knew quite clearly he only searched for a way to rescue her for MY benefit but he still did it, putting aside all of his feelings and thoughts on the matter.

"But we are one Sassenach. What is your cause is mine as weel" He said not understanding the deep gratitude and surprise I conveyed to him for his actions.

That was the only reason and the only way I could keep my mouth strongly shut as I stood face to face with Geillis now.

As for the idea though- It broke my heart to inform, a waiting to be thanked and kissed grinning Jamie, that this could not even be considered a partially adequate solution to Geillis predicament.

To allow her to kill her husband, go through a trial- alone this time (for I had no intention to stand on the accused podium again)- get pregnant from a man that will forsake her, only so she could be exiled to the Americas alone and penniless.

He stood there so deflated, after being so secure in his triumph upon one of the many problems we faced.
So I devoted the rest of the night to put that triumph expression back on his face.

Just the memory of his trying so much for me, made me grin and bear it while I stood opposite to my friend, not to mention made me think of tonight.

So I departed from her, with no secrets being told from either sides and went to put Angus to bed in order to get my husband in the same position.

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Later tonight all the fighting man of the Mackenzie clan will gather in the hall and make their oath of allegiance to Colum.

No one will be watching the stables

I could hardly see a thing before me.
I kept caressing the walls of the cellar, trying to find the damn tunnel.

I was more than annoyed.
I constructed my plans so exhaustively, leaving no room for error.
I included all of the paths I needed to take and all of the people I needed to 'take care' of.

But there was no way, no how, I could have accounted for Muriel.
May her skin burn in the fires of hell!

Muriel was Laoghaire best friend.
And so with my painstaking efforts to avoid the one I ran smack into the other.

I just past the store room to the right of my surgery, intending to cross the kitchen and go down to the basement, when Muriel popped in front of me.
Yes, she actually dashed and popped herself before me, as if we were playing a stupid childish game of tag.
She grinned from ear to ear, delighted at catching her patsy and calling out at the top of her lungs.
"Laoghaire, Laoghaire I ha' her! She's here, come quick"

"Look child" I said sternly. I had to keep her silent and away, so no one could hear or come to us.
It wasn’t only not seeing Jamie that was at stake.
I was standing here, fully cloaked and carrying provisions for Christ sakes.
Although this time I wasn’t intending to run, it looked to be exactly that.
And all I needed was someone suggesting going to the stables to check if I had help or a horse standing by-
Well, my head would not be the only one being removed and served for dinner.

"As I said" I said more harshly, as she ignored me and looked around for her friend to come "I don't know what game you're playing at, but I have no time for you or for your inbred friends, stand aside at once and let me pass!"

She surveyed me through and through, from top to bottom and all of a sudden I startled to recognize the same guile, malice, fueled with evil stares that Laoghaire gave me, as she stood at the trial, pointing an accusatory finger and peddling lies about me.

Was this idiot child a force to be reckoned with?

"Ho no Mrs. Beauchamp 'tis nay game or inbre.. what ye said, 'tis I’ came the panting voice of Laoghaire Mackenzie at my back "Muriel dinna stare at the mistress such 'tis rude"
A flushed Laoghaire appeared in front of me.

"I'm so sorry mistress Beauchamp, 'tis only we ha' been searching for ye high and low" They two stood side by side opposite me. How is two against one fair?!
One all excited with twinkling eyes, fumbling her fingers fretfully, the other measuring me suspiciously with narrow eyes and tight lips.

"We do apologize mistress, 'tis only we tried talking to ye for quite some time now. Couldnna get ye alone for a moment. So when Muriel saw ye leave the hall"
"Wi'oot Angus or Rupert mind ye" chimed in a helpful Muriel crossing her hands to her chest.

Who was this bloody child?!

"Aye" said a missing the point Laoghaire. She seemed to have only one thing on her mind and there was no way in hell I was supplying it!!!

"Look you two, I'm sure whatever it is, I will be able to assist you at another time. Tomorrow perhaps in my surgery" I persuaded myself to be civil, as to be done cordially with the matter and let Jamie have a good laugh about it at my expense, where upon I would be the one curled up in his arms.

"Tis only we… I mean I… If I can only trouble ye for a wee favor" Laoghaire wasn't budging the slightest.

"No" I determined quite forcefully, losing my cordial intentions "I'm sorry, I'm quite busy at the moment I must go-" I must say Laoghaire could surely choose her friends. Her conniving, stinking, blackmail bitches friends, I thought as I soured at Muriel.

"I don't see why this is of any concern of yours" I said in clipped tones. "Tis nay m' concern, m' affair or o' m' caring" she said, placing her hands on her hips "Might be to others though" she added cocking an eyebrow at me.

"Look, I see no injury or bleeding in the two of you" I said, acknowledging my inferior standing at this moment, but not giving in on the harsh tone front "and as for ONLY that I may be good for you… so if you will please excuse me-"

"No, dinna be worrit mistress, we're quite raw. 'tis o' another matter" carried on a stary eye Laoghaire "Weel I was wondering if…" I said, ready to refuse and hoping it will be the end of it.

"Oh aye" she stuttered, but her friend gaze never left my eyes, daring me to not fall in line.

"Only if ye had a potion that might open a lad's heart to a lassie" She hurried on to explain, taking my silence as misunderstanding.

"Ye ken, a potion or a brew o'some kind… help a lad…. Ye ken..." she giggled, lowering her eyelashes demurely.

I wanted to throw-up

"Look, I'm neither a magician, a dragon, a fairy or a witch" I said reciting any kind of creature I knew from mythology and literature that dealt with such potions. "Nor am I an old one, a Selkie or a kelpie" I added all I could remember from Gaelic-Scottish folklore taught to me by MY HUSBAND.

"I don't conjure anything, or associate myself with such things or people who involve themselves in such matter" I was really picking my stride here.

"Unlike others" I cocked an eyebrow at Laoghaire remembering the ill-wish doll.

"I dinna mean to offend ye mistress" Laoghaire, who had not yet purchased the item in question, missed my point entirely (again) and also seemed to ignore all my other protestations "I just... I had it in mind that... weel ye aid so many wi' your healing that... maybe ye had somethin' in your keen knowledge that could help a lass holds a lad's attention"

"Look Laoghaire, I don't know what YOU think happened between you and Mr. MacT—" I said, losing my restraint and good sense, caring only to make sure there will be no more attempts of seduction against dear old, unwed Mr. MacTavish. MY dear old, soon to be wed to me, Mr. MacTavish that is.

"That's nae exactly true, what ye say" brought me back from my outrage tantrum, a wicked Muriel. "What" I half shouted, forgetting myself over my anguish.

I just wanted to be in my husband's arms, why was this happening?

"What ye say afore" Muriel preceded to enlighten me "'twas ye who told Mrs. Fitz ye're a charmer, 'twas ye who healed Tammas Baxter and Wee Lindsey McNeil using potions and 'twas certainly ye that been seen dancing naked wi' mistress Duncan in the woods north o' the foot hills" "What?" I gapped opening my mouth and eyes at her "No one could claim such a thing! It is complete fabrication!"

"No according to our friend Jeanie Hume, the Duncan's housekeeper, or at least that will be her telling once I ask her to" she said with sinister eyes, glaring at me back "They all ken ye and the mistress commune wi' the spirits there. Ye ha' been seen quite friendly wi' each other as o' late"

"Look Laoghaire, I don't know what YOU think happened between you and Mr. MacT-

I said, losing my restraint and good sense, caring only to make sure there will be no more attempts of seduction against dear old, unwed Mr. MacTavish. MY dear old, soon to be wed to me, Mr. MacTavish that is.

"That's nae exactly true, what ye say" brought me back from my outrage tantrum, a wicked Muriel.

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"STAD Muriel" Laoghaire, of all people, was the one to come to my rescue "There is no need for this, the mistress helps anyone who asks, ye ken that! She'll help"

She turned to me pleading "'Tis nay for harm mistress I pledge it to ye, 'tis for moving his heart forward. He himself said he holds me in his eyes, only shyness seemed to take a much too sturdy hold on him o' late"
"I... I...I..." I was so flustered from all the disclosure regarding my perception in the public eye, again; at being blackmailed and threaten by a sixteen year old child, again; and at a kind and choosing to do right by me Laoghaire, that I stood there completely immobile and speechless.

"Wait there" I said, comprehending at last, that if I didn’t comply with one child, the other will stir up trouble. Muriel knew I wasn’t supposed to be here and she seem to know how to get me in deeper trouble than Laoghaire could.

Beside, Jamie and I were to leave the day after tomorrow, get married and the question whether to get back here or use our chance and try to escape to Lallybroch was still very much at deliberation. This was certainly an enormous merit for Broch Tuarach.

I hoped Jamie would find this funny. Me, being bested by two teenagers. And I hoped he could help me find the humor in it!

But as I turned back to my surgery, to bring a jar of my finest dried horse dung, I knew I could never tell him about this. Although he wouldn’t admit fully to the extent of it, Jamie was terrified about the past replaying itself again. So was I.

But I have worked too damn hard to assure him that we could change things to our benefit. And hell if I was to let these narcissistic, conceited, brash, filthy adolescence arseholes ruin my second chance at happiness. Laoghaire Mackenzie and her like will not be my downfall.

I hated to even think of hiding something from Jamie (and I was damn afraid of not being able to fool my very perceptive husband), but deep inside of me was always a strong terror of my own as well.

That if Jamie would think the surroundings and what’s to come to be too dangerous, he might try to send me back through the stones again. He tried to, three times. I didn’t believe he wished me gone of course, but Jamie was very good at sacrificing all he had and all he was for those he loved.

I feared of the day he would leave me no choice and try to protect me against my wishes. I truly didn’t know how I could live without him.

Moreover, this was harmless. Jamie loved horses but I doubted very much a jar of dung and a Wizard of Oz chant will send him on an amorous spree to someone else's arms.

Although, if he ever comes back smelling of it, it better be because he stepped in it. Or he might find himself being circumcised, religious beliefs notwithstanding.

And with the decision to forestall the whole witch trial completely, for me and Geillis; this gave dear olc, striopach, mighean na galla Laoghaire Mackenzie (Jamie would be proud. I was putting his lessons to good use) no weapon against me.

"Here" I said returning and trusting the jar to Laoghaire eager hands, almost making her drop it. "Sprinkle the content of this at his threshold. Stand outside the door tap your heels together three times and recite 'there's no place like love, there's no place like love " I repeated my past words only this time sounding cold and mean in my own ears.

"Thanks to ye Claire" said Laoghaire, sure that we reached a more friendly intimate stage in our 'relationship' and missing the truth before her. "Good night to ye mistress" said a cynical Muriel that seem to see too much of the truth before her.

They both turned to each other, jumping up and down with glee and scurrying along. I ran to find the secret passageway and be reassured and secure in the arms of the man that loved me.

But here I stood and could not find the cursed thing anywhere!!!

All of a sudden my hands stumbled on a torch and a flint strung to it, just by a jagged formation of stones on one of the walls.

"Jamie" I felt the smile spread to the outside of me, as the heat of his protection and care for me warmed my insides.

I pushed one of the sharp points and could feel the wall being pushed inward. I slid myself inside the crevasse.

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I walked into the stable, trying to hearten myself that if I couldn’t escape my encounter with Laoghaire, I at least arrived unharmed or molested by drunken clansmen or Dougal.
I placed the kindled torch inside one of the sconces in the stables and walked in.

"There's no place like love, there's no place like love, there's no place like love" I recited my own creation to myself, hoping it will conjure my love and bring me back to my rightful place between his arms.

"What's True North?"
A soft but no less deep whisper came at my back.

How on earth was he always able to sneak up on me?

"Weel Sassenach" he summoned me back from my wonder "I've been waiting for my lesson all day. What's True North?"
Jamie circled around me, coming to stand face to face to me.

I watched him move, observed his face; so filled with confident, joy and a blazing passion waiting to ignite.
All the things I lacked at this moment and badly lusted for.

"You" I simply said looking up at him with longing "You are True North. My True North".
Jamie smiled at me with shining eyes, conveying understanding beyond any further explanation I could afford him regarding those words.
And some of the pieces I felt threatened to break from me in my fragile state, were glued back together again.

"Come" he said extending his hand to me, as he did the first time I came here wanting to escape.
He was asking my permission, then, to lead me to safety.

I took it, now, for the same reason.

******

He was warm as always and his hand was so big that when it engulfed mine, my palm almost disappeared in it.
I brought my other hand to clasp and caress that perfect whole left hand, bringing it first to brush my cheek and then guiding it to my lips, kissing it lightly.

No, I vowed, I won't let you be hurt again!
I lifted my gaze to his smiling, free of burden face, that lightened my burden in return as I allowed him to tug me behind him strolling further into the stables.

'See' I told myself 'things can change.
Then, I was strolled to the cold outside, led by a stranger; a friendly, kind, beautiful stranger, but still a stranger at the time.
Now, I was being led to the warm inside, by the person I knew and knew me back most in the world.

I viewed my surroundings, to find that the familiar, stuffy, coziness of the stables have transformed itself to an unknown serene vastness of free space.

Without the constant coming and goings of the people it usually held and with more than half of the horses gone; taken to stand for the night near the tents of those who claimed them for the hunt tomorrow, the stables seemed as free and limitless as the outside land.

The extremely high walls and ceiling that held a row of windows at their point of joining, were a complete contrast to all our past rendezvous in my, perhaps luxurious but - confronted with this place - still a chamber.

A big, comfy, warm bed, even placed in a big, comfy, warm room seemed all of a sudden as if it was oppressive.
As if until now, we made love in a room that was made for concealment and shelter;
a small bubble hid away from prying eyes.
But here outside (in a way) where the expanse of space was evident and its location outside the castle walls held everyone far and away from us, I felt as if I was liberated.

Free to live, free to speak and shout, to run and to choose which direction to take -

"Free to love" I told the back of my tugboat, that led me to some undisclosed location.

The stars that glistened from the outside sky shone bright enough that I was able to see more than just shapes and lumps, so when my assumption that he couldn’t possibly have heard me was proven wrong, as he halted abruptly at my spoken words, slowly turning to me to reveal his face, I was quite capable to see and read his expression; every line, every note and every facial muscle movement.

So I can say, beyond any reasonable doubt, that his face was completely incomprehensible to me, which for Jamie meant he was feeling something quite strongly or too complex to be expressed.
For a fraction of a second I feared I said something wrong.

I had no more time to ponder such a thing, for he grasped me by my nape and pinned me to the nearest wall.
Taking my lips with no gentleness right from the very start.
When he finally did ease the pressure on my lips, he did so only so he could begin to suckle on
my lower lip, as I closed my upper lip on his.

"Ye smell nice Sassenach" he said, beaming with pleasure as he stood close fitting to my side when he was done with my lips.

His front stood to my left shoulder and he was enjoying himself watching me, closed eyed and panting, while he ran his hand up and down my clothed body, slowly.

"Ye smell o’ Colum’s Rhenish, Mrs. Fitz’s venison wi’ black berries and… mushrooms" he added as he licked me just below my chin and then closed his mouth for a small soft bite.

"Now I know you are just making this up" I smiled teasingly, still keeping my eyes shut and leaning on the cold, damp wall that he restrained me on "I haven’t had any food at all today, only wine" I had to admit.

I knew what he smelled were the provisions I brought for him; that now stood at my feet, where they were dropped as I was fastened to the wall; but it was nice to be attributed such fine smells.

"It clings to your skin, my love" he took his finger and traveled it across my face as if he was a blind man studying another’s face so he could ‘see’ him; from the tip of my nose, to my lips and down my décolletage between my breasts “your skin is so fine other things imbed themselves into ye wanting to seek entry”

He came closer.
The side of my body felt his front tight to me "I ken I do, so badly" he said bringing his palm to cup the side of my face, half turning them to him, just enough so he could bring his tongue into my mouth, finding mine and coaxing it to move with his.

"Always" he said as he released me with a content smile "It doesna stop Sassenach. Ye” He moved his thumb to my chest, sloping it to my left breast and when he reached where my nipple rested, beneath my very tight, un-layered dress, he pressed it hard.

With no shift or corset and only very light stays under the thin fabric, it stiffen almost immediately. A sob escaped me as I moisten my lips together.

"Ye” he repeated himself in my ear, as my eyes were closed shut again "never stop".

He began to circle his thumb around my nipple, as his palm cupped it from below.

"Do… y..ou want me… to?" I strained to let the words out, pressing myself to the cold wall, trying to find a loosened protruding brick or something, so I can sink my fingers in it, in response to what his touch released in me.

"No, mo nighean donn” he said and I could hear the puzzlement in his voice for me even considering such a thing "Ye misunderstand me, mo chridhe, ‘tis nay a complaint but a pray of thanks”

I strained to open my eyes to look at him, panting from his touch, feeling my thighs as the stand on my feet slippery.

"Then you wouldn’t want another?” I would never ask such things, or act as a spoiled girl seeking acknowledgements, only tonight I wanted his assurance and recognition, but could not ask for it any differently without letting the reason slip and there for take the chance to injure and scare him.

He didn’t stop his maneuvers, thank the Lord, I couldn’t stand it if he did, I was so aroused that if he wasn’t inside of me, hard and filling all of me, I needed his touch on me at least.

Why could he sense it, was the real puzzlement. That I didn’t care to solve at the moment.

He came so tight to my side I could almost feel his long lashes on my temple as his mouth was in my ear.

"Listen to me Claire” he said in a commending voice, which pierced my eardrum in such a way I could almost imagine seeing the vibration of the echoes his deep, deep voice conjured in me.

"Ye will be no one’s but me, Sassenach and I ha’ been yours from the day ye were born. I have waited two hundred and then three and twenty years more for ye to come to me and I willna let ye go for at least that long”

His other hand came to my neck ribbon and was pulling at one of his ends.

I actually saw flashes of light and felt my knees give-way.

"Jamie” I gasped the word, pleading.

"Not yet, mo nighean donn” he said and the pressure on my breast increased.

I actually saw flashes of light and felt my knees give-way.

I felt him holding me still.

I was standing only by his hand at my elbow and his other hand at my breast.

"Please Jamie” I implored again.

"No, nae yet, my love” he whispered into me, sounding so in-control and collected.
So oppose to me being a pool of desire that he was not willing to plunge himself into.

When I accustomed myself to the level of pleasure he inflicted on me and he felt me stand a bit firmer on my own, he moved his hand from my breast down to my navel, applying the same maneuvers he afforded my bosom.

He was so close to my core, I tried to urge his hand to come between my legs but he wouldn’t have it.

"Do ye ha' any notion how much I wanted ye after that moment before the hearth? Do ye ken how much ye possessed my soul from that first night 'till now?" he asked and I was beginning to think I was being punished for all I put him through.

"I'm sorry Jamie, but please come to me I …." I wanted to tell him that I needed him inside of me, I needed him to tell me over and over that there was no other for him, that we could not even see those lassies around him that wanted him, especially Laoghaire.

I wanted to tell him that it wasn’t only envy I needed to resolve; I wanted to know he wouldn’t send me away, that he wouldn’t be so worried that I was bested by two small girls that I couldn’t possibly survive here, in this time, even with him by my side.

I couldn’t ask for all of that though; but I could ask to be connected to him, I could ask for his body to protect me from my own thoughts, from myself.

It was a rough night and what her and her friend did to me, forced me to do, to play along with - I wanted to lose myself at how good he felt and how much he loved me.

However, I couldn’t tell him that either; couldn’t explain myself to him.

For the first time, since my reveal from where I came from, for the first time since my disclosure of my truth, I couldn’t be honest with him.

She took that from me, that retched girl took that from me, from us.

I hated her more, now, then when she plotted to have me burned at the stake.

I brought my eyes to meet his.

I didn’t know what he would see in them, but I was willing to deny all I wasn’t prepared to say. Only I still longed for him to see my need.

"Please" I said looking into him "I need you"

He looked back into me and to my surprise whatever he saw did not only make him not desist with his roaming hand at my navel, but made him slide it between my legs.

With layers of fabric still between us, but it was progress.

His other hand came to my bare nape and enveloped it whole.

He brought our foreheads to meet and did not break our stare.

"Ye are mine!" he growled "Do ye hear me Claire?" he asked forcefully 

"Mine" he repeated "and I will never let ye go"

"Thank ye" I whispered in gratitude, marveling again at how he knew what I so desperately required to hear.

He came to stand in front of me, taking my mouth and pressing himself on me, making it quite clear that he may seem in control but his body surged with desire for me. I could feel it pressing at my hips all through my lower stomach.

He asked into my lips 

"May I take ye as I want Claire? Or d'ye need differently o'me?"

He pulled back, looking into my eyes, holding himself, awaiting my command.

I nodded my acquiescence.

He distanced himself from me further, holding his palm to my throat, his thumb caressing my jaw line and settling on my lips pressing on them.

He stood at the distance of his stretched arm from me, only touching me with a palm at my neck and his thumb at my lips.

His words to me silenced my insecurities in such a way, I found myself capable of curbing my desire and need of him to await our encounter to begin.

He took his other hand and plucked out my stomacher, exposing my stays.

I witnessed his satisfaction as he saw I came prepared to be taken and there for wore no more than the bare minimum.

Still keeping me in arm's length, he pulled on the strings that bound me; again I could hear the rasping sound of it as it past every loop and every cross knot that held it skin tight and binding to my form.

It flopped opened, to each side of me and my chest swelled as I took a full long breath into my now released torso.

Jamie's eyes become slits and his expression blank again.

He placed both his palms to my throat and his thumbs lifted my chin a bit so I would stare into his eyes.
"Undress me" he ordered.
I took my hands to his waist to release him of his dirk and belt.

The outside terrain was so quiet in contrast to the very loud noises coming from the castle.
As if nature itself could not win against the uproar its human inhabitant could emit.

So when belt and dirk fell to the ground, their clamors echoed through the air and into my body
making me shiver.

I brought my hands to his neck untying his jabot and collar.

Once removed and his shirt front slightly open, I meant to relieve him of coat and waistcoat, only
his lips distracted me and I found myself smiling as I traced my thumb on his full lower lip.

Jamie smiled back at me, parted his lips slightly and bit the tip of my forefinger, never breaking his
stare from me.
He used his tongue to flick its end; so it was I, who broke our stare and closed my eyes at the
sensation.

He didn’t wait anymore for me to go on with his undressing, as I felt his thumbs lift my face
higher as his mouth came under my chin, nibbling its way to the base of my throat where his
tongue licked a small circle at the small arc at his base.

His lips spread to a smile into my skin and he said
"Aye, ye smell and taste like fine game Sassenach" he chuckled into my larynx "most o’ the time I
canna believe I trapped such unattainable quarry"

He lifted his eyes to meet mine
"How did I do such a thing Sassenach? Can ye tell me?" he inquired truthfully.
I looked back at him and said with that same truthfulness
"You were you, Jamie. That’s all I needed. You”

His stare intensified; his hold on me hardened.
He lifted my dress high to my hip and lowered himself between my legs.
His other hand drew my right thigh to spread allowing him to reach me.

"Jesus H. Roosevelt Christ!” I cried out

"No Sassenach” he peered to me from under my dress, grinning "just me”

and with that he slipped back under my garments.

"Free to love”

That's what she said and that’s what did him in at the end.
"Free to love”

He was intending to take her up the stairs to where he slept all those nights wi’out her.

He had only one more night to sleep there, alone, before the rent party will be on its way.
But he wanted the feel and smell of her on it, even for that one night.
He planned to borrow into the sheets of his cot, having her scent, her warmth and the memory of
her, engulfing him.

Lying in his private secret, amongst the other stable's workers, them nay the wiser o' what
transpired a night before between yon sheets.

Only then he heard her say "Free to love”
And he lost all reason and self-control.

"Free to love”

She was free! He saw to that.
Made sure she was no threatened or coerced by no one, no even himself.

It may ha' taken him some time to reach the bravery and strength it took to do so, but he fought his
battles from the start and won.

He gave her free choice to go and do as she pleased, wi' no impending punishment above her
heid.
And she in return chose him.
She came back to him.
She chose to FREELY LOVE him.

Earlier tonight he feared she wouldna come.
In the stables, this morning, he had to leave her side, as Alec came close to them.
Just as he slipped away, he heard her say something about their previous decision not to meet and he couldna stay to persuade her otherwise.
Jamie tried telling himself 'twas for the best if she willna come, 'tis the right and sensible thing to do'.
And he and Claire were sensible, pragmatic people, or at least so she said once.
Only his memories of how miserable he was here last time.
All curled up on the ground muttering to himself foul words regarding the situation and the people involved.
Hating the feeling of being hunted and forced by his own uncles!
Trapped in a dangerous tag of war between the two.

And then, he thought he was being attacked as something heavy kicked and landed on him.
He rolled on the form that hurt him, feeling so angry he wanted to kill the poor soul that was probably ordered to bring him to the hall.
And there she was, under him, scared and alone.
And he forgot.
He forgot what cold felt like, how loneliness stabbed him in his wame all night, how wrath tasted vile in his mouth.
There she was, soft, scared and alone wi' pleading eyes open wide, unsure what to do now that she was caught.
He watched the changes in her as she regained her determination to run, to escape, to be free.
Aye, she dinna sit and feel sorry for herself, as he did that evening, she kept fighting no matter what.
Christ, she inspired him so.

But tonight when she will come, if she will come, he speculated, as the light darkened to black and still no sign o'her, it willna be to escape him.
Tonight she will come 'free to love' and will choose to love him.
She willna be running from him, she will be running to him.
And the coherent, rational side o' him stood aside to a selfish, indulgent man that wanted to see her verify her love to him time and again.
It came nay from a need to be proved that, but simply from the joy of seeing it manifested each time.
For she was his.
For every uncertainty he had, she demonstrated the real truth, wi'oot being asked.
For every disbelieve he felt, she brought him to his knees marveling at the miracle of her love and passion for him.
For everything he needed the woman beside him to be, she left him more than satisfied and in awe o' the many new things she could give him.
The part of him that still held that small nagging insecurity regarding such matters, was due only for his disbelief to the fact that the woman he craved more than life, the woman he dreamed of, the woman that was brought through time and magic here, was his.

How on earth could she be his?
How can such a thing be possible?
But there she was, crying 'oot his name, wanting him as he did her, if one could believe such a thing was possible.
But most of all here she was moaning and gasping, crying and sobbing from the love o' him.
The pleasure acts of the flash are for all to know and try, but between him and Claire they were an exchange of love beyond the exultation.
Nay a mere act of unbridled carnal hunger that one could exchange with another no matter the man or woman involved, these were things that could only happen if he was him and she was her and they were together.
"Aaahhh" Claire let out her breath as a sob, as he added his tongue to the play and not only his lips. His hands came up to side of her hips pinning her further into the wall, as he let his heid go deeper.

"O my. G. O. D" she cried again completely unraveling "o my God" she dinna seem to be able to stop saying it over and over again. Her hands were holding on to the roots of his hair, pulling at them as if wanting to distance him from her, but he kent she was only trying to hold on.

"Aaahhh" another breath she couldna fully take into her, was forced 'oot. Serves her right, under her command, Jamie mostly thought he would swoon wi' the lack of air and that is when he dinna think he was 'bout to outright die from his heart erupting. He chuckled at himself for his earlier fear that she would think it nay prudent to come. She was coming along quite lovely, he thought amusingly, as he felt her heat gather and rise.

She hissed at him, feeling his chuckle go through her, "I'll kill you for that" she threatened feebly, as she arched her back from the wall, her hips coming closer to his mouth.

Jamie was done applying soft kisses to her core, he was now doubling his efforts making sure he wouldna miss one spot of pleasure he was so intimately familiar wi'. She clung to him, shaking and desperate "Please," she begged. "Please I can't stand, Jamie, please stop so I can lie down. Please Jamie, I can't stand" she cried 'oot again and again then shivered and lost her footing on the remaining leg in the process.

Jamie simply caught her by her right upper thigh, lifting it, so it rested snuggly in the palm of his left hand. He turned his face to the newly lifted leg; applying gentle kisses along her soft, sensitive inner thigh as he did wi' its predecessor. Once he was done wi' that though, he began nibbling on it exchanging between teeth and tongue, coming closer and closer back to her center.

She rested enough, he determent, as he placed her other leg on his left shoulder. He rose higher on his knees and he could hear her back graze the stone wall as she was lifted higher from the floor, losing all connection to the safe, stable ground. Her nails were now drawing blood at his scalp. Her entire weight and safety, quite simply, rested on his shoulders. He liked the feeling o' having her security completely under his control.

Earlier today between the uncertainty whether she would come or nay, there also came the fear that something would happen to her on her way to him and his brainless desires. He feared she would ha' another "encounter" wi' drunken clansmen in the corridors or with Dougal; even though he told her o' the path to avoid them, gave her directions to a place no one ken of and snuck at the dead o' the night before, to leave her a light to find her way to him.

He suddenly was succumbed to a wave of self-loathing, for even suggesting her to come to him and was preparing to go to her, to see to her wellbeing; when he saw a single torch hop up and down, at the pace he ken for certainty was hers. He accustomed himself to walk beside her a long time ago. He smiled as he saw her approach, his heart uplifted when he saw the first glimpse o' her face, searching all around to make sure she was alone and no followed; just as he taught her.

She realized what it meant for him to ha' her, here, today, at this time; wi'out him telling her o'it. Her right calf was, now, rubbing his shoulder blades, running up and down his back, the soft part of her inner thigh grazing his face. He increased the pressure he was applying and clutched her thighs wi' his palms. He felt Claire's legs stiffen as she released a high pitched cry, shivering. He willna stop though, nay 'till the wave o' desire left her completely. She cried out again and convulsed.

He felt her trying to find an anchor of a sort, felt her try to grasp the flat wall, finding naughting to hold on to and returning to him, buckling almost completely onto him. She quivered one more time and let out a shuttering breath becoming completely helpless.

She was ravished by him completely. She was gasping for breath unable to return to herself. But Jamie was far from done wi' her.
He lowered one leg at a time, returning them and her to the ground. But her legs seem to dissolve into naughting as the rest o’ her. She needed him to hold her.

She was panting and still whimpering from what he did to her. When he finally finished placing her straight and fastened to the exposed brick wall, standing only by his support; he began moving his hands on the naked form, he undressed earlier but dinna give proper homage to.

And her body deserved worship.

He took his hands to all o’ her. Using his fingers to stroke her face. Moving his thumb to her temple, that throbbed. To her nose, so refined and narrow wi’ the smallest perk at its end. He found it so adorable and always felt the need to bite it, especially if she would wrinkle it wi’ worry or thinking too much, which she did much more than he liked.

He glided his thumb on her exquisite fine chiseled cheekbones, adding his other hand and holding her upright just by pressing his body so tight to hers. This was also done to signal her they were far from over, surely she could feel it. Her hair drizzled from his binding to her face and he pulled it back to expose more of her countenance to him.

He reached her lips, which were still quivering and were engorged wi’ blood; so much so that when he pressed them they turned white and when released they snapped back to their flaming crimson- cherry ampleness.

No, he’ll stick to the plan, he told himself. He willna lose himself in her, as always. It was a rare treat to ha’ her so at his mercy. So succumbing to him and nay beginning her wild dance o’ seduction on him, which caused him to lose control and hold o’ himself. He wanted this time savored and lasting.

If he would kiss her, she will take his mouth and all it took was one small bite to his lips and he would be inside her before he could even remember hoicking up his kilt. He pressed harder on her form, even though she was slowly taking hold of her standing. He slopped his hands to her shoulders, remembering to trace the clavicle she schooled him on as he laughed and marveled at how pleasant it felt to make love to a physician; told her so as weil. And it only got better wi’ time.

Her dress was so tight on her slim body he had to peel it from her as he released her arms slowly inching the garment down, sliding it ‘till just below her waist. When he was under her, he had the good common sense to remove bum roll and under skirt, so it was possible to expose more of her to him.

That’s what ye get from following a plan, he deduced cheerfully. He brought his palms to fully engulf her waist and glide his fingers on her stomach; her hips shivered under his palm and ensued a small sinuous squirm. She was telling him she was ready to endure more, now.

Not yet.

Everywhere he touched her, his hands received an anser o’ some kind wi’oot him asking naught in the first place.

Her skin coated itself wi’ gooseflesh where his hands would just touch, they moved wi’ his touch to wherever he would go, warm flashes o’ heat coursed through her and light sweat glistered from her navel, which was inching away from him, only to return wi’ her breathing, which was heavy and long now.

He made sure to nay finger too much near her navel or her soft belly; he wanted to force her delight to shift away from her depths and into the rest of her. He wanted to still keep her at the edge o’ ecstasy but as to make her able to receive him into her, soon.

Although his wife’s body reaction to him was, has always, enough to make him want to watch it and her forever. He wouldna be able to hold himself for much longer.

Her breasts... Well her breasts were a marvel into themselves, they moved and hardened but still was the softest, smoothest thing he ever touched; as to be almost as if he was skimming water in an untouched loch only given to him to bathe and immerse himself in.

White opalescent misty water loch.

Soon, he promised himself in order to receive leniency from his own body’s demands, so he could
ha' a few more moments of adoration at her feet.

Her pulse was so strong, it echoed in different parts o' her, which in turn resonated in him.
It was slowing down to her usual heartbeat though.

It was time.

May the Lord forgive him, but he loved to make her so pliant to him, to shatter her by his own body and lust.

'Tis nay sublime to own such women who desired to be owned, who were fragile and o'need o' protection and care, he thought.
To serve and marry such women was a call of duty.
An honorable and moral act to serve a lady's need as such.
A worthy cause for any gentleman to take upon himself, to be sure.

But to own a creature that could rule the world if it desired, to take a woman such as Claire that knew how to talk back, fight her battles, take care of others and nay only herself.
Weel, mastering such a vision was nay a show of strength from the vanquisher side but of trust, given to so few, if at all, by his ethereal holder.
And she bestowed it to him.

Besides 'tis was nay only him that requested such actions to be made. Tonight she came craving naughting but subjugate herself.

He placed his hands under her oxters and lifted her high above him, hearing her skin brush the wall behind her again.
A louder rasping sound was made as he glided her back to him.

"Wrap your legs around me, Sassenach, I'm no done wi' ye yet"

Claire curved her legs around his hips obeying.
Jamie tightened his body to hers again, placing one hand under her to keep her steady and used his other to lift his kilt up, to finally join her.

When he entered her, it took her breath away and she gasped, holding tight to his nape as begging to be fortitude by him.

He trusted into her hard, so hard he needed to let go of her body and brace his hands on the wall, shaking, trying to grip it to reach deeper.

The skin o' her which he touched and clutched at all night was cool from the night air but the inside of her was a blazing heat.

He could feel how sensitive she was from his handling of her before, but he could also feel the slickness o' her inviting him in.

He pushed into her again
it made her arms wrap themselves around his neck, her hands clutching to the back of his heid.

He trusted again and she enveloped him deeper, bringing the crook of her arms around his neck placing one palm to claw at his dressed back the other coiled itself around the back of his head her fingers inserted into his hairs. She let 'oot a moan.
He stopped, letting her accustom herself before each thrust; he needed the same.
The feel of her was exciting him too much and the elation raptured surges that were enveloping his cock was so intense they almost made him spill himself wi' each shove.
He could, she signaled him wi' her hips that he could. She had her pleasure and wanted him to ha' his as he desired, but he desired it to last.

From the moment she came to him this night, he felt feverish pleasures gush inside him and the whole night seemed as one long release for him.

"Every time ye come to me in a place I wanted ye, a place I dreamed to ha' ye wi' me" he whispered in her ear as he plunged into her again.

She arched herself in order to contain it, creating some distance between their chests.
He took his left hand which was placed on the wall and ran it through her front.
Caressing and gripping hard on breasts, hips and stomach.

He brought his mouth to her breast, opening his mouth further and further suckling it and no forgetting his companion.

With his next thrust into her, he had to release it, as his own breath escaped him in a cry.
He brought his hand back onto the wall, almost pounding into it.

"Ye heal all that I ever felt there" he panted "The loneliness, the hurt, the need of another to spend my life wi', to share wi'"
He thrust again and this time added a strong pull to him wi' his, now, two hands under her.

"Ho Lord" he cried at the sensation, letting his heid fall back.

He brought his heid back so that his lips rested on her shoulder, as he hoisted her up around his hips for a better grip.
"Aaahh" Claire called 'oot, puling at his clothes as she stiffen once more, her heart pounding on his chest, so loud he swore he could hear it with his ears and nay through his skin.

He bit her shoulder, suckling it at the end as if to ease the hurt.

Christ he is marking her again.

Never mind, he eased his berating conscience, one more night and they'll return as a married couple and wi' no more need to hide their love and the repercussion of it.

Their breath was so warm from the exertion and so conflicting wi' the cold air outside the steams they were emitting coated them in misty fumes. They seemed to be the only two people in the world and they were being protected from all around them by the foggy air itself.

"I love you" she cried 'oot as he resumed his thrusting, her voice sounded hourse as if she dinna use it for a while, even though she dinna cease calling 'oot her pleasure for him to hear the whole o' this night.

He stilled for a moment as he pulled back again, grasping her nape, placing his forehead to hers, taking his much needed breath.

Jamie lowered his gaze to their bodies and there obvious connection, wondering how he reached such a position as to be inside her, when all he could remember o'this place and time were dark, cold corners he had to hide in, smiles and lies he had to tell to two kins who plotted against him and only one beacon of light he just met, that he couldna stop thinking 'obout since she literally fell from the sky and into his path.

"I dinna ken how to have ye mo nighean don, how to court ye, how to reach ye"

His raised his gaze to her now

"But reach ye I must, have ye I will; that I knew and never kent a stronger truth than that"

Claire felt his movement and opened her eyes to him.

There were so close, he saw naught but a large orb of bright blue light, which seemed almost to swallow him completely as it consumed his whole line of sight.

He pressed his hands on her arse hard and made those orbs flare wi' ecstasy.

"And then ye came to me"

Now he moved in her and dinna stop. She cried 'oot again, her scream echoing through the stables and they horses began to stir.

"Shah my love, I would ha' ye cry 'oot for me for all the world to hear and envy, but after we be wed, now ye must brace yourself and cry only for me to hear"

He teased, but dinna ease his efforts as to afford her such capability.

He was grinding her so forcefully into the wall wi' all his wanting of her, that if she wasna making sheer sounds of bliss he would ha' been worrit he was hurting her.

"Jamie" she cried out loudly, shivering, screaming to the ether unable to heed his warning

It was nay only him that was so insatiable tonight, she came to him, as such, invoking it from him.

She came as a doe eyed -timed -verra frightened sparrow.

She came to him needing and asking to be conquered, to be owned.

Aye, there was no doubt in his mind the minute he stood in front of her, offering her his hand to take, something scared his woman before she came to him and it wasna there this morning, when he saw her first.

Every act that followed that first glance of recognition only intensified his assurance.

Something or someone pained her.

Whatever it was would soon meet his maker, to be sure, but he let it bide for now.

She needed differently o' him.

She required security his words or his brawn could nay afford her. She needed his body to tell her he would never let her go and if she thought that she could receive it only by proof of his scorching passion for her, then let it be that for now.

Naught could hurt her at this moment.

He was here!

He would make his inquiries later, when they will be done; she might even be submissive enough to tell him what she obviously dinna want to divulge.

But even if nay and she will try to lie about it or deny its existence, she will fail.
She was bound to him by word… Nay an oath of honesty.

She could try and act differently, but even if she wasna the worst liar he ever did meet, her conscience willna let her tell him false.

Or at least nay wi’oot every sign on her features showing contrary to her words.

He moved harder and faster now.

Claire was pressed so tight between him and the wall he had no need to hold her by his hands to keep her on him.
So that was how he found his palms pressed to the wall and felt his fingernails trying to crumble pure stone with the power he felt he possessed at the moment.

He felt the grains of sand and dust and the small springs of wild grass that sprouted from the wall graze him under his palm and her bare breasts grazing themselves on his chest, He felt her warm slippery thighs trying to close tighter and tighter around his hips, her hands squeezing his arse, losing hold with each plunge into her.

"I want to stay inside o’ ye so much, forget the world, the danger and evilness in it”
He was moving so fast and powerful he had to return one hand to clutch at her; needing something soft to grip at, as his other hand now seemed to try to push the wall to move.

Both her hands gripping into his pounding hips, she was panting in his ear.

"I want my only fear to be, that my cock might snap and break in ye from all the loving o’ ye Claire! For I do mo nighean donn, I do love ye”
He sped up even more wi’ the exhilaration he was feeling.

"I need ye”

"Hhhaa” she sobbed as she stiffened again, he should’ve slowed down to allow it to her, but he couldna.
Nay, he couldna anymore

"And may the Lord guard me always, I want ye so bad, that when I’m in ye I want ye even more”

All of a sudden his back curled backwards and a shot of pure, inexorable sensation fired from the spot of their connection, straight into his heart, almost piercing it wi’ its force.

He cried out himself in such a thundering voice he could hear the stirring o’ every kine and animal that lived about the stables, no only inside it, follow.

His hips made one more uncontrolled jerk even though he could feel himself already going soft and couldna tell to save his life what happened next.

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"I never knew there were bats between the rafters here” she mocked the sound he made at the last, no heedng or caring o’ his own warning from before.

She sat atop of him, still connected to one another as he laid flat on the ground, which probably was where he crumbled onto after his release, unable to do more.
’Tis was probably also him who dragged her down wi’ him, to lay wrapped in his arms wi’ his eyes shut.

A few drops of sweat ran down his back and made their way between the cheek o’his buttocks and he shivered lightly from the ticklish sensation.

Claire let ‘oot a small "Hoo” and laughed at the ticklish sensation it made in her.

Aye, he served her weel tonight.

She sounded calm and happy and when he reluctantly cracked his eyes open to look up at her, as she laid both palms on his chest still straddling him only coming to a sitting position atop him, he saw no more worry or sadness in her eyes.

Aye he served her verra weel tonight.

"And you laugh about my noises, at least mine don’t make the sky above us filled with winged animals, running away from fear of what made such racket” she said sounding as if she was looking up.

He cracked his eyes, reluctantly, again, just in time to see a bat almost run into a bird, both frantically flying to find new shelter, probably thinking it wasna safe to be where such sounds were made.

It made him smile.

He stretched his back luxuriously, skimming his fingers at the slope of her still exposed belly and bringing his other hand to rest under his head.

"Now if only my sounds could make the world’s people disappear as weel, so I can stay wi’ ye like this forever” he said while returning his gaze to watch his glowing wife.

"I wonder what you would sound like trying to come up with such a voice” she laughed returning her gaze to him as weel.
"Want to hear me try?" he said threateningly, taking a deep breath to fortify himself to stand the challenge.

"Well no. Not while you are… well we are, in this specific position" she said blushingly glancing at where their connection laid, under the layers of her dress.

She returned herself to lie atop of him, burrowing into his clothed torso, while she was still as bare as he made her.

"And I surely don't feel like letting you move right now" she said and lifted her face to kiss the line of his jaw.

"Good! I dunna think I can, even if I wanted" he said and brought his arms to gather her to him deeper.

But that was truly the best he could possibly move at the moment.

A moment later she shivered slightly and Jamie frowned

"Are ye cold my love?"

He asked pulling her back from him to watch her face.

He was still swaddled in his coat and kilt, fully dressed and in possession of his boots.

Claire had lost her Moroccan heels somewhere during his positioning of her on his shoulders, her dress was completely compressed from both sides, as he pulled it down to touch her and up to have her.

Its resemblance to a verra thick belt and no a full attire was evident.

Jamie was forced to admit she could never be warm enough wi' only his arms for cover.

So he un-eagerly lifted her by her hips so she will be released from him and peeling himself from the floor, brought him and her to a standing position.

"Why?" she protested w/ her words, when she realized what he was doing, unable to object physically as her arms were clutched around her as she began shivering again.

"Because ye'll freeze, mo maise" he said and disentangled her arms to dress her.

Now how on earth will he find her shoes, he dinna even hear them thump the ground when they left her, did she fling them across the stable?

"No I won't" she lied with blue lips and skin filled wi' goosebumps.

"I'll be fine" she said shivering violently now.

"Aye, weel I won't be if you'll catch your death from the cold or fall ill. I'll ha' my heart broken and die too.

I would still join ye that way in the life there after, but I'd like to keep playing with this corporal form of yours some more, before I die.

So do a poor lad a favor and dress" he said while helping her do just that.

Now the cloak HE threw away, where did he throw it to?

He should really start paying more attention to such things, he thought, 'tis no as if such encounters willna repeat themselves again and again and again, he concluded wi' a smile.

Claire hurled herself into his arms, just as he was searching for her cloak, it surprised him and he almost dinna catch her.

"Don't worry nothing bad can happen to you" she said with a voice full of confidence, as she cradled his heid in the crook of her arms, letting their noses meet and moistening her lips seductively

"Remember 'only fear that my cock snaps and break'?"

"Woww" he yelped wi' surprise as she made an experimental tug at it.

"No" she smiled lusciously "still very much attached and whole so I think were all healthy and sound"

"No if ye put those frozen paws o' yours on it" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Jesus, Sassenach, one could think ye want it gone and lost"

"Never" she teased in mock outrage, lifting her hands as a show of good faith on her part

"Best part of you" she determined.

"Really?" he put her back on her feet, going to fetch her cloak, which he noticed when his heid snapped at her tugging.

"Yes the others I'm not always so pleased with, that one hasn't failed me yet" She was indeed in verra high spirit at the moment; Jamie thought, pleased he played a substantial role in the matter.

"Careful" he cautioned mockingly "or ye no see it again. Ever" he strengthen his warning, trying to no show his proud feelings regarding yon part.

"Ho aye?" she tarted in a Scottish… weel what Jamie was sure was supposed to be a Scottish accent "Wonder how long that would last"

She said finishing her dressing by herself as he came back to her, cloak at hand.

"Two days at least" he said, but then he reconsidered when he saw the fabric of her dress glide on her skin, he reevaluated as he watched how it was tightened on her slim form and he certainly regretted his say as he observed her white, glistening, virgin- snow skin disappeared further and further under that beautiful tartan dress and her breasts vanished when the stomacher was placed
in his proper place.
"Weel a few hours" he corrected himself "aye, I think I can hold for a few hours at least"
A day had a night and day in it. That was too long as weel!

She laughed and lowered her hands to the side of her body finishing her dressing and sighing with the comprehension there was naught left but for her to take her leave.

"Well I suppose I'll be going back now." she smiled a warm smile with ruefulness hidden at it's corners, as she came to take her cloak from him.

He hated to do so, but there was one more unresolved issue between them. And she willna be freed 'till it be resolved.

*****

"Nothing's wrong!!!"

Claire cried 'oot again, trying to still hold on to her lie.

And doing a fine job o' it too, he detachingly perceived. Why, if he dinna ken her earlier state of mind and feeling, he might ha' actually believed her words now.

"Really nothing is wrong, now." Claire tried for a half truth, but Jamie knew that ploy as weel.

He kent Frank taught her to say a word o' truth inside a lie, so that the feeling o' the truth will obstruct the feeling o' the fabrication. Claire told it to him just before his first appearance in French court.

'Just in case you run into any trouble there' she told him wi' a farewell kiss.

If he dinna ken it came from such a place o' pure worry and care for him, Jamie would surely feel himself insulted and mad at her doubts regarding his devious twofaced talents or affronted by Claire's perception that there was anything he should be schooled upon from Frank and his 'intelligence' espionage skills.

Wasna so 'intelligence' as to keep his own wife at his side. Now was he?

Jamie has learned, all by his lonesome, to be anything Claire could ever need of a man that walked by her side.

Aye, no help required, chiefly nay from that man.

'Besides,' Jamie smiled to himself, looking at the spot on the wall where they just had their verra insatiable, licentious encounter

'bet ye havna done that to her'.

Christ, he was a jealous man, he deduced and nay for the first time, must be all that damn Mackenzie blood in him, he eased his conscience.

But he was also an acutely observant man and he dinna fail to notice the word 'now' between her words.

Claire had one maneuver left in her bag of tactics and according to her, now, new positioning of body and face, she was just about to give that one a try-

"Really I don't know what is going on with you that you are so suspicious" she said vexed.

"Good Lord, can't a person just feel a bit under the weather and not let it be perceived as if world war three was starting...or...or do you think once you finish 'handling' someone as you did just now, that this person can't be anything but deliriously happy... can't possibly be anything but ecstatic to the moon?" she leaned her palms on her hips to convey exasperation

'Well I tell you, James Fraser, I don't know where you come from, but where I come from...." Aye, if failed to protect herself, the lovely Mrs. Beauchamp will try to go on the offense and adding the all 'we come from different times and places' was a verra nice touch indeed, Jamie appraised.

She was getting better at the lying game. Forsooth!

He was surely corrupting the lass weel.

"Christ Jamie" she carried on wi' her mock indignation speech, all a while gathering her things and making herself ready to leave so she could escape his interrogation.

"I do have other things on my mind but you. I mean ye keep me quite busy with all-"

"CLAIRE" Jamie said in a tone that made her stop deid in her tracks as she was wrapping her cloak around her.

"What?" she said breathless, keeking two frighten-quail eyes at him and truly seeming shaken at the thought o' him disclosing the secret she held.

He moved a step closer to her, and she moved a step back from him.

This was nay good she was too timid to allow him the truth.
The question remained was she afraid o’ what has hurt her or o’ his reaction to it. If she was afraid o’ his reaction, yelling and demanding will only cause more harm and cower and will grant him nay answer. And he already gave her his best try at seduction and tenderness..... Christ, they always seem to work when she employed them on him.

Weel, either way 'twas quite clear, that no knowledge would be bestowed on him by his bull-headed, stubborn, wee besom of a wife.

He rubbed his chin weighing matters and sighing wi' the acceptance of this predicament.

"Fine" he resigned himself "kiss your husband goodnight, march straight to your room and retire for the night. 'Twill be an early rise tomorrow for the Tynchal and ye be needing your wits about ye, to keep yourself safe. But chamber and bed Claire, nowhere else, no one else!!” he ordered.

"Thank you Jamie” she sighed herself wi' relief of him agreeing to let the matter go. Her shoulders slumped down and the stress seemed to leave her body. She was back to being calm and collected again.

Perhaps what scared her was long gone, so it will be safe to let her go w/o the knowing of such matters, Jamie mused, trying to calm and collect himself at the need of letting his woman go, alone, w/ some sort of menace lurking 'bout.

Claire came to him unafraid now and kissed him.
"O Lord how I love you” she said

"Good” Jamie replied, kissing her back, letting his hand gather her in through the arch in her back. "I despise o’ the need of telling and nay to be the one to come wi’ ye to see to it, but, please, be careful on your way back, my Sassenach, and bundle yourself good and tight in your bed. I will lie here warm and happy only if I ken ye there and as such” he said w/ a rueful smile of his own now.

'Christ Jamie' he told himself 'soon, so soon and ye will never let her go alone again'

"Of course, my love, anything you say. Your wish is my command”

"Hamm” Jamie snorted, rolling his eye to the heavens as if praying "That I would live long enough for that to be true, Lord”

Claire laughed, kissed the top of his nose and turned to leave

"You never know what the future holds” she teased, as she went across the stables to where she left her torch.

"Bed!” Jamie called ‘oot after her, preparing himself to return to his delightful cozy hellhole cubby.

Or so he'll have her think...

I walked across the stable's strip by the stalls, feeling happy and secure in mine and Jamie's triumph over whatever obstacles might present themselves in the future and of our feat against all that wanted us harmed or apart.

At this moment I felt as if nothing and no one could.

So from that prospective, I reasoned, there was also no need to tell or rehash anything that might make such proclamation be doubted by either party.

"You will not malign, defame or condemn me, Laoghaire Mackenzie” I avow

"And you will not create more chaos and hardship in mine and my love's heart. I won't allow you that satisfaction” I said as I affirmed my decision to not tell Jamie what was wrong.

I was blissfully happy and so was he. Why ruin it?

Besides, I required to be through with all the drama and wanted to let sleeping dogs of hell lie. If not dead and buried at least lie.

I sneaked one final quick look back, to see Jamie go through the wooden door, where he would stay for the rest of the night; until all this Gathering occurrences will be done and gone with. He wasn't the only one who would sleep warm and happy knowing his better half to be safe and secure.

I turned back around to continue with my unscathed return to the castle and crashed right into-

"HO MY GOD” I cried out horrified as I looked up to see the face of the obstacle that trudged into my path.

"You're the one that tried to rape me in the corridor last time” I gaped at the short, portly, round - bulging eyes with long, disgusting, yellow thatched hair man (if one could call such a specimen a man), that currently held my arms in an iron grip, smiling a half toothless malicious grin at what he got (for the second time around).

I was so stunned and surprised that the words escaped me without thought.
So after his grin, his words of ‘pretty lady’ to me in the Gaelic and the licking of his repulsive lips, I stupidly put in his mind what to do with me next. To my defense, in spite of the shock my appearance must have caused him, he didn’t seem to need any help in deciding what to do with what he inadvertently captured, AGAIN.

But I wasn’t as perplexed as last time and I have lived in this time long enough to acquire some protective skills, I resolved, as I geared myself for a fight. I was going to drive my knee to his groin or slap him hard enough to sufficiently make sure he either couldn’t perform such an act on me or to be so thrown back to allow me my escape. I mean it was only him this time, and without the two drunken clansmen at his side this time, I thought I could at least make a good dash for it and outrun his big, disgusting, sloshing belly.

Only I did not receive my fair chance to execute my plan. Where my hand should have met bone and cheek, I found nothing but air. The man was already half way to the other side of the stable’s corridor, flung through the air by the force that discharged him.

This proceeded with the weapon that implemented the hurling to pound vigorously into the ejected form. Jamie was straddled atop the man and was pinning him down to the ground by the sheer forceful blows he was hammering into him.

The brunt of them resonated through my own body and not just the ether. As the third blow hit his face I could hear, quite clearly, the nasal cartilage being slivered clean, another blow and I could hear as well as see a tooth launching itself from his mouth.

"JAMIE!!!!" it was Rupert's voice that cried out from the back of me. I turned instinctively to where the sound came from; other than doing that I was too shocked to even breathe.

Rupert and three other men carrying torches, entered through the stable's entrance.

"Fuck" I said, again from pure instinct.

Without warning my mind, suddenly, brought into view the sights of the first oath taking I attended. I was standing at the balustrade of the second floor mezzanine, Murtagh by my side, translating the goings-on. Me having a clear sight to all that stood in line to pledge their oath of undying fidelity to Colum. So I saw quite clearly, Rupert standing and searching for someone in the hall and Murtagh seeming very dis-pleased when he saw it.

I also recalled Rupert's satisfaction as he apprehended and dragged the unconscious young laird back to the castle last time.

I put two and two together and realized he wasn't there by chance the first time around, he was probably then as he was now searching for Jamie all along.

The only question remained did Rupert want him in peril by Dougal or inline to succeed the current laird?

Ho dear Lord, I should have comprehended the truth of it, I should have warned Jamie, but most of all I shouldn’t have come here tonight!

Another blow thundered and hurled me back from my thoughts; which seem to be the only activity I was capable of doing at present. It was so loud that when I snapped myself back to where the unreigned rampage was taking place, I actually cringed at my standing spot; sure I could feel some of the blow's ricochets vibration going through me.

The next fist landed squarely on the man's kidney, making him spew out blood. His face now was unrecognizable. His nasal bone was broken in two different points and his septum seemed clogged with blood, closing his air supply as he tried whizzing from his mouth, that featured much less teeth than before. The rest of his face seemed as if they were pounded into his cranium and were also covered with blood, but not only from the blows. I saw he had lines on his face which looked as if something or someone clawed at him. His palm held a smashed index finger and his clothes seemed as if they went through one of those military shredder I once saw, exposing black and blue contuses all over his body.

Rupert pounced on Jamie, trying to take control of the berserk gladiator with a taste for blood in his eyes and fists. the other men stood shocked and rooted as me.

After a moment, one of them did stir himself enough to come and try to restrain Jamie’s hands who were now choking the air from what was left of the would be rapist.

I just stood there in complete dumbfoundness; my mind unable to fathom what was happening at this moment.
It was as if past and present occurrences could not merge in my psyche.

Guilt and shock from all that transpired from the beginning of this evening, over my decision to be in my husband's arms tonight, left me completely void of muscle and mind aptitudes.

I was has frozen as lot's wife and quite dumb as a pillar of salt too.

"Dunno e'er dare to touch my wif-" "Jaammie"e Rupert's cries drowned Jamie's yelled words and cut his saying before the telling one could be uttered.

Not that it would have mattered what Jamie would have said.

Rupert and the other two men that joined him to try to settle the run amuck savage, were too busy in trying either to extract Jamie from the man or to at least pry his hands from his gullet. They were failing at both equally miserably.

My would be assailant's jugular vein seemed ready to erupt any second now.

Jamie on his end, saw only two paths before him; to either squeeze his throat for one more minute or just lift the man's head two inches off the ground and slam it back down.

And he was going to do so.

I saw it in every one of his veins that pooped to the surface, in the color of his skin just under his collar, in his missing compressed lips and bared teeth, but most of all I saw it in his eyes that saw nothing but death and retribution.

O dear Lord his crime to me!!!

I remembered my earlier words now, 'tried to rape me'

Jamie must have heard me and knowing something had to be very wrong for me to conceal and lie about something to him, he must think that-

"Jesus H. Roosevelt Christ!" I cried out. Speech being the first facility to return to me.

Now there was no doubt in my mind to the fact that Jamie was going to truly kill this man. It was clear to the frantic men around him and it was clear to me.

The man was half dead already.

Something needed to be done.

And apparently it would have to be me to do it, I determined, as I watched Jamie release himself from Rupert's and the other men hold on him, again, and propel himself right back to his victim.

I walked to where he crouched on the man, beckoning the other men to stand back.

I think they only did so, from the sheer shock of having any woman come near this manic beast on her own accord.

I didn't know where I established such skillful accurate hands, or it might have been only all the luck that I have ever accumulated in my life.

Either way I found myself able to successfully cup Jamie's cheek and raise his face to meet my eyes.

I took a great risk doing so when Jamie was in this state.

No matter how soft, tender and loving he was with me, no matter how much sweetness and innocent his facial expression held and no matter how he could be just the right amount of soft-rough in our love making and never cross the line;

it was nothing to what Jamie could become in true battle.

He didn't unleash it often or wouldn't at all if it was up to him.

But inside my sweet, gentle, be it stubborn and hot-headed, loving husband laid a true barbarian.

A true highlander, Viking, barbarian-warrior.

A legacy from the Norwegian- Scandinavians giants that plundered and ruled anything in their path.

And Jamie was no less dangerous,

"Jamie it hasn't happened, it hasn't happen" I said, truly scared he wouldn’t be able to understand what I was saying in his demented state.

"Yeef" I mouthed with my lips in silence, as to not make things worse for him and I.

I have done plenty of that tonight to last a life time.

He was still red faced and frenzied, but I could see some form of recognition in his eyes.

Even if it was only the shock of seeing me in his view in the beginning.

A moment later and I saw a small glimmer of the logical man that will not swing a killing blow if I was near.

"That's it, come back to me James Fraser " I pleaded, as much with my eyes, as with the whispers from my lips.
I cupped his cheek firmer and guided him to rise from the man.

The carcass under him groaned with pain and spat out blood; Jamie's eyes darted on him and his nostrils flared.

"No Jamie... No... Look at me not at him" I added my other hand to cup his other cheek returning him to me, to see only me.

Wheedling him with sweet, calming tones and smiles to rise to his feet and follow me as I backed up, distancing him from the half corpse man he made.

"That's right, just come to me... Look at me... Follow me"

I guided him using only one cupped hand at his cheek, as my other one took hold of his bleeding at the knuckles palm, covertly checking for any damages.

I didn't dare break my stare from his eyes.

Slowly but surely, Jamie began breathing deeper and slower.

I could feel his pulse still frantic beneath my fingers, but I held on to him and bore my eyes to the spot in his eyes, where I saw my Jamie stare back at me and not Attila the Hun.

I smiled the smallest smile at him and he intuitively smiled back, I didn't think he was even aware of doing so, but he did smile back.

It was the smallest twitch of the lips, but it was enough.

It broke through the veil of violence and my husband returned to me and with that his capacity for speech.

"But, ye said that he tried to-" he frowned, trying to honestly comprehend why I would ever stop him.

Jamie was a firm believer in revenge and man's right to it.

Striving for honesty myself, there was a part of me that didn't quite know itself why.

Although this man didn't actually try to rape me this time, he was the exact same man that tried to, before.

And would have had him and his cronies pass me around, as the evening's entertainment, if Dougal hadn't come to scatter them away and sent me still chaste and with only one forced vile kiss claimed as payment for his kindness.

Also, from what I managed to experience tonight, the man- which was being tended by Rupert and the others now, as they ignored me and Jamie for the moment- didn't require his buddies to want to give it and me another go this time around as well.

I looked at his bloody, broken form, as the others gingerly tried to lift him from the floor, but returned my gaze swiftly back to Jamie.

It was not yet safe to leave him to his own thoughts.

"I know Jamie, I know" I said, stroking his check with the fingers of my cupping palm.

Covertly as possible of course, we had already amassed quite a lot that needed explaining to the strangers around us, especially regarding the Pied Piper of Hamelin act I performed.

I didn’t want to add more to the pile.

"But he hasn’t Jamie; he hasn’t done that this time. Yes he tried in another life” I whispered, as I saw from the corner of my eye, that the men were still occupied at trying to stop the man’s bleeding and arguing who will carry him back to the castle, as to pay any attention to us.

They did send a few glances our way a couple of times, but once they saw that Jamie had no intention to move from my side, they gladly relinquish the care of the criminally insane man the perceived him to be, to my charge.

"Even with that fact, you cannot kill someone for something he might do, but hasn’t, yet. You must give him the free will, the second chance to amend his ways and that's the Lord's truth and not just silly Mrs. Beauchamp's’" I smiled

I wanted to say ‘and not just YOUR silly Claire's truth' but the smile that now appeared across his lips said he took it as such, without the need for me to say so in front of our audience.

That by the way also included the same young man that grabbed me from behind, last time, asking 'can I keep lassie for myself?' and which was now hovering around us both.

I felt it was safe now to remove my hand from Jamie's cheek and hold him to me by our shared faint smiles at the corners of our mouths.

But just as I did so and was trying to imagine what could we possibly say to make this right in the eyes of our beholders and wondering whether there was even the slightest chance Jamie would let me come within two miles of the beaten man, to see if I could help in some way-

A big wooden pew, probably used to assist children to mount their horses, came crushing down on Jamie's head and he crumbled to the floor.

Dear old, distant-cousin, Rupert was not taking any chances for the beast to come out of its cage again, he just put him down. As last time!

"Rupert!!!“ I scolded him and would have said a lot worse, if I wasn't too busy launching myself after my husband's flailing form, taking hold of his head before it hit the ground and placing it in my lap.
Jamie was stirring in my lap.

We were no longer in the stables though, but in the small, cramped, candle-lit, storage room, where a proper attire and sorted possession will be brought forth for the laird’s nephew to wear, as he will ‘take’ his turn in front of Himself pledging his oath, against his will. Again!

Or at least that’s what the bloody filthy beasts that dragged us in here thought.

I had a small moist rag in my hand and I dampened his face with it, as he very slowly opened his eyes to look up at me.

His head very much still placed in my lap, as it was the moment we reached the room and the men meant to hurl him to the ground to ‘sleep it off’ and I dived head first myself to secure him on me. A soft smile appeared on his features.

Jamie had his usual sleepish, tranquil expression which he always held when he awoke in the Mornings. I myself saw it very few times, but it was very recognizable.

It was my sleepy, beautiful Jamie, thinking it was morning and he must rise for the day's labor.

And as with the mornings Jamie awoke in bed with his wife awake and in hand - His tender smile became a wanton one in a heartbeat and his hand came up to caress my face, that stared worriedly down to him.

When his palm reached an inch from my cheek, Rupert's big fat paw appeared and clutched at it and used it to pull Jamie to his feet.

“Aye, we all fancy a sweet plump lass by us as we wake, but nay Jamie, ‘tis only mistress Beauchamp insisting to physic ye ‘til ye wake. Couldnla get her to go back to the hall ‘il she saw ye up an’ ‘bout. Takes her job verra seriously that one. But nae so much as to bring around your fancies for ye” he wiggled his eyebrows at me, questioning the matter and received in turn a vexed look indicating what I am willing to do for him.

“Aye weel, dinna think otherwise. So rise to your feet lad, dunno try to paw the lass. She nae want ye”

That’s what you think, I mused, remembering the stables and according to the twitch in Jamie's lips so was he.

Jamie groaned loudly as he tried to stand on his own two feet and find his balance, the ramifications of the blow manifesting themselves to their full affect.

Jamie floundered and staggered until he reached some sort of stable standing, as Rupert went on to pat him down roughly from the strew and dust that covered him.

“You didn’t have to hit him so hard” I protested to Rupert’s back, as he came to stand between me and Jamie, carrying on with the poking and shoving of Jamie’s body, in the pretense of awakening him up and cleaning the oatstraws and dirt from his hairs and skin.

I covertly tried to extract some oatstraws from my own hair, which just like Jamie’s had nothing to do with the fight.

“I'm sure he would have been willing to come” I said, as I quickly removed one strand from between my breasts. I had another one itching somewhere else, but I would definitely need to be alone to remove that one.

“Aye, but I dinna want him maiming half the clan while he was making up his mind” said Rupert looking back at me and catching me with the strand in hand, which I discarded swiftly and smiled innocently at him.

He returned back to Jamie, clobbering him one good one on his head, as if trying to sweep the muck from his hair.

“Be careful” I cried out, pushing him aside to reach a still shaky Jamie. “You have to be gentle with head-injury patients, he might have a concussion”

He didn’t before, but I wasn’t taking any chances, I mean Rupert took a whole bench to my husband’s skull this time.

“A what?” both Jamie and Rupert asked in unison, looking at me with the matching Mackenzie feature frown.

“Sort of a cracked head” I sighed with exasperation, rolling my eyes to the heavens.

“Ouch weel, ’twas cracked long afore I came along” Rupert belched his rumbling, jolly deep laugh, spurring fumes after fumes of liquor.

“Got the rest o’ your clothes Jamie” said the young man, that this time wasn’t nurturing a sore or a cracked head for wanting to ‘keep me’. In fact he was doing his best to not even acknowledge my existence. A result from needing to carry what remained of the man Jamie ‘handled’ and trying to find him some medical assistance that wasn’t me, I presumed.
After I explained the situation to them, I was actually prohibited from coming near the man, undoubtedly over their apprehensiveness that I would like to follow through Jamie's intent to its end.

"Taing dhut" Jamie thanked the young man and took the pile from him.

"Weel that should be suitable for the laird's nephew" approved Rupert, content at succeeding in his assignment to deliver Lord Broch Tuarach to the hall.

The question still remained by who?
I remembered how surprised Rupert seemed as he saw Dougal return to the hall after he awakened from my clout to his head and how truly afraid Rupert looked as he saw Jamie kneel in front of Colum with Dougal form looming above him, grasping the hilt of his dirk.

Did he bring Jamie back, thinking Dougal already gone after his own oath?
Did dear Rupert only mean to allow for his distant kin to still hold the right to one day become laird of Leoch, or did someone bequeathed it on him?

"Christ Jamie!" Rupert's exclamation brought me back from my contemplations, just in time to see Jamie's arse peek from under his shirt as he bent to put on his new given clothes.

"Dinna dress yourself in front o' the lady. God's eyes lad, first ye rescue them, letting them think ye fine and proper, then ye try to slip it to them yourself?"
Rupert mocked and hooted so loudly with the rest of the men in the room, I was sure he was about to choke himself on his own laughter, or at least I hoped he would.

"Watch your tongue in front of the lady" thundered a red-faced Jamie, pointing a menacing finger at Rupert "Or I'll cut it for ye, wi' other things to boot" he pointed further down on Rupert's body.

Jamie obviously didn't think twice about undressing himself in my presence and his anger wasn't only aimed at Rupert, he felt embarrassed at making such a silly mistake.

"I wasna the one bein' indecent afore her, showing her my wee man now was I? She'll nae want your bigealas in her no matter how much ye save the lass" Rupert said and turned to bellow a gut-deep laugh with the rest of the room's inhabitants, as Jamie and I exchanged looks filled with memories of everyday life where his mentioned part played a central role in;
and I found that my husband wasn't above causing me to blush shyly.
Jamie grinned, forgetting his anger at my expression.

"Besides" Rupert turned back, to now two solemn faces, as we both adjusted our features swiftly "heard the lady already goes wi' the Irish lad, Jamie. That man has fine crown in him and there is much talk 'obout how good he is wi' his crafty hands. Ye no agree mistress?" Rupert poked an elbow at me, using double entendre regarding Luke's smithy vocation.

Jamie darkened.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean, Luke and-" Jamie coughed at my words
"I mean Mr. MacLiver and I are just good friends"

"Aye, seen your friendship all the times I followed ye, running time and again to his hoose, closing the door behind ye, telling me to await ye outside as ye be needing a private word wi' the man" Rupert's gruff guttural jeering, rumbled even louder this time, spouting droplet of the alcohol, he so obviously have been consuming all the livelong day.
If he wasn't putting me in hot waters with my husband, I would perhaps be feeling a bit more charitable toward him and would have offered him to shut his mouth, because he was attracting flies.

"Slàinte mhór" said one of the men, which fortified the hilarity and brought about another pitcher of whisky. Why did I leave all my Valerian dosed port to Angus?

"I need to examine my patient" I said as an alternative of getting Rupert's mouth away from my husband's ear.

"As I said, he might have a concussion! There are tests I need to perform on him, please walk away now" I summoned my best Mother Hildegarde tone.

"I need to examine him!! Will you not leave us alone for a moment" I almost yelled, when Rupert didn't budge "For Christ sake, you're in the room with three other men, where would he go? Besides you want him safely on his feet standing in front of your laird or take the chance for him to swoon in front of all to see?!!" I glared at him

"Look" I added to fortify my case, for he was rubbing his chin still mulling my plea "The common symptoms for a traumatic head injury are headaches, confusion, disorientation, amnesia and vomiting. Which can easily lead to a loss of consciousness. Do you want me to continue or is this enough for ye to realize you can't afford for even one of these symptom to appear in front of HIMSELF?!!?"
I demanded from a complete flustered Rupert, which looked at me as if he was suffering from exactly everything I just described.

"WHAT? Can ye ne'er speak proper English mistress?" he asked honestly "I swear ye no sound like any Englishmen I ken".

At that moment one of the other men found it in his rights, to lift Rupert's mug and begin drinking
While he was being scolded, cursed and smacked by Rupert and as the other two men in the room tried prying them apart; me and Jamie were finally left to our own devices.

"Sit" I said "I wasn’t joking, I need to examine you"
"Ouch lass, dinna fash yourself on my account" Jamie dismissed the matter "Harder than an iron pot' remember? And Jenny never lies"
He was trying to lighten my mood but I wasn’t having it.

I hurt him,
I endangered him,
I caused history to repeat itself.

If I thought myself half broken from the Laoghaire and Muriel encounter, the rest of this evening occurrences and this last coup de grace left me shattered, ashamed and wanting to curl up and cry.

"I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry" I kept saying as I sat him down on the pew.
Did the bastard bring the one he hit Jamie with??

"I'm so sorry…. Do you feel as if you want to throw up or do you have nausea of any kind? ... Ho Lord, I'm so sorry Jamie" I sniffed pushing down the tears, trying to do a proper examination of my patient.
"Do you feel you can stand or bend forward and touch your toes without wanting to swoon? Ho Lord, how I am sorry Jamie” I was going through a mental roster of questions one asks after a head contusion blow, but found I couldn't stop apologizing vigorously.

"I'm no doing that in front of them Sassenach” he frowned angrily at me.
"And 'tis fine Lass” he said, as I stood in front of his sitting figure, my back to the others, which were now opening a new barrel of very cheap and potent spirit of some kind.
Which also meant Jamie and I, could stand on our heads, naked and we wouldn't be acknowledged.

"Look at me” said Jamie, placing a finger under my chin and making me stop and look at him, as I bent to check his left hand, which was a bit bruised but other than that completely fine. Remarkably fine as oppose to what it inflicted on the other man.
"'Tis fine and I'm fine Sassenach"
"You don’t know that” I said not allowing his words to balm any feeling of panic, shame and self-flagellation, I so miserably possessed at the moment.

"A concussion is almost always associated with strong cranial sensation and memory lost” I went on with my inquiries "if you don't have a vile taste in your mouth and if you don't want to hurl or if you don't have ringing in your ears and your not seeing stars. You're not are you?”

"Weel ye're quite a bonny, shiny…”
"Stop it” I refused to be complemented at the moment, if ever again

"And you won't let me test your equilibrium” I sniffed again "I want you to tell if you're having trouble remembering anything that happened tonight. I know I surely won't forget any second, so talk to me so I can see you're coherent and not suffering from any residual affects or memory lost” I ordered

"Weel I seem to recall a bonny wee…”
"stop it at once James Alexander Malcom Makenzie Fraser, I'm not playing with you” I hissed at him.
"No ye truly arenae” he said, reading my harsh mood correctly "Full name, tone and all… Ye are angry!”

"Well not at you” I said, changing anger for the anguish that lurked behind it "I didn't mean for you to stand up for me. AGAIN:
And now you are in so much trouble. AGAIN
And it's all my fault. AGAIN”
I swayed a bit feeling I could hardly stay standing.

"It's not fair” I sniffed again, trying to fight the ’I won't be able to explain them' tears down,
"I try so much to protect you and I not only fail at that but I put you in more harm's way. No wonder that toad Laoghaire thinks her a better match then I.
I'm starting to think she might have a point and I ….”

Two strong palms grasping at my wrist shook me out of me pity party
"If ye think for one second I will ever chose Laoghaire-”
"Why not” I wasn’t letting him put one word in, that might give me joy or solace "better for your health”
I didn't really mean it but I just felt so bad and mad at myself.
"Sassenach…”

The men around us broke into a full out spree of drunken hilarity as Rupert illustrated quite vividly his tales with the plump, juicy 'pie eater' and Angus's face when he saw them through the kitchen side door, where Rupert took her right there in the open.
They were all rolling on the walls and floor.

Jamie and I were practically invisible.
I was still with my back to them, so I allowed myself to lower my eyes and let one tear fall down, as I sniffed to make sure not to fall apart completely.

Jamie looked up at me and then at the motley crew near us, he couldn’t fully embrace me or shake the absurdity from me and he seemed desperately to want to do both.
I wouldn’t have let him if he tried; I deserved my seat on the court’s dock.

"Do I need to sort all? regarding them I mean" he gestured with his head at the men around us, as if this was the chief problem at hand and not the fact that in a few minutes he’ll be standing in front of Tweedledum and Tweedledee both ready for a fight as their literary counterparts; only real blood was at risk at being spilled here. Jamie's blood.

"No" I swallowed down another tear, feeling I was the one with vile taste in my mouth

"I at least managed to take care of that”

"Is that so?" Jamie seemed amused and not at all angry at me, I didn't share his feelings. "What did ye say my beloved glass- faced Beauchamp?" he was truly happy and for the life of me I couldn't understand why.

"I simply told them my past truth” I shrugged.

"What's your meaning??"

Now he sounded worried???

"Not about trying to escape" I glared at him "but at simply strolling around to have some fresh air, running into a man that tried to rape me and as I managed to escape to the stables, I came crashing down, straight into my big Tarzan savior”

"What's a Tarzan?” he cocked an eyebrow at me, suspecting it to be an insult of some kind on his expense.

"King of the jungle” now I managed to extract a smile from myself. A small and weakly one but a smile.

The part about ‘king of the apes’ I kept to myself.

Jamie straighten himself on my examining pew, expending his chest just as a true king of the jungle would do, only he didn't even know it. It made me smile against my will, again.

Jesus, what that man could do to me, even without his knowhow and against my resolve.

"What?” he inquired, seeing the genuine smile on my lips, it made him very happy to see it even if he didn’t realize the cause of it.

"Nothing” I said with a short snort of amusement.

"Only ye dinna really say a 'Tarzan' did ye?” he frowned, thinking I couldn't be trusted to suit my sayings to this time.

I couldn't fault him at this moment, but I still had some pride, as Jamie loved to remind me constantly.

"Ho dear lad, I did manage to fool and deceive all of them” I waved my hand to indicate the dwellers of the castle and the surroundings around it "For close to six month I might add”

I decided to abstain from mentioning my prisoner stature during that time and the being captured by the English and the witch trial and... Well apparently I was always 'bad' at being an 18th century woman. Why did I ever think this time would be any different?!

"Even you” I kept holding on to my pride though "You big oaf. And I was already in love with you for most of that time” Jamie smiled widely at that.

"So no.” I concluded my case "I said I ran into 'A kind gentleman that would never stand for a helpless woman to be misused and abused. No matter if he had close relation to her or not”

"And they bought that?” he inquired, looking more and more as a pompous turkey than a king; over being stuffed with so much praises, no doubt.

"Well you sort of have a track record of pulling half- brained rescue missions when women are concerned”

"What is 'track record' and I DO???” Jamie puzzled looking completely perplexed

"Who do I save?” then he smiled amorously and his eyes sparkled "besides ye I mean. Could I trust I will be thanked for it later perhaps?”

"Laoghaire” I said and watched all the air being deflated from him, the lustful smile vanished and now it was him who lowered his eyes to the ground.

"All I had to do was remind them what you did in the hall for her and the matter was settled”

"Ho” he said still piercing the ground "No thanks tonight then”

"I didn't say that” I said to the eyes that came back to look at me, all mischiefful and happy again.

"Is that so?”

"You did rescue me” I smiled mischievously back "besides it helps to know that the event in question actually end up assisting us in the end. Everybody sort of expect such behavior from you now and nobody suspects you'll be going for the Sassenach widow when you have the beautiful, maiden, Scottish Laoghaire at your disposal”

"Sassenach” he berated

"Calm down, I was just ridiculing the whole situation, that is all” I lifted my hands as a showing of good faith and to signal surrender of the ludicrous subject of Laoghaire MacKenzie and my husband.
"But most of all" I added, slumping my hands, my shoulders and my head down "after what I did to you tonight, after what I caused..."

I wiped the few tears that got away from me.

"I mean, Jesus H. Roosevelt Christ, Jamie" I said going back to being vexed at myself and rightly so "I would actually not blame you for leaving me to go to some safer wife that might be able to take better care of your well-being and health than I.

I have no words for what my colossal mistake after mistake did to you tonight.

Jamie what you are forced to do now, what I am forced you to—"

The tears won the battle against me.

"Ye must mean only the lying Claire, for all the rest wouldna be your fault even if ye tried" he said sounding truthful and not just kind.

"What?" I looked up at him, baffled

"Sassenach, ye ken yourself the men and Rupert came looking for me in the stables, which means they would have found me lying in the stables last time, even if I dinna walk ye safely back. Probably would ha' fallen on me as ye did and I bet they wouldna ha' felt as good to roll atop of" he winked at me, which only meant he looked as the most adorable, huge owl I ever saw, closing both eyes and opening them again.

I snorted inaudibly to myself.

"They would ha' found me now as weel, me and my half-wit insistence to sleep dry tonight, even if ye havnae come to me. But most o' all, Sassenach, before ye came to me, tonight, I kept thinking to myself that maybe I should go into the hall as last time and—"

"What??" I gaped at him, forgetting myself and raising my voice

All the men in the room remembered our existence now and looked at us puzzled.

"I mean, what do you mean you're seeing stars, Mr. MacTavish? That's very bad, very bad indeed. Rupert," I turned to Rupert with the same disapproving, disbeliefing tone in my voice I just used on Jamie.

"You really injured the man, you rash, hooligan gillie that you are. His irritated, his speech is unclear and completely void of any logic”

Rupert had to find my words the truth, for they were. They were also all symptoms of a concussion, but foremost they were all very obvious signs that something was definitely wrong with my husband's head.

Rupert did as he always did when he was told off by those he found nonthreatening and waved his hand dismissively at me, returning to his beloved drink, while laughing in Gaelic with his friends, probably at my expense according to Jamie's expression.

I ignored it, it was the outcome I expected and desired.

"Explain yourself, James Fraser and at once!” I hissed in a tone that prohibited anything but the truth to be said and promptly.

I cupped his cheeks in my palm and pretended to look into his eyes checking for dilated pupil, or for interruption in the retina to indicate abstraction in the eye or sight, I even grabbed a nearby candle to help with the fraud.

I did actually take a quick look to see if there was something there. From his words, there was a part of me that did actually fear something was wrong with him.

I placed the candle aside when I glanced and saw we were not the main attraction anymore and put both my thumbs under his eyelids forcing his eyes to open wide and stare directly at me; then firming my hold on his cheeks I commanded "And don't try to be funny”

He tried to not smile and look solemn and said.

"'Tis just, we ken what would happen if I do pledge my obedience to Colum as kin and ally and promise myself bound to his words as long as my feet rest on his land” he explained with no preliminaries and in accordance with my edict “and we dunno fully Ken the repercussions o' what he or others might do If I willna”

"What do you mean?” I frowned worriedly

"I dinna ken that Dougal willna ha' it in his heid to try and kill me for one preposterous reason or another. That he'll probably put himself in his own heid” he rolled his eyes in exasperation regarding how his uncle's mind works.

"Colum acceptance o' my friendship as laird and ally to the clan protects me, or will once he will make it for all to hear. And he will do so for his preposterous reason o' keeping me in the running to be laird. I'll be kept alive and safe for now and still ha' my way done! For if ye forget Sassenach, let me remind ye, that I am 'obout to perform the ultimate step to preclude myself from the line o' successor. One that will be so appalling, no man here will chose my arse to sit in Colum's seat”

"O dear Lord, what?” I asked, anxious as to what act Jamie's reckless mind came up with, that he hasn't shared with me.

Jamie grinned like a big fat Cheshire cat and now I did see something in his eyes; they sparkled and ignited in bright crystal blue.

"I am going to marry you” he simply said and for a moment neither of us spoke or moved.
"Are ye no done wi' the lad yet?" cried a restless Rupert from behind me, clicking his tongue at me in disapproval "looks all fine to me".

He probably ran out of drinks and wanted to go back to the hall where there would be more.

"Just searching for blood or any other secretions from his nose and ears" I justified my standing in front of Jamie, my face an inch from his, cradling his face in my palms.

"Just one brief moment more" I added.

"Are you sure?" I asked, turning back to what I hoped was my healthy 'patient'.

Head injuries are never to be trifled with and I didn’t want him to start slurring his words while trying to perform this incredibly dangerous task he was about to take on. I also remained unconvinced that this was our best course of action.

"Aye Sassenach, I really see no harm and only gain such a thing can cause" Jamie said a bit miffed at my suggestion of something regarding his bodily fluids to Rupert, who seemed to take it as the next topic that should be address in the men's obviously deep conversation, but he still acknowledged my concerns and answered genuinely and wholeheartedly.

"It forces me to do naughting in the future" he determined "especially wi' our plans to perhaps leave to Lallybroch after the wedding. And even nay, it forced me only to leave ye when Colum banished Dougal back to his home last time and I ha' no plans to do so again, promise or no. Besides wi' your … I mean our plan to save your 'dear friend' Geillis, there will be no witch trial to fear. Canna believe I am saying so, but apparently t'will be the best things for all concern if we do prevent the thing"

He looked into my eyes trying to fill me with his confidence.

"Saying what I said in the past and acting as I did in the hall, only forced Dougal to look for a quick solution to 'take care' o' me and my chancy position as the next in line for laird. A solution that doesna involve killing me that is" he added in dry humor.

"Do you really think he would ever do such a thing?" I queried.

Even as he tried to kill me, Dougal ordered his nephew to move aside from his way as to not hurt him.

Jamie darkened and stiffened all of a sudden, as he always did when he brought to mind a dark time from his past and said in a low voice

"He told me so, a ghraidh. The bash to my heid wi' an axe? The one that sent me to heal or die in the Abbey o' Ste. Anne? He executed it, mo chridhe. 'Always ken it will be ye or me' he told me that himself when … at the day I slayed him"

"Jamie, you didn’t slay anyone" I protested vehemently, shaken from the discloser, but wanting to convey to him that it was self-defiance, mine that is and even then Jamie begged Dougal to stop the fight.

The 'incident' in question was just another validation in my hard-long-fairly won guilt-roll; that weighed my soul down in regards to what I did to Jamie's life.

"Nay matters now lass" Jamie said dismissing the matter. We were not in the right time and place to discuss such things.

He cocked and eyebrow at me returning to his original point "Dougal canna do a thing to me once I'm in Colum's favor, so he must think o' more creative machination and what Dougal came up wi' last time... Weel..."

The Cheshire cat made another appearance and Jamie almost cracked his lips with his smile.

"What Dougal found as a proper solution last time was..."

"Marrying me to you" I matched Jamie's grin, almost wounding my own lips in the process.

"But what if it will go wrong, what if this time it won't work, what?" I was still afraid of deviating from our original plan, which meant not allowing any of this to come to pass at all.

"Sassenach" he said in a tone that made me stop at once with my speculations and fears. "Ye told me once that only one of us is allowed to be afraid, mad or sad at a time and when it was your turn I canna be as such. Ye actually called it your turn many, many, many times"

I narrowed my eyes at him.

Jamie always knew what to say and how.

Making me annoyed with him was stronger than any daze of selfishness need of mine to blame everything on myself and carrying on as a hen with no head, running around crying for what has happened.

"Now I claim my turn Sassenach" he stated his need "It doesna take from me truly thinking this is the best path for us to take; but I am also afraid of my love, I am also mad and sad for what I am forced to do at this moment even wi' knowing the consequences are at our favor. I dinna like being forced to do so then and I dumno like doing so now, even by my own choice. So I ask o' ye Claire, my lady, to be the one now that will stand in the hall by my side and be strong and brave for me to see"

He added his hands on my palms, that still held his face.

"And Sassenach a smile wouldna come amiss as weel" he cocked an eyebrow at me, smiling and without putting a thought before the act I could feel myself melt and smile back.

"Good" his smile broaden seeing mine "I meant what I said in the stables lass. Ye coming to me in
the dark places I was wounded and alone at, heals me.
I willna want differently to what happened tonight and Claire,” he beseeched me to believe him “It
willna hurt me as much if ye will be there in the hall, standing behind me, being truly mine. I will
ken why I do this, ye will be the right reason to act as such and so it will replace the wrong reason
o’ last time.”

He sounded as he really believed his words, could I?

“You will be my strength now, ye will stand by your husband in the great Hall and be the face of
courage he needs... That I need to get through this.
I need to see your smile and Ken why I am doing all this for, so let your face be the first and last
thing I see, Sassenach ” He said and I saw how he longed to touch my lips.
He clasped my hands in his, lowering it down from his face and bowed his head to our joined
hands, as a knight asking his liege for fortitude before a battle, as he always did before going into
danger.
I moved to hide the gesture from the still jeering men.

"Be my hope my Sassenach, be my joy, my comfort and safety amongst a sea of peril.
Mo nighean donn, when I am surrounded with lies, deceit and schemes, be my honesty, be my
‘True north’ so I can find my way back home, my Claire” he looked up at me now
"Can ye do so for me, mo ghràidh?”

“Yes” I answered without a moment pass "whatever ye need of me my love.
And I know I can for I will stand in that hall, beside the man that is all those things to me as well”
I caressed his cow lick spot at the top of his head “and if I forget how, I only need to look at you
again, so I know I won't fail”

I extracted my hand from his and dug in my pocket, coming up with the Fraser badge Jamie
bestowed on me for safe keeping.
Only I knew the main reason he did so was to offer me some sort of protection, small as it would
be, that if anything will happen, I will be able to say I'm under the ruling of the Frasers of
Lallybroch and must be brought in front of the Laird of Broch Tuarach himself before any
judgment or punishment would be rendered.

“You will be needing this” I said handing it to him.
He lifted his face to me and smiled with pride
“Aye I will, Sassenach. Go, Stand by Murtagh that I ken ye to be safe and my soul could be at
ease”

I entered the pine torch lit hall, ignoring their brilliant flares.
I walked disregarding the beauty the walls, decked with myrtle branches, yew and holly, held.
I stepped over the lethargic inert form of Angus Mhor that laid leveled with the floor, but managed
to extract a toothless silly smile when he saw me pass above him.
I sidled through all the assemblage around me, praying for no further hindrances to come my way.
I didn’t cross the hall slowly this time though, but rushed to Murtagh’s side, almost crashing into him as I dashed frantically in his direction.
I stopped myself at the last possible second and took hold of his forearms, which were poised on
his chest.
I needed to convey urgency and to command his full attention and I didn’t care for good and
proper behavior at this moment.

"Jamie is here” I whispered with no precursory to the stunned Murtagh, which was already
completely befuddled by my disturbing conduct toward him.
At my spoken words he snapped himself around, just in time to see Jamie stand under the upper
archway that framed the main entrance to the hall.
Murtagh, as me, ignored good and proper and shared my urgency at once, there for allowing me
to be the one this time, to drag him to the side of the hall, to stand by the candelabra tables, so I
can say my piece clandestinely.

And, as me, he brought himself to full alertness regarding both our heart's concern: Jamie.

"Christ, this is no happening" Murtagh disclaimed unable to believe his eyes "Forgive my blasphemy mistress, but what is the coot doing here??" Jamie had to just stay hidden 'til the gathering was ower, or both his uncles would ha' his heid on a pike and the craic te air fad kens it weel.

For heaven's sake what's 'rong wi' him?!

"Listen to me" I said again with no preliminaries.
Everyone in the hall as just acknowledged my husband's attendance and I saw Jamie fumble his fingers nervously.

I knew I didn't have long to implement my plan, he'll need me to stand by his side or at least to have my face be the first thing he sees after he takes his turn in front of Colum.

"PLEASE listen very carefully" I went on with my instructions "He was leaving the stables to escort me back safely after I was attacked"
To prevent any further delay I added
"And yes I'm fine" not that I thought Murtagh much cared for me at the moment.

He, just as me, saw only one thing or should I say only one man before us.

"And yes, this is all my fault and I know it" I said, making sure that Murtagh wouldn't waste any time with letting me know my role in all that was going on.

"Aye 'tis" he said disapprovingly, flaring his nostrils at me and not giving up the opportunity to make his feelings known, which meant making sure that I understood how Jamie's life have become more chaotic thanks to my presence.

"D'ye no ken, the lad got a price on his heid? Wouldna be long before captain Randell or the watch have him in irons.
We thought the only safe place in Scotland is here at Leoch" he looked at me with a twitch to his lips "'til now"

"Then help me make it right" I hissed in his face, not allowing his words to break my resolve.

"Ahh?" Murtagh gaped at me perplexed.

"Listen to me, I know what needs to happen to keep him safe, so I will know if anything changes and indicates something is going wrong"

If I was already demanded to be a conjure woman tonight, let me be one in others eyes when it suited me!

I knew how everyone in this hall should act and look if Jamie's words will be accepted; therefor I could tell if anything or anyone will deviate from it, which will signal menace for Jamie. So I was alerting the only man on our side to be ready to act swiftly.

"Be prepared and listen to me!" I commanded as the wife of his chief
"I will tell you if anything is going wrong and when I do Murtagh… if I do"
I pressed harder on his elbow, leaving no room for disobedience
"And if I do… Get him out of here Murtagh, I don't care if you need to club him in the head and carry his carcass, you get him out of harm's way and tell him anybody here can take care of themselves as long as he's safe"

"What?" Murtagh puzzled

"I mean if he refuses to go" I hastened to explain "over worrying or something for someone here"

"And who would he be worrit ower?" Murtagh cocked his brow, surveying me.
He couldn't know about me and Jamie; could he?
No! We were so carful.

"I don’t know" I exclaimed in a loud whisper.
We didn’t have time for him doubting my words.
Christ, He was much easier to rally when I was Mrs. James Fraser.

Jamie was already crossing the hall to come to the line of men taking their turn in front of Colum, just as Dougal entered through a side entrance.
He was adjusting himself as to suggest he probably ran into a willing hen this time; for he wasn't cultivating any contusion and wasn't nurturing an injured head.
What he did still seem to be was very drunk and just as much violent as he noticed Jamie.

Rupert was surprised to see him, this time around as well and tensed, as did almost everyone else in the hall, holding their breath, as the two man walked side by side to their assigned stations.

Jamie stood awaiting his turn in the oath taking line, as Dougal came to stand at Colum's side.

I turned back to Murtagh, trying to hurry the conversation along.
"Maybe he'll be concerned that Old Alec will be blamed for hiding him in the stables or… or…"
I didn’t have any more time to waste so-
"Laoghaire perhaps"
I said, not minding the least to invoke her name.
I only cared to keep my man safe.
“You know him” I explained my point “Even if they’re not involved, yet, this is how he acts. You remember how he never left Annalise de Marillac side, cackling and cooing all around her, no matter what danger he faced. Fought his first duel over her” I pressed my point further.

There was no room for petty jealousy now, if people thought it their right to stuff their noses in our businesses and deduce the wrong conclusions, than who was I, to not take advantage of it and use those assumptions for our own benefit?

What mattered was that if Jamie's life will be threatened, Murtagh will not let Jamie stay to care for me.

I knew Jamie will not walk away serenely into the night without me, but I was in no risk of harm and could calmly find my way to him later.

"Listen Murtagh, I know you said there is no place safe in Scotland right now, as long as he has a price on his head, but please, if anything goes wrong tonight take to the ether with him and hide. Please Murtagh promise me you’ll run and take him with you”

"Aye, ye ha' my word” I didn’t believe it at first, but Murtagh transformed his entire countenance and smiled kindly to me, placing his palm on my forearm as I did. Only unlike me, he did so in a reassuring manner.

The first act of true kindness from him to me, since he saved me from Randell and much earlier given than last time.

"Grown quite fond of our red-heid, stubborn fool, ha' ye now?” he asked but sounded as if he already knew the answer.

"Well, he is the first true friend I made here, since I first arrived” I said with complete honesty “and he does have a way of entering one's heart and making them care for him, even against one's will” I continued with only the truth between my lips, which was, fortunately, the best explanation at this moment.

"Not to mention” I added, turning back to see that Jamie was second to the next in line for the oath-taking "he seems to get himself in so much trouble, you can't help yourself but worry about the man all the time”

"Aye, ye surely canna” I heard Murtagh sigh and agree with me wholeheartedly.

"Besides” I said, turning back to Murtagh, pleading to see understanding in his eyes “I did this to him’ I expressed my regret “I ask your help in relieving my conscience just the slightest, by making sure nothing worst will happen”

Murtagh looked into my eyes and whether he saw my care for the young laird, which matched his own, or whether he saw the pleading of an honest individual that truly sought absolution for her misdoings; he replied in the most tender friendly tone saying "D'anna be worrit mistress, I swore a long time ago that t'will first be me to see the heavens and nay the lad” then he added with a small amiable smile "And by the looks o'it, t'will probably be at protecting the clot-heid from himself”

It was the most faintest of smiles, but yes, Murtagh Fitzgibbons Fraser did smile at me. “So ye ha' my word, no harm comes to the lad, before I see the almighty myself”

"Thank you” I smiled back, placing my palm on his where it held my forearm, feeling a little lighter.

"Now” I said, returning to lay all the details of my plan before him “if I tell you the words ‘be well' you take him away Murtagh and don't let him look back by any means. I don't care if he needs to be knocked and dragged away. His skull can take it. If I utter the words ‘be well' to you at any time, it means it's your turn to carry him away to safety agreed?”

"Aye” said Murtagh, matching my look of determination and readiness for battle.

"Come” I said “I need to stand closer for a better look” and for Jamie to have my face be the first thing he sees as he requested of me, but that I added to myself.

We came a bit closer and I watched all the key players in the hall. I even stared at Laoghaire that went pale but hopeful at the chance of Jamie becoming a Mackenzie and therefore transform himself into proper marriage material, to bring home and be approved by her father. I didn’t care what her intent was, only that there wasn’t the slightest change happening anywhere and by anyone.

I also hoped that if anything will happen she will be the one to swoon and therefore create the distraction Murtagh needed. It was either her or me.

"The slightest change and I'll make my move” I said again and again under my breath. Bringing all my senses to full alertness, as the adrenaline coursed inside me.

"Je suis prest!” I said.
Jamie and Murtagh weren’t the only Frasers in the hall this time!
A new point of view

Chapter Summary

Now I been getting a lot of requests and q' about the..... you guessed it: THE WEDDING.
Which I must admit turned up quite funny ans sexy so far (its really not even close to complete)
But I'm still writhing up to it and because I really don't know where they characters will take me,
I wrote this little thing that I thought and I hope you guys and lady's would like to read without giving too much away except that they will be married (but who are we fooling it's a given, only who knows what happen after that??;:}

Chapter Notes

I have never read from his pov' before I really hope I did him justice.
And now I'm really going back to writhing the big story in order for mine and I hope your'es pleasure.
p.s: when this section will appear in the main story i might add or twik it a bit

They were stopping to make camp and he went to have a piss behind the trees out of sight.
Now, wi' a lady present, they had to be polite 'obout polling their todger out and were now forced to excuse themselves to dispose of their bodily waters, rather than just hoicking up their kilts and minding to their own business.

"Just a nuisance and a bother all this women business if ye ask me" he said to the tree that he was now relieving himself on; who dinna seem inclined to ask him.

"But the lad as never looked so happy in his life" Murtagh grudgingly admitted to himself and to the tree.
Jamie seemed more than just happy though, he looked peaceful, content and wi' that stupid grin that dinna waver and sparkling eyes that couldna stop looking at his new bride, Jamie looked like a man passionately, fervently and wholeheartedly in love.

He was familiar with the feeling and kent how it looked.
He once gawked at himself in the glass trying to comb his busy hair before going to see Ellen Mackenzie no Fraser at the time.
He remembered staring back at the reflection and staggering himself at what looked back.

But he couldna look otherwise when it came to her and he did try.

He remembered what caused it-

Her rosy scent, that carried through the air when she entered a room, that made his wame shrink inside him.
The sound of her voice even just humming a melody or a note or two, that made him feel hallow and ready to burst as a soap bubble (thank the Lord no one could hear him describe himself as such).

How her touch, even brushing him by mistake, could leave his skin sweating and shivering at the same time.

For once is his life he realized that great strength and power rose from weakness and tenderness.

And how to lose it made the world's colors dull and one's face to drop eternally.

But that wasna the case for his young godson.
The lady seemed as devoted and moved by him as he was of her, to be more was impossible in his opinion.

Since the wedding the young couple not only dinna part from each other side but couldnna stop touching and embracing one another.

If one wished to address Jamie, one, now, had to ogle at two heads glued in the forehead only half tearing themselves from their connection to acknowledge those speaking to them but not parting, nay never parting.

All awhile holding hands clasped to their chests where their hearts laid, which was the only distance between the two bodies.

There would be riding for a while when Jamie would declare she was too far and she needed to ride wi' him and almost pulling her from her saddle before allowing her to dismount and join him on his horse.

A complete waste of a horse that is, he thought watching her mare joyously and weightlessly jouncing along them.

And if they thought that the plaid he covered them both wi' was sanctuary from praying eyes seeing all the touching and fondling that went on, they were verra sadly mistaken.

Beside, there wasna anything covering their faces, when they kept turning to each other and exchanging much too amorous passionate kisses.

He had never wanted to see Jamie's tongue, why would the lad think he wished it now was beyond his grasp!

Christ, he looked and acted completely under a spell and not for the first time Murtagh was reminded that the women was found near Craigh na dun and all kent verra weel what was there.

If'sna as if he dinna see it before.

From the first moment Jamie saw the lassie, he was hers.

There wasna nay doubt 'obout that.

Ye had to be nor just blind or deaf but faoin and baoghalta to boot to miss that.

For 'obout a second one could mistake it for the lack of female companion at the abbey Jamie spend his days recuperating from his head injury beforehand.

But nay Laoghaire or any other girl at the castle took hold of his heart or eyes for more than a glimpse and certainly nay once she was near or far or when he thought he heard her voice and looked around to search for her or when he suddenly began laughing and mumbling something as to how she would be shocked 'obout this or would love that.

Aye, he craved the widow more than life.

When she would enter a room he would sit taller, when he looked at her he admired all of her, when she would speak to him he answered in a much deeper rumbling voice than Murtagh ever heard him speak.

Becoming a man instead of a boy before his verra eyes.

Maybe the magic she held was doing him good nay evil.

And seeing him so, made Murtagh's frozen heart melt.

After enduring what he suffered and carrying the marks to show it (which to his delight dinna seem to concern the slightest to the woman from the start).

Aye, a ghille, deserved bliss like no other.
Since his father's death a cloud rose behind his eyes and dinna lift when he laughed wi' others, dinna brighten when we went out to his adventures and exploration of the world and dinna melt when he held other lassies in his hands.

That is 'till she showed up.

He watched how this morning when he was 'obout to go prepare their horses for the ride she caressed his cheek and he melted into her hand.

How when she saw the bite mark on his palm, when he returned, where Donas greeted him good morning; she got such a fright and hurriedly jumped to her feet to mend her husband and to check on his well being and then hurriedly brought something or another to clean and apply on his hand (Jesus Christ the lassie liked to clean skin all the time- forgive his blasphemy).

She could be a witch, but it seemed whatever she possessed, would be given freely and unequivocally to the lad, with all the tenderness and care a woman could give a man, he observed.

Jamie on his part seemed to be enjoying himself immensely.

Murtagh returned to the party to find them divided to two groups (again).

One containing Claire sitting tightly behind Jamie, her arms wrapped around his midsection squeezing tight, her head lalled on his back gazing into nothing all awhile Jamie had one hand reaching back stroking her cheek and with the other he was eating something she made for him before they left the inn.

How did she call the wee thing? A sandawheitch, nay, a Sandwich perhaps?

After she teased him when he tried and failed to say it properly she said it was a snack, which he will be needing in 'obout five minutes after breakfast will be done, to which he replied he could think of better things to nibble on.

Bloody wee besoms, where they no seeing they were in public? Although he had to admit he couldna fault neither of their assumptions.

The other group held the rest of the men shamelessly ogling them and Dougal shaking his heid disapprovingly at the looking verra like two monkeys clutching at each other, couple.

"What's a miss then?" he asked turning to a glowering Dougal.

"Christ" Dougal barked "I've called the lad for the past quarter of an hour now, to come and hear the route of the rest of our ride and his been nodding and saying 'aye, aye' but the clot as not even moved a muscle all this time"

"Weel wi' her holding on to him so tight I'm surprised he is able to get air in him, never mind moving. Maybe that's it Dougal" said a rapt at the spectacle Rupert (it was hard to look away from them).

"Maybe, he fainted from lack of air only his eyes ha' stayed open and he's eating out of sleep. I've done that from time to time" he continued

"Aye that what ye told Mrs. Fitz last time she found ye in the middle of the night in her pantry. Dinna fool her and it sure as hell doesna fool me" chastened him a now growing impatient Dougal ready to attack.

"They look so inlove should we no leave them alone?" suggested a charmed willie hungrily longing for a tableau such as this for his own.

Lord to be so young, mused, Murtagh to himself.

"Aye leave them be" agreed Murtagh shrugging "it's no as if he be much use to ye away from her".

"And that's another thing!" Dougal was pointing his finger to Murtagh accusingly "do ye nay find all these going on's a bit strange?" he was inquiring as if something was being concealed from him by malice.

"I dona see ye'r meaning" Murtagh replied getting quite fed up with his suspicion nature.

Why, if the lass was a spy, the English stood nay chance to find their arse to scratch than to win a coming war.

"The wild, gold eyes, tiger we picked up on the side of the road all of a sudden becomes a kitty curled up under her master feet?" Dougal was relentless and tiring.
"Maybe he did something to her last night. We did." offered a lewd Angus lifting his eyebrows and licking his lips. He was stopped by Dougal retorting snappily "Weel maybe ye forgotten how it's done. I havna. And that devotion dosna happen over one night. And I donna care if she saw stars or if he took her all the way to the moon something is a miss!!!

Now, the angry crazy lad becoming calm and stupid looking, as if he got bashed on the head a hundred times. Aye, last night could have taken care of that but-"

"Jamie" Murtagh bellowed to the lad, not wanting to let Dougal continue this tawdry discussion or allow him to keep guessing himself to a conspiracy regarding secret plans behind his back conducted by Jamie. He was just enough of a bullheaded nincompoop to attribute Jamie some evil plan against him and concoct retaliation against him. "Come now!" he said wi' as much urgency he could convey in his voice and starting to realize why Jamie longed to find safe haven in her amongst the sea of vile sordid people he found himself bound to.

Jamie frowned at him but started to show signs of life and movement. He twisted his body and her arms seem to let him go. He stood on his knees cupped her face and watched them penetratingly. "mmm?" he murmured into her mouth kissing her goodbye as if he was going to war and not taking a few paces to his side. "mmmmhauck" she murmured back into him and a huge smile spread on Jamie's lips as he pulled back a bit saying "of course always".

He bent and kissed her palm chivalry, rose to his feet and began his, apparently, very rough seven paces march to them for he was sighing the whole time.

"You do know that no actual words were involved in that conversation?" teased an amused Ned Gowan "or are you two so enamored with each other words lost all meaning?"

"Ye needed me for something?" Jamie ignored Ned banter and seemed anxious to conclude wi' whatever business took him seven feet from his wife.

"Christ lad, did I'nno tell ye to nay seem so eager?" Pant an exasperated Dougal. "Why if ye ask me, she'll be running down the hill away from ye in less than a week. Ye should really stop pawing her such".

Murtagh dinna want to believe his gut and his mind should kent better but the man sounded jealous of the lad.

"Weel uncle she dosena seem to mind for now and in my position I'll take what I can get when I can get it.

Beside if ye'll no mind I'll handle my marriage as I see fit. After all, one can only learn from his own mistakes" he smiled cunningly to his uncle. "Now, ye be needing me for something else? other than giving me another very Saige, I'm sure, but unnecessary advice?"

It was a slight in the most witty clever way one could offer another and although Murtagh would have preferred him to keep his big yap shut it gave him a joyous thrill to see that the lad that's been running around the past few weeks like a beheaded hen was starting to return to his best old humorous clever self.

They were all in a circle crouching or sitting around Dougal and Jamie ducked down to join wi' them saying "Weel what's a miss then?"

"Routing our best safe way back to the castle to return ye and ye'r new bride safe to the MacKenzie loving bosom, sounds important enough for ye?" answered a vexed Dougal. A moment later after all the stares between Dougal and Jamie were concluded, Dougal was explaining where they were headed, which road had red coats sightings and how they especially needed to take care near the garrison and how no one steals cattle or even a cows bell from that point onward.
With that they all turned to stare at Rupert in a knowing look.

Rupert simply shrugged and said "aye, aye".

After a while Dougal raised his stare from the ground he was drawing the path on, noticed Jamie and scolded "R'ye'no listening to me boy?"

Jamie it seemed, was only interested in glancing behind his shoulder at his wife's lying form.

Which had her back turn to them.

God's eyes, did her charm work even when she wasna even looking at him and was obviously sleeping???

At that exact moment the same Mrs. Fraser found it appropriate to shiver and burrow further into her cloak.

Jamie's face soured almost immediately.

"Ye drùiseil dog, can ye no spare a minute to mind something or someone else?" hissed a very exasperated Dougal

"NO" Jamie answered matter-of-factly "Now if ye'll excuse me, gentlemen, my wife is cold".

He simply rose to his feet and headed back to her, asking in the Gàidhlig

"Do you feel cold my love?"

"There's another thing to ye" said Dougal as Jamie's body laid on his side cradling her figure tightly to him and caressing her hair "how is it the lost little lamb of a lass who got stuck in Scotland by accident, or so she claimed, has some Gàidhlig all of a sudden?"

"Ye'r looking under rocks that donna exist Dougal" said a starting to wonder that himself Murtagh.

"He has been whispering in her ear since first she came to the castle and she's been around enough patients and ye lot to probably learn a word or two, beside-" he lowered his voice as if revealing a secret "would ye nay ha' Gàidhlig yourself, would ye find it difficult to understand that?"

he inclined his heid to Jamie who was now busy at pulling the mistress, limb by limb, into a big cocooned ball composed of his body and plaid.

Chapter End Notes

And If you like the writhing and have some ideas or thoughts about Outlander you would like to see come to life I would love to give it a try

Thank you
Chapter Summary

SO THIS ONE IS FOR BEING PATIENT WITH ME UNTIL THE NEXT EPISODE IN THE BIG STORY.
BUT I COULDN’T LEAVE YOU WITH NOTHING FOR THE HOLIDAY
SO THIS IS MY TAKE AT WHAT HAPPENS TO CLAIRE WHEN SHE GETS INTO A FESTIVE MOOD.
WE READ ABOUT HOW SHE GETS WHEN SHE DRINKS FROM JAMIE POINT OF VIEW THIS IS FROM HERS.
I HOPE I NAILED IT (PUN INTENDED).

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

*****

“Hello wall” she said giggling to the stone rampart he leaned her on in order to open her chamber’s door.

"Leave the wall alone Sassenach. He as ye need his rest now. We wouldna want him to fall down like ye, now would we?”
Jamie said as he tried to take her back into his arms and off to bed.

"No" she waved his hands away from her and tried, in all the dignity she could bring about in her present condition, to enter by herself to her room. To her acclaim she did manage to hobble and sway to it all by her lonesome, only slightly almost missing the door.

"I'm perfectly capable of walking” she said waddling into the chamber.

"Of course ye are Sassenach” he smirked unconvinced "only ‘tis the talking to walls that make it hard to trust such statements, ye see”

Jamie watched her frown as she stood by the bed trying to recall either how she got there or what to do next. It turned 'oot to be the latter for she squinted her eyes looking down at her clad body saying “That is it!” she declared formally “Tomorrow I am going to discover the zipper and no one here can stop me!” she finished her speech waving her finger to establish her point and Jamie kent better than to query at present time what she meant by her words.

Claire began removing her garments w’ the door to her chamber still open.

Jamie hastily closed the door behind them, sliding himself at the last possible moment inside and glancing around the passages to see if anyone was there to witness him.

“Ye canna undress yourself such Sassenach, what if someone would ha’ come?” he said padlocking the door behind him.

Though by the way she was undressing, she wouldna ever reach such a state o’ bareness as to expose herself to another. Nay wi’oot some assistance, he mused, wiggling his fingers at her as to indicate he'll be taking the role for the time being.

He stood himself in front o’ her untying her laces and pulling up layers o’ fabric through her hands.

She stopped resisting him after a while and was busy flicking her unruly- wild curls away from her face.

Poor wee thing o’ his, he sighed wi’ compassion for her, the past few days were such a whirl o’ strain, worry and scare for her, that at dinner she ate hardly naught again, which he suspected she had done verra frequently lately.

Mainly for he wasna around to glare at her proper in the dining hall as to eat something or simply there to inform Mrs. Fitz the mistress hasna touched her cookery at all and watch, thoroughly entertained, as Claire crammed and gulped, almost wi’ no chewing, all the food down and apologetically assured a much hurt Mrs. Fitz that her food was delicious and she meant no disrespect.

He should’ve had Murtagh see to her when he left wi’ Alec and during the gathering days, he berated himself. For heaven’s sake, he kent that when worrit or too occupied wi’ the healing his love tended to eat naught.
And although tonight they had naught one worry left to deal wi’, all the past strains left his Claire still anxious and apparently in need to sip her nerves away.

When Laoghaire and Muriel came in for their food she gulped two glasses, one after the other.

No that Jamie would ha’ allowed them to even glimpse at Claire’s direction the wrong way. And Muriel herself would be most surprised when her betrothed will find himself in possession of a letter informing him his wife to be, hasna a wean in her belly at present and contrary to what has been told to him by her.

A letter that is to be delivered by John the stable lad once the rent party would be on her merry way.

For there should be no need to create havoc beforehand as to perhaps endanger their departure in some way.

Dougal entering the hall for his supper and taking his seat at the main table, caused Claire to fill her cup twice over again.

During, hopefully, their last night between these castle walls Claire as it seems was as scared as a hare at anything going amiss.

She kept sipping her grog and once done wi’ her own and obviously being the worst for it, she reached ‘oot and took the one that belonged to the chatty lady at her right.

Which thank the good Lord was far too busy wi’ her conversation companion as to notice Claire’s thievery.

Claire kept timidly darting her eyes to and fro from one menacing threat to the other fearing their actions and mal-intent, dreading they will catch her and Jamie unvigilant and make a mess of things to come.

Jamie sat by the far end o’ the table unable to do much over the throng o’ people occupying the dining hall, at this, the last day o’ the gathering, or he would’ve surely seen to her or at least made sure that wi’ every sip she took she would’ve at least taken somethin’ to eat to sooth the effect o’ this cordial partaking o’ hers.

When she was finally done and staggered to the passageway that lead to her room, Jamie waited but a blink of an eye as to excuse himself and went a different route as to meet her in the next bend of corridors, praying she was still able enough as to reach him.

After waiting for what seemed as forever he doubled back to find her staring at a small window, enthralled by the moon and humming to herself.

“Sassenach?” he questioned her, amused greatly by the sight that presented itself to him.

“Hmmm?” she questioned back at him, glazed eyes and a silly smile anointed on her lips. She was filled wi’ spirit alright.

“Come” he simply said softly and guided her wi’ an arm at her back from time to time when it seemed she was losing her footing at the floor.

To his dismay he couldna yet simply gather her in his arms and carry her to her bed but only walk a step or two behind her, nodding cordially to passersby as if he was inadvertently going the same way.

Claire walked as if crossing through a field o’ Scottish primroses, wi’ a half-wit smile nay budging from her lips. The silly goon even closed her eyes a few times along the way.

Jamie had to make sure naught stood in her path as she glided dreamily through the halls.

“I was merely saying hello to an old friend”

Claire said bringing him back from his recollections to present time.

“You shouldn’t be so rude” she giggled thinking herself most witty.

“I’ll be sure to stop and greet the thing on m’way ‘oot” Jamie promised playing along wi’ her and trying to keep a straight face.

“Shows what you know” she said cocking an eyebrow at him striving for superiority. Jamie folded his arms to his chest trying his damnest to nae laugh at her face or kiss her passionately over how cute she looked doing so.

“And what do ye mean by that?” he asked wi’ as much seriousness as he could muster.

“Now who’s drunk?” she joshed him for his lack of understanding as if she was the one that held reason at her side at the moment.

“You said the wall might fall” she explained as if that cleared all.

“Aye?” he asked wi’ quivering lips at the hilarity of it all.

“The wall… that wall that is” she announced ”Will remain standing for more than two hundred years into the future. I saw it, when I came here with Frank… wait, no… will come here with Frank” she corrected herself

“We walked along, I mean we will walk along these very walls… I mean halls. We even went down to my sur…” Claire began laughing in earnest amusement, cupping Jamie’s cheeks in the palms o’ her hand.
“We went to the province of the castle hermit or perhaps the dwelling place of a troll or two”

she let ‘oot a small snort
“Although Frank said he didn’t think trolls live in pairs” she said wi’ a solemn expression
“solitary creatures they”\nClaire brought her nose to rub on Jamie’s
“All this and no one to share it with” she snorted again
“Well I suppose that changed” she said looking into Jamie’s eyes dotingly.

She was truly gone wi’ the drink if she mentioned Frank to him and he in return had to let it go for
the same reason.
That was easily done, for although she spoke o’ words and times they dinna share together and
Jamie had no idea of their meaning;
it was here and now that she was skimming her lips softly on his lips, cheeks, nose.
It was to his body she was bringing herself closer and closer into and signaling she longed for no
other but him.

“Sorry” I said putting my hand up to suffocate a small belch that threaten to escape my lips “I do
believe I drank too much”.

“I believe that as weel, Sassenach” Jamie replied smiling a very broad salacious smile at me.

“Well I don’t care” I adjusted my features and declared with as much bravado as I could muster
“I’m celebrating”.

“And what if I may ask r’ye celebrating?” he queried looking me up and down as if searching for
something.

“Well” I leaned into him as if telling a secret.
It was my turn to join the fun gossip game that kept being played around me, usually at my
expense, amongst these castle walls.

“I don’t know if you heard the news but tomorrow I am leaving this castle to ride under the free
open ether”\nI throw my hands in the air as the Triumphant conqueror I felt myself to be at present.
We were done Jamie and I.
This was it, this time tomorrow we would be-

“Out of the confines of this suffocating lonely place where are love was secret and forbidden”
I said placing a finger at my lips
“Shhhh… and—” I added with a smile that felt as if it was bursting from my chest “I am going to
get married”.

I found that as I was talking I seemed to be tipping over;
further and further forward; so much so that when I was done with my secret telling Jamie had to
catch me from falling all the way.

“I might ha’ heard somethin’ to that affect” he lifted me to my feet holding me by my waist, I felt
as if I was melting into the floor.
“Christ, Sassenach ye are stinking drunk forbye”

“Not you. You smell nnniiiicccce” I leaned into his chest.

"Best get ye safe and tucked in bed and ‘oot o’ trouble, mo chridhe.
We’ll be leaving at first light tomorrow” he said trying to direct me to the bed in question.

“Well” I waved his helping hands off my body and continued with my speech, recalling my initial
point “I don’t know what you think of the news but I-”

“Y e s??” he inquired, cocking his eyebrow at me, curious now at what I had to say.
I giggled at the sight of him.

“I am very drunk right now and should maybe go to bed right now, before I put my foot in my
mouth and bite it, right now”
I giggled again.

But instead of doing so I found myself reaching for my husband grasping him in an iron grip with
my arms, burying my head in his chest, sniffing at him and purring like a big lazy cat.

“No Sassenach, as ye’re behaving, I highly doubt ‘twill be your foot that will find itself in your
mouth being bit” he said letting his hands yield the same hold my hands offered him.

“Ho is that a fact?” I raised my face from his chest “And what pray tell did you have in min-”

His lips came eagerly to mine and I felt his tongue in my mouth, so as promised I brought my lips
around it and bit it lightly playing a small game of tag with it.
After a moment of this, my hands came into his hair and I pulled his head back exposing his neck to my pleasure.

Nibbling, biting skimming my lips on his skin, all while using my hands to pull and loosen more items of clothing so I could clear a path for my mouth to continue its administrations.

I bit him hard where his neck met his shoulder blade pulling skin with my teeth. His hand clasped my arse hard pulling me so tight to him, that our body’s to the outside observer might have seemed like just one big lump.

He was purring too now; or perhaps it was me again and our bodies being so tight snug didn’t allow me the correct observation anymore.

When I finally released him, I circled my tongue over the bite mark as if to ease the pain I inflicted, but in truth I was simply savoring Jamie, making his male, testosterone-bursting intoxicating smell become taste in my mouth.

I couldn’t help myself, the things he made my body feel, time and again.

The thought of all those sensations made me hungry for him, made me crave to ravish and devour him until he would tremble and collapse with exertion and fragility at what I would make his body feel in return.

I wished to pay homage to what he regularly inflicted on me.

For one second I mused to myself that my intoxicated self is quite a pervert, but my entire body and soul didn’t seem to find this fact so disturbing.

They only urged me to fulfill my perverse needs even more.

"I want you inside of me" I said breathlessly as I almost ripped his waist coat, pulling at the opening of his shirt to reach his very taut, pink and getting pinker nipples, biting them in delight.

He swayed a little, losing strength to stand upright almost buckling at his knees and was making a lot of incoherent noises.

"Ye are nae playing fair Sassenach" he said trembling all over.

"Why?" I laughed into his skin which made him swing his head back and groan deeply.

"I'm celebrating. Do you not want to celebrate with me?" I teased.

He turned me so fast to my other side that I ‘whooped’ and almost tumbled if he wouldn’t have caught me so skillfully and pressed me firmly to himself.

At this point and in my state he was the only thing preventing me from completely collapsing.

Although I was squirming and wiggling, the muscles of my body could not stiffen and stand.

I felt myself as being all the liquid I drank this evening.

Soft, light almost translucent and wanting only to flow and slide on to and into someone else, unable to stop.

I was now propped to stand by him with my back and other parts of me to his front.

Jamie growled in my ear in a mock menacing tone

"I would show ye what true celebration is right now, only ye insisted that we couldna do a thing tonight over Mrs. Fitz coming to prepare ye and your things for the ride and we do leave at first light Tommmmmhh-"

He moaned very loudly as I started to rub myself on his person enjoying the sensation of stretching every part of me to every part of him.

I really should not drink like this often.

But I wanted to feel good and I wanted him to gratify that need for me.

And as the very spoiled child I was feeling myself at this moment, I wanted what I wanted now and without caring about the consequences and undesired outcomes that might spring from my actions.

I wanted him and I wanted him now!

"Please Jamie, I need you inside me" I whispered back to him as I lifted my hand to grasp the back of his head to me.

His hands were caressing my breasts, my hips, my thighs, he was pressing himself quite forcibly to me but he was still not ready himself.

I was beginning to glide my other hand between us to assist with that part.

When he whispered into my ear which he bit first and then begged me

"Please no nighean donn, we mustna or we will risk all; now when we are so near"

I sighed with disappointment, but did release him and literally molten into the bed, that was, thank the Lord for small mercies, one step away from us.

I was sprawled on the mattress on my stomach.

There was dead silence behind me, so I peeked at his towering form from above my shoulder and said

"Fine than, you can leave now, I promise to not move from this bed until the morning… Although you might need to come and carry me from here when we do need to leave"
I said laughingly for I found myself quite amusing and witty at the moment.

I stretched myself further into the covers and buried my face into the soft feathery mattress. Everything I touched felt so nice.

"I don’t think I would be much capable of anything by morning" I said giggling at myself again and wondering how will I handle myself tomorrow.

Jamie stood there rooted in place not moving, hardly even breathing. He moved his knuckles on his lips looking hungrily and regretfully at me.

"I thought you said—"

"Sàmhchair" he said commandingly "I'm thinking"

"About?" I queried frowning.

"How long mmphm will take and if I can get to the stables in time before Alec—"

"But I thought you said we couldn’t’" I frowned further, wondering how this turn of events came about.

"Ye ha’ the roundest, sweetest, plump rump I ha’ ever did see" he said longingly reaching his hand at me, caressing the air as if it was the bulge in question.

"But I thought we weren't risking our future for mmphm" "Some things are worth risking everything for” he said flinging his kilt to the floor

"Your arse is defiantly one!” He stated, worshipfully lifting both eyebrows and biting his lips as in an act of praise.

He came into the bed standing on his knees, using them to nudge my thighs to spread and using his hands to lift my hips up.

He took hold of my hair pulling my heid and ear to his mouth as he lowered himself to me.

Leaning on me he brought his other hand around my knees, using them to nudge my thighs to spread and using his hands to lift my hips up.

When he finally did enter me, he whispered in my ear with joy

"Besides we are celebrating"

When Mrs. Fitz did finally come.

I was still gasping on the bed, shivering from the fumes of our shared ecstasy not wanting to move from the memory.

Chapter End Notes

AND AS ALWAYS WOULD LOVE TO RECEIVE NEW PROMPTS FROM ALL OF YOU.
So today my brother had his first baby or to be accurate my good-sister did :)
So while we were waiting in the hospital I managed to bang out 95% of the next chapter
And as a celebration for the new arrival: he's huge and he looks like my brother
I am displaying some random sentences of the next chapter to maybe make another
person smile today as me

*** "Did I not make myself clear or shell I pick the dirk off the ground and stab someone? I'm a healer I know VERY WELL where to cut!!!"

**** .... Not that anything you said so far would be considered the word a Solomon.
Best you'll be silent, trust me!!!!

*** "Which is bleeding right now" noticed a suddenly concerned Luke

**** This Luke was really pushing Jamie's patient to new heights and Mr. Macliver shouldn't be surprised to find that when it came to his wife and other men, Jamie had none to begin with!

*** But that was when she mumbled something in the surgery before they....
He couldna remember anything from then, except her mouth on his-

**** "I'm not so sure me and my whoring arse really want to go on that trip. Nothing good is waiting for me there!!!"
'And I do mean the wedding' he completed what her expression but not her mouth said.

**** Ye Irish, drunkard, chriosdaidhsìursach and I wish ye'd-bhith ort!" Jamie wasna having any of that.
"Ye heathen whore yourself and regarding annihilation I promise ye that, that would be exactly what I will bring upon you!" Luke bellowed back

*** Helen of troy held no candle to his women, Jamie mused, and not for the first time.

*** "Well that is what differs you and me greatly, thank the Lord for that, from this red headed, stubborn, moronic, quick-temper, ridiculous ...."
"We gather ye'r meaning, Sassenach" Jamie was defiantly blushing now.
"Scot" she concluded ignoring him.

**** And him thinking her unwed and newly widowed.
Weel, she was fair game, open to all to try.

*** 'And damned if she will be allowed to roam free then' he added to himself, trying to contemplate how that decision could be enforced on his wife wi'oot her killing him in the process.

*** He was obviously not infatuated or lustful for Claire.
The man was unmistakably deeply in love.

**** "If I had a car at my disposal I would be hundreds of miles away, putting hard miles between us, right now" she said longingly, for the object she described many times to him, which he only gathered to be a really fast, strong, moved on its own carriage, which also had to do with a
horse's power of a sort.

**** "Unfortunately, I'm stuck with a suspicious, liar, self-centered Casanova, which still manages to be a misanthropic, lout barbarian, grouch Neanderthal clown of an effing husband and ONLY ONE HORSE" she finished in a scream

**** O lord, here comes the generation gap between us.

Jamie always struggled, deeply, at my incomprehension (or so he saw it) of the fact that if he truly wanted to he could control every aspect of me.

I was after all, by law and religion h i s property.

The fact that he didn't establish it often, only meant he was being a good husband that know how to handle his wife, while still maintaining world peace.

**** Jamie did not get his retribution on the king and Luke did not have an army at his side.

**** "It was you, ye made me do so" he snapped as if letting something buried deep inside out.

"What?" I gaped at him but he did not desist in his berserk revelation.

"She was less than nothing Sassenach. It was you" he pointed opening his eyes at me.

AND MORE THEN THAT WOULD BE TOOOO REVEALING :)


From the way out part 3

Chapter Summary

So this is the last part of chapter 3 in the big story.
I posted it yesterday in the main one and forgot to let you know here.
I hope you like it (it should really be read with the other 'foreplay' from the main one,
but feel free to pick and chose as you like)

He was thrusting himself into me, time and again, ferociously and frantically.
He wanted to reconquer what he felt was slipping away from him, I supposed.
I also supposed that I wanted to be retaken as well.

His trusts made me feel as a pier standing at the point where the waves crash into it and the
sensation was not unpleasant.
I wanted my husband back.

After a few minutes he let out a moan.
No, not a moan but a roar. Exactly as a lion would after fighting a battle; reclaiming his crown as
the king of the jungle.
A roar as if all the aghast that was bottled up inside him, was now coming out in the shape of
vocal release.
The roar ended and I would have been sure he reached his completion, were it not for his very
unmistakable and still very hard cock inside me.

All the other of Jaime's limbs though, had collapsed in full weight atop of me.
His body covered all of me as he laid there not moving a single muscle; head buried on the pillow
near my left shoulder.

We laid like this for what seemed like forever and I was just about to enquire whether I should
take matters in to my own hands, by slowly trying to move my hips, which were like the rest of
me buried under a very large, very still Scot

"Dinna move" I heard his voice muffled by the pillow "don't dare move Mo nighean donn.
Please" this was not a threat or an order but a plea.
As if me moving, meant moving away from him, which in our current situation was extremely odd
and unlikely but I complied.

He needed to get something from me he could not yet put into words and I was more than willing
to let our bodies engage in the negotiations that will result in his questions and needs answered by
my flesh.

They have done so before and had never failed in leaving both parties completely satisfied and
content.

And By the way Jaime was behaving lately… a little satisfaction and contentment were sorely
lacking and highly in demand.

His right hand had pulled up to caress the side of my body, lingering awhile to fondle the side of
my breast which was still flattened , like the rest of me, under him.

He drew a light breath through is nose and let it out softly through his lips, as his hand continued
its path down the side of my body.
I could smell the Rhenish I left behind on his breath.
It entered through me as ripples at sea.
I took a big inhale of it, taking with it, the special musk that was Jamie and the sweat of exertion
from today’s strains and tribulation.
The fight and the release of words (that needed to be said), took their price on both of us;
and the mental as well as physical exhaustion they left in us, made every sense tender and acute at
the same time.

His hand reached the back of my right knee and pulled it from under him to settle on his hip, my
ankle on his buttocks.

At this I allowed myself to squirm a bit and grazed my ankle up and down, from top thigh to
buttocks and to the curve of his lower back.

His sounds made it clear, that was fervently appreciated.

Slowly his voices of approbation became humming sounds, coming from deep inside his throat and chest.

He skimmed his lips slowly on my skin from my chin, neck until his mouth reached my left breast and was alternating between cracking a very wide smile that I could feel but not see on my bosom and very lightly suckling my breast. That made me, arch my back and my ankle pushed him fiercely to me.

He started rocking his body with the movement of my grazing leg and lifted himself on his arms.

My arms now released, came up. One hand, very lightly almost hovering, caressed his face, touching his nose, his lips, chin and neck.

He had his eyes closed completely absorbed in the sensation of me; of us together.

When he sensed my fingers on his lips, he opened his mouth lightly and bit one, not hard, but just enough to give me back the knowledge of how sensitive the nerves ending in the fingers, really are.

This time it wasn't only my back that arched, I brought my hips to meet him as well.

He released my finger opened his eyes looked straight into my eyes and I to his.

He started moving harder and faster.

the other hand coming to my left knee and applying it the same treatment he afforded her companion one.

I was holding on to his hips with my legs almost floating between him and the mattress. With each thrust I felt him lifting me and could feel the air slither under me.

His hand came to cup my left cheek for a stronger hold all awhile leaning on his right.

I smiled in delight at him biting my lower lips and he smiled back.

And then I saw it.

Jaime!

There he was, the Jaime I missed so much, the one I didn’t even know had left until I saw that smile looking back at me.

There he was, innocent and strong, tough and beautiful, mischiefful but wise; all at the same time and so much more. And mine.

I felt a complete fool for the fighting, the yelling and the mistrust from my part as well as his.

How could I forget who we were, who we still are!

Jamie that aroused in me so much love, compassion, desire and a need to protect.

And the only man's protection I wanted back.

He was the man I wanted to cradle, to ravage, to nurture and to devour, all in the same time.

And most of all to be with, always and forever.

Although in retrospect, I realized that all those things that kept us apart lately, were the one that were helping us find each other again in a better, honest, deeper way.

Fewer secrets between us now, fewer mistrusts or things that were left unsettled.

We have learned our lessons and now we’ll know better than to listen to others over our own hearts.

"I love you so much” he said overcome with emotion and sensations.

I chuckled only because I felt the words about to erupt from me.

"Why are you laughing at me?” he inquired but with a smile, still rocking inside of me and pulling his face into mine so our noses bumped up and down.

I reached for his cheek "because I was about to say the same exact thing in the exact same tim… haaa" I pulled my breath in and closed my eyes, hands gripping at the covers, hard.

I was coming to an end myself as waves of pleasure took hold of me and were couring through my body.

I grabbed his shoulders, eyes closed tighter as I realized that I was so consumed with watching Jaime feel his pleasure that I completely forgot about mine and did not notice the surges assembling inside me; which were now erupting and revealing themselves to their full extant.

I felt my hips completely airborne, tight to him trying to contain the stimulation and afraid to move or I would shudder.

Jaime didn’t suffer from any such need for stillness and was moving harder and deeper.

I raised my left hand to his nape, while grabbing and squeezing his buttocks with my right, pulling myself to him.

I felt myself about to cry out, when I heard him say
"No. not yet Sassenach, wait…. please wait….wait wi’ me"

They were a few times when we had climaxed together and usually it happened naturally without us trying to induce such a thing.

But he needed it this time. I could feel the knowledge of it with every bone in my body.

We were returning to ourselves (slowly but surely) and we just knew.

Since crossing the stones we were so absorbed in manipulating and deceiving all around us, that we had started suspecting all, in having some secret agenda and wicked motives and once that was determined in us, we forgot to look at each other in different eyes.

We feared so much to lose control over everything and to make the same mistakes again, that we forgot to use each other as the isle in the eye of the storm where one could settle and feel safe until it blew away.

So we could make it on the other side, whole and together.

I breathed very deeply and calmed myself as best I could. It was almost insufferable.

I could feel my body gush and tremble, I squeezed my inner thighs but Jaime wouldn’t have it, standing on his knees he took the hand that he leaned on and spread my thigh very wide and farther and farther apart until I moved the other one on my own accord, only then did he let go.

As he continued his inexorable ways he said "Say it, then. Tell me, Sassenach, tell me"

It took great effort to open my eyes to stare straight into his.

I cupped his cheek that hopped up and down in my palm, ordering my eyes to give him the most honest, bare, loving look I could master, especially under the circumstances and said gently but very firmly

"I have never loved anyone as much as I love you, and I n e v e r will".

He stopped moving abruptly.

After a second his hip made a small jerk inside me, but the rest of him did not dare move as to not break our eyes, our stare into each other.

He saw me as I saw him.

He made a few more small but hard movements only with his hips and we both let out a heartfelt, heartbreakng and shuddering breath.

Feeling our releases crush into each other so hard, he almost tore the mattress he was griping near my head and I know that his finger marking on my left buttocks will be left for days.

When he stooped shaking he collapsed burying his face into my breasts.

________________________________________________________________

"No. Stay" She said when at last he made a move to slip away.

Her hands held him tight atop of her, and when it was obvious he was not going anywhere she allowed her hands to roam.

Caressing, stroking, loving him all through his nape, back, buttocks, every inch that was afforded to her grasp.

One hand continued to wander aimlessly while the other nuzzled into his hair interchanging between massaging his scalp to running her fingers through his hairs.

Both maneuvers left him praying to never need to move again in life; even if his body was not so completely flaccid and informed him that any attempt to such a course of action will be rendered futile.

"I’m sorry" she said "I failed you”.

He frowned not knowing what she meant.

She must have sensed the movement on her skin for she went on to clarify her words "you needed me and I failed you and I am sorry for it”.

"I…. you…” Jamie started to say, but his mind was so relaxed he could not form words or meaning in anything.

She must have sensed that too, for while her caresses continued she added a small amount of
pressure to pull him even closer to her, if such a thing was possible. She sighed and said
"All the times I needed you; you were there, sometimes even before I knew I needed someone, something.
You always watch me so closely, so I will be safe and mended; so I will never feel alone or unloved" a faint of a smile and a laugh rose in her chest "even when I am very angry at you or at the world; you try to make me laugh and if you fail, you make sure I know that when it is right you will be there… with a smile, a hug or very good whiskey".
His own mouth curled a little, but even that took great effort.
His body never felt as heavy and as dead then it did right now.
He really hasna been sleeping weel lately, he inferred.
He needed to be still for the moment and she kent it first.

"And I-" she searched for words, always fearing and mistaking, that her ability to say the right thing was any less then perfect in his eyes "A little while after we were married, or would be married" she snorted "I tried to do the same, to you, for you"
"Your arms came and rapped themselves on his neck "I…… I wanted you to have the wife you deserved"

"Have you lost all reason?" the question seemed to leap from his lips.
"What?" she laughed surprised.
With very great difficulty he raised his face to her.
"The wife I deserve? Have I ever given you the thought that you were less than my wildest dream manifestation?"
Then I failed you no nighean donn. To think when I imagined my future wife, Sassenach, That I could ever -".

"Hush" she put a her finger to his lips "I talk now! You listen!" she pointed at him ordering and glaring her eyes in jest.
So he lowered his head back to her.
Cheek just below her breasts so they rested on his heid.
He did lift himself just enough to slide out of her, but returned to lying atop of her as he did before.
Her hands, her magnificence hands, continued with their Administrations.
"You gave me everything, from the very beginning, even before we were married... will be... one day you will know what I mean" she said a little exasperation in her voice regarding all this confusion.

"I could not. Not at the beginning, it was too much at the beginning. Not you I don't mean" she said, explaining herself hastily "The voices of the past, my past I mean, the threats from all the people that surrounded me at the present and the horrible fear of what will become of me in the future. I felt as if I needed to keep up walls. Walls for protection, walls of deceit. For how and to whom could I ever tell what and who I am?" she sneered mockingly at the thought have ever explaining what she was and where she came from to another. 'You did not know if I would ever love you like I do now… and I do Jaime, o God I do’
Her voice broke as in a plea to make him believe it and he felt one single tear glissade from the corner of his eye without him ever remembering feeling sad.
All he could feel lately was just anger all the time, anger and suspicion.
He couldna shake it, he could not run from it and he felt even more enraged at himself for being that irate and not being able to control it from seeping onto his wife.
His would be wife if she'll still have him.
At the beginning, he thought his anger to her was owed to the ridicules accusation she thrust at him regarding Laoghaire.
After a while, he bound his anger to all the deeds and say from people around them, who seem to be if not outright pulling them apart, were plotting to do so.
And her listening to them! (not that he dinna do the same, but when angry one tends to look at others not at himself).
And then is ire truly found a home in the form of Mr. MacIiver, the Irish bastard.
He liked to contemplate the possibilities that he would have, if he was allowed to call the man out, to shoot him? Run him through? Or just possibly could he find the occasion and justification during the duel to come close enough to wring his neck completely?
It's always good to have choices.
but none of those were her fault.
After all she ever done for him (and would have done). How could he mistrust her?
Think she would leave him for another. When she not once but twice said that she will die with him than live without him.
The blame was his and his alone, well except for Laoghaire. But he could see how the fault of her suspicion wasn’t entirely on Claire’s shoulders.
A slender finger took him out of his own heid and wiped the single tear away.

Who could she have sensed it?

He ridiculed himself at the reminder to never doubt how she did the things she did, she just knew.

"I'm sorry lass. I don't know why I'm-"

"You are crying because I failed you!" she interjected into his words "because you needed to know; no you needed to feel secure in our love, because ever since this thing happened" she gestured to the void as a sign to that unknown force that did this to them "you have been feeling everything I felt when I first came 'through'" She sighed

"You told me at the kirk, but I should have seen it earlier and I should have known what to say the moment you told me" she sounded annoyed at herself.

Although he wished her not to blame herself; When annoyed the lovely Mrs. Beauchamp was not to be argued wi'.

He would have to wait his turn.

"Instead of me being the anchor you were to me I….. I left you alone to understand for yourself your own feelings, to try to make sense of everything on your own. Me!!! That felt that anger, that rage that wouldn't stop" now she was truly fuming at herself.

"Of course you listened to others and not to reason, of course all this happened, I should have minded more to you" she made a fist and thumped it on the bed, vexed. Then she took a breath, calmed herself as possible and said.

"I should have told you Jamie, that as scary as it is to think of stopping and letting this anger catch up to you. That as terrifying as the idea to stop and be forced to look straight at that big dark menacing black hole that’s feels like its chasing you, wanting to swallow you whole;

You must do it.
You must feel the fear that hides behind it, to feel the hopelessness and helplessness. It is the truth after all".

She lifted his head by pulling his ears and placing him that they were staring at eye level to each other, so he could see her, truly see her.

"Because we don't know why or what happened and we don't really know what's coming next or will we be able to change the things we want and not destroy the things we so desperately want to keep".

She sighed and her breath came to his face caressing him as her fingers did before.

As if it was the breath of life.

"But Jamie it is we! When you are done with feeling all you are feeling, you would look up and see me there.
You would understand that you are not alone, that I'm right there.
And that is what I failed to come across to you at the kirk and before.
I'm not leaving for a better life in the future, I am not searching for another man to live an easier life with.
It cannot be an easy life without you and there is no future that I want if I cannot share it with you"

She interlaced her finger in his "It is we. You and I this is my time, this is my place now".

She bent his head to brush her lips to his, so lightly she could utter the last word into him without sound "forever".

His strength was returning to him now, all the tiredness, the anger that left him so weak and miserable were all gliding from his body as tide retreating away, back to the sea and far from him.

"I dinna ken" he whispered, and now wanted to weep.

He let his head drop to her chest holding to her tight "I dinna ken".

"How could you?" she pulled his ear playfully and began caressing the tip "It wasn't you that been through this before, now was it? It was me" she chuckled then "I don't know how you did it though"

"What?" he ask, not understand.

"Before, when I just came. You didn't know me or of me and yet." her eyes darkened as memories and feelings seem to cross behind them "You knew" she said admiringly "You knew I needed an anchor, something real to hold on to.
Remember I told you how everything from the past seemed to me like pictures?"

He nodded into her skin

"You never did" she chuckled again and shrugged "Lord if I know how, but from the first moment, you never did"

Then she pulled herself a little higher on the pillow one hand behind her head as the other stroke his soft curls cradling his head.

Christ all mighty, how he loved his woman.
They lay there. 
She just stroking his head and shoulders, him breathing deep, head serenely lolled on her stomach regaining all his strength without a single minute of sleep. 
The shadows from the window retreated slowly and the light of the day began to raise painting the outside with bright colors and shine, threatening to expose all the secrets of the castle inhabitants. 
“I need to go soon, the castle would be awaken by now, even now I take the risk of being seen mo chridhe” he dinna want to go. 
“I know” she sighed. 
She pulled him back up to her by his ear. He came easily. 
To reach her he found he had strength, to walk away from her nay. 
The loft above the stables Dougal allocated for him, since they first came to Leoch, felt like a freezing lonely hell hole and she felt like home. 
He shivered a little and not from the cold. 

She let him lay fully atop of her again, by sliding back under him, both still naked. Bodies cooled from the chill of the night. 
She held his gaze and said. 
“But now you know, now we know” she took his hand in hers interlacing their fingers again. 
“You told me once that I should not be scared anymore as long as you’re with me and after we were married you said that I shouldn’t be afraid because there were the two of us now. 
You didn’t know then what it meant for me to have you. You do now” she smiled softly and knowingly at him. 
“AT Lallybroch, I told you that we will handle whatever comes no matter the cost” she kissed him lightly. 
“Soon my love, very soon, and then no more hiding or concealing” her fingers held his tighter. 
“And my bed” she kissed his nose “my body ”she skimmed her lips on his ”my soul” she kissed his forehead ”will be openly yours instead of only secretly” she added in gaiety. 

“I love you Mo nighean donn” he replied raising his lips to meet hers opening her mouth with his tongue , engulfing all of her mouth with his, Caressing those breasts that were so soft but seemed to stand taut to his demanding hands. 

After a moment of which she was returning the same penetrating kisses to match his own and lightly biting his lips, he couldn’t stop his other hand from roving lower and to her back. 
Taking a handful of that sweet, round-

Arse. 

Lord, he loved this women, his women. 
And that was no blasphemy but a prayer of thanks. 

“Mmnn…” she murred into his lips “I think you better stop and leave, before….ho…. never mind, a bit too late for that” she parted their lips and squinted down to see how late it was for him. 
She clenched her lips trying to keep a serious face. 
“I shouldn’t have waited till dawn to…Jaime!” she slapped his not so stravaig hand from between her legs, trying to direct his entry ”why I ought to” 
“Tina just me, Sassenach” he dinna stop his maneuvering ”Jesus Christ, you are as wet as a-” 
“Well unfortunately, my body quite recalls what you’re like in the mornings and so” 
“Ooo, I like that. So your body is conforming itself to me, then?” he asked mockingly ”good, it kens its master.” 
He frowned after deep contemplation and added ”can you make your arse return to his full size then? You have not been eating properly at dinners lately, I have been watching” 
She pounced on him, rolling him to his back, her perched atop him, holding both his hands hostage, with his permission and she know it. 
She bit her lip then licked it. He made a deep throat sound of approval at that.
"I thought, ye said my arse is perrfect as it is, mmmmaa?" she rolled her R's and strove for a meaningful sound as in imitation of a Scottish accent. His he wandered.

It dinna matter, it only made her sound more English, more like a verra, verra fine lady, trying to sound like a pirate.

"Mine" he whispered menacingly raised his upper body, grabbed her by the waist, whirling her back into her back, hearing her faintly crying "but Jaime everyone…." Before plunging his very awake and fully engorged cock into her.

"Donna be worry lass, it will not take long"

It didn’t.

****

"Tha gaol agam ort" he whispered to the ear his mouth was closes to, rubbed his face on her neck and shoulders which made her squirm, flail her hands at him and laugh.

He finally rose, feeling the chill of the day crash into his heated body that no longer had another heated body pined to it.

He was standing at the foot of the bed and looking at his wife, his heart, lying in bed prompt on her elbows.

Her hair an explosion of curls, an eruption of Medusa snakes, all pulling in different directions, all floating around her face, that held patchy reddened cheeks and chest by his stubbles brushing her. Did he mark her on purpose?

In the past, the future that is, after they married, he had made sure that they all kent she was his and so he could distance himself from her, but they dinna ken that now, do they?

Is that why he felt he needed to be with her always?

He kent that feeling, that longing, verra well.

He had it since he held her first; sobbing in front of the hearth.

But it was milder then now.

Or was it?

He would be able to go 'about his business (he was no sloth), he talked wi' other people, think of the trade while they were in Paris and so on, but it was always there.

She was always there.

Simmering inside him, thoughts of her at hand.

He suddenly would crave to see her, as if it wasna only a few hours after he left her.

A sudden need to touch or be touched by her.

So was that the truth then?

He desired, needed her, just as before. It was only that then he could be free to do so and now-

He returned to his memories of Paris and their time there, all awhile dressing himself as she watched him.

She laid completely naked on the bed, smiling at him and sheepishly blinking.

She loved sleeping late, but was now trying so hard to stay awake to have one more moment wi' him.

He remembered once he caught her sleeping while she sat, waiting for him and when he tried to lay her down she cried "no I'm a wake I'm a wake" he laughed in his heart at the memory.

Aye, Paris, he returned to his original thought, tearing himself from looking at her so he could go on the ground to pleat his kilt.

Where they truly started to be, an 'old married couple’, as she called them.

A completely 'old married, trying to save a whole country, ordinary time traveler-English-wife and a red-headed-laird- Scot warrior husband, couple’ she would correct herself.

He remembered how he would see or hear something only to smirk under his breath at the thought of her reaction to the spectacle.

He remembered how he would always return home and gratified those feelings he had for her during the day.
Not just the bedding (though most times it was, he had to admit to that; wi' her consent of course)
Also a mere kiss would do, a smile, her look of opened mouth astonishment at what people "are
like at this time" and how her mouth opened again in outrage after he closed it the first time wi' his
finger and continued to tell her what the other man did,
Her reaction and inquires when he told her the going around during his day.

He found that his opinion on one matter or the other, would become clearer through her, even if
he did not agree with her comprehension of the situation or person, her reaction helped him
deduce his own.

He has grown so much with her, needed her to become the man he sought to be – whole with
himself or "a work in progress" as she would say.

Even the times he returned to her and she was already asleep (poor soul she did try to always wait
for him);
her being there was enough and he could always speak to faith, that seemed to ken when her
father came home and would move under the sheer shift his wife wore or didn’t (she did try to
wait for him properly to welcome him back).

"Madainn mhath to you, Sassenach" he said, now, when he finished his dressing and was wearing
his shirt and plaid.

He was battening his waist coat and could feel his grin widening as he looked her over.
He bent to plant a very small kiss on her lips "a verra bonny madainn mhath indeed".

He opened the door, peeped at the corridor to see if it was clear, all a while searched for a
plausible excuse in his mind, if he was to be captured or seen and slid out.
Just as her door was about to close, he heard her whisper and the words trickled through the small

"I love you too"
Cherchez la femme

Chapter Summary

So this one is gifted to emijane who wrote me : Just an idea, could you write a scene from Dougal's point of view at the gathering (which I thought a brilliant idea)

That inspired two pieces of writing. This is the first one, which is also going to be in the next chapter in the main story (under the name 'the gathering') the other I will post soon.

I really hope I do her proud, cause she always take the time and heart to encourage and comment on my work and for someone that has never 'published' what she wrote before, I can't thank her enough. I really hope you like it emijane

I tried very hard to let Dougal be a "round" character with depth and purpose and not just good or bad (I think the show does that better than the book, excuse the blasphemy) and it is sort of my interpretation as to how and why Claire and Jamie really found themselves going on the road with the rent party

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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"He'll be coming soon" her voice echoed enticingly.

"I'll be gone before he comes" he answered reassuringly.

Dougal was standing inside the infirmary, leaning on the apothecary cabinet o' old, late Davie Beaton.

God rest his soul, he said, crossing himself.

Even before they both entered, he could hear their glee echoing through the upstairs corridors.

Apparently, his woman was right.

Now they were descending on the short flight of stairs to the surgery.

She had her back half turned to him, laughing giggly, leading Jamie by his hand?!?!!?

Aye, there was nae doubt on the matter, they were holding hands.

Dougal was in a rare mood this evening.

After standing on Colum's side last night and hearing him accept a mere gesture o' friendship and good will instead o' an oath from the young laird, this appearance was 'obout to send him over the cliff.

Colum's consent and approval o' the weak words afforded to him, meant he desired the door for Mr. Fraser to be his successor, to remain open.

Dougal expected his brother to refuse such frailty promises, declaring Jamie an enemy to clan Mackenzie, thereof never to set foot on these lands or risk bein' outright killed.

Tis nae as if he wished his own kin deid, but the price o' him showing up in the hall, was now, too great to allow him to live.

If he had just stayed hidden as he told him he would, before the gathering when he confronted him, all would've been fine.

But the lad broke his words and the price for that was steep.

Dougal was nay fool. He kent Jamie knew he couldna outright refuse Colum; although that would settle quite weel as far as Dougal was concern.

Christ, if that be the case, he'd even fight on the laddie behalf in Colum's ear, telling him that the lad should be banished and nae killed.

But what transpired instead wasna to be accepted.

"We are honored by your offer o' friendship and goodwill, honored by your offer o' obedience" his brother's words thundered in his ears.

"We accept them and hold them in good faith" and what truly did him in at the end was-

"As an ally to clan Mackenzie".

Dougal actually felt his mouth drop from astonishment.

Colum chose his words so carefully, leaving Dougal wi' all the room to doubt and nay certainty as
to his plans for the clot-heid.
Douglas followers wilna in good conscience allow him to harm the boy now.
And Colum kent it weel.

They would argue that a friend to the clan is nae one o’ them, therefore there is nay reason to feel threatened.
And that would force Dougal to admit he was threatened by the whelp to begin wi’.
The lad could never be considered to be laird, they would say and wi’ oot the certainty they wilna risk hurting a man which was under Colum's good graces.
Why that would be an act o’ outright rebellion on their part.
"Besides" they would undoubtedly say "The lad’s kin".

Aye young Broch Tuarach was greatly loved and respected, which was what made him such a formidable foe, that needed squashing.
The fact that Colum protected the lad so, gave no other reason but for his desire for Jamie to inherit his position.
The obedience the lad promised can easily take care o’ that; forcing him when the time came, to swear his allegiance to himself.

But only “so long as my feet rest on the lands of the Clan MacKenzie” the lad said.

So-
That was the moment in the hall when Dougal looked at the other part o’ his plan for young Jamie, consoling himself that the match is far from over and he will get his way.
The lass was breathing lighter, her face ignited wi’ relief at the realization that her young ‘friend’ was safe and sound.
He could feel his own smile spread under his whiskers, knowing now, that he was sure to prevail.
He almost dinna come to her though.

Dougal stared at her and Jamie and Mrs. Beauchamp after standing frozen for only a second, dropped the hand she held and said
"Well that's very good Mr. MacTavish I'm glad to see you can squeeze my arm as I asked. I'm very glad to see it indeed. That means it's not broken”
she turned to Dougal glaring
"Count yourself lucky you didn’t inflict permanent harm on the poor lad and on his injured arm no less.
I've seen how you play the game and fair apparently means pretty in your eyes.
You, sir lack sportsmanship!”

"What?” both he and Jamie frowned in bewilderment.

"Never mind” she responded rolling her eyes in exasperation and coming to stand by the table were her herbs layed awaiting her return.

She placed them in her mortar and used the pestle to pound them properly.
Dougal grinned at that, thinking o’ his love doing the same thing at the exact same way.
Creating something from nothing, all a while using strokes and movements o’ slender, agile, graceful hands.

Once he lifted his gaze from her though, he noticed Jamie looking at the lovely Mrs. Beauchamp wi’ the same admiration and grin to match his.
Jamie noticed him watching and shuffled his feet looking down.
'Aye, look all ye like laddie, ye only coil the rope tighter on your neck’
Dougal said under his breath.

After a moment where they all just stood there in silence, Dougal recalled he did ha’ something he wanted puzzled, before he went on wi’ the business at hand.

"You've seen men die before, and by violence.” He stated.
Claire desist wi’ the grounding and looked straight at him in defiance "Yes, many of them.”
He was about to inquire how and where but Jamie coughing once took her attention and after snapping her heid to him, she swallowed hard as if realizing she said something wrong and silenced.
Dougal suspected the young laird to be infatuated wi’ her, but she seemed receptive to him as well.
He would ha’ to keep it in mind for later.

Best also to send Geillis to sniff at the matter.
The lass could lure man, woman or beast to tell her everything she desired and thank her for it at the end.
Although when it came to the fair Claire, his woman dinna seem so quick to reveal all and betray.

“Ye've done a fine job here as healer” he said and meant the kindness "Mrs. Fitz will ha’ ye sit for a portrait if it was up to her” he complimented in true but also to soften the mood.

"Twas time for the plot to thicken.

He paused a moment then, turning from her and taking one thing or another from one o’ the tiny drawers in the chest in order to hide the wae o’ ache that came at him for his lost

“And ha…I wanted to thank ye, personally, for what ye did for poor Geordie ‘oot there on the hunt”

She was humble and graceful in her reply freeing him from the need to extend any other gratitude to her.

"In truth I did nothing. I wish I could have helped him” she said sounding truly regretful on the matter. That was kind o’ her. It also meant that perhaps it wasna sentiments that drove her close to the young buck but truly her art and heart.

Good, she’ll be easier to draw to his favor if that be the case.

“Ye did!” he proclaimed and almost felt his voice crack, he kent the plan would work better if the lad was here, but he wished ardently that he wasnt.

For a light moment he even wondered how consoling she would be to him if they were alone.

He needed some tenderness now and had none to give it to him. His own lass might be many things but the kindness this healer could provide was missing from her skills.

'for king and country' he said to himself swallowing his need and saying

"You took him to a peaceful place and that’s all any o’us can ask when we pass so-thank ye”

"You welcome” she nodded acknowledging and accepting the gratitude and sounding so understanding that for one moment he wanted to turn and kiss her.

But instead he added kindly but almost choking at his words

"I also heard ye went to his tent at the grounds last night, tried to make his wife to nae allow for his joining at the hunt today, said ye had yourself a feeling, a bad omen”

He heard a crash behind him and turned to see a glass tube o’ some kind at Jamie’s feet and Claire rushing to crouch under him to pick up the pieces.

"Sorry, I’m fair clumsy today as it seems” Jamie uttered through clenched lips all a while erecting himself to full height and looking down at the lass menacingly.

For heaven’s sake, she was a healer. Did he no ken she had powers o’ sight and mend?

She on her end, seem to look everywhere but up at him and was cringing in her own skin. If Dougal wouldna ken better the spectacle would ha’ seemed as a servant being scolded and begging for forgiveness from her master.

What’s ‘rong wi’ her, ‘is he who broke the glass, no?

What was up wi’ the two o’ them? And how did the lad manage to wield such power or position in her eyes to be allowed to act as such?

He was her only friend here, aye. Dougal kent that. Jamie treated her wi’ great kindness and respect o’er his adoration o’ the lass and Dougal supposed it granted him favor in her eyes, mainly due to the fact that all that surrounded her here were either hostile or ordered to spy on her; mostly by Dougal.

But was there somthin’ more than that, that laid between them?

Did she no fancy MacLiver the sword maker anymore?

Claire rose from the floor and turned abruptly to Dougal as if trying to escape her berate.

"Perhaps you came for something else as well” she asked, but side-glanced at Jamie while waiting for Dougal to reply.

Dougal never did like knowing naught o’ what and how things stood. These displays were making him downright rabid.

These two seem to hold many secrets between them and he dinna ken even the slightest what they could be.

"I don’t mean to be rude but as you said ‘a fine job here as healer’; so you will have to excuse me I have much to do for clan MacKenzie in my little dungeon here”

She spoke taking him away from his outraged thoughts.

"Weel that’s why I’m here lass” he said settling to do for which he came, leaving other concerns to a time when his head could be clear from grief and sorrow as to think straight regarding these two.

"To set ye free from this dank room” he declared, sure she’ll query his meaning. But she in turn did and said naught.

In fact, all o’ a sudden, the two faces before him were beaming exuberantly at him.

"Ye’re coming on the road.” He proceeded.

But again no question arose, she just nodded as acknowledging the information and Jamie seemed
to be almost standing on his ends.

Did he injure the lad so badly at the game, his brain went to mash?

"I'm leaving tomorrow and I'm taking ye wi' me"

Fine than, now he was 'bout to erupt; still nae a word Father o' them?

Somethin' was most assuredly 'rong if she dinna at least ask where he was taking her.

But there she stood before him, trying to discard her smile by biting her bottom lip in a feeble attempt to prevent it from curling up.

A soothing thought crossed his mind; the poor wee besom might think his intentions were to set her free.

Aye, that was it, that would explain all this.

Well it seems the woman is nay so bright as all assumed.

"We'll be travelling through MacKenzie lands, collecting rents" he further explained.

Christ, she was still smiling. Did she nae understand what he was saying?

Weel, he'll put an end to it.

"Colum doesna travel so- visiting the tenants and taxman that canna come the gathering, that falls to me… and to attend to a wee bit o’ business here and there”

He said side- glancing to observe his nephew, knowing full weel how crucial he was to said businesses.

To his astonishment the lad looked squarely at him, in what could only be described as a knowing look to match his own.

Dougal could ha’ sworn on his young daughter's heid, that the young coot kent what Dougal had in mind for him and yet seemed to nae care the slightest.

But that couldna be. The only one he told of this was Geillis and she wouldna ever tell another. Foremost since this was her proposal!

'Twas also for the cause and nae in life did Dougal see a woman… nay, nae woman or man more devoted to that end than she.

Dougal was surely nae in his right mind o'er all that transpired today and unable to truly read the people before him.

So he continued wi' his purpose, rising to his feet coming closer to Claire.

"I think 'twill be wise to ha' a healer along, especially one that does weel under strain and there is a lot o' that on the road”

At least wi' that said, she seemed to lower her gaze in worry.

"So that's the business settled” he concluded, coming closer to her side.

From the side o’ his eye he saw Jamie coming closer protectively to her as weel, matching Dougal step by step.

But he dismissed it also in order to take his leave.

"Mrs. Fitz will ha’ supper ready and ye dunna want to incur her wrath by coming late. We leave at first light” he admonished and left climbing the stairs, hearing murmurs and whispers behind him.

He breathed easier now.

Aye, now that the task he assigned himself to do was done, he had only to wait to see if his woman was correct.

Dear Mrs. Beauchamp should count herself lucky to even ken o’ this trip beforehand, he mused angrily over the agitation an’ befuddlement they placed in him.

Should ha’ gone on wi’ his plan, of her finding herself awakened, thrust wi’ luggage filled wi’ clothes and amenities for her, which he already asked Mrs. Fitz to prepare for her, placed to mount a horse and depart.

Lord's eyes, what was 'rong wi’ him when it came to that woman?

Why did he want to control and tame her so?

He scolded his feelings and thoughts o’ her.

She was a ferocious- combative- feral- rude- unknown mystery and he kent he wanted to puzzle her 'oot.

But most o’ all she was free; even when she was obviously captured.

You couldna find a woman like that so easily.

The other which he found as such, he sought after and had on her back three weeks after they met.

And for him that was more time than he ever devoted to bed a lassie.

Aye, he remembered bedding Geillis for the first time.

The enormous pleasure it was to ha’ a wild mare under and atop o’ him.

Her knowing all the conceivable ways to please and be pleased in her bed.

He was no abbot but that was a religious experience if ever did he feel one.

And yet after a few nights o’ this and Geillis wasna yet his, he could sense it.

She was free like Mrs. Beauchamp, nae to be subdued even when under a man.

And he wanted to rule and own such rare and precious things, just as he desired to own Leoch or
to ha’ a Stuart king at the throne.

And as o’ now, he was quite triumphant wi’ all his plans.

Geillis did finally submit to him, he could feel it in her arms, in her bed, between her legs.

Leoch would soon be his. He served his brother beyond everything one could ask for.

He was a loyal and devoted soldier, givin’ his life and body wi’ nae regards to himself.

He had even given his seed and had to watch him grow, never to be able to hold him as his own.

And this was a high price for him to pay, him nay havin’ another barin to call a son to.

He had also given his honest mind and best advice when asked by his brother.

Offered and enforced orders for this castle and the lands around wi’ both their best interest at heart.

‘till now that is.

He would take the healer and wouldna tell Colum o’ it.

Claiming ignorance to Colum’s need o’ her when they’ll return and giving all the reasoning he just informed the lady at, as regards to her joining.

For as much as he would like to tame the beast himself, for right now, he needed the spell she casted on the young laird to come to its full entrancing fulfilment.

If she was on the road, he would ask to join the journey.

Every him knowing the risk to his own heid and the dangers awaiting him while being exposed so.

If she would come, he would follow.

Dougal’s could command and plot as his heart desired on the young buck’s back, he only needed her to enforce it.

And the young man’s back was one o’ the parts that interested Dougal the most, coming second to the lad’s estate and men under his command.

As much as it pained him to see it inflicted, Jamie’s back and the marks he borne, would be a fine story to tell and show at the taverns and inns were they would go, collecting money to bring his country back to its past magnitude.

People kent the horrors that transpired, but seeing was believing.

And young Broch Tuarach’s raw scabs and lashes couldn’a leave a man to hide behind reason.

Even if the funds weren’a abundant, he would play his part at awakening this country to its truth.

He will make them rise and take arm when the time came and nay settle in their stupor.

That was the real dream, the real goal.

For his country to be truly restored to its rightful place and stature and away o’ those bloody, heathens, English hands.

How could one want or even think differently than that?

To live as dogs under their command? To pay them from OUR own lands and hard worked labored earnings?

And what wouldn’a be paid would be taken, seized in the name o’ a Lord and sovereign Dougal refused to even address by name and wished only to spit on his flag.

He as seen his country only torn and hurt under that king’s ruling.

Land plundered to naughting, women raped and their husbands and children forced to watch or even taken themselves.

Those sick, Twally-washer, Póg mo thòn, perverts Englishmen.

All those horrors unleashed and freed on his lands.

Aye, He’d live to see a free Scotland once more and he will be right there in those front lines to accept his dues for all he gave and contributed toward that end.

Him and Geillis that is, who would be so close and obtainable once this castle was his home and resident and wi’oot his wife being the wiser for it to be sure.

But first he would ha’ to bide his time, tread lightly, scheme, earn a small fortune and gather men and arms in secret.

‘Twas his green eyed beauty, who suggested such a course as he was ‘obout to take.

They laid in bed, sweat glistened from his chest, him panting as his heart threatened to burst from his chest after a verra long, verra hard ride wi’ her.

His companion to said ride was lying on her side, taut to his body, looking naught used or bushed the slightest, almost as to refute his own mood and state at present.

For her this was the usual.

She was toying wi’ his chest’s hairs, curling them around her finger.

He told her, just before they started, that he must soon take his leave o’ her, riding wi’ the rent party and wondered who could he ever endure those long weeks and nights wi’oot her, as he was already feeling his balls bursting at the thought.

“Ho I’m quite sure ye’ll find a lass or two, willing to go a round wi’ the War Chieftain o’ Clan MacKezie and future laird o’ Leoch, Dougal” she teased

“Nae that ye require such titles to get them on their backs, my Lord Beannachd” She laughed at him and brought her lips to bite his nipple.
After that moment o’ pure sensation he let it ‘oot how he would at least be able to go to each man
and village and ask for funds for the rebellion to bring back to her in pride.

When she released his skin, He gasped, rubbing at his sore wi’ pleasure and blurted how if only he
could show them all of what he saw the soldiers do to the true sons and daughters o’ Scotland.
To show them what English justice looked like as displayed and proved on Jamie's back.

She lifted herself on her elbow and asked
“Why nae take him wi’ ye then?”

“The lad wilna leave the castle wi’ a price on his heid. 'Twill be as convincing a boar to lie still
while the butcher is beside him holding a blade”

“Wield the lady” Geillis said simply adding a pair of cunning eyes to gleam at him.
“What?” he stared at her in complete loss for understanding.

“Claire” she said again clearing her words wi’ a smile filled wi’ knowledge and secrets, all awhile
running her hand in bigger circles on his chest.

“What’s your meaning?” Dougal queried strenuously, as she was now pulling on one o’ his
chest’s hairs hard.
The sensation nae completely unpleasant.

“Ye take the lady wi’ ye and he wilna be far behind” she skinned her lips on his skin, then she
raised her mouth from his body and laughed a much knowing crafty high-pitched laugh.

"Why I do believe he might even beg ye to come".
She slowly laid her logic for him to see and he felt a daft fool for noticing naught before;
especially that which was so obviously clear to him now.

“Cherchez la femme” she told him in French.
“What?” he bewildered, as he did so many times regarding the strange things she would say or do.

"Look for the woman” she explained “Always search for the woman that will move the man ye
seek to guile.
In the eye o’ the storm there will always be the woman who caused it”

He took her meaning at once.
He needed the lass to rule and tame the young steed.
A steed that has been growing too strong and too smart to be willing to go and do as Dougal
decreed.
The lad was nae longer a wee sixteen burke lubber willing to stand under Dougal's thumb as
before.

"Ye can try to bed her Dougal, but ‘twill do ye nay good, she wilna ha’ ye to be sure” Geillis
added just as he was pondering on the fact did Mrs. Beauchamp feel the same for the false Mr.
McTavish as he felt for her, for Dougal did desire a short ride on the young widow.

"Geillis” he rebuked indignantly “what d’ye take me for?”
He tried defending himself, fearing she could see the thoughts and dreams he had of the mistress
of late.
She wilna begrudge him to have her.
She always allowed it wi’ others, sometimes even joining them by her own volition.
But still he felt a small combativeness between Geillis and Claire friendship.
And as oppose to men, women nay only hated or loved there were many layers in between.
Best for all concern to nae enter those layers; or so he learned wi' bloodshed as his guide.

Nay worry though, for Geillis kent weel, once he had a lassie good and properly used, he would
lose interest and always come back to her.

But she also kent he wouldna be denied the sampling o’ such fine cuisines that crossed his path
before giving them up, to be sure.
There were far too many wonders in the world and he would ha’ them all.

“A collector” she answered his false outrage "Ye like the rare things that grow wild in the world”
she said but dinna seem disturbed at all by the fact, but rather amused.

“Ye like to collect, possess and make them your own. To leave them shattered wi’ your mark
cauterized on them” her tone still seemed amused and approving of such things only she added a
sigh, rose on her arm to sit on the bed by him and laughed lightly

"But I'm afraid ye canna ha’ this one Dougal, nae, nay our fine Claire"

"I got ye dinna I?” he teased caressing her naked back, so smooth and unblemished.

"Aye?” she quizzed as if that wasna the whole truth.

“Believe ye me Geillis? he rose on his arm as weel kissing her back, her red fiery hair caressing
the tip o’ his heid "ye are rare”

“More than ye will ever Ken lad” he heard but no saw her smirk at that.

“But m' notion of bedding and hers are quite different my Victorious conqueror. I'm afraid the lass
will only bed for love and the unfortunate twist for ye Dougal is that she will never love what
couldna love her back” she said gathering her flowing hair to expose more o’ her skin to be
afforded the treatment o’ his lips.

"I dinna follow your meaning” he said, already applying his lips to the work he was assigned to
do.

"Our Claire is what ye may call an idealist” she said reaching her hand back to his balls and lightly
applying the same pressure his lips gave her back.

"Which means?” he increased his force so she will increase hers.
"She is attracted to the purity o' notions ye Ken naught 'obout she laughed and pulled her hand a way.

"Such as?" he grabbed her wrist and put it back in its place.

"True love" she cupped them both rolling them in her palm "loyalty to those she holds dear or o' need o' her protection and care" her hand now went to his cock "And ye m'dear Dougal canna truly love"

"Ye think me a monster?" he gasped wi' eyes closed and head thrown back, sure he might take offence to her words, were it nae for her strokes making it impossible to feel naught but pleasure at present time.

"Nay, I think ye a patriot" she laughed with admiration hardening her strokes.

Christ, that was what he loved 'obout her.
To be wi' her meant one had to be the best and at his best at all times.

"A what?" he blew the words wi' no breath.

"Someone who'll put his own heart aside for honor and country" she snaked herself crawling on him 'till she sat atop him letting her hand maneuver his entry, which was just as well, for Dougal could do naught but lean on his hands and clutching the covers.

"Ye are full wi' passion and unwavering principals for your cause, but your cause can never be so small as to be only one woman"

He was inside her now, his eyes closed feeling himself shaking.
He heard her voice, as always, slid as a snake, seeming to him as coming from all directions.
Reaching and penetrating his ears in enchanting whispers.

"Nay. In your eyes, ye aspire greater, bigger" she rocket him to a lying position.

"The young cub now. He seeks true love, he desires to burn and perish only at the light o' his true heart. He has no mind to conquer the world or even to be free.
He will throw it all for love.
Surrender to it and let it be his master" her voice came near his left ear now, as she bent and purred deeper into him.

"Ye would sacrifice love instead" she chuckled at his ear "that is what I find most arousing 'obout ye. Ye would never think or look so small.
Ye dream of a free Scotland o' moving the heavy rocks o' history at your feet.
The young fox desires only happiness and to protect does he holds dear.
He might grow, change and fight for code and glory but for now he will only fight, truly fight for love"

Geillis's soft tones became louder and deeper and his heid couldna hold naught but her words.

"Control the lady" she ordered sweetly “Dangle her as lure and the lad will beg and plead to come... hahah... ye'll see”
By now she was rocking atop him ferociously, his hands clutching her white milky breasts, she was lifting herself on her knees inching higher and higher forcing him to thrust his hips up to her in order to keep their connection.

He wouldna ever allow a woman ride him so. Naught but her.
Geillis could do all she desired to him.
She knew ways in the bedding he saw nae the most prestige whore to ha' knowledge of.
She moved his hands down to her stomach as she rocked into him harder and harder, she hardly dared to open his eyes, but when he finally did, he saw that she wasna even looking or minding him but eyeing straight ahead, smiling a smile that was thrilling as 'twas unnerving.
Teeth bared, eyes glinting, her body moving as she was dancing on him, moving as a snake slithering to all sides, touching herself, her breasts, her hair.

So consumed wi' her pleasure he wasna even there, just a sacrifice in this maddening dance.

"Christ" he screamed and spilled himself ferociously.
His whole body shaking as she descended from him and so-matter-of-factly took his hand, lay on her side, tight to his body and maneuvered his fingers to further satisfy her.

"Control the woman, you'll control the man" She said again and he wondered how can she even form words while she had his hands serving her so.
She seemed always in control even in her moment of -

She cried 'oot, releasing his hand, sighing and returning to full sense in a trice when he was still shivering and basking at the light o' their joint second ride.

"Are ye hard yet?" she asked a few minutes later.
To his astonishment he was.

She saw his puzzlement over it and laughed "Ye always are, when ye watch me"
She climbed atop o' him again wi' no need for delay and rode him to oblivion leaving him incapable but always hungry for more.
The reminder of that bedding made him look at the direction of the surgery he just left, wondering did that lady in there acted the same as his own when one had her on her back.

"She's a rare one, just as me Dougal" Geillis told him just as they departed "But ye canna ha' her. Ye'll see, for as a child that's been denied, ye will try, fail an' try again"

Of course he would Dougal resolute.

Lord save him that only made him love Geillis more. SheKent it o' him and dinna care. She knew him and how to treat a man as him right.

This wasna enough though, to clench his curiosity and desire regarding the new widowed Mrs. Beauchamp but 'tis why he would always return to his true lady at the end o' every liaison he pleasurably entangled himself at.

And unlike Geillis that had nae mercy or softness to her, the healer once calmed seemed to possess it in spades and sometimes Dougal found himself craving it from another.

"She's rare as me" he heard Geillis's voice say again and wanted to hunt the fair English game to completion.

'Ye will sacrifice all for king and country' Geillis also said and so he did, willing to let the lad play wi' the widow for a while until he'll get his way.

****

He heard steps coming toward him and Jamie's voice frantically pursuing him down the corridors.

"Dougal, Dougal, can ye spare a minute a bràthair-athar?"

Dougal sneered to himself wi' the satisfaction of a man whose plan is coming together.

He laid the trap and now could practically hear the coil snap on the moose's neck.

"Aye?" he turned to see a flustered Jamie come to stand by him, smiling in a pseudo polite smile.

"I heard what ye told Mrs. Beauchamp" Jamie said panting, then straightened himself, replaced his demeanor to an earnest and serious one; also quite false, Dougal could tell.

"Aye?" said Dougal harmonizing the expression before him.

"Only I Ken I was a bother o' late and hav'na been helping much wi' all the interests o' the castle and o' himself" Jamie said, sobered and heavy-thought looking.

"I'm sure I dinna Ken what ye mean. Old Alec speaks verrra highly o' ye and your work in the stables" he shouldna play wi' the moose as such, but this young, flushed, trying to con the highest conniver, a gòrach, made him want to play wi' the cheese and see Jamie's mouth struggle to bite.

"But that's nay help in the grand scheme o' things"

Jamie went on wi' his reasoning

"Why I owe ye my life for getting me 'oot from fort William and taking me to the abbey after… weel after someone bashed my heid in" he gave Dougal an odd stare but there was no possible way the lad could ken 'obout that, That secret Dougal will take to his dying bed.

Jamie took him 'oot o' such pondering by carrying on wi' his words

"And I feel myself in debited to ye for it" he said but looking verrra peculiar at saying that.

"And feel myself owing ye harder labor than what I ha' given o' late" The moose went on wi' a final try

"For ye to ha' gathered me to my dear kins bosom's and offer such security… ouch, such things must be paid in kind uncle"

"Fine" said Dougal relinquishing his fun and letting the game end "What was your thoughts on the matter?"

Jamie cracked a brilliant, sincere, wide smile at that and said "weel 'obout that then… "

Chapter End Notes

So this is Dougal's POV and voice which was a bit scary because we never really read or hear from him in the books but to me it felt I needed to make him raw and explicit just like the character.

He devours life and all that come in his path and never stops to question himself or what's good or bad

Now about the title:
Cherchez la femme = is a French phrase which literally means "look for the woman."
The implication is that when a man behaves out of character or in an otherwise inexplicable manner there is always a woman involved either trying to cover up an affair with one (Dougal), or trying to impress or gain favor with one (Jamie).

The expression comes from the 1854 novel The Mohicans of Paris by Alexandre Dumas. The first use in the novel reads:
No matter what the problem, a woman is often the root cause…

So according to the date Geillis will know the phrase but the others won't

Hope you liked it.
Chapter Summary

From the upcoming 'THE GATHERING'

I kind of started to play with the idea to voice other characters that we never heard from, after I tackled Murtagh and Dougal.
So this my take on Mrs. Fitz and its coming up in my next chapter in the main story, which will be coming any day now.
This also comes right after the 5 ep' from this post
Really hope you like it

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I was trying fervently to scurry the Misses along, to no avail.
She was staggering and wobbling to all sides through the castle passageways.
She was moaning loudly e'ery time we crossed a window or a crack in the wall where light shone from; shielding her hands to her face.
The lass was as drunk as Angus was the day and night afore, when we found his sprawled person in the hall by the hearth where the oath-taking took place.
Why, me and my Betties finally conceded and began sweeping 'round the man, for he wouldna be awaken to save his life.
Aye, men and their cordial partaking at celebration times.

In the past few days it seemed my art had become to scrape men that were distempered by the drink.
So badly, ye swear by the Author o' our being himself, that they were devoted and bound for the devil, only to scrape them yet again the next day in the same fettle and us left to clean up their spew.

Perhaps someday the world would come to see those kind were nay the minds who should be left the running o' the world. But then who would?
I pondered amusingly to myself.
Us women?

Galena m'dear ye and your absurd notions.
'Til then though, I laughed at myself again, the bloody carcass o' Angus Mhor, an' so many others, couldna be moved nae matter how many times we kicked him, yelled at him or e'en poured icy water ower him.

He just belched from the side o' his mouth and scratched his--
Weel, he scratched what the Author gave him, but shouldn' be scratched in public.
Or in private if one had interest in my opinion; aye, that was what he scratched!
I quaked at the memory.

Mrs. Beauchamp has it seem was as bedraggled as he, at this moment.
Floundering at e'ery step and still wi' the needing to sit or lean on something e'ery few paces or she would fall from her feet.

She was as this, since I came into her chamber this morning.
So much so that I was finally compelled to slash her from her bed, sit her down and take care o’ her toiletries for her.
Her shift reeking o’ Colum's Rhenish.

"M'dear, how many o’ the cups were ye in last night?” I berated worriedly at a leaning on the wall figure, which moaned wi’ pleasure as she snuggled her heated face to the cold stone wall.

"Hst, a nighean, how will ye e’er ride so? Why ye’ll flat-’oot fall, straight from the horse and onto your face and ye canna treat your own cracked heid, now can ye?’

Though wi’ her awful way to cure distempers, I wouldna be at all surprised to witness that.
Fine healer that one, a fine one indeed.

"Hommen the madsax” the misses said starting to snore ’oom her noose lightly.
Truagh lassie, she probably did so after being told she’ll be on the road wi’ the men-o’-arm. What's Dougal's mind? The road is nay a place for a respectable lady such as the Mistress to be on.

"I nae ken what ye ha’ in mind for her, MacChoinneich, but I'll surely pray all day and night to the heavens to keep her 'oot o’ your scheming machination hands and thoughts" I said under my breath. The truagh banntrach, has been through enough. She deserves some joy and love in her life. Here's hoping she'll find it soon.

Or perhaps she has, I brooded, considering dear Mr. MacLiver. For drink wasna the only thing the woman was smelling o’ this fine morning.

"When Colum ken o’ this Dougal-“ I sighed silently to myself afraid to be heard as I looked her ower again

"No as if there's a working ear 'round here at the moment to hear m'words" I smirked benevolently to the whining coming from the wall.

And I kent better than to go tell Himself's working ear and shake the soil under all our feet, I determined.

I may no be educated or gone round and 'obout to see the world, but I ken verra weel nae to lay m’ carcass between two bovines heids in rut for the position o’ laird.

Besides, I thought as I saw young Jamie coming to take leave o’ me wi’ a warm embrace and smiling eyes, as always. He’ll look ‘oot for her if I ask this o’ him.

Aye, she’ll be in bonny hands wi’ this one.

Why the lad had such manners and heart, pure as the snow that's nae fell yet.

Bred to be a mother’s dream that one, I mused, crossing myself at the sweet memory o’ kind, beautiful Ellen. Him being her spitting image and nae missing o’ her wit as weel.

Nay wonder the castle lassies dressed a bit more… weil more since his arrival. 'Better get yourself good and properly marriet, before they'll take ye by force Seamus', I inferred to myself regarding the coming lad. 'Why, after what ye did for m’little chuisle, the lass is ready to read her banns and vow her troth to ye, outlaw or murderer be damned'

Jamie came and bowed so gracefully to me saying "Your servant ma’am". Then straithen and bundled me to him, laughing wi’ a warm true heart.

"What's a miss then?” he asked amused by the figure that cracked an eye at him, smiled a silly half-twit smile, then winced and shut her eye again, inclining her other cheek to be brisen by the wall wi’ a turn o’ her heid from us.

"Hardly could budge her 'oot o’ bed or keep her straight while I tended her, I dinna ken how she could e'er ride so” I said justly afraid at her standings.

"Dinna fash. I ha’ seen her worse than this” Jamie said surveying her up and down and quivering from hilarity.

"Ye ha’?” I said, wondering in my mind’s eye ha’ I e'er seen the Misses in a bad way afore today.

"I mean she told me o’ it, aye that's what I meant. Of times she would be much worst from drink than this” he stammered through his reasoning. He was ne'er a bonny liar to me, but I dinna ken why to lie o’ this.

"She'll be just fine in an hour or two, I'll see to her 'til then” he said and came near the lass turning her heid back to him e'er so gently and whispering in the softest loving voice I e'er heard him speak in, to man or woman.

"Sassenach?” he inquired while cupping her cheeks. The bright blue eye split again and the most heartfelt smile spread on her face. "Jamie" she whispered just as lovingly and tenderly as he did to her and then heaved herself to the other side o’ the wall she leaned on, collapsed to her knees and began to retch her poor cridhe ‘oot.

"Ouch m’dear” I said wanting to come to her aid, only to be outreached by Jamie holding back her curly hair, which was coming-'oot in all direction from under the pins I tried to arrange for her this morning.

"Shhh, shhh” he whispered supporting her from behind, caressing her hair and soothing her 'til she was done "Tis fine a nighean, I'm here, shhh”

"I hate everything” she said between the sickening. "I ken that” he laughed nae wi’oot sympathy "Ye always do when ye're sick. 'Tis fine Sassenach, ye told me so yourself once, wi’ me in the same bad way, that after a good retch ye feel much better” she peered up at him, glaring and simply said "I hate you too"
He laughed and seemed verra unconcerned wi' her harsh words.

"Aye, ye always do. Though serves ye right for what ye did to me last time wi' all the things ye wanted to give me" he laughed shaking wi' joy and glee, seeming giddy as he was 'oot to a celebration and nay on a cold, dank, dirty ride through the ether wi' the rent party.

"R'ye all done now, then?" he queried softly after a moment "we should really go"

"No I can't, not on a horse" she tried protesting as he took her by the arm and lifted her to his lap

"No Jamie I really can't, I think…. No I know I'm dying"

She said curling her hands round his neck.

"Ye are r'ye?" he asked, mocking tone apparent.

"Aye!" she exclaimed weakly, burying her heid against his shoulder and burrowing herself into him

"Please just let me die on solid ground".

He just laughed again.

Why, couldna stop w'i the constant laughing since he came to us.

He began pacing warily as to no shake the lass so.

Walking toward the opening that stood by the side o' the kitchen that led to the courtyard where their horses awaited.

I myself was fully transfixed by the happenings and couldna do naught more but follow blindly after them w'i her trunks.

"Ye canna be deid yet Sassenach" he whispered to her cradled heid at his lap.

"When then?" she mouthing her words so weakly, half gone'oot by now.

She seemed to feel so secure in his arms she just 'obout melted into him.

"A'her he simply said "After ye can collapse"

"After what?" the words seem to leap from my lips as I was fully mesmerized by the spectacle.

"Dinna worry she gets my meaning" he blinked or rather just shut his eyes quickly and opened them again, all filled w' jokery.

I crossed myself again, smiling and thinking how Ellen couldna properly blink also.

"Are ye weel w'i her things then? I dunno seem to possess a hand to gie ye at the moment" he said deeply remorseful as he noticed my burden.

"Dinna fash" I heaved the load for a better grasp "Nay worry lad, I daresay ye ha' your hands full w' virtuous chivalry at present" I said only half noticing my words.

I simply couldna believe my eyes.

I kent that young Jamie appreciated the Mistress beauty or e'en inclined himself to feel amorous feeling for the lass, but I thought her one o' many he desired.

Young lads being as they were meant to be.

Although the whole castle took to the noticing as to how he was, once she was near, how he would informally ask what she did today or where she was at one moment or the next, mostly sounding verra worrit after slinkin' 'bout the surgery and finding her nay there.

But that was due to her being w'i Mr. MacLiver or at himself chamber's treating him.

I much assumed such things will blow away once he will come to see her feelings for the handsome, allegeable, fill wi' crown Lucas were so rooted.

Why the way those two laughed was a sight for sore eyes, especially if one kent the poor lass was nay guest but prisoner o' himself and his brother.

I so wished her to find happiness and security and young Luke seeming so willing to take her.

That was the only reason I told Himself o' the why those two were to be wed and fast.

It will insure her safe way'oot o' this castle but still near enough to prove she wasna working for the Sassenach's army.

She could be free and looked after at the same time, I told Himself.

Why, we all kent the man's art and talent.

And he was a good man, kind and caring and also quite obviously love stricken wi' our fine charmer.

And their were all the obvious signs in her room indicating a verra glaring evident o' male attendance there, for all these past weeks.

She clearly was entertaining a gentleman caller in her chamber.

Nae that 'tis o' concern or mind o' mine, I told myself, the lady is a widow and o' age to do as she pleased and being locked here w' nay friends or freedom canna be easy.

So-

After the night me and my Abigail's found the telling signs, I addressed Colum informing him that if he willna ensure her a marriage stature o' some kind, a scandalous illegitimate barin will soon ensued.

But the way Jamie acted just now and the smile she returned him, accompanied by the most trustworthy inclination she allowed him to carry her so.

Weel perhaps the young cub did stand a chance to win her heart.

He's sure to ha' her alone and unguarded on the road w'i him.
Perhaps that is why he made the startling announcement to Murtagh in the kitchen the day afore.

Saying that they are to join the rent party and he'll hear none different o' it.

Murtagh thumped his plate and Murtagh ne'er abused his food, went on to yelling and stomping his feet, but to no avail.

They were to leave, Jamie said and although he would usually gie' the man the right to decide if he chose to go wi' him or nay, this time it was most important that he came along.

"I need ye there standing by me for what's to come" Jamie pleaded wi' the man.

"Then why go, if ye ken problems might ensue?" his kin protested.

"Tis nay only trouble that might come to pass a ghostidh, it could be a merry occasion and such" young Lord Broch Tuarach told his unconvinced godfather

"And I'll ha' no other man but ye at my side when it... I mean if it does, whatever it may be" Jamie said, placing his hand on Murtagh's shoulder and wi' a look that was no order but a plea, but also invoked the ancient sacred bounds o' blood and oath between them, simply added "Please".

So here stood Murtagh, this fine morning, I saw as I followed Jamie 'ootside to the steeds.

Murtagh held his and Jamie's reins awaiting him to mount.

Jamie placed Claire back on her feet near her mare, making sure her threats o' death were idle.

He parted the curls from her face grinning.

"All weel then Sassenach?"

"No" she said and started to mount her beast.

"Aye, ye'll be fine lass, ye'll be fine" he helped her up, making sure o' her sturdiness on the animal afore leaving her to straddle his own, all while still glancing behind him to make sure o' her wellbeing.

"Jamie" I called 'oot to him.

He came to me to embrace me farewell again, planting a firm kiss on m' forehead.

"She'd be so upset she couldna say goodbye to ye" he said so sure o' his words "she loves ye greatly"

"And I her" I said peaking at a half-deid form sprawled on her mare's neck.

"Ye'll mind and care for her mo ghillie, aye? Poor thing doesna always mind our ways"

"Always" he said in a way that left no room for doubt.

"Mòrbhaileach" I cried after him as he departed from me to go on his horse "and mind yourself as weel"

I added, knowing he'll be in m' prayers also.

"All o' ye" I called 'oot to the rest o' the men, feeling the tears arise as I watched m'dear men, m' grown children and kin mounting and riding away.

"Mind ye're selves, be kind to all and -" I choked wi' emotion at the receding line o' beasts and men.

Feeling m' heart flutter e'ry time one o' them crossed the gate and into the wild.

"Tha gaol agam oirbh uile"

I said already to myself in an empty courtyard, watching them ride in such a time the sun has nae yet even come to shine their way.

Aye, m' love is upon ye all, indeed, I said again in m' heart.

Chapter End Notes

So-

I didn't abandon you (this is to those who haven't abandon me yet:) I'm working very hard on a special chapter full of goodness and love for the holidays but its taking a bit more then I thought it would (I think I'm psyching myself out a bit), but I also took the time to re-edit the first 3 ep' in the main story, that's cause in my rush to post them I didn't do it properly.

p.s:

some words I used and their meaning: (after reading an article on used words at the time)

Betties/ abigail = maidservants
Cordial = hard liquor used mostly for medicinal purposes to knock a man out
Art = craft
Devoted = doomed
Author of our being = the creator / God (Mrs. Fitz will never use blasphemy)
Awful= awe-inspiring
"Wooff I hate sunrise" she exclaimed firmly.

"'Tis nay sunrise Sassenach, 'tis dawn, twilight dawn to be exact.
If it be sunrise I couldn't be here w' ye, now could I? I'd be needing to be back to the stables"
Jamie illuminated his wife.

"Aaarrr" she glared at his clarification "I don't care, whatever it is I hate it!!" she carried on declaring.
"I don't understand why people excite themselves to see it"
His dear wife clutched the covers and lifted them way above her head.

She hated to be awoken so early in the morning and even more so, to have the first crack of dawn hit her face so mercilessly right between her eyes.

"I mean it comes every day; we understand how it works already!!! Can't the bloody thing or the sun come a bit late at times!!!
I myself will not hold it against them, I assure you!!!"
She cried out, her voice muffled under the coverlet.

"Sassenach" Jamie was trying to yank down the shrouds, she was holding so tight to her face.

"Besides" she said, emerging from her screen and trying another tactic on him.
"Every sunrise, at the moment, means you are taken away from me" she said, turning to her side to face him and away from the window.
She buried her face into his naked chest, replacing the bedspread with his body.

He groaned when her lips caressed his nipple, but dinna falter from his mark.

"S...sa...Sassenach " he clasped her upper arms, to distance her just enough to compel her to stare into his eyes, which he adjusted to hold a disciplining look and cocked his eyebrow at her.

"Fine" she rolled her eyes giving in.
"I understand Jamie, I'll do it, stop...stop 'fashing and fretting forbye" she said, trying to imitate a Scottish phrase, using either his or Mrs. Fitz's voice while doing so, he couldn't tell.
She did sound verra funny, but he wouldn'a return her grin at her witty retort.

He had only a few more moments before he had to go and this must be made clear.

"Then say it Claire, repeat my words to me, so I Ken you heard them A L L".

"Wooffff" she exasperated again "fine, fine".
She sighed submissively and recited his speak.

"Once on the road with the rent party, I will not distance myself from you!
I will not disappear without making sure beyond a shadow of a doubt that you 'ken' exactly where I am. At times, with no exception!!!
I will not speak to strangers, for I am not of this time and I do not fully know how my words will be interpreted by Scots that dislike strangers that are Sassenachs, especially at this point in history!
I will not see some 'bonny' plant and run off without you, in order to pick it"

"Not even if said plant could heal the dead" she added swiftly when she saw his mouth open to further clarify that point.
When it came to the healing, his wife could always be trusted to forget herself.

"I will..." she desisted wi' the declaim and folded her arms in protest "Haamm ...you do know I was doing quite well without you, before, I mean?"
She lifted her eyebrows testing his memory.

"Managed to get myself not killed or mishandled all by my lonesome"
She smiled gloating
"Even more than that, I got YOU to fall in love with me"
She leaned to him and kissed the spot between shoulder and neck
"Got YOU to marry me"
She flicked her tongue at the hollow of his throat and then very lightly tasted him.

"Got YOU to get me pregnant"
She inhaled his morning musk into her
"Twice"
He could feel her lips spread into a smile on his skin.
'Don't give in, don't give in, don't give in, don't give in, don't give in.'
Jamie held tight to the belief, that if he would say it enough times, other parts of him willna hear her morning call and awaken wanting to join the proceedings.

He frowned disapprovingly and tightened his clasp.

"Fine, fine" Claire yielded.
"I will not take further risk at anything changing, so any step I take will be discussed at length between the two of us. To be agreed upon by both parties before ANY further steps would be taken" she proceeded to quote him back to himself in a monotony chant for another minute or so.

"Verra good" he said when the address was done "ye might actually make for a proper wife someday"
Now he was willing to return her grin to her and retort wi' some wit o' his own.
While his wife on her end, took his first looks and was cocking her eyebrow at him, frowning and glaring
He kissed that frowned, wrinkled, nose he loved so much and was heavily rising to return to his lonely hole in the ground, that dinna hold neither smell, warmth or sight of her.

He was really starting to dislike sunrises as well.

He wore breeks and a shirt this time, when he came to her, in order to save the five minutes it took to pleat his kilt and put it on, so he could spend a few more precious moments still entangled in her.

"You think I can't?" she asked, probably thinking his deep sigh came from his disbelieve in her ability and not for how his body always seemed to weigh double his size when he was forced to put distance between them.

"You'll see" she said "I'm a great communicator"
"A what?" he frowned, finishing to dress.
"Someone how is able to transfer the information required quite skillfully" she replied.
He snorted.
"Ye?!! Half the time I dinna Ken what ye're saying and I've been marriet to ye for almost 3 years"

"Watch yourself James Fraser, the wedding didn't happen YET, now did it?" she said, using her trump card.

How was the clot-heid that said the lady dinna Ken how to play?

"I'll show you!" she said rising to her feet as weel, shivering from the cold and saying "Right! Now I am walking to the hearth to light the fire" and so she did.

"I am lifting the flint, hoping it will actually ignite in the first hundred tries and not the three hundred"

Jamie crossed his arms looking amusingly at the narrated story and play before him.

"Please tell me if there are only enough peats for a small fire, we wouldn't want me to burn the whole place down, now would we?" she said; hand on her chest in mock fright.

"Never mind" she waved her hand dismissing the matter when he didn’t reply.

"Now I am doing this" she emphasized her words as if speaking to a soft in the head patient for I intend to have a quick wash before my day starts and maybe have some tea... Which reminds me, are there some leafs left in the drawer of the dresser behind you?"

Jamie poked at it and handed her the folded, fragrant kerchief she always kept such thing at.

"Ho dear!!" she said stunned "Don't you want to smell it, to know which kind I'm having?" she asked sarcastically.

"I mean how could I ever be safe if you wouldn't know if I'm having Jasmine or Camellia Sinesis?"

"I get your meaning Sassenach" Jamie soured his face

"OoooH no Mr. Fraser I'm not done yet" she came closer to him

"We didn't even reach the part where I tell ye what I will wear today. Will I wear boned bodice or a lacy one..."

"Sassenach"
She carried on ignoring him.

"Then you simply must know how many steps I will take to reach my surgery...mmmmm" she put a finger on her lip musing "Now I can't tell you what will happen when I get there, that of all things, did change a bit for I do spend more time there, now that I am not planning my escape this time, so I tend to more patients"

"SASSENACH" Jamie tapped his fingers on his thigh

"I'm pretty sure Malcom the... well I forget what he does, but I promise to take notes in the future!! Well he will surely come to see me about his wart; his black and green wart. See I had to tell him not to wash the place where it grew and apply daily only what I concocted for him as a drying solution, now the top layer I already peeled off.
And now that the main body slowly became a scab with the treatment, I need to remove it today. He can't possibly do it alone for it might ooze and bleed"

She narrowed her eyes at him and held a pleased smile on her face as he made faces of disguised at the imagery she was unfolding before him.
Thank the Lord he had nothing in his stomach yet.
She didn’t desist, enjoying her true win.

Who needed cards; she was a true winner in getting her way in life.
"What I'll do is probably need to clean his big, fat, ripe, blistered toe… woww"

Jamie hurled her back to the mattress by her waist, laid atop of her, rubbing his face and stubble over her face and neck. When she finally silenced from squirming and begging for him to stop he said

"Fine, fine, no every step then, but Sassenach-"

"Don't worry Jamie, you will know where I am at all times my love” she brought her hand to the back of his heid, caressing and toying wi’ his hairs, he hummed enjoining the feeling. This was better than warts!

"And will you grant me the same?"
She asked softly.

"That's easy Sassenach" he said quite seriously "look either to your left or your right, that's where I'll be. Always” he finished and kissed his wife good morning.
I sat on the rock I sat last time on, hoping he realized that I picked that fight for us to have five
seconds alone after so long apart between others.

I'm sure it was my angst and over mounting anticipation, that made it seem as if he wasn't going to
come.

It must have been those feelings that clouded my judgment in such a way, it made me think that I
must have waited forever before I rose to my feet, dusted my skirt and sighed
"Ho well, I did try" I said.

"Jamie probably couldn't get away, this time, without raising suspici-"

I was snared and swung in such a way that when my back was pressed to the tree behind me, my
sight and focus have not yet reached my new location.

When they did finally return to me, my first thought and view, were of my own tracks, that were
left by my feet, when I was dragged with almost no weight on them to the position I found myself
at the moment.

Such a sight was afforded for me to notice, since my assailant did not stand before me, but had his
face completely buried in my décolletage and using only his tongue to liberate my breast from the
neck line of my bodice.

A thing I would have considered to be impossible, but he was applying himself quite convincingly
to prove me wrong.

He was frenetic, he used his hands to untie the knitted shoulder piece I wore and once that was
done, he couldn't decide if he wanted to press himself on my body and ready himself, although
there seemed to be no need for it from what I could feel,
or continue his extrication of my breasts using only mouth and tongue.

"I want ye so bad it hurts"

He said, still unable to decide and trying to do both at the same time.

"It hurts so bad, I cannot see anything through my eyes but your white glowing skin, that seem to
blind me and your hair which I keep thinking I smell everywhere I go"

The new decision now, was to either lift my skirt or his kilt first.

The poor man was still unable to elect one course of action from the next.

"And 'tis making me hard all the time" he complained.

"Reallyyyyy mmmmm" I started to say, but his lips on mine, as his hands deciding to just almost rip my garment off and be
done with hard decisions, made me unable to speak any further.

"Nmmmm" I tried to slow him down, to tell him no, that we couldn't, we shouldn't.

But he clutched the tree trunk behind my head, pressed himself to me and when he finally did
released my mouth, he ordered

"Touch me a nighean, touch me!! Put your hand on my skin NOW!!!" and he made it clear with
his eyes which part needed to be touched.

"Jamie stop" but he wasn't listening and I knew better than to try and push him away.
I managed to side slip across the trunk of the tree though.

I was fast and he certainly didn't see it coming.

Now the tree stood between us.

"Get back here!!!" he commanded, trying to take hold of me.

"No!" I side-lunged again around the tree so he wouldn't catch me.

"Sassenach" he growled I love our games always; truly I do, but not now!!!"
He tried again and again, but as if we were both in the most childish playground game of Cat and
Mouse, I maneuvered my way around the tree to keep my freedom.

"Sassenach" he glunched "If ye find that ye are nay ready, I'll see to it that ye will be, ye ha' my
word, but by the name of all that is holly and all that is not, get over here or else."
The damn jungle cat was fast and agile and I found myself clasped in his arms, as I tried to make a run for it. He clutched me from behind, before I even finished taking my first step in order to run and pressed me to him. He sighed with the pleasure of our bodies touching.

"I was going to take ye differently than this, but ye ken perfectly weel, this way is fine by me too" "Jamie!!!" I hissed and inclined my head to signal a spot just in front of us, where down from the small hilly region we stood on, he could clearly see one of the mans-of-arm feeding the horses and taking some things out from the wagon. Just as I remembered, and the reason I played this little game of tag with my husband. Even when feeling his desire pressed against me, I realized no further 'preparation' will be needed for my side as well.

His grip loosened and I distanced myself quickly thanking our lucky stars the man had his back to us the entire time. As my body pulled himself off of Jamie I heard him whimper, yes actually whimper at feeling my body depart his. He stood rooted in place, his arms still frozen as if he held something that was now gone, taken away cruelly from him, he also seemed to stand half bent unable to straighten fully.

His eyes bore into the man below and he growled menacingly. I was quickly adjusting my garments to return looking presentable and queried "What are you doing?" "I can get him from here" he snarled. "What?" I asked uncomprehending.

"I can take that rock" he gestured with his eyes at a stone by his foot "and throw it at his head from here, it will knock him 'oot for more than five minutes, to be sure, not that it will take that long" He said diverting his stare to me, as I was tying my laces, adjusting my stomacher and making my breast disappear back under the thick fabric. It REALLY, REALLY won't take that long he said in a pleading pitiful way, so I might still consider his proposal.

I huffed at him. "You will not be killing or throwing stones at people James Fraser, do you hear me?" "Nod if you can hear me Jamie! So I know you understand" He really did seem unable to comprehend more than his animal instincts at the moment. "Jamie! Nod if YOU understand" I repeated myself with a louder hiss. Hoping fervently, I won't need to slap him. His face distorted into a hateful sneer directed at me, but he still nodded.

"Christ Sassenach, how are ye doing this??" he snapped. "I'm not!" I glared my eyes at him "It's just as bit as hard for me as it is on you" "Trust me Sassenach it's nay as H A R D on ye" I giggled, I didn't mean to, but there you have it, I did giggle.

"Sassenach" he whimpered again. "Jamie, I just thought a chaste kiss a small touch of the arm, to talk to you. I didn't think you would come here thinking...well thinking mmmmpphh" "Who the bleeding Jesus are ye no thinking mmmmpphh" he exclaimed

"Keep your voice down" I whispered loudly "Beside, I am!!!!! I shot him duggers with my eyes "All the time, it's insufferable to me as well, but I'm keeping my eye on the prize here" "Ha?" he frowned bewildered. "I just mean, I keep thinking about the wedding night" I smiled lewdly, trying to be encouraging that his wait will be rewarded. "Dinna do that!!" he ordered and bent as if he had a thousand stitches burst from his gut, all at once. He crumbled himself to sit on my earlier boulder. "I think ye should leave now mo chridhe" he said, now looking and sounding as if those same stitches were being sewed back into him with a very dull needle. I hurried to crouch by him But he staggered back on his rock.

"No dinna touch me! Trust me no luaidh, touching me is nay the right thing to do right now...
"Just... Just... Please go, leave me to my doom"
"You really shouldn't be so melodramatic" I crossed my arms to my chest irritated, he wasn't the only one how was suffering here.

He looked up at me and growled menacingly in a gut deep voice
"Leave!!! Now!!!"

"What?" then I looked a bit down to where his gaze descended and realized that my breasts stood very round and taut when I crossed my hands.
"Oh" I unconfined them at once.

I wanted to bend to him, but then thought better of that.
I wanted to kiss his forehead before I left, but thought better of that as well.

"Just please leave so I can be alone when I... when I... well ye Ken"
"Oh" I repeated, understanding again.

"Aye, I canna take the risk that someone will come and find ye with me when I am, weel as I am now, so-" he signaled his head for me to leave "So leave me be and I'll have it sorted"

"But what if someone sees you do... well... that"

"Then I'll be doing alone what every man does alone" he whispered impatiently "NOW LEAVE!!!!".

I sighed and said gently
"I love you"

"Not helping" he replied.
But as I turned and began to walk away I heard him confide in a low voice

"I love ye too mo nighean donn".

Chapter End Notes

This will also show-up in its proper place and time in the big story (but will probably be a bit different)
THE GATHERING 2

Chapter Summary

This the exact episode in the big story only when I copy/paste it ran amok and I end up doing it in like 40 different tries
So this is for anyone who missed the other parts I only posted later
Forgive me, its not me its technology!!!! ;)

THE GATHERING 2:

****

Jamie was slammed into Claire chamber's door.
He staggered and tried to regain his balance, but she pressed her whole body on his, pressing him back to the door and taking his mouth quite ferociously.

"Claire someone could seeeeeee" she was biting and pulling his lower lip.
"Don't care" she answered her voice muffled, for her lips was devouring his again, but he could also feel her hand by his heid as she fiddled with the latch in order to open her door.

When it finally opened they almost fell to the floor.
Claire kicked the door behind her, as she saw him do many times.
Once it was closed though, it was he who pressed her to the door.

"How much time do we have?" she asked when he finally relinquished her mouth to go down to her neck.
"Mmm?" his voice was now muffled in her skin.
"How long do we have before you have to go?" she said a little breathless and panting "what did you tell them anyway, to make old Alec release you from your servitude?"

Jamie lifted her bodily, still in a standing position, turning and marching with her to the bed.
"Rash" he said as he flung her on the mattress.
"Rash?" she asked, rising from the bed to a sitting position to help him undress.

He was unbuttoning his waist coat, while she was removing his dirk and belt.
Thank the Lord he wore no cravat or jabot while working the horses.
He half turned intending to throw the coat aside, just as she guided her hands to pull his shirt from his plaid and then placing her fingers under it, touching his skin, guiding his shirt up and away from his body.
He stood eyes closed, feeling her hands skim and glide his shirt up and away, while she ran her lips over stomach, chest, neck- every inch o' him that now stood bare.

He lifted his hands and when he remained shirtless, he wasn’t willing to turn or even half turn again to discard of his waist coat and shirt.
Claire was now biting his skin so he just dropped the damn clothes by his foot.

He finally did open his eyes and began pulling the strings that corseted her bodice.
His fingers encountered the most irritating, inappropriate, badly timed knot in it and he was using his teeth to try and pry it open.
Thinking frustratingly, that every moment it would take him to untie it, will be one less moment he would ha' to enjoy more pleasurable and satisfying things.

She willna be allowed to wear anything anymore but a shift, he decided.
"Told Alec I ha' verra bad hives on a very tender part that needs tending straight away" he said through the side of his mouth trying to pull the cursed thing open.

She smacked him a way and applied her thin agile fingers to it, as he watched with his hands hovering ready to continue wi' the undressing himself once the bloody thing will open.

"And he let you go with only a mere case of a hives? I find it hard to believe" she asked
"Haammm" he made a Scottish sound to indicate his displeasure with the questioning and her insufficient hurriedness at untying the obviously demonic tie.

"Tis nay the rush, but where it his, Sassenach… Ouch, give me that" he said shooing her hands a way, just as she almost got the better of the knot and replacing her hands with his.

The first one to ever touch her naked skin would be him and no one else, not even her.

"Told what does that mean?" she asked lifting her hands in surrender and moving out of his way.
"Tis nay a frequent occasion but when she does, she does it verra weel, Jamie looked pleasingly at how adorable she looked doing so.

"Wait! You don’t mean?!” her eyes popped open "No surely you didn’t tell him that.. that… you know”
she inclined her heid down to signal the location.
"Of course I did" he said joyfully, as he already managed to remove bodice, undersleeves, bumm roll, which he removed by lifting the front of all her skirts and untying it, thank the Lord for small mercies, wi’ no further hindrance.

He was now, finally seeing petticoat.

"No man will ever risk another man's good parts" he said opening his eyes in bliss and satisfaction at her now exposed breasts.

He took one hand to them as the other guided her by the nape to lie on the bed. Now came the difficult decision; should he start handling wi’ the skirts removal or just take her as such.

"Offered to show it to him to get his advice, if he felt I souldna go to the healer for mending, made a verra agonizing face and everything” he said

Skirts were now being stripped off, as she raised her sweet bum to allow them to skid from her body.

"Used all your disgusting little words that ye used, when ye so 'generously' described such a growth to me, from that time ye said ye saw that man at L'Hopital des Anges for such a matter. Never in life did I think that could e'er come useful, except for making me mad and threaten to kill the man”

Jamie stood with his knees on the bed between her legs, nudging them apart and surveying the landscape he was about to stroll on and plotting where to go first.

"Nice to know you actually listen" she grinned "But what would you have done if he would have agreed to have a look?” she asked amused and probably flattered at his willingness to sacrifice his good name and dignity only to bed her.

She bloody hell should be!!

Christ, the other way was to break his whole arm, for a mere finger wouldna do in Alec's eyes. Not that he wouldna ha' broken it to come to her when she is in such moods, only he wanted to be all put right to thoroughly enjoy it and her at such a state.

"Sassenach I ha' failed to see, even once, a man look at another one's part, even if they stood side by side pissing in the field. If one has no such taste for my kind, I doubt my part and an inflamed one at that, would be of much interest or desire for someone to ogle at, especially not by dear tender-hearted Old Alec” he ended with a grin.

"Well I don’t know if I'm partial or not, but I'm kind of fond of yours, inflamed or otherwise” she laughed teasingly.

"Good" he said smirking as he lowered himself to her "'tis of great consequence for the next part”. He lifted his kilt and began the event he sacrificed his reputation and honor, in Alec's eye and who he would probably share it wi’, in order to participate at.

"Aaaa that's nice” he sighed as he gilded into her. He began rocking himself.

"Aaaa, verra nice indeed” he said closing his eyes and relishing the sensation "I thought I'd ha' to wait 'till tonight to feel this nice wi' ye. Mmmm, I'm varra glad to be 'rong”

She sniggered at his sighing and gratifications sounds. He ignored her.

"This feels verra nice indeed” he said striving to go deeper, keeping the pace slow and controlled in order to savor the moment and in order to feel her fully.

"Enjoying yourself are you?” he heard her now fully laughing at him. She dinna get much chances not to be the lead vocalist during their joinings.

He still dinna care. Let her ha’ her fun, he was surely having his at the moment.

To be able to have the vigor and stamina to properly serve his wife and himself and may be drained from the day's labor or from all the things he had to do in order to reach her at night and all the thoughts in the back of his mind of needing to return to the freezing accursed hole he called his quarter these days.

"Aye, I am” he answered her question ardently, slowing himself even further to feel every second of pure wakefulness.

A few more slow blissful movement such as those and he found it in himself to care and to be able to ask-
so he opened his eyes and looked down at her, curious

"Aren't ye?”

"Mmmm” she made a pleasurable sound, while biting her lower lips and smiling from ear to ear. All done verra dramatically, for his benefit and a bit to josh him for his performance. But he could tell she was happy and enjoying herself also.

"And ye? I'm always willing. But tell me my fair lady, why was I bestowed the pleasure of your company at this moment?” he asked, bending his head to bite the tip of her nose lightly, then rising back on his arms and continuing with slow, deep strokes into her.

"Luke” she said, between now genuine sounds of delight.

"What??” he said and ceased his rocking.

"No silly” she said, pushing him to start again by clasping his buttocks and pulling him to her

"Explain woman” he said in serious tones but began his movements again.
He could be just as mad at her after the act as he would be now, only in one path he could be making love to his wife and then scolding her and on the other path he could just be scolding her.

Any man wi’ half his wit ‘obout him would ken the right choice here.

"Luke and Isabella" she said smiling at the absurdity she assumed his mind conjured up. "Further explain woman" he said, but now could free half himself to continue genuinely enjoying himself wi’ the pleasures his wife’s body held for him.

No betraying or unchaste routes could involve Luke and his good-sister.

"She’s getting better Jamie, so much better” Claire said beaming "The gash is almost sealed, the nutrients must have finally been assimilated properly in her system, to have her body be able to absorb and equalize her glucose levels. Which means her metabolism will be working; her white cells count would raise and fight all infections. Lord I should have known homeopathists herbs would take longer to come to affect … mmmm, that does feel nice”.

She stopped saying things that dinna make the slightest sense to him, although he did manage to understand ‘she’s getting better’.

She was now absorbed in the feeling of him inside her and his maneuvers. And it was always good to be appreciated.

“Very nice indeed” she said slithering her other hand into his kilt and applying it to his other cheek.

“Free” he inquired, happy that she moved on to something he might be able to comprehend and that she did so before the mention of oozing and festering things came up.

It would ha dampen the pleasure of the situation. It wouldna have stopped the proceedings, but it would have certainly crack a chink in his pleasure.

For the oddest reason it wouldna bother hers, though.

“Free to go and marry the man I love, not fearing to come back during a friend's mourning period and lost. Free to leave with nothing weighing on my heart and mind regarding what I could have or should have done differently or better” she rose to him and kissed him lightly before arching herself again and yielding to him completely.

“Free from feeling as the most awful, selfish person, for leaving such a man in a state of need and with no other proper medical help”

she moved her hand to his nape grasping him and bringing him to her mouth, kissing him passionately and circling her fingers through his locks applying rough and soft pressure together.

He raised himself up on his hands doubling his efforts, tilting his head further back into her palm.

Feeling the hard stiffness between his legs increasing more and more and in complete contrast to his head feeling lighter and ethereal under her palm’s strong caresses.

"Free" she whispered and her sweet, light, voice felt as it was floating into his ears, just as the both reached their end, one second apart from each other.

*****************************************************************************************************************************************

"Jesus H. Roosevelt Christ” I screamed as I was awaken so crudely from sleep.

"Sshh” a big paw like palm with light ruddy-copper fuzz on it, came from the back of me and placed itself on my mouth “Ye’ll wake the whole castle. Be quiet”

"Christ Jamie” I exclaimed “Even doctors, considerately, warm their hands in their armpits before touching their patients and they’re not touching them in their private part! Well not usually” I added, suddenly remembering in the most oddest of memorial flashbacks, that I had… no will have… a gynecologist appointment back in the future to check on my worrisome fertility, which I didn’t cancel.

Well that conundrum was solved I mused. ‘Beauchamp, the way your mind works, dear Lord’ I scolded myself.

"Weel ‘tis cold outside! D’ye have no sympathy for a poor, canny gawk, trudging around the ether trying to come to his wife’s side?” he added deeply affronted “I would think I should be rewarded for such efforts and nay kicked and screamed at. Beside” he added starting to wiggle his naked body closer to mine “I came, now, ‘tis your part to warm me. Come here to me, my Sassenach, take care o’ your cold, lonely husband” he wrapped himself bodily to me, arched behind me, rested his very frozen, cringe arousing, hand between my thighs and his head on my shoulder blade.

“What did you have in mind?” I asked feeling sympathy and guilt for my covered, warm state, as I took my hand to the back of me placing it between us.

"Sleep” he determined, removing the limb, kissing it and returning it back to its owner “I canna do a thing else” he added cracking a deep yawn “I’m so tired, I canna even move. Old Alec and Colum ha’ been working everyone to clean and shine stables, horses, pile up enough hay for those here and the more coming. So amongst, hauling, dragging, chopping, two foals being birthed today” he yawned again.
"And after what ye did to my parts today and Alec is doing to all my other parts"
"Me?" I indignantly objected.
"Nothing in me can rise, stand up straight or perform anything for yours or even my pleasure" he concluded.

"So why did you come?" I asked trying to defend myself "You could have stayed in your warm, cozy bed for one night"
"I missed ye" he answered simply, as if it was the most obvious thing "But Sassenach?" he added.
"Yes?"
"We willna be sleeping every night only this one" he professed in a tone that made sure I understood this was not to be the status quo in our rendezvous.
"Oh" I said "How encouraging to know, I was worried there for a second" I added smiling to my pillow.

"Ouch, I'm still cold" he complained frustrated "I need ye Sassenach, turn over"
Jamie rolled to his other side and stretched his neck several times signaling me my next appointed step.

I rolled to my other side also, to face him or to face his back to be exact, laying my body tight to his and placing my chin just below his shoulder blades where there was the smallest nook between muscles at Jamie's back, which also meant my lips rested squarely on the connection of nape to shoulder on his person.

He made a Scottish noise and again I knew my agreed upon move.
I brought my left hand around his hip placing my palm just above the bush of red-auburn mane between his legs.

Jamie had the smallest, softest trail of short delicate hairs that led to his umbilicus. He discovered that he liked me caressing them gently. Not to tickle, no, never to tickle, but stroking them was most welcomed; it relaxed him.

It also meant that if he was ready to start something regarding other more laboring actions I would be the first to know of it, or so I was informed and then shown a close personal demonstration.

This time though two seconds after such maneuvers and I could hear the softest wheezing coming from him.

"Ho dear lad, we must make sure to double your vitamin c intake so you wouldn't catch an ague. Hate for you to miss your own weeding"
I said and ran my nail ever so lightly on his skin just below his navel.
I felt the skin on his neck twitch lightly and knew what it meant.

I propped myself on my right elbow, looked at his face and made the same movement with my fingers again.
And there it was, good as money in the bank, Jamie's sweet, sleepy smile.

A small stretch of his lips and his big-stern-Viking warrior features were transformed to the most lovely-innocent-child like-sweet-endearing-engalling man expression I have ever seen, letting me know he was happy and content.
And with the next tic it would be gone, leaving me with the memory.

"Ho, may the Lord help me, how I love you" I whispered so vehemently.
My big red-head worrier extorted a small snore.

"How did you do it James Fraser" I asked but expected no answer "How?"
I have loved frank in every way I thought possible at the time, but I could be apart from him during the war. It was hard, I had my fair share of emotional and physical breakdowns, where I craved him so much and couldn't stand the separation no longer. But it would be gone by morning and I could go with a clean mind and joy to return to the calling and vocation I found during the war.

Fighting, helping in what I thought was the rightest war in history and healing.

But Jamie -
Jamie seeped into my being, penetrated every cell in my body, until he was vital to my survival as food and air.
To be apart from him was -
An unbearable thought surely to never be actualized.

To love Frank was a choice and at the time I made it gladly and with a clear mind.
But to love Jamie was no choice it was a fact.

It never asked me my preference or my approval on the matter, it simply washed over me, surrounded me, entered and lived inside of me.

With Frank that love could become caring, companion, friendship- if ever our paths would cross again.

For I was told many times that high-flamed loves do not last. They either extinguish completely and the two lovers part, mostly in a vicious explosion that matched their fiery feelings to one another, or it would become a comfortable, slow-burning bond of two alliances, that care and love for one another without all the fireworks.
With Jamie the feelings were too passionate and uncontrollable to ever be less than what we were. For better or worse we burned for each other, we fought as we made love, ardently and with every piece of ourselves. We talked and yelled, played and worked always from the core of our being. It always burned high. The soft, quiet, gentle part of our relationship was apparent and well established, but it also sprang from those soaring flames. Which seem to burn taller and deeper the more we knew of each other and lived with one another.

Like a sweet smile that when revealed, each time and from the first, almost forced me to ravish him with lust, desire and most of all love; everything with Jamie was lived as I was experiencing it for the first time. Whatever lay between us could not be mistaken for anything but a lovers bond, never only a friend, never only a mere companion.

As I said, from the start, we couldn't and will never, be able to be less than what we were.

Yes, loving frank was a choice I made; loving Jamie was a fact intertwined with my life. I was not asked, I fought against it, I resisted as much and as long as I could, And when I was given a choice, by him, to go back to my time, I tried to leave it behind-

"How did you do it?" I questioned again, but didn't really seem to mind the answer. My chin and lips returned to their assigned places and his sleep joined mine in dreams.

"Good night my one true love" I mumbled just before slipping out of consciousness and wasn't sure but thought I could feel another twitch to his lips.

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"Woooff I hate sunrises" she exclaimed firmly.

"Tis nay sunrise Sassenach, 'tis dawn, twilight dawn to be exact. If it be sunrise I couldna be here wi' ye, now could I? I'd be needing to be back to the stables" Jamie illuminated his wife.

"Aaarrt" she glared at his clarification "I don't care, whatever it is I hate it!!" she carried on declaring.

"I don't understand why people excite themselves to see it" His dear wife clutched the covers and lifted them way above her head.

She hated to be awoken so early in the morning and even more so, to have the first crack of dawn hit her face so mercilessly right between her eyes.

"I mean it comes every day; we understand how it works already!!! Can't the bloody thing or the sun come a bit late at times?? I myself will not hold it against them, I assure you!!!" She cried out, her voice muffled under the coverlet.

"Sassenach" Jamie was trying to yank down the shrouds, she was holding so tight to her face.

"Besides" she said, emerging from her screen and trying another tactic on him.

"Every sunrise, at the moment, means you are taken away from me" she said, turning to her side to face him and away from the window. She buried her face into his naked chest, replacing the bedspread with his body. He groaned when her lips caressed his nipple, but dinna falter from his mark.

"S...sa...Sassenach " he clasped her upper arms, to distance her just enough to compel her to stare into his eyes, which he adjusted to hold a disciplining look and cocked his eyebrow at her.

"Fine" she rolled her eyes giving in.

"I understand Jamie, I'll do it, stop...stop 'fashing and fretting forbye" she said, trying to imitate a Scottish phrase, using either his or Mrs. Fitz's voice while doing so, he couldna tell. She did sound verra funny, but he wouldna return her grin at her witty retort.

He had only a few more moments before he had to go and this must be made clear.

"Then say it Claire, repeat my words to me, so I Ken you heard them A L L" "Woooff" she exasperated again "fine, fine". She sighed submissively and recited his speak.

"Once on the road with the rent party, I will not distance myself from you! I will not disappear without making sure beyond a shadow of a doubt that you 'ken' exactly where I am. At all times, with no exception!!! I will not speak to strangers, for I am not of this time and I do not fully know how my words will be interpreted by Scots that dislike strangers that are Sassenachs, especially at this point in history! I will not see some 'bonny' plant and run off without you, in order to pick it"

"Not even if said plant could heal the dead" she added swiftly when she saw his mouth open to further clarify that point.

When it came to the healing, his wife could always be trusted to forget herself.
"I will wait until you could come with me!!" she opened her eyes wide, as he did when he said it to her and pointed her finger to his face, again just as he did to her.

"I will…" she desisted wi' the declaim and folded her arms in protest "Haamm ...you do know I was doing quite well without you, before, I mean?"

"Managed to get myself not killed or mishandled all by my lonesome."

"Even more than that, I got YOU to fall in love with me!"

"Got YOU to marry me."

"Got YOU to get me pregnant."

"Twice."

He could feel her lips spread into a smile on his skin.

'Don't give in, don't give in, don't give in, don't give in, don't give in, don't give in.' Jamie held tight to the belief, that if he would say it enough times, other parts of him willna hear her morning call and awaken wanting to join the proceedings.

He frowned disapprovingly and tightened his clasp.

"Fine, fine" Claire yielded.

"I will not take further risk at anything changing, so any step I take will be discussed at length between the two of us. To be agreed upon by both parties before ANY further steps would be taken" she proceeded to quote him back to himself in a monotony chant for another minute or so.

"Verra good" he said when the address was done "Ye might actually make for a proper wife someday"

Now he was willing to return her grin to her and retort wi' some wit o' his own.

While his wife on her end, took his first looks and was cocking her eyebrow at him, frowning and glaring

He kissed that frowned, wrinkled, nose he loved so much and was heavily rising to return to his lonely hole in the ground, that dinna hold neither smell, warmth or sight of her.

He was really starting to dislike sunrises as well.

He wore breeks and a shirt this time, when he came to her, in order to save the five minutes it took to pleat his kilt and put it on, so he could spend a few more precious moments still entangled in her.

"You think I can't?" she asked, probably thinking his deep sigh came from his disbelief in her ability and not for how his body always seemed to weigh double his size when he was forced to put distance between them.

"You'll see" she said "I'm a great communicator"

"A what?" he frowned, finishing to dress.

"Someone how is able to transfer the information required quite skillfully" she replied.

He snorted.

"Ye!?? Half the time I dinna Ken what ye're saying and I've been married to ye for almost 3 years"

"Watch yourself James Fraser, the wedding didn't happen YET, now did it?" she said, using her trump card.

How was the clot-heid that said the lady dinna Ken how to play?

"I'll show you!" she said rising to her feet as well, shivering from the cold and saying "Right! Now I am walking to the hearth to light the fire" as so she did.

"I am lifting the flint, hoping it will actually ignite in the first hundred tries and not the three hundred"

Jamie crossed his arms looking amusingly at the narrated story and play before him.

"Please tell me if there are only enough peats for a small fire, we wouldn't want me to burn the whole place down, now would we?" she said; hand on her chest in mock fright.

"Never mind" she waved her hand dismissing the matter when he didn't reply.

"Now, I am doing this" she emphasized her words as if speaking to a soft in the heid patient "for I intend to have a quick wash before my day starts and maybe have some tea... Which reminds me, are there some leaves left in the drawer of the dresser behind you?"

Jamie poked at it and handed her the folded, fragrant kerchief she always kept such thing at.

"Ho dear!!!" she said stunned "Don't you want to smell it, to know which kind I'm having?" she asked sarcastically.

"I mean how could I ever be safe if you wouldn't know if I'm having Jasmine or Camellia Sinesis?"

"I get your meaning Sassenach" Jamie soured his face

"Ooooh no Mr. Fraser I'm not done yet" she came closer to him

"We didn't even reach the part where I tell ye what I will wear today. Will I wear boned bodice or a lacy one...?"

"Sassenach" She carried on ignoring him.

"Then you simply must know how many steps I will take to reach my surgery...mummmmm" she put a finger on her lip musing "Now I can't tell you what will happen when I get there, that of all things, did change a bit for I do spend more time there, now that I am not planning my escape this
time, so I tend to more patients"

"SASSENACH" Jamie tapped his fingers on his thigh

"I'm pretty sure Malcom the… well I forget what he does, but I promise to take notes in the future!! Well, he will surely come to see me about his wart today; his black and green wart. See I had to tell him not to wash the place where it grew and apply daily only what I concocted for him as a drying solution, now the top layer I already peeled off. And now that the main body slowly became a scab with the treatment, I need to remove it today. He can't possibly do it alone for it might ooze and bleed!"

She narrowed her eyes at him and held a pleased smile on her face as he made faces of disguised at the imagery she was unfolding before him.

Thank the Lord he had naughting in his stomach yet.

She didn't desist though, enjoying her true win. Who needed cards; she was a true winner in getting her way in life.

"What I'll do is probably clean his big, fat, blistered toe… woww"

Jamie hurled her back to the mattress by her waist, laid atop of her, rubbing his face and stubble over her face and neck.

When she finally silenced from squirming and begging for him to stop he said

"Fine, fine, no every step then, but Sassenach-"

"Don't worry Jamie, you will know where I am at all times my love" she brought her hand to the back of his heid, caressing and toying wi' his hairs, he hummed enjoining the feeling.

This was better than warts!

"And will you grant me the same?"

She asked softly.

"That's easy Sassenach" he said quite seriously "look either to your left or your right, that's where I'll be. Always" he finished and kissed his wife good morning.
source of all these feeling awakening in me.

"I did also say cold and fear" I tried to diminish a tad his inflating ego.

"Ye're never scared o' me, Sassenach" his smile broaden.
He kissed my breast "and your skin in nay so cold".

He brought his lips to the base of my throat.
"Go on than, tell me more of Cutis Anserine" he began nibbling "Is your neck, no aroused like the rest of ye by me?"
"I can assure you that my neck, like the rest of me, is very much of awe and admiration of you" I said, now inflating the same ego.

"Really??" he rejoiced doubling his efforts.

"Than why?" he asked moving back, disappointed to find no affect anywhere, although he was performing braw work indeed.
"Because Cutis Anserine are caused when those emotions erupt and the hairs stand erect and pull the skin at their base"
"So?" he asked now adjusting himself to lie more atop of me and really applying himself to break the rules of my epidermis.
"So, I might not have much hair there or their fine hairs that their follicles aren't strong enough to lift my skin at that exact spot" I explained
"Really?" he pulled back "that's odd I seem to possess plenty there. Here take some of mine than" he said rubbing his short beard on my face, throat and chest

I cried out with laughter and squirmed.

When he was finally done with me, I felt as if I was sand papered all over, while Jamie held the man smugness of having my body, finally, react properly to his possessor.

He snuggled atop of me, making me feel so warm and protected.

A wide-mouth, deep yawn escaped me, as another bodily reaction of mine to him began.
I always seemed to want to sleep in his arms.

"Are ye tired a ghraidh?" he queried.

"Yes" I answered truthfully "I didn’t have a chance to sleep tonight before you came. You managed to slip in quite early this time" I said with a smile, making sure he knew that this was a better gift than sleep any time.

"Before? Ye manage to sleep before I come?" he puzzled, but smiling back, appreciating the complement.

"Well yes. I usually sleep as much as I can until you come, so I may be able to stay awake and act properly during the day and not slobber into my breakfast landing face first in it’ I grinned and shifted our positions so we laid spoon fashion on our sides.

"Besides I must. For when you come… well, you have become a very demanding husband as of late… I mean lover"
"I'm a lover am I? I don’t believe I e'er been a lover before." He said, obviously amused at his new title.
"Must be bound for the devil then, since I seem to be enjoying it verra much" he said nuzzling closer behind me and interlacing our bodies from head to toe.

"Does that mean that when the time comes you wouldn't want to marry me?" I asked taking my hand around me to stroke his face, knowing I would be able to feel-The frown presented itself instantly and I could feel the temperature of his skin rise a few degrees.

"DO NO EVEN JEST OF SUCH MATTERS!!!" he ordered firmly "Why between trying to remember every little thing we said and did, as to not foil the blasted thing from coming to past, to ye and ye're ifrinn, bull-heid thoughts of me and Laoghaire"

"Jaime I -" I opened my mouth to protest

"To no have ye in OUR bed every night and in MY arms every day!!" he ended with a pointing, menacing finger, coming to my line of vision to make sure he was understood.

"Well I would think a bride without a head on her shoulders would not be such a good choice, but whatever you desire my love" I said and snuggled my derriere a bit further into is hips, that being the quickest and full-proof way to make him forget whatever he was on about at any given moment.

He sighed, grabbed the appendage in question and began mumbling all the things he would like to do with or to said part.

He smiled to myself for my cunningness.

I shouldn't have joked about such a thing, but I knew what I was saying bringing up the option of not marrying me into light.

Fun, sultry and very passionate as the "lover" title provoked Jaime and me to be in our love making of late, Jamie was very much a devoted catholic how believed In the sacrament of marriage.
My smile widened at the memory of all the times when, even for all his jests and flirting the idea of him lying even in the same room as me or to have it be considered by others, forbye, that my reputation would be damaged by him was unspeakable in his regard, not to mention how he disapproved of all the liaisons and such going around at French court and if to be perfectly honest everywhere in Paris.

"serve him right, a man ought to be married" I recalled his words regarding bonny prince Charles, when he had himself miserably bitten by a monkey and bedraggled through Paris's roofs returning from his 'consorting' with the lovely, married Louise de La Tour de Rohan.

I knew he loved the knowing that his love for me and his loving of me, was a virtue blessed by a priest, the church and the holy ghost.
And to be perfectly honest so did I.
for me Jamie and I were right for each other in every way and how I knew to be possible, and this was just another aspect of that.

It made me feel fortunate in a way.
The man I was so deeply in love with was mine, not only by the bounds of say but by rights of the heavens and the holy order.

Perhaps in a way, I also hoped it will play some part at protecting our union and keep us safe and together.
So many dangers and bad men threaten our lives and our very souls.
I wanted whatever help I could get!

Was this not one of the reasons man began to lift his gaze from the earth and pray, to something larger than himself?
Is this not the reason man sought and founded religions, or at least big part of it?
The knowledge that what he was doing is right, that the path he was guided and walked on was the true and blessed way and it was leading him to a 'bonny' place.

We all traveled in the trails of life, scared, confused and seeking reassurance that we could be free, happy, secure and loved!
From the moment, the first man realized the vast that surrounded him, realized how small he was against all around him; he as well as us, sought the sense of safety and love.

O God how I wished that for Jamie, for me. For us!

Religion to me was
To aspire and not dwell on fear.
To strive for kindness and virtuousness and not to fall prey to the darkness inside us and around us.
My marriage to Jamie was a big part of my path to that.

"Jamie" I said in a way that made him stop a VERY picturesque way of-
"Hamm?" he inquired.
"Nothing I ….I just…. I love you Jamie" I said, craving very badly the day I could lawfully call him my husband again.

"HOCH You made me lose my place of thought now… where was I?" he said with mock affrontedness, but I could hear the smile widening in his tone.

A few more minutes of descriptions in the Gaelic, which I finally got around to listen to and I raised my voice in some affrontedness of my own "JAMIE…. I would never…. And I do mean never would do such a thing"

He laughed.
"Finally Sassenach, I was beginning to think ye forgot all your Gaelic ….besides" he said, turning me to lay on my back, him atop of me, spreading my legs apart slowly, but with enough of a stern hand to make it quite clear that all resistance would be futile.
"It willna be YOU that will be doing 'it"

"Lord, how did I ever find myself at this time and place" I said wiggling my body under him, raising my voice in some affrontedness of my own "JAMIE…. I would never…. And I do mean never would do such a thing"

He sighed with pleasure from my chosen moves.
"Ye couldna be anywhere else Sassenach. Nay w' all the machination and espionage I performed to get ye, ye would ha' fallen for one or the other"
"Really? Thought a lot on the matter?" I bantered, rising on my elbows.

Jamie looked into my eyes with much seriousness.
"Claire from the moment I decided ye to be my wife, I had hardly any other thought in my mind but how to make it so" then he added with a mischievous smile "that is 'til I married ye"

"Is that so? And after the nuptials?" I asked amused and I must admit flattered.
"Ouch, then" a huge grin began spreading from his lips to his eyes to…. Were the hairs on the crown of is head erect? No they couldn't be, could they?

I dismissed that, but he did seem entirely transformed to a little cartoon devil; homy hair and mischief all about.
"Since then" he empathized "almost every thought I ha' is how to get ye alone and what to do wi' ye once I do!" he concluded and I realized how close his face had come to mine.

"My, my, grandma such big eyes you have" I said to the now very open enlarged pupilied eyes who bore into mine.
His forehead connected with mine and was guiding me to a more inclined position into the mattress.

"My, my" I said a little breathlessly "what big teeth you have"
I rammed when his teeth closed very gently on the root of my neck.

He continued to nibble his way down my person, using only his head, nose, mouth and tongue to further explore my body, all awhile leaning on his hands.

Something came to him and he chuckled into my skin and I sensed the words more then heard them
"which one am I then? The wolf or the hunter?"

"Both" I cried and arched my back as he reached a very, very tender spot between my legs.

'Even little red riding hood herself' I humorously concluded in my head, once I had returned to some capacity of thought and found that my hands were anchored firmly into those cooper-auburn locks.

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"WHAT? How can you send me away after…. after that?" he asked truly affront.
His resemblance to an abused puppy, if puppies reached such sizes, was apparent.
He stood there completely naked, holding the items of his clothing that I was amassing one by one on his folded hands.

He looked as a lamb that got kicked in the teeth by a mean ram.
He stood there with a quivering, pouting lower lip and with eyes wide opened almost tearing-up, un-willing to believe his abuser actions.

Well I wasn’t taking on that role, thank you very much.

"I also made lists, you see?" I tried clarifying what might seem a slightly heartless behavior to the outside observer or to Jamie "of everything I can remember about what happened during our time in the castle-"

"I remember quite well that I have ne'er done THAT to ye in here. In Paris though" he added for fairness sake "and ye always were verra tender to me later, all 'canoodles' and happy to reciprocate" his eyes lit up at the memory and his tongue peered as he licked is lower lip, but then remembering the insult of my action he added "Never this, no, never such a thing as now!"

"Tomorrow or today, I should already say" I hinted to the window that showed no moon by now, but very few, very light, pale rays of sun that were threatening to be followed by their source. 
"Mrs. Fitz will yet again not take heed of her hand and I was, no I will" I corrected myself "be awakened very, very early, to knocks at my door accompanied by the very lovely Laoghaire"
That was said in a very acerbic edge to it, that I saw did not go unnoticed.

"Begging me, to please 'come, come quick'" I tried my hand in imitation before, this was no more successful.
He laughed, saw my face and covered it with a cough.

Then trying for a last Hail Mary, even though he was already beginning to dress himself, I assumed this was an attempt to humor me.

"Would that no put an end to her fictitious fancies?"
I scrutinize him very thoughtfully and stared straight into his eyes.

"And if I were to agree and reciprocate, these delightful - I do must admit to that- 'Administrations' that you afforded me this fine morning-"

That awarded me a heartfelt smile, that almost did make me want to pull him back to bed and cause him to cry out in a way that the whole castle would be knocking at our door; no, my door, I reminded myself and at that I was snapped back to our reality and stood my ground.

"You would just chuck all your clothes and put yourself on display for her?"
I asked making my point.

The smile promptly disappeared and I could see the wheels of his mind trying to come up with the right answer.

Were he to say no, I could think this due to his feelings for Laoghaire, which he was working so hard to debunk; were he to agree, I might be enviously deranged enough to allow such a thing and by the day's end we would be the tale for generation to come.

'The scandal of Castle Leoch', which would also put a firm end to any marriage-filled- bliss life we hoped to accomplish.

After what seemed like a very long silence, I decided to let the worm off the hook.

"Hoch weel" he replied promptly and persisted in dressing very quickly before I might change my
mind "if YOU say so".

Before leaving though, he touched my arm very, very softly
"An toir thu dhomh pòg?" he whispered.
"at least?" his eyes pleaded.

"Of course I will give you a kiss you big dupe!" I answered feeling so tender, moved and guilt-
ridden for me having to send him a way.
I came up to my toes and kissed him passionately, letting my arms clutch his buttocks and pulling
him firmly to me, his arms went around me so unyielding, his mouth devoured mine, my tongue in
his, my hands squeezing hard.

When we finally parted ourselves, I swayed a bit and felt my lips tingling to such extent that I
knew that I wouldn't be able to move them properly for a while.
My eyes just dazed into his chest and I could do nothing but breathe through my nose smelling the
scents of sleep, testosterone and Jamie.

He snuggled his forehead to the top of my head "I miss ye something awful lately, I canna ken
why. I find myself wanting only to wrap myself around you and sleep. I donna sleep verra weel wi'out
ye near, I need ye and more than just for the bedding. Although that part I canna do wi'oot as weel" he clarified sternly.
I enveloped his hips with my arms, holding for dear life.

"Soon, so soon Jamie. We have a plan. We know what to do this next week with the Gathering
and everything" My voice was tender but unshaken "We will play our part right, we would go on
the road with the rent party and Dougal will not be able to resist marrying us under Colum's nose
to get you out of the running of Laird" I smiled at the thought
"And then you could have me" I looked up at him "everywhere, any time"
I brushed my nose to his
"any way" I teased with a bite at his lips
"freely given, very welcomed, and this time-" I paused, looking and holding his gaze
"forever".

He looked back, expressionless, hardly breathing, but electric currents flowed between us, so
intense that I thought if light bulbs were invented already they would surely explode now and
burn with the rest of the world at our feet.

We both knew there was so much more: Faith our second child, Fergus, the Jacobite rising,
Charles Stuart, Lallybroch and his men, Mary Hawkins, Alex Randell, Dougal's death and as a
result our almost forever separation and… "Black Jack" Randall and Wentworth.
"He will not hurt you again. I will not let it happen again! I swear it on my life, Jamie" I said tears
streaming from my eyes without me even blinking, so great was the sorrow in me of the things to
come.
But my voice once again stood very clear and infallible.
"I'll protect you, I won't fail this time" I resolved.

He touched my face very lightly with his fingers, tracing my tears, not to blot them, just to trace
their path, his lip curled in the most rueful smile.
"No" I freed myself from his grip.
"No" I said much more sternly "No Jamie, not like before, it will not happen again"
I came back to him quickly holding his face with both my hands, pleading for him to believe "No
Jaime. It is different than before. We are not trying to change a big piece of history this time"
"We're no?" he said so sorrow stricken "I'll tell ye Sassenach, I do not consider myself and the
happening to me so important as to be written down in history but…. They are big a ghraidh.
Faith is verra important to me, what happened to me is….
"No, please forgive me" I held on to him shaking "I didn't mean it like that…. No I only meant-"
"Aye" he smiled, gathering me in "I ken fine weel what ye mean, mo chridhe. Ye mean that it will
be easier to change things if they are small to the world. Ye mean that this time we do no ken
vague, obscure facts that we donna ken how they came to path, but the exact way of things to
come" he stroke my neck with one hand as the other held me close in the small curve of my back,
my body and face buried into him.
"So we ha' a good chance" he said distancing me just enough to look into my face and move my
curls away from eyes
"But first I'll ha' ye properly married and back in my arms for all to see"

"I never left" I smiled Shakely back to him. Taking his palm and putting it to my lips
"Besides" I added looking back to him "if we can not change a thing, why did this all thing come
to path?" I looked at him pleading for his understanding.
"If there are no second chances, why did we receive one?"
At that his smile widened sincerely.
"Aye, whatever did this, might help us" he said, a bit unsure what it could be, but glad it was on
our side.

We were interrupted by a very excited knock at the door and Laoghaire's, damn her eyes, voice
came after it "Mistress Beauchamp, Mistress Beauchamp, r'ye waken yet?"
The pounding on the door became more vigorous “Mistress Beauchamp, please come, come quick it’s my nana mistress”

"See? I told you” I whispered in his hear, for yet another reassurance of our success. We knew what was coming.

“I will dress and come swiftly” I rebuked at the closed, and thank the Lord, locked door. “Ho” she answered surprise in her voice at my harsh tone to her “I can wait for ye here if ye like”

Perhaps she wanted her love potion, I thought, thinking of all the occasions she was hovering around me, waiting to get me alone. But just like all the other times I avoided her, this will be no exception. The magic shop is closed dearie! Find some other fabricated accusation against me. ‘His mine’ I declared to myself, watching the man who didn’t seem to want to release me from his arms, not now and not ever.

“No” I stated “It’s fine! Go the kitchen I won’t tarry” I managed to answer with only a slight rebuff in my tone this time. "How did ye ken…?” She started to say, but I replied swiftly. “You did say Mrs. Fitz, did you no? Where else would she be at such a time but at the kitchen?” “Aye, of course mistress” she giggled “I’ll be telling her ye’re coming. I thank you” she added and I could hear her feet pitter-patter on the stone floor pulling back.

“Well, I suppose I should go and treat your girlfriend’s nana then” I said already putting on my shift and stays. Jaime came behind me to help with the binding and tying and was doing it in such away it was clear he did not appreciate my last remark.

“Yes do remember that I was the virgin when we wed?” he said tartness to his tone “and ‘tis ye who were the one-”

“That knew the flesh of another?” I suggested fearing maybe he would choose something more hurtful to say. “Aye” My petticoat was pulled atop of me in a very harsh manner. For a minute I thought he might choke me inside it, but a minute later, my head peered from its opening, one more minute and my bodice lacing were tied very skillfully if not a bit too sturdily for breath. He was getting quite adroit at dressing and undressing women. I intended myself to be the only one he would go on practicing such things on!

“Yes I remember” I said "But how would you feel if the whole castle kept talking about me and another man and how it was clear to all that it is only a matter of time before he and I would finally marry? Or how would you act hearing that the man has been seen wherever I am at all times? Or to hear that I must marry for I am in such a state that it would do me only good” I pressed my defense. “‘why, young Jaime is such a good young lad but he needs a good lass to take care of him’” I quoted “and they never let me or the rest of the world forget how you so chivalrously took the beating for her!!” I added, getting myself all worked up and almost stomping my feet. Jesus Christ, what was it about this girl that boiled my blood and made me so?!? I couldn’t explain it myself. But there it was, the relentless, nagging, feeling that if I would leave Jamie alone, too long with her, I would return to find she managed to seduce and scheme herself right into his arms. It was absurd of course, but something inside me wouldn’t subside when it came to Laoghaire Mackenzie!!

Jamie on his end smirked “Really?” he said steering me to the door, fully dressed. Seeing my face, he removed his hands and maneuvered me using only one finger. The bloody man was strong, I concluded for the million time.

“Well except for what happened with Luke” he pointed out in a very logical tone, side-looking to the sheet that probably held his scent again and were one of the reasons Luke held my ‘lover’ stature at the moment in everyone’s eyes. “Such a thing can never happen” he determined.

“Ho really?!” I turned to him when we were just at the door “You don’t think I could attract such attention from another man!!?” I demanded a bit slighted. Other men could find me attractive, maybe not many, but at least some.

He looked at me in complete bewilderment, “Of course ye can Sassenach. Do ye no ken what ye look like for Christ sake?” He opened the door behind me, checking the passageways to make sure the coast was clear and handed me my shawl (when did he pick it up?) “‘tis just, such a man will simply no live long enough for such rumors to begin in the first place” he added very logically, turned me around, patted my backside, kissed my cheek while still looking around to see if the lack of wandering eyes state remained.

A last “I love ye” and he disappeared down the hallway.

I blinked twice, all of a sudden a bit unsure how I got to be dressed and in my current location. I took a long breath, a glance down at myself to check I was decent and began walking to the opposite side from where Jamie left, on my way to the kitchen.
We were sitting with everyone for lunch. To be more accurate, Jamie was sitting with everyone for lunch, I was standing like a simpleton, hovering near the doorway.

He was angry with me, I could tell. Well it really wasn’t hard to tell.

He was eating his lunch in big un-chowed bites, swallowing them whole, ripping into bread and meat in rage and every few seconds he would side-glance to my direction and flared his nostrils at me.

To my defense, I was only late by a few minutes, (half an hour maximum) over a delay of treating a very small child's broken finger. I mean, for the love of God, was I to just leave him to fend for himself?

Or to just see to him as he screamed and wiggled?

No, as with all small children, they had their own rhythm and way of doing things and it involved exercising patient, tenderness and care.

Which apparently my husband wanted as well, before he and Alec, who sat right beside Jamie, would depart and be off, precisely after being done with their sustenance, not to be seen around the castle until after the Gathering would conclude.

But I came late. Too late to say goodbye, too late to even touch a hand in passing, Jesus H. Roosevelt Christ, I was even too late to find a seat anywhere in the overcrowded dining hall, not to mention a seat near the one I came here for.

I stood there for a while, not knowing exactly what to do. Should I just leave?

It will look extremely odd to just stand here and gawk at everyone and to not simply pick up a plate with food and evacuate the premises, as accordance with the rest of the straggler that came late as I.

But walking away, meant walking away from him so-

To my luck, or so I thought at first, I had some pull with the main-head of the kitchen. Mrs. Fitz while helping her subordinates to bring more trays filled with food from the kitchen, saw me standing there, cried out in shock, simply dragged me to stand by a man I didn't recognize and began releasing such ire looks and words on him in Gaelic and English, which I gathered were regarding, sitting on his, fat, lazy backside while fine ladies, such as myself, where standing and starving and after me tending to his cousin's hand but only a few minutes ago.

How on earth could she know who was in my surgery???

Two seconds later and I found myself sitting three seats to the right from the only thing I hungered for, unable to plan what to do to reach him.

Mrs. Fitz disappeared, but returned a few moments later having prepared for me a very full plate of nutritious substances, I had no stomach for.

Would he really be gone, with me unable to say goodbye to him?

Jamie and I never left for our day or anywhere before departing for one another properly, not to mention if days were involved.

I learned in the war to always take leave from the ones you love as if this will be the last time you would ever see them, for it might. Even with only a soft chaste kiss. It didn’t matter what the gesture would be, only that it will be done.

Have the last thing you’ll ever share with them be a moment of love that you gave and received from one another. For no better reason, as it will always leave your soul more at ease when you do, like a small reassurance all will be fine.

It was silly, I knew, I would see him in a few days. But that need to execute that small sign of adoration was acute in me and by my very furious husband's face, which kept placing his spoon and mug forcibly back on the table, it was so in him as well.

"M'dear what's that on your neck right below your chin?" Mrs. Fits asked appalled
"And on your… weel down your neckline there" she continued astonished pointing and gasping "and right there on your… weel."

She waved her fingers in the direction of my left bosom. She was standing right above me, which afforded her a birds eye view of my entire décolletage.

Jamie that sat near enough to hear such inquiries (as did a great deal of other people) began choking in earnest coughing and spouting his food all while being roughly handled with a strong harm to his back by Alec.

"What e'er 'rong wi' the lad?" She frowned peaking at him.

"Probably went down the wrong pipe" I said, but then I looked down at myself and was horrified to find a big red bite mark right above my left breast with a bit of blue and purple decorating its ends and what looked like very bad rug burns on what I could see in my eye of vision of my chest and neck line.

I choked a little myself.

All right then, the small little tingling sensation I was feeling all day was not due to my woolly shawl which, how convenient, I wore all day long and removed in the last second to be left in my
surgery, before I came.

"I'm fine… fine a charaid " Jamie was saying between droplets of drink flying from his mouth as he coughed exasperately, but slowly returning to normal, red faced from the exertion, but normal.

"And that mark on your neck near your chin as weel, why 'tis almost black" she said when she sew my observing the bite mark.

I placed my hand immediately to the place she was pointing at.
Just as Jamie began choking again this time almost retching his food out and half bending on the table trying to take breath.

He was so red and his eyes were actually popping out in a way that if I wasn't too busy holding my palms to my 'injuries' I would have probably reached for him.

"I'm sure it's nothing contagious, maybe just an allergic reaction to something" I said apologetically embarrass.

"Contiges? alerjeck?" she frowned, hand on her chest afraid of the ominous sound my not understood words conjured up in her.

"Nothing just probably a bad reaction… an aversion to something in my surgery, with all the late Beaton's cures, one must have gone bad. Best I go have a look immediately, shouldn't I?"

I said hands still placed to cover myself and rising from the bench.

Half running to the surgery to look for something that could cover love bites, I had just enough sense to glance a final peek to see a mortified with a "I'm soooo sorry" face Jamie still choking.

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When I was done with the task of simply arranging items of clothing to cover myself up, in the absent of a good foundation make-up, I hurried to the court yard, holding the perfect excuse, that I remembered could help my other unsolved condition.

Some ointment of oil and tallow for Alec's Rheumatism that I had in my surgery.
It will be aggravated by the ride in the cold.

Uncharitably of me though, I was performing this door to horse service for the most selfish of motives.
I simply couldn't let Jamie go without even the smallest token of farewell.

And now, thanks to the "damages" performed by him on my person I would surly be awarded instant forgiveness from any unplanned steps, which diverted me from our plan to meet before he departed.

It was also always quite enjoyable to see Jamie squirm with embarrassment and mortification of his action; he had the sweetest 'I'm sorry' smile with the 'you forgive me don't you?' eyes I ever saw.

"Here" I said handing the small wrapped jar to Old Alec "just make sure you don't over heat it before applying, the tallow heats faster than the oil does, you don't want it to scald you"

"Why, I thank ye kindly misses, most kind o' ye to consider me such" he said truly moved and making me feel very self-seeking for my true reasoning for doing this.

My true reason was standing just behind Alec, shuffling his feet, smacking his lips and trying very hard to look everywhere but at the affronted parts of me he handled.

when I was done with Alec, he coughed lightly and said
"I… I mean we" he corrected himself looking down to the ground "heard ye had some trouble yourself before" he coughed again as if a whole chicken was stuck in his gullet
"I only wondered ye ken, if all is weel wi'… wi'…" he waved his hand in the vicinity of the areas in question, now looking to the sky.

"Yes quite well thank you, no lasting damage or further un-pleasantries" I replied, trying very hard not to laugh and to sound assuring, the poor man might think he actually injured me and he might nor reprise such actions again and that would be the true damage here.

"Ho weel" in reply to my tone he lowered his gaze, saw my smile and a smile spread back on his lips "I only worried ye ken"

Once our eyes locked neither of us moved any further or saw anything but one another.
Two seconds later and our breathes equalized and our chests went up and down in perfect unison.

"I only worried ye ken" he said and I knew he was apologizing for being mad at my tardiness.
"Ye said so already" Alec looked from Jamie to me and back to Jamie.

"Aye, I did" Jamie admitted, still seeing only one thing "But I always do, worry I mean"

"You shouldn't" I said "Not good for your health" I smiled "Besides, what could possibly go wrong?"

"Aye I ken that but still… I worry at all I canna hold in my own two hands and protect" he said with pleading eyes for me to take special heed when he wasn't near me.

"Christ lad do ye think yourself the almighty?" cried out a very bewildered and confused Alec still looking from one to the other between us "the castle will still stand when ye return"

"Some parts of her might even last over two hundred years in to the future without any assistance"
I said trying to lighten his worry, it did rewarded me a warm smile.
"Aye, future does tend to make his things strong" he said

"what?" cried out again and an even more disturbed Alec, then lifted his hands to the heavens, relinquished any caring and went to mount his steed.
Our eyes never wavered.

"So perhaps this is goodbye" I said shivering slightly and feeling gooseflesh appearing all over my body from feeling strong emotions, only pleasure, euphoria and sexual arousal were not the cause this time. But I was trying to make light of the situation, repeating his words to me when we first thought we would never see each other again and that I would be leaving with Sean Pitry, the tinker in the morning.
We were proved wrong then; his fears would be proved wrong now!

"I suppose so" he said, recognizing the words but not seeming calmer for their meaning.

"R'ye no coming?" asked a now very upset Alec, not that he wasn't before.
Jamie would have to spin a lot of lies to fix what we did, but he was very good at that and maybe Alec will be the one Scotsman in the whole of Scotland, that will keep his big yap shut.

"Safe journey to you, Jamie" I said still holding to my encouraging smile.

"Goodbye to ye then, Claire" he said still holding to his sadness as well.

I kept smiling until I couldn't see the horses any more.
If he would turn I would have him only see me smiling, no matter what I felt.

---

I was staring into Rupert gloom, irritated face, not without sympathy, as Angus went traipsing along, almost skipping, toward the woman he "won" in my little game of pulling sticks.

"Never dismiss a lady's choice Rupert" I said, feeling giddy and elated and wanted to spread the joy by being charitable to my ever present shadow.
Besides in the future, I was, I will be that is, really fond of dear, smiling Rupert. Seeing him gone as he did, broke my heart and was defiantly one of the things I would talk to Jamie about, trying to see if something could be done to rectify his fate.

For now though, I simply felt happy to see him follow me around cursing and complaining at my own existence.

"Mistress?" he queried.

"I just mean that you two may think it was your choice to who's 'arms' the lady should find herself tonight," I said reserving the right to not mention their chosen body part to bestow on the lady
"but I can assure you Rupert, it is always the lady that will have the last say" I tried to hint.

"I dinna fallow your meaning mistress' he tilted his head probably to try and stir his brain to comprehension.

"I'm simply saying that if it was me" I laid another thick clue "I'd prefer the gentleman to the horny toad, no offense to Angus" I said remembering how he grabbed my breasts, that day by the water, as me, Jamie and Murtagh raised anchor on the Cristabel.
putting the insult aside his hands felt quite awful and painful (he pinched them!!!).
There for, I had every reason to believe once experienced, the (by the lack of a better name and may the women party forgive me) 'pie eater' they both fancied, would be running back the other way, ready to be taken by a much gentler man.

"And despite all suggestion to the contrary and some remarks I heard you say to me when we first met, I do believe, dear Rupert , that deep, deep, deep inside, you are a gentleman"

A smile spread on his good jolly face and he straightened himself proudly.

"I am?"

"Yes" I determined, trying very hard not to laugh "so if I were you I wouldn't give up on...well the... Good Lord, that 'pie eater' over there" I must ask for her name the first chance I get I decided.

Rupert Mackenzie blushed.

"Come along" I said "I'll need to pick a horse for the hunt tomorrow; the laird wants a healer to go along just in case".
This time I let him lead the way and as he happily, light-heartedly, now doing some skipping of his own on the way to the stables marched on, I strode behind him.
At least this time I wasn't told 'Thalla 's caic' by anyone.

Sometimes change is a welcomed thing

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THE GATHERING continues:

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The beginning of "RENT" and some previews for what's to come

Chapter Summary

So I have been working hard on "RENT" and "THE GARRISON COMMANDER" And because they are so intertwined with one another and I keep shifting things around it's taking a bit longer than I thought so I couldn't post yet. But this is the beginning of "Rent" and because it's so close to Valentine and I wanted to leave you all with a sweet taste (for it is a wee bit dark) I'm adding a few softer previews. Hope you all will like it and stick with me :-{}

Chapter Notes

These are still rough drafts please forgive. as always dictionary is in the end.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"RENT"

"Well I must confess that although I would love to pull my weight and supply you all with the ... Hmm... Well with the Substance in question, truly I would, I'm afraid that…"

I apologetically searched for the proper words to excuse myself from participating in that specific stage of the proceedings, as I sat in the women's common room cottage in the small picturesque village which I and the rest of the rent party finally arrived to this fine morning.

I mean, if one could call such a small cluster of a huts and cottages that numbered so few, as to be smaller in length than the minute sweet-water glen that laid perpendicular to it, a village.

I did truly mean my words though, my reacquaintance with these lovely, good-hearted, sincerely-welcoming women, was one of the highlight I awaited with eagerness to encounter anew, during this, my second time around in this travel; and in return to their graciousness I did find myself wanting to return the favor.

For it was more than just a delightful change from the company of the farting, smelly, lewd joking involving farm animals and incest relation men that were my daily undergo on the road thus far, again; in this point in time it was truly was a necessity.

Although I still regaled and found myself fortified greatly by the company of short, elderly, heart of a romantic, half-rimmed spectacles Ned Gowen, Solicitor at law, which once we reiterated our love for John Donne and I treated his already diagnosed case of asthma with the ample doses of thornapple I procured in advance to strengthen his cardiovascular functions for him, our long amicable friendship was fully blossoming and flourishing even stronger and better than before.

But delicate friendly female companion was sorely lacking in my life.

I was also never a woman who could stand to be nonessential and in possession of idle hands, so I craved to be surrounded by hard working joyous women again with something for me to do.

I mean how long can one sit and stare as Ned collected his doits and pence, watch as the others hauled the bags of grain, or trusted fowl into the wagon and tie goats to its side. Yes, a very ‘interesting’ life I led these days.

At some point, very early on, even the amusement of seeing Ned go through all the stages of grief as he realized that yet again he must receive another pig into our midst, despite his decree beforehand, had worn off leaving me bored and restless.

So once we arrived here, I jumped at the chance to rejoin my old friend, who didn't quite know she was an old acquaintance of mine, and hurriedly introduce myself anew to dear friendly Donalda Gilcrist.

She on her end took me in as the lost- in need to be put to work- lamb I was, and did so with just as much kindness and hospitable manner her and her gang of merry women Waulking wool did last time, after the warmed up to me that is.

My pleasure enhanced tremendously over now knowing all the words to the Waulking song.

One of the many benefits of being married to a scot and having him at my disposal during the times we secretly shared between the castle walls at night.

I quite frequently asked Jamie to teach me all the words I wished to know or remembered would
come up in my near-known future.
And enjoyed watching him do so with a very proud smile over his wife becoming more of a
proper ‘Scot’.

The words that the rent party spoke about me during our travels were kept tactfully undisclosed, in
accordance to the wishes of both parties involved.

“And now I ha’ a life time to teach ye Sassenach” he once said serenely almost on the verge of
sleep, cuddling me to him in bed and kissing my forehead with the joy of knowing we did, now,
have our whole life to share together and with no need to part as we thought we needed to when
all was lost.

I was also feeling quite proud of myself for managing to sing along quite well to the “Mo nighean
donn ho’ gu” song this time around.

“Chuirinn suas ri do chluais
ite chnuachach an es’in.

Mo nighean donn ho’ gu
Hi ri ri hu ill
Mo nighean donn ho’ gu”….

I remembered humming and practicing the tune a few times along our ride.
And always seemed unable to stop smirking under my nose as I did so;
hearing Jamie’s voice recite it to me in my head along with me.

He refused to actually sing it to me, no matter what I promised to do to him, but he still sounded
just as enticing repeating the words to me in a dry read.
Jamie had a good deep spellbinding voice for storytelling and poems reading.
He certainly put his spell on me every time he opened his mouth.

My smile always widened as I realized how appropriate to our current predicament the translation
of the song was; telling of a young man in the army who is unhappy there and longs to be reunited with his
sweetheart that awaits him back home.

Jamie and I were in the midst of our own little battle at the moment, surrounded by an army of
men and longing to be truly reunited with our sweethearts in the open.

Which in all truth, was also one of the main reasons I was happy as a lark at this moment to finally
be rejoined with these fine women.
For besides their company, they were the first step in our travels to reach mine and Jamie’s goal.

*********

“I would place the curled feather
of the eagle against your ear

Ho ro my brown haired lass
Hi ri ri hu ill

I would be happy with my love
in the white hay barn.

Ho ro my brown haired lass
Hi ri ri hu ill

I would be happy with my love
in the soft hay barn

Ho ro my brown haired lass
Hi ri ri hu ill

my hand will go in your hand
despite any living person.

Ho ro my brown haired lass
Hi ri ri hu ill

forming the militia
took young lads away from us”

Ho ro my brown haired lass
Hi ri ri hu ill

Holding hands no matter who was near, rolling in hay stacks and of course the words Mo nighean
donn, had never failed to ignite something in my core in regards to mine and Jamie’s shared
memories.

Which in turn made me quite reminiscent of the one more, immensely-pleasurable, source that
aided and abetted with keeping my spirits up, during my ride through the crags and moors of this
beautiful, but held hard riding conditions piece of land we found ourselves trudging on.

Jamie was so close now.
There were no stone walls, no miles of Leoch grounds to hold distance between us and no pesky sixteen year old vermin desiring to dance, touch, be rescued or charm my husband anywhere in sight.

We couldn’t touch, we couldn’t speak more than a few words to one another, we couldn’t sneak more than a glance or two at each other and even that had to be done sporadically as to not seem too obvious with our yearning for one another;

but in true Jamie fashion, he made sure his presence was known and felt by me.

I would wake every morning and emerge from my little field makeshift tent to find him loitering about near my tent, picking up twigs for the fire, scaring a pest or a snake he told the men he spotted, but that didn’t truly exist;

or just be there for some reason or another which he used to excuse his whereabouts to the people around us.

It didn’t really matter what he said, just as long as he would be the first thing I saw each morning no matter what.

“Mistress” he would nod to me politely in greeting, with a smile that could only be described as Jamie’s.

“Mr. MacTavish” I would smile politely back.

And just like that, another day on the road had become more tolerable.

He was seldom able to, but he did try to reach covertly to caress my calf under the camouflage of my skirts during the times he could be the one that brought me my food.

Which I must say that under his supervision seemed to improve greatly from the usual shriveled Easter rabbit meals I remembered accustoming myself to, last time around.

The assembly’s lascivious jokes and derision comments did go on as before, but now I could always tell when I was becoming the butt of the joke.

Jamie would at once darken and cease to laugh abruptly.

Depending how hurtful and demeaning the jest at my expense was, the following day the Joker would find himself in possession of some sort of larva or maggots awaiting him in his meals or boots.

Angus’s jaunts about me were probably the worst, for he would find himself almost daily face or arse down on the ground as if he was the clumsiest man a live or as if the universe had it in for him;

all while Jamie would pop up from behind, walking the other way, whistling a joyful innocent tune, Looking up into the heavens as if he was completely ignorant as to what was going-on on the ground.

My sleeping arrangement had improved significantly as well.

I was quite miraculously, almost from the first night, in possession of two blankets instead of one and a thicker second cloak disclosed itself between my belongings.

How did he do that I wondered.

No matter how many times I tried to return the added coverlet to its dispatcher,

It would make a returned appearance between my belongings the very next day, each time to no avail.

“Scotsman are none so thin blooded as ye bluenosed southern” Jamie once teased me about, as he bundled me good and proper in a cloak with him clad with no more than shirt and kilt.

Apparently I was to be proven the truth of it again and again, resistance being rendered futile.

Although the gestures of warm- hearted acts of kindness and love granted to me by Jamie daily did make life on the road much bearable, I refused to allow them to distract me from my quest.

To lawfully get back to my husband’s arms and return to my own 18th century life.

And it all starts today, now.

So I fortified myself and my expression of regret to these friendly women for not being able to provide my urine to aid with the process of setting the dye faster,

all so I could be ready for what’s to come or for who’s to come to be exact.

“… well I’m afraid that in five, four, three, two, one, my companion will be coming to…” I said, staring at the rickety door, predicting the very rude entry of one yelling cussing Angus Mhor.

I was expecting him to walk in mid- sentence, so I let my words trail off, only to be met with dead silence.

“I… I’m s…ure he would…”I stuttered at my words, wrinkling my nose with puzzlement

“You see, I … I thought” I bumbled again, quaking at the thought of things going terribly wrong.

To my surprise a voice did make itself heard at that exact moment, only it wasn’t the furious, squealing one I expected.

Screened behind the door, a deep, polite, soft cough preceded a gentle, shy, oceanic-rich voice inquiring in the best of manners

"Mrs. Beauchamp? Haa… R’ye all done wi’...?"
I marched and swung the threshold open, to find my very civilized but utterly embarrassed husband courteously and cheerfully smiling as he saw me. "Hee, there ye are Sasse... I mean Mistress Beauchamp, I dinna want to disturb til ye be all done wi’... Weel, wi’ such matters that ye were dealing wi’. Ladies Latha math" Jamie turned to address the other women and bowed most graciously "Your servant Mesdames, Mademoiselles".

And as always, when a well-mannered, by all means not ill-looking young man displays such curtsies and reverence, particularly to a group of women, which most have never seen further than where their feet could carry them, or as I mentioned before, no further than their own very, very small village; Jamie’s bonny- blue eyes and remarkable features created quite a commotion.

I heard a soft thump and half- turned to see a young, fair- haired lassie had fainted at the sight of my esteem husband and the honour he bestowed on her. Jamie frowned at the sight of her flailing form and would have gone to lend a hand to be sure and apologies profusely for the wrong-doings he perceived himself to have performed on her.

He most obviously did not understand what he had done, but to him it didn’t matter. Jamie was a gentleman through and through.

Only another woman, an elderly one this time, who was fanning herself as if in the middle of a heat wave, also caused by my precious husband, waved him off saying “Nae, nae sir, she be fine” she assured him and then hissed from the corner of her mouth to the swooning girl “Get ye up Dorin, ye’re embarrassing us in front o’ his Lordship” and then she curtsied awkwardly to Jamie not knowing what else do to with herself.

Some of the other women gasped, some clutched at each other whispering "Ho my", some giggled and blushed and one very ancient wise- looking one was valuing my husband’s arse and seem to approve greatly of the appendage in question.

It made me smile covertly under my nose.

I regained my self-composure quite quickly though, as my wondering as to ‘what in hell was going on here’ thoughts resurfaced inside my head.

"If ye Ladies be so kind" Jamie bowed deeply again and the young woman almost descended back down to the ground, having just risen a second ago. “As to permit me to take back custody o’ this lovely lass, so I may return her to our band of men, I would be much obliged and forever in your debt”

Jamie concluded this with yet another bow and I began to suspect that after not receiving his fair share of attention from his own lady lately, my husband was enjoining the effect he was having on these women and was milking it for all its worth.

I was so used to seeing it only applied on me; I almost forgot what a big flirt my man is. "Mrs. Beauchamp” he addressed me now "Your presence is requested by Dougal and the rest of the men” he said offering me his arm “If ye be so kind”

“Right” I said confused by this exchange, but willing to put it aside to prepare myself for the fight ahead.

“Yes, I should leave” I turned to depart from my charming hostesses "Dougal will surely be fair steamed by now regarding my unannounced departure and disappearance act" Good, I added to myself, just as he should be for the plan to work.

"Ho nae mistress, no at all” said my dear unforeseen, sabotaging husband. “I took great pains as to convince him that I allowed ye to go waulk wool wi’ these fine, fair group o’ ladies here” Jamie beamed at them complimentary. The other women sniggered gratefully; I snapped my head from them to him and snarled unappreciatively “You did what?”

The shocking effect Jamie expelled from these women was starting to exude from me as well. But if I thought myself completely bamboozled then, Jamie surprised me yet again by opening his big mouth and -

“...And took care o’ the other matter as weel mistress” he said procuring a silver pewter mug the size of the biggest tankard I ever seen with a hinged lid at his top.

Did Jamie hold it behind his back this whole time? I mused as I watched him hold the damn thing by its handle, grinning from ear to ear.

"Nae dinna be thanking me, ‘twas the mistress idea” he said as the tankard, which turned out to be filled with goat’s milk for the teething toddler, was handed by him to a stunned, open-mouthed, Speechless Donalda which almost dropped her bairn from being so in awe with my idiot husband.

“Claire ... I mean Mrs. Beauchamp, insisted she heard a wean cry earlier from hunger and asked me to milk the goat as she would go to look for him”
“When did ye hear..” Donalda exclaimed in perplexity only to be stopped by another wail from the needing to suckle infant, which obliterated any suspicion on her side and left her only with gratitude.

“Slàn leibh Ladies” Jamie nodded in kind farewell, as he took a stunned, open-mouthed, speechless me away.

He placed a light arm in the curve of my spine and guided me out from the hut and in the direction to where the men of the rent party were gathered.

"Why would you do such a thing Jamie?” I asked when we were neither there nor here, placed just far enough as to not be heard by the place we just left and to still be camouflaged to the men that were our destination.

“I mean, I think it was extremely kind of you and I’m happy, really, truly happy it was done for the baby’s sake, to be sure” I said marching slowly in front of him and frowning in thought.

"And to spare me being grabbed, shoved and cursed at by Angus is never the wrong way to go, but preferring him from shouting at the top of his lungs that I’m drunk and smelling of piss, or telling Dougal you allowed me to go about my business… I mean Jamie” I stopped and pivoted to face him, searching for the right words as I racked my brain to think what was I to do now to stir up a tumultuous hubbub around me.

"Is Dougal at least ‘been all about it’ as last time?” I puzzled at Jamie, wondering why for the Lord’s sake he would risk such a crucial stage of our plan.

"Err Sassenach, ye do smell o’ piss” Jamie said, sniffing at me and ignoring my inquiry.

"Well we were walking… I mean waulking wool” I answered starting to get annoyed “But Jamie—"

"Aye I ken that, only why would ye do such a thing, is unclear for the life o’ me. I mean ye do ken ye couldna sew to save your life in our last lifespan, right?

D’ye reckon it changed this time around?” he teased me in merriment.

Now I was fuming.

No matter what absurd notion crossed his head and no matter for whatever reason Jamie was doing what he was doing, our plan must come to pass, I… we worked and desired it more than anything! And I was in no mood to be teased when more important things stood in the balance.

“What are you even on about at the moment?” I said frustrated with the lack of answers I was getting.

"Besides I did sew your socks… that one time” I added to save face.

"Aye” he smirked to himself while rubbing his chin as if that wasn’t exactly what transpired. "Ye did sew them. Only ye sew them shut Sassenach” he said smirking again but then added for fairness sake.

“W weil I suppose ye can still call it tailoring in a way. I mean ye did manage to stitch the hole shut, ‘tis only ye did so by closing the spot where the fingers go as weel” he informed me, looking utterly amused “But nay worry the stitches dinna hold for long as to be a bother anyway”

"Liar” I said piqued.

"Aye. I always am when I tell ye things ye dunno want to hear a gaol” he said smirking for the third time.

I wanted to slap him.

“Right! Listen up you big bloody dolt, why did you do all this and why did you even come?” I demanded my questions to be answered and to be answered now.

I turned back to see if I could spot the men-at-arms and the mood that they were in, saying to Jamie.

“Angus is supposed to come and scream to high heaven’s how I’m ‘stonking drunk’ whatever that means and they all need to fight me by the wagons over the goat, So that the Lieutenant…”

He brought his other hand to snatch my other elbow and said in a harsh hiss to my face.

“No Lieutenant, no Corporal, no Brigadier General and most o’ all, by any means, shape, form or ancestor no FUCKING  Captain Jonathan Randall, esquire, of His Majesty’s eighth dragoons in YOUR future lassie"
I knew Jamie struggled greatly with the part of our plan that involved me coming face to face with that man, that depraved, sadistic, degenerate rotten to the core fucking cur of a man, that is.

But I kept reminding him he did nothing to me last time (that Jamie knew of) and our plan THIS time involved me seeing him for only five minutes in a room full of people.

Where, even Jamie had to agree that Randall wouldn’t dare to lay a finger on me.

It took endless hours of me fighting, persuading, blackmailing, begging, crying, yelling and anything else I could think of, to get Jamie to the point where he even considered for such a thing to come to pass.

In the end it came down to one thing and one thing alone; we had no better plan than that to find ourselves back in each other’s arm, lawfully bound.

And even my tenacious pig-headed husband had to agree on that.

Then why was he doing this now???

“Now” he unhooked me, looking to all sides, making sure none saw his behavior towards me ‘Ye’ll ha’ your choice ‘obout it whether to come back and stand by Ned or if ye will do me the great honor as to sit wi’ me in the wagon. This I give ye free rein to decide as ye wish”

“Ho, much obliged to you, for your charitableness master” I said readying myself for a real fight now and not a staged one at all.

“Ye quite welcome subordinate” Jamie said in all seriousness, but then stole another glimpse to the sides to see no one was watching and clutched me tight to him for a rough speedy kiss.

“Christ Sassenach, tha mi gad ionndrainn” he said with such longing, ending the kiss abruptly, which was more of an attack on my stern closed lips than a kiss.

“I’ll see to everything myself Sassenach. ‘Tis handled” he decreed still clutching at where he grabbed me, wanting more and fighting against himself whether he should or be smart about it and let me go.

In a flash he regained his self-restraint and ended in a commanding voice

“And we shall hear no more ‘obout it”

And with that he began marching away, in order to end the discussion and make it clear he was unwilling to hear a thing more or anyone else but himself.

He stopped around the next bend to make sure I followed after him though.

‘That’s what you think you big gorilla- stubborn -boorish Scot!’ I determined in my head as I stalked angrily behind him ‘I have a few more tricks up my sleeve’.

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“Hey, hey were d’ye think ye’re taking that?”

Dear plump and portly Rupert scurried bouncily after me, as I pulled on the goat tether.

Jamie sure I would do his bidding had already progressed and was by the big assembly wagon were the bulk of the laird’s rent goods were stacked upon.

I waited until he would reach it before running to untie the rope that held the nanny.

Once explicit directions regarding our safety and our conduct in public were given to me by Jamie, no matter how I disagreed and raged inside myself about them, I would always follow his word in public, waiting until we were to be alone to raise a good proper, hurling things and even once chucking Jamie himself off the bed, stramash;

Jamie was sure this time would be no different.

But I wasn’t ready to give up this time.

This chance would come and go, leaving us with no other opportunities in our path for me to find my way back home.

Back to where I belonged now.

“Back to her owner, the family needs her” I said playing my little past game of tug-of-war with Rupert over the livestock again.

“Ths, ths, lass” he clicked his tongue at me

“Jamie already milked it for them” he said sounding tired from needing to yet again deal with the spoiled daft woman he perceived me to be.

“So stop your whimpering woman, the goats ours, were taking her wi’

“The he’ll you are” I said shrilling a bit louder than last time, for whatever Jamie told this motley crew around me, it was working; and it was working against me.

Rupert looked exasperated but spoke calmly enough and no other member in the party seemed to be making his move to circle me and intervene.

And therefore no one made me seem as a poor defenseless Englishwoman in need of assistance.

Ned suddenly popped for my back instead of to my front as last time.

He stood himself by my shoulder, patting me tightly on my back in a fatherly manner.

A father that was calming his unhinged infant daughter that is.

He spoke to me in soothing sedative tones
"Ho lassie, that's good and chattels and must be accounted for dearie. Come let us retire aside and allow these men to be men and deal with all this fowl play. Do ye get it mo luaide?

Fowl play, as in foul play mo caileag, you see?"

He laughed with a twinkle in his eyes and witty mirth in his voice, trying to include me on the joke instead of me being the bud of the joke as always.

It was kind but I wasn't amused or playing along.

Jamie satisfied with everything coming up roses for him, just stood there by the wagon, palms tucked in his sword belt smirking in smugness, cocking his eyebrow at me as if saying 'See?'

Adding a 'Give it up' look with his eyes.

"Go canny Ned, poor wee thing is so completely drunk. Be careful or she half-fall and retch on ye as she did on the ride from the castle" He told Ned aloud so that all could hear.

"Aye I can smelt her from here to be sure" said Ned adding his own smirk of hilarity over the play under his kerchief.

People around us didn't pay to all the going-ons much attention.

Apparently a drunken disturbance wasn't anything more than a common day occurrence; even in such a small village as this.

Absolutely nothing was happening in order to lure a lieutenant out from his whereabouts. Wherever they would be.

From where did he show up last time?

I puzzled as I looked around, thinking I would perhaps fortify my efforts in that direction.

Jamie may think it was done but he was far from right.

"Ouch dinna be worrit lassie" Ned put a soothing comforting palm at my back

"Remember ‘Humiliation is the beginning of sanctification’" he quoted John Donne to me as to make sure I wasn't too hurt by the joke I was becoming in everyone's eye.

But I wasn't letting go, not literally from the rope that was cutting the circulation in my hands by now and not figuratively of the opportunity.

Now that the opportunity finally presented itself I was determined to reach my goals knowing this time I must not fail.

"Ouch leave it be ye bean craicte" Rupert wasn’t giving in either “Ye be givin' me the goat”

"Let go" I barked loudly and pulled harder.

A big tall form blocked the sun above my half bending over, unyielding, yanking at the rope figure, as it appeared between me and Rupert.

Jamie took my hands quite masterfully and with no great difficulty, no matter how much I tried to be one, uncurled the rope from my wrists, skillfully opened my palms one by one and released the rope from my clutch, handing it to Rupert that stood behind him.

His furious glaring eyes and his sudden arrival made me inadvertently slacken my grip on the rope and I swallowed hard when I looked up to see how beside himself he really was.

It was what I planned and what I intended to happen, but Jamie was still a formidable foe to cross and come face to face with.

But If I couldn't arouse Angus, Dougal or the rest of the men around me to look ominous and threatening to my wellbeing, I was still always very good and skillful at arousing more in my husband than his libido.

Jamie handed the leash to a flustered to his end Rupert and send Ned on his way by a mere flick of the head.

He stood towering over me; looking down at me and making me feel as if I was hardly a foot long.

"Do mi!" he simply said in low tones and through clenched teeth in Gaelic.

He was ordering me again to join him on the wagon and not to take this any further.

He was also obviously curbing his fury and voice as to make sure Dougal or any of the others wouldn’t notice or intervene.

But Dougal wasn’t the one I wanted. The man I meant to anger was just where I needed him to be, right in front of me.

Now if I could just make him yell at me one time…

"How hard is it to keep watch and control one Sassenach wench?"

Apparently Dougal wasn’t giving- up his chance to join the party.

Good the more the merrier.
"Slippery as an eel that one Dougal"
As it seems Angus wasn’t forgoing his chance to put his own two cents regarding me.

"Would you stop talking about me as if I am not here" I scolded them loudly above my husband’s shoulder and Jamie’s hand actually twitched as he fought the urge to either slap me or muzzle my mouth with his palm.

He did neither though, but growled instead, making sure I realized I should really stop this foolery and at once.

“There’s a baby that needs milk” I rebuke them all with my past words, again, trying to side slip away from Jamie.

If he continued to keep his temper in check I had others to play with.

“Stop your havering woman the beast is payment for rent fair and square” said Dougal completely calm, waving his palm dismissing the matter and he and Angus were already walking away.

No one seemed willing to get upset at any of my past words.
What did Jamie tell them???

“So you let a child go hungry?” I cried persistently after them, and at least that awarded me some attention, even if it was only from the other tenants and cottars around me.

Only Dougal was already following my cries for justice with the story of how they kindly milked the goat dry so as to take care of all in his flock.

Ending his words with “A Sassenach; fleeing drunk forbye” and receiving his fair share of jeers at my expense again, only this time no Lieutenant followed!!!

"Sassenach” Jamie took hold of my arms bringing me to face him again as they all began to scatter.

This time every part of him flared at me.
He was unraveling.
His eyes narrowed into two tiny slits, nose puffing as a dragon’s and his lips disappeared altogether.

‘Finally’ I mused.
It was the walking away from him that broke him, I thought, hoping I won’t ever need to remember that again.

“Ye will stop this now, they all ken the family got enough milk so ye ha’ naughting else left for ye-”

But I wasn’t about to listen or care.
This was my wedding, my life, my husband and my children at stake
And I would fight for them till the world’s end.
Even if it was against their own will!

"Urrrr” I yelled into Jamie’s stunned face.
Come on you God damn bloody bastard.
You stupid Sassenach soldier, I raged in my head frustrated.
Come on, hear me already,
HEAR ME!!!!

"LET GO OF ME” I cried at the top of my lungs
The menacing form of my husband, clutching my biceps, red-faced, furious and stunned to disbelief as an angry gorilla that one weakly sod from his pack dared to defy him was better than even Dougal’s ire face.

"Dè tha thu a dèanamh?” Jamie hissed in my face losing his English, which was a clear sign that an explosion was imminent.
Jamie could keep a clear head in front of almost anyone and in any situation, but not with me.

‘What do you think I’m doing you big oaf!? I pulling the best shrilling tantrum attack I can muster’ I said to myself.

“What do you think you’re doing Jamie MacTavish!!”
What; do you think that you are my friend so I’ll obey your commands? Well I assure you, you're not!
You’re just another obstacle in my path to return home”
I said matching his rage tight lip to tight lip, glaring eye to glaring eye.

Come on where the bloody hell are you soldier??

Jamie staggered back a step from complete shock and let go of me, which didn’t bode well for me and what I needed.

Luckily he was regaining his fury in such a way, I could almost imagine his next move to be picking me up bodily, with a cloth at my mouth and hands tightly bound to stifle any other form of resistance on my part;
so I made my move first

"That’s what I want, I want to go home!!"
I shirked again and the truth of my words resonated in everyone’s ears to hear.

It was the honest truth. I did want to go home.

I wanted to wake in that huge, fit for a whole family, comfy goose-feathered mattress bed with huge plump pillows that awaited me in Lallybroch.

I wanted my first sight in the mornings to be of my husband plaiting his kilt on the ground as he starts his day.
Or have my faith wake me with her cries in the morning as my second child kicked my kidney from inside my womb.

I wanted MY home, the one me and Jamie were meant to build together.
All the frustration and agony I endured to reach this point which I kept at bay and on a tight leash were pouring out of me and I was losing control in earnest.

‘I love you more than life James Fraser, but I will not stand here and watch as these things slip from my grasp’ I seethed inside myself
‘And I’ll be damned if I will allow you, my overgrown, overbearing, control-freak of a husband to stand in my path to that.
You are mine James Fraser and I will see to it happening just as much as you could ever do so’
I said in a heartfelt prayer.

Although according to the looks I was getting from him, I was starting to wonder would he still say yes to the idea of marrying his stubborn, disobedient, unruly wife of his again; once given the chance that is.

Well there was always the threat of me being delivered to the Englishmen to be tortured and killed on my side to make him do so, I concluded as I watched his skin change colors.

And then I heard it.
That stern cultural couch and the inquiring politely, but by no means less commanding respect over his stature, British voice questioning

"Madam is everything all right?"

“’I’m Sorry” I said letting my breath out in relief and saying it this time to the man in front of me that closed his eyes in defeat and not to the soldier that went on with the same script as last time.

“May I be of service?”

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"The land’s been good to ye this year…"

We were all, but one, from the rent party, sitting scattered in the tavern that this small village held. Dougal carrying on with his preliminary chit chat, in order to ply his audience good and proper before disclosing the true nature of this cozy amicable drink fest that was generously held on his own dime.

This time I seated myself around one of the smaller lower tables that stood more to the center of the room, just where Murtagh sat last time and did so again now.

This was in accordance to Jamie’s instructions for me to always be by Murtagh’s side, from the first moment he would not be around himself.

“See Jamie, I do listen to you” I said in my head to my nonexistent husband at the moment
“I’m not only the ill-tempered, shrew of a harpy you perceive me to just now”.

He, as oppose to me was fulfilling his word to me and following our plan, which meant to make himself magically scarce, during the evenings were the places we resided in during the day boasted an inn or tavern that were where Dougal displayed my husband’s back and heart-grueling, horror-stricken tale as to receive funds for his precious rebellion.

Before we embarked on this voyage of ours, I politely but firmly informed Jamie, that if I was to be subjected to the tableau of my husband’s honor and name being dishonored such, again, I would simply stand up and stab Dougal right in his nonexistent heart or in whatever shriveled raisin he was using as a heart these days, not caring the slightest what will become of me.

Now that we knew for sure how much Colum disapproved of the matter and would not allow Dougal the chance to ask or commit disciplinary actions to be made against Jamie and we also knew that the marriage was a maneuver designed to forestall Jamie’s station as contender for the position of Laird of castle Leoch and the next ‘heir to the throne’ for Chief of clan MacKenzie, and therefore stood in no danger of being sidetracked.
Jamie could refuse to participate in this charade without any worry of undesired penalties done against him or against the ones he cared for.

Dougal wouldn’t send him back to the castle to accumulate more popularity amongst the clan’s members or wouldn’t make any move for that matter until he will come up with a suitable solution to the problem called James Fraser that ached his backside.

No.
Dougal was definitely the epitome of San-tzu 'Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer' mantra and could always be relied upon to follow it to the tee.

I mean that was exactly how I found myself in the position I am now at the moment; I reminded a laughing Jamie, that cuddled me to him during the night we laid in my chamber at Leoch and spoke about our future plans.

"Weel, hate to need to kill all those people just to save ye Sassenach. So I guess I'll be staying far clear from such occasions" Jamie said as he held me closer to him, snuggling his frozen nose into my bosom.

So it didn’t matter what Dougal had in mind or that this was his main reason for even bringing Jamie along. We needn’t comply.

I was tired of being conspired upon and manipulated by him, or so he thought. In this instance we could correct the wrong done to my husband and we will be doing just that!

And if Dougal had in mind to try more forceful ways… well, Jamie only needed to dilly-dally until the wedding issue would arise, which now thanks to me was still proceeding on the right course.

The reminder of Jamie’s laugh and a night spent in his arms though, almost broke my already shattered heart entirely.

I sat, now, on the stool facing Murtagh, hardly able to swallow my ale down. I felt so sick for my actions I couldn’t think of eating the fine beef and turnips lunch we were offered earlier or to drink a drop of anything affably given to us now.

I knew I did right by me and Jamie. It was what needed to be done for our future, but seeing Jamie’s reaction when that cultured voice rang in our ears and that neatly groomed soldier appearance followed it; was painful to say the least.

My betrayal of him, my betrayal against his word was reflected in his eyes and I could hardly lift my gaze to look up at him.

Not that he offered me such preview to his countenance. As the sentences of old echoed through the air, being told again by those who told them before, Jamie averted his face sideways, unable to bear the sight of me. It shattered me to pieces.

Luckily Angus required no reason to pick a fight with a Sassenach, be it an officer or me. Once the man’s speech was sounded, I didn’t need to do naught else. Not that I could at that point, once I saw Jamie’s response.

Angus and the others went on the attack straight away, with no need for me to add more kindle to the fire.

“Aye, ye’ll keep your nose oot o’ our business” Angus began playing his role, as the other men came to stand at the back and sides of their clan member, circling Lieutenant Foster into acknowledging his inferior stature.

“I was speaking to the lady” the Lieutenant said in a stern voice that knew his true position and strength, even if the others around him failed to know it yet.

Jamie, aware of the truth the man’s rank held, shut his eyes in pain and anguish at his words. I swallowed hard as my throat went dry completely.

I suppose my reaction to Jamie’s response was just as good as any scared, timid face I made then, for things went on exactly the same from that point on.

“The lady; is a guest of clan Mackenzie” Dougal came to stand by his gillie.

“Do ye treat all your guests this way?” the British officer, with no redcoat to show for his bravado, inquired and Jamie pushed his breath through his nose with great force.

“Hey. Bugger off” the tones were intensifying now, centuries of animosity acting in my best interest.

“Or maybe your lugs need cleaning ‘oot”

“I assure you sir my ‘lugs’ are perfectly fine” Foster persisted.

“Go home laddie and suck on your ma’ teat”

Words were darted between both sides now pointedly and snappily. All the men-at-arms stood weapon at the ready, their hands caressing hilts of swords and butts of pistols.

All except for one member, that is, that just slowly walked away not looking back to me or to the men.

Jamie knew I would not need his protection and that a fight would not ensue, so he left without another word or even a glance exchanged between us.

The last sight I had of him was of a face frozen and void of any emotion.

I sniffed now at the memory, wanting to weep.
"I had to do it" I said into my cup, concealing my face from a few people that came to gawk at the Sassenach healer. Rumors flew about her across the MacKenzie’s land, faster than the speed our little gang of men rode at.

“I want you back Jamie” I said, again only to myself. "And if you truly had a better plan for us then this, you would have proposed it to me a long time ago and not spring it on me at the last second.

You got cold feet that is all, you got too scared” I spoke to the air. "I’m scared too, but I had to do it. Please understand. We have no other way” I said into the nothing as I sniffed again.

Dougal was carrying on with his vulgar jokes and was winning his audience just as before.

I leaned forward to Murtagh and whispered. "How mad is he?” I queried apprehensively.

Jamie was very good at hiding and was nowhere to be found after the occasion, so I had no idea where things stood right now.

Murtagh looked mighty vexed at me himself, quite as his chief.

"I dinna ken how mad HE is, but between ye ordering me to look ‘oot for his wellbein’ and him informing me that I am to be your new shadow and no leave your sight long enough to even take a piss, beg your pardon for my loose tongue, but I must admit that I find m’self bonny maddened enough for the two o’ ye.

What pray tell-”

He said in mock English enunciation to indicate how inflamed he really was at me and my high-class English arse

‘is bloody goin’ on wi’ ye two?!” he said ending with his usual grave Scottish speech.

“Not a thing” I said looking down into my drink again, which was my only protection against my translucent face.

“I think we’re just looking after each other as good friends do and…”

“Wi’ the good friends that ye two are, I shell pray to find m’self between m’ enemies and count m’self blessed” he growled his disapproval at mine and Jamie’s bond.

“May the Lord protect us all from the outcomes o’ your mutual affinity to one another. For between the two o’ ye and your reaction to each other, ye might as weel kill yourselves and save us all from your blubbery, swine-stubborn, juvenile mistakes. Which the two o’ ye keep making ower and ower again!!

What were ye even thinking getting into trouble involving a Sassenach? With the lad’s havin’ a price on his heid an’ him so close to ye as too be seen?!?

If ye failed to notice our stubborn fool is unmistakably conspicuous!”

“Not a thing” I said, again looking into my drink, which was the only protection against my translucent face.

“I didn’t mean it as such… I just…” I stammered at my words.

I really didn’t consider that, I did fail to recall that fact.

Last time, Jamie indeed was more of a stand-by observer than an active member in the scene that transpired; but now that he placed himself in front of me…

Well it was his own Goddamn fault!

I turned defensively in my head. If he hadn’t started this all thing and played around with how things were, all could have gone on just fine as before!

“Never mind what ye meant or nay” Murtagh admonished me.

“Even before the Englishman came, did ye nae think the lad would come running to your side the minute ye might find yourself in danger or trouble wi’ the MacKenzie’s?!” Murtagh demanded of me.

I ignored the fact that Murtagh seem to take it for granted that Jamie would come to my rescue, which was worrisome to put it mildly, but chose instead to address my main concern at the moment.

“So how mad is he?”

“Let’s just say I ha’ seen the lad plenty mad and cussing somethin’ fierce over a few individual in m’ day, but the way ye seem to crawl under his skin and get to him…”

Murtagh said, now looking at me in wonderment.

“Christ lass, an’ excuse m’ blasphemy, but ye make him go completely demented. The man half bashed his own head into a tree from your actions and words, and his knuckles bled somethin’ brutal from being smashed into yon tree beforehand.

And by Christ and St. Agnes, some o’ the things that came ‘oot from that man’s mouth…”

Murtagh crossed himself at the remembrance.

“Did he use the one about the cat, the snow or the ladder?” I questioned, trying to estimate how bad was Jamie’s state at the moment and therefor mine.

“Ye mean ‘May the devil make a ladder o’ your back bones while picking apples in the garden o’ hell?”

“Yes” I said in trepidation. “That one is reserved to when his really irate. I prefer when he uses the cat one or the one about the beggarman, those he uses when his just angry, I can handle just ‘angry’.

Besides I like cats, if I’m already dead, i don't think I would care that much if one ate me”
I tried making light of the situation
"And the devil can choke on the cat for all I care after that" I added remembering the second part of the profanity.

"Poor lass" Murtagh shook his head "He only opened wi’ the devil and the ladder! It got much worse after that and steamed much faster than usual as weel"

"Ho dear me" I said forebodingly.

"Did he curse just in Gaelic, English and French or did German make an appearance? It’s really, really bad when he uses a forth language" I tried to evaluate Jamie’s mood further.

"Lassie, there was Latin and Greek in there too" Murtagh said and my blood ran cold

"Aye I swore on m’ mother’s grave to ne’er repeat what I heard him say today, so dunno even ask” Murtagh said shivering at what he witnessed

“May God forgive him for it and me for even hearing it”

"Ho dear Lord, Latin is only reserved for the highest sinners in his eyes" I yawped in a short low exclaim.

"Aye” Murtagh nodded looking down at me disapprovingly and then shivered as he recalled again what Jamie had said.

If that be the case, his oath was fine by me. I really did not want to know what my husband’s frenzied mind thought of me at the moment. Just as long as he didn’t say in the Gàidhlig ‘Marry in haste and repent at leisure’,

With my mind so preoccupied with Jamie and our not so little drama, I didn’t even realize Dougal had already begun with the business at hand.

The mood darkened all around, the atmosphere of hilarity and joy was now subdued. Sober contemplative minds were pondering about the times and hardships that plagued their country.

It was hard not to want to cry out for them to stop. Hard to not warn them that such actions will only make the body toll and adversities increase and worsen. It was excruciating to not tell them that we tried already. Tried to change history for them, only to find ourselves as Don Quixote. Thinking we were on a mission to fight injustice and save a country and realizing that we were fighting windmills in a war that was doomed from the start.

But would it make a difference? Would they even care? Would I have cared or listened if someone told me we stood no chance against the Nazis? Would I have stopped fighting?

Even knowing what I knew today of lost causes, I would have still marched into those field hospitals, stationing myself at the forefront again. Fighting and donating all I could, even under heavy fire for that cause. Giving all in service to that war. A war that was fought against such horrors that the world had yet to see or even dreamed of devising.

Only I was fortunate enough to play apart in a war that whatever force that allocates such matters had decreed the right side to win that time.

My heart ached for all the Scots; all the people I grown to care and love. But what was I to do? Sacrifice my husband’s life again and therefor mine and my children’s in the process, just to see the cause go out in flames again?

My husband’s… I mused again on the words. Does he still even want to be that?

Dougal inclined his head and Rupert turned on his back to close the entry doors he leaned on.

Tonight’s patriotic speech has been carrying on for some time now, so I found it a bit odd Dougal was only now signaling for the doors to be shut.

But I tried to not dwell on the matter, or regarding anything else that surrounded me at the moment. It may sound cruel and selfish, but I couldn’t allow myself to get emotionally involved again or I would fall apart completely against my helplessness. I had so much guilt and hurt inside of me already; I couldn’t by no means add on to it and go on living. I wouldn’t even have come here, if it wasn’t for my promise to Jamie to be at Murtagh’s side once he wasn’t near me.

Jamie. That was the only ray of light I held on to in this time and place. Thank the Lord Jamie was far and awa…

A heavy large body plumped itself on the third stool, just between me and Murtagh at our table.

My bottom lip dropped open and I couldn’t close it, not even in order to swallow my stupefaction down.
I was surely seeing an apparition. He could not be real!

Yes that was it. I craved Jamie at my side so much I must’ve dreamed him up.

Brought him to life somehow.

For there was no way, no how he had just walked in, at his own volition and sat by my side.

Jamie’s shirt was slashed brutally.

Down from collar to hem and before I managed to even focus my eyes at the vision that sat before me.

I gasped loudly almost choking on my own breath and clutched at my mag as if it was time itself and I could stop and freeze what was happening if I just grip at it with all my might.

My audible distress was swallowed by the spectators’ gasps.

Their reaction at the sight of my husband’s back, matched my own reaction for him allowing this to transpire again.

I tried springing to my feet to hit the foul filthy bastard who started it all.

I promised.

I said that I’d kill him and I meant every word.

I would silence him for life for all that he has done and cost me and Jamie, I thought enraged, as I went to rise on my feet.

But something hooked my knee in such a way I found myself dumped back into my stool.

Once seated, I found I could not get back up or even move to the smallest of degree.

My big barbaric, brute, knobhead of a man had me caught by my knee joint, and he kept applying more pressure on it if I dared move.

The pain I was inflicted with if I tried to stir the slightest was inexorable and even when I tried to endure it and press on, Jamie with only a flick of his fingers flopped me back into my stumped seat.

I was outright immobile.

As if I needed more proof to the fact, this finally sealed it shut.

My sodding husband was very, very, very strong.

He needed only his wrist at my knee to hold me put; looking as if rendering a whole person utterly disable fazed him not a bit and was done with complete control and hardly any strain on his part.

He calmly used his other hand to signal Murtagh to remain still.

As the bloody commander of his own battalion that he was, he mastered every detail and any subservient under his ruling magnificently and surgically.

I tried rising a few more times, but was rendered futile.

Jamie kept applying constant pressure to my knee, which made it a doomed mission from the start.

He was a big powerful windmill and me not even Don Quixote but Sancho Panza the squire at his feet.

When I remembered I had a voice, he must have felt me gear myself up to use it, because for one second his eyes came to bore into mine, giving me a look that said his other now free hand, for Murtagh already took his seat obediently, will be used to gag me if I were to let out a sound.

Said hand then came into view and placed a kerchief on the table to indicate his threat was ready to be administered if I so choose it to be so.

I had tears in my eyes from fury as much as from hurt.

But slowly and surely, as he knew I would, I found myself plumping myself submissively onto my pew, giving up, lowering my gaze to the ground, shutting my eyes and trying to shut my ears to what was happening around me.

No one paid any attention to me or my appalled grief-stricken suffering,

they had the main speaker and the main attraction to keep their sight and ear transfixed upon.

And my tormented response matched their own distress at the sight of my husband’s back and story.

A back that was mine, given to me by him to see and care for.

Not to be ogled or pitied at for the man who had to sustain such atrocious acts, but for me to care and adore as just another part of the man I loved.

And by no means was it to be an instrument to diminish my husband’s true worth and value.

Was this Jamie’s retribution for my actions?

Have I infuriated him so he cared none for himself, wanting only to punish me by forcing me to watch him treated such?

A small puddle of water gathered on the surface of the table below me.

I sniffed inaudibly as I could, blinking my vision to clear again and managed only to make the puddle grow.

If this was his reckoning, Jamie won by far.

“No” I said feebly into the ground.

“Please no” I said again, as Dougal’s story telling voice had become an arousing to arm roar
and Jamie simply shook his shoulders lightly to allow the raggedy ripped flaps of linen that were
the last remnant of the shirt he wore, to slide completely off his back, as to allow all the lookie-
loo's to have a better glimpse at his humiliation and scars.

"Please leave" I whispered in a broken voice, my face sill averted to the ground.
I was unable to raise my eyes to watch anything to do with what was happening at this very
moment.

"Please Jamie for me"

When there wasn’t a kinder touch inflicted on my knee and not even one word came in response
to my pleading, I forced myself to lift my gaze.

Jamie sat there, ignoring me as if I didn’t exist.
If it not for his harsh holding of me at my knee to keep me in my place, I would think him
completely detached from reality.
He was staring straight ahead into nothing.
As if the sounds coming from his right side were not the words uttered from his beloved wife but
from an indefatigable gnat that needed to be snubbed so it will grow tired and leave.
Only I couldn’t leave.

Jamie’s face was frozen as a stone aristocratic gargoyl; seeing and caring for nothing.
I never saw that look in regards to me.

Murtagh would probably have wondered in dismay how was Jamie allowing himself to touch me
so, only he wasn’t able to stomach the going-ons more than I could and he also looked away.

I had a small flash of memory to the first time this happened.
And I remembered that as I watched in hurt and sorrow to what was done to him,
Jamie very stealthily peeked behind his shoulder in the direction of where I sat.
I thought nothing of it at the time.
It was only later I realized how much more difficult this must have been for him because I was
also there.

To bear the wonder of what I must have thought at what was happening in addition to all that was
being inflicted on him.
Or perhaps it was comfort he sought after, amongst the cesspool of Machiavellians exploiting him
literally at the expense of his own back.
Whatever it was then, he wasn’t seeking anything from me now;
and as I heard the clink clang of those coins being gathered for a cause that took everything from
me last time, a burst of vile ran up my throat.

I narrowed my eyes at the taste of it in my mouth trying to swallow it back down and a few more
newly made tears broke through my retina and ran down my cheeks.

I assume people around me just affiliated it with me being a dainty Sassenach woman, seeing such
sights for the first time and was unable to endure them.
Not that even the strong Scottish women around me were acting any differently.

"Why?" was all I could say as I averted my gaze to look straight ahead as well, trying to stare into
the nothing as Murtagh and Jamie did, so perhaps I could force myself to feel nothing as well.
But I received no reply. I didn’t think I would.
If Jamie had resigned himself to be this spectacle, he would bear it to the end, in the same harsh
silence he bore it last time.

And just as last time what a spectacle it was.

*************************

"Ha, weel enough. 'Tis no a great deal, but we canna expect much from a small place like this
though." Dougal said to the chiming leather bag Ned held for him to inspect

"'Tis a respectable sum" he came near me and Jamie, but I knew I wasn’t allowed to move or
even look at him.

Jamie did relinquish his grip on me, at the very last second when it was all done.
Only then did he acknowledge my existence and looked at me with a stare that made sure I knew,
I wasn’t to say ONE word or pounce and scratch nobody’s eyes, as I so vehemently wished to do.

After this, his retaliation over my earlier actions, I dreaded the price of disobeying him again.
So I stared straight ahead frozen, blanked face and dying inside.

"... And wi’ young Jamie's back to show, 'tis money in the bank guaranteed" Dougal slapped Jamie’s arm fondly.

"Be a good lass" he addressed me as he settled himself down on a stool, drink in hand, acting as
if, after HE endured such a grueling and unpleasant task he earned his respite.

"Put ye're needle and thread. Mend that" he pointed at what was left pooled around Jamie's waist.

Jamie couldn’t remove it all the way this time, for he had one hand occupied with crushing my
rebellious spirit to nothing.

I swallowed hard, pushing the tears that wanted to come out down and meant to reach my hand to
take the much needed mending shirt, only to be outreached as Jamie pulled the cloth away from
his body, rising to his feet and said angrily
"I'll mend my own shirt. Heard the lady, we are all just bloody obstacles in her path" he added and stormed out.

I couldn’t stop the tears anymore, so instead of giving Dougal a more detestable look through my eyes, to match the hate I felt inside me toward him, which outdone the hate I felt for him when he tried to kill me, or instead of screaming, cursing and just outright opening my big, fat, filthy mouth that they kept shockingly tease me about, I rose on to my feet, staggered a bit for my knee still felt a bit numb from the lack of circulation it endured, walked outside, managed to take at least a few steps away from the door, hunched over and heaved all the bad taste out from my mouth.

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I couldn’t find Jamie anywhere last night and he wasn’t nowhere to be found this morning.

He was definitely not the first thing I saw when today’s sunrise arrived; or even the third or fourth thing I saw and I looked fervently, trying to make him so.

No twigs were gathered by my tent, no one packed his sleeping covers near my place of sleep although he slept at the other side of the encampment.

And I most certainly did not awake this morning as I did a few mornings ago with a flower clutched in my hand.

"I am your husband, Sassenach. And 'tis my duty to keep ye satisfied. From the first time to the last. Ye'll nay want or need another" he told me once.

And apparently if my need for complete satisfaction included a joy from flowers, Jamie would fulfill all I ever want or need in that regards as well.

Even in the dead of winter, which meant he would have to dig into snow or muddied soil to seek what lay hidden underneath, as the last remnant from summer or spring.

Or even if he needed, in this case, to climb through rocky terrains, seeking between crevices and clefs in the bare limestone rocks of Scotland.

All, so I would awake to the sweet delicate vanilla fragrance the Dark-red helleborine held.

The rare and most beautiful wild orchid was clutched in my palm, while his most striking deep red-purple petals caressed my nose as saying good morning with a scented kiss.

Red is the color of joy, passion and love.

Pink signifies romance and love.

The purple color is usually associated with mystery, magic and wisdom.

Jamie’s flower with a heart of gold at its center, held the sublime combination of all three.

A love letter with no words.

I couldn’t put it down for days after that, not even long enough to press it.

When every small bloom on his stalk finally crumbled into nothing, as all growing living things do, I could have sworn I still smelled his bouquet around me, or felt the very fine short dense hairs of his flower head caressing my nose.

Or was I imagining my husband’s fine short beard sprout as the began to spring, which felt when he kissed my nose, as he loved so much to do?

Either way I held none of them in my hand and grasp at the moment and wouldn’t as it seem, for a very long time.

Of things to come:
(In no particular order as to not give too much away and some things are crossed like this ------ ,for the same reason, but it is still close to valentine so wanted to end the read with something a bit less dark than the section above)

"Today someone will rise, awake himself by washing his face, dress and go to his hard labored day.

Today another man will do the same but he will also smile while he would be doing so.

Today some poor woman will scream in agony under the burden and strain of childbirth, just as another will scream enthralled by the alleviation and freedom of morning delight.

They both will be happy and blessed as their tasks at hand will come to an end.
Today someone will make love to his beloved for the last time, without even knowing it to be true,
just as another will do the same for the first time
in many, many times during all the days of his life.
Today someone will do not a thing and still no happier man would be found.

AND TODAY I WILL MARRY THE MAN WHO LOVES ME AND WILL BE ABLE TO LOVE HIM RIGHT BACK”

Ho ro my beautiful brown-haired maiden
Hi ri my beautiful brown-haired maiden
My kind, beautiful maiden
I would not marry anyone but you

Oh brown-haired maiden of the warm eyes
I loved you deeply.

Your appearance, dear, and your beauty
Always come into my mind

I shall not conceal from the world

That you are my desire and that I love you...

Jamie went on wi’ the chant alone in the room.

As always, he was the only audience, he allowed himself to be heard caroling by.
But today he found he cared naught the slightest who heard him trying to croon a tone.

At this moment, he dinna care who saw him either.
Standing there stark naked, wi’oot a stitch on,
towering over the bed that displayed the full regalia he would be adorning today.

He placed all the ornaments he will be embellished at, atop of the clothing that he would be swathed in today.

All the attires he would be carrying and exhibiting himself in, at this, his formal occasions, were here.

Last time he wore it all for her, to give her respect, to make her proud and somewhere in his mind he wished her to look at him as a man, thinking perhaps she wilna mind it so much to marry him if she could regard him as a man of worth.

A man of worth, of respect. So perchance Claire could look at him and see someone she could view more than just a friend.

Jamie let ‘oot a small snort at the preposterous notion that crossed his mind then.
As if the right vestment or the right trinket could make a woman like Claire take heed or look differently at any man.

Splendor or richness may sway many a lassies hearts; perhaps convince some o’ them to regard a man as worthy and as a good prospect for marriage. But Claire?

“Ye thought she would love ye for any mark of stature ye will present?” he chortled again at his stupidity and naiveté.

“You were you, Jamie. That’s all I needed. You” she told him when he queried how he ever got her.
Wi’ all the truth she possessed, she brought her eyes to meet his and said so, all awhile seeing and wanting only him.

And he knew from that moment, from those words, that he could come to her always; naked as he stood now.

Bare as an egg, inside and ‘oot wi’ none to give her but himself and that would be all she would ask or need.

There to his left, just by the spread of his garments, laid wrapped in black velure with two thick strips of white flax Claire’s long oval shaped token of love for him, to finally be unsealed for the first time in this occasion.

Just as she herself would finally be able to reveal and unmask her love for him in public, once the ceremony will be done.

Jamie pulled on the strips the held it bound, ridiculing himself now how he failed to recognize them for their use when first he saw them on her bed.
How many times did he use such strips to clean and polish the swords that he wielded himself or the one’s he cleaned for others which he served under?

For ye are “Damned fool and nae a day wiser…” he heard his sister chastising words at him when first they came to Lallybroch as a married couple.

And as always his sister was right.

A damn clot he was and could nae be either sage or sensible when it came to his heart.

And when it came to the woman that possessed his heart, that swallowed it whole;

he will be such for the rest o’ his days.

Murtagh watched the sleeping couple.

Her face and body were pressed tight to his chest and … weel other parts of his as weel… or was it his to hers?

The truth was that once marrie the couple just seemed to blur into one indistinguishable lump together.

One incoherent jumble of words and limbs all jointed as one.

Just the day afore, another fight over their behavior ensued as they all realized they inadvertently left the couple for more than three minutes alone together by the rent-goods wagon.

“Wael I’m nae goin” declared Angus rubbing his noggin
“Hied still hurts from him throwin’ the sack o’ grain on me, ower me watching them suck each other faces last time. As if him doin’ so behind the hauled bags of goods and chattels makes him deserving o’ some privacy?” Angus protested vehemently wi’ a logic that was only known and recognized by him.

“Tis nae as if I was even lookin’ at him while I was ha’ing me a wee look-see. Now was I? Besides Il he dinna want another man taking a peek at yon breasts, perhaps he should stop squeezing an’ touching them all the time himself. Verra tempting that is’ he said again in that same use o’ judgment.

“Hear m’ say Dougal, send Willie” he concluded in a knowing tone.

“Willie? Why?” Murtagh found himself chiming in, baffled.

“She likes Willie” clarified Rupert as if this explained it all.

“So?” Murtagh questioned just as confused as before.

“So when Willie comes near them she tells Jamie he should perhaps stop an’ listen to the what the lad wants” Rupert went on wi’ the illuminating.

“And she doesna tell him to stop when ye two come near?” snorted Murtagh “I highly doubt that, ye whelps”

“Nae, when we come near them, she just outright denies him her… ’company’ shell we say… and then starts up all mad at him especially after” --- said Rupert a bit apprehensive

“And that makes for a verra maddened, murderous Mr. Fraser and hell and the devil himself canna strike a bargain to help the man that comes near that man when she refuses him Murtagh.

And if ye find yourself bein’ the reason for it… weel… weel ‘tis bad Murtagh, verra bad indeed” he said shivering again as if remembering what Jamie did to him last time the events he described transpired.

“Why even leave them alone?!? Ye ken what happens once more than two minutes past and there alone wi’ each other, ye sniffin’ mongrels’ lubbers’ cried ‘oot in turmoil an enraged Dougal, that truly seem to dislike how enamored and entranced the couple were with each other.

Even more so as he kent what a great part he played in enabling their joining.

“Did I nae tell ye to keep them two apart long enough for me to ------?”

An agitated Dougal demanded again o’ his minions.

“When?” rebuke in frustration up to his ends Rupert.

For otherwise Murtagh doubted verra much the man would e’er let his voice rise such in front o’ his chief.

“Ye said ‘go canny’” said more calmly a trying to defense himself Rupert “wait for the moment… nay, for the second they will part to take him aside an’ keep them so till ye come, that was what ye said Dougal. Only he had nae let her go once yet”

“Tis true Dougal” chimed in Angus agreeing wholeheartedly “the lass got two working legs that havna been workin’ since he marrieit her. Or at least nae for walkin’ an inch away from him”

“I’ll ha’ a talk wi’ him ye do tho’” said Murtagh as he took it upon himself to talk to the lad regarding -----

He began walking in their direction, but then reconsidered.
He swiveled back on his tracks, returned to the men and said
“Best perhaps to do so tomorrow though”

And seeing Dougal’s irate mug he elucidated.
“It has been longer than five minutes Dougal”
He looked down at the man
“I’m nae stopping what they obviously started by now.”
He ended that with stretching ‘oot his arm to seize Angus by his waist coat, as the man already
began slinkin’ in their direction himself.
“And neither are ye, ye bloody filthy pea-brain dunce. Sit your arse back down!!”

So here he stood, in this, the morning after, a few feet from the couple.
Watching Jamie’s arms draped tight around her as if making sure nothin’ could ever come near her
w’oot going through him first.
Their legs were quite clearly entangled with one another under the covers.

Only a few nights ago they both slept in different sides o’ the camp wi’ enough space amongst
them as to lie an army in their midst.
Fighting like two demons spawn for their throne in hell.
Fighting tooth and claw to reach somewhere or to get at somethin’, with only the good Lord and
themselves to ken as to what or to where.

Whatever ‘twas, was varra long forgotten by now to be sure.
whatever made them fight almost e’ry day wi’ each other;
that is when they did actually talk to one another and dinna outright ignore one another in spite,
stood aside to clear the path to somethin’ so powerful and unexpected that left the rest of the men-
at-arms an’ everyone around them verra confused an’ on their edge.

An’ the lad needed to acknowledge that fact an’ deal wi’ the business at hand.
Murtagh loathed his part in the disillusionment o’ the lad though;
for once married, it was as if the long race they both ha’ been running since first they met ended.
An’ the two o’ them came crashing into a halt an’ into each other.

These days if one could slide one straw o’ hay or an ant could find itself able to slide between
them, Murtagh would be most surprised.
Not to mention the smiles...
Christ they dripped honey and bliss.

Aye, aye, but he promised, so-

Murtagh shuffled his feet on the ground in order to make his presence clear to one half of the lump
before him...
And as always two small slits cracked two slanted eyes.
The clear blue color sparkled for a second in the lighted dark that surrounded them at this early
hour, only a few moments before the sun will show her presence fully.
Jamie spotted Murtagh at once and knotted his brows in question.
Murtagh inclined his heid for his godson to follow and nodded to indicate a word needed to be
exchanged.

Jamie bunched his expression in reluctance, but had already began to stir.
He moved so gently and slowly as if the mistress was a quail’s egg which was already cracked
and one more slight movement or even a breeze from the morning wind will break her all the
way.
When Jamie finally untangled himself from her, she was still sound asleep.
But just as he rose to his feet, letting go o’ her completely, she must’ve felt the cold, for she
mourned as if in a question.
It must ha’ been the cold nae?
I mean, the woman slept like the deid.
Murtagh seen it during their travels together.
T’wasna possible that she truly sensed his presence gone from her, could she?

“Shah, I’m still here Sassenach’ whispered Jamie in her ear
“Right here wi’ ye mo chridhe, I never left”
He said as he gathered back one roving curl from her face to be gently placed back behind her ear.
The dormant figure just melted back into the ground and yielded wholly to sleep once more.

“Why did ye say that to her?”
Murtagh asked at a finally coming to his side Jamie.

“Dinna Ken, but she needs to know it” Jamie shrugged, but seem to ken the answer just fine.
When he recognized the look o’ acknowledgment to that fact in Murtagh, Jamie added quickly
before more words would be exchanged.

“Come a ghostidh, will brew some water to boil so we could make ourselves somethin’ hot to
drink and she could use the rest to wash in the morning when she rises.
They would be warm and pleasant when she’ll finally awake” Jamie smiled mischievously at
Murtagh –“twill make her forgive me for lying ‘about my presence’ he jested

“She forgives almost everything once she’s clean” Jamie grinned at his cleverness, already picking
the water flagons in the direction of the river.
Now, how could a lad that’s been married less than a week ken that??!!
Christ, between these two and their behavior, Murtagh found himself truly at a loss for words or logic.

All of a sudden Jamie outstretched his arm to the back of him and a soft content smile spread on his lips as he dreamily looked to the horizon in front of him.

"Come. 'Tis fine" he said tenderly.
And Murtagh frowned in lack of understanding what was ‘rong wi’ the lad now.
This incomprehension lasted only a trice, for two slender white-opal colored arms came around Jamie’s waist and the puzzlement ended.
She kissed his clad back softly and then went up on her toes to kiss his nape from behind.
And Jamie’s face lit up as if he was the morning sun himself.

"You lied" she falsely berated him "Don’t ever let me think you would be in my bed when I wake and let me find you missing” Claire buried her face at his back, snuggling to him tight.

"In my defense ye werena supposed to rise till the sun would grow tired of ye being the only one still asleep and would place a cruel kiss on your face or send me to try and convince ye that ‘tis morning and no just the sky burning up, so I should just let ye be” Jamie replied bringing her to his front kissing her verra lightly on her lips as if to keep face and dignity in front of Murtagh.

At least the lad had some respect for some if nae for others, Murtagh mused approvingly.

"Heated ye water to wash Sassenach, they’re in the pot there, and aye they’re clean, boiled them but an hour ago so they’re nice and warm for ye, as ye like”

"Hoooo what a treat” she drowsily smiled “fine you can lie anytime you want”

"Oh, I’ll keep that in mind”
"Try me and I’ll -"

"Go Sassenach, Murtagh has nay a brave enough heart to listen to what your mouth can conjure up, even this early in the morning”

"Ouch, you men and your tender hearts” she mocked and departed

"May the crows peck and eat their eyes and the devil eat the crows.
And when he, all but be done wi’ that, may he secrete it in the morning and place them back in their heids”

"Jamie!!!” I exclaimed in silence, pulling on his ear.

"What??!” he objected feebly, too busy purring from my chosen deeds “That’s what they warrant for watching us so.
I finally ha’ ye back Sassenach, I’m no ‘obout to stop touching ye ever” he said skimming his lips on my face.

"Never” he added as a small prayer a second later

“Give me your lips mo maise I want to suckle and bite them”

“No” I said my voice a bit muffled

“Aye Sassenach but if ye nae want me to lose complete restrain an’ take ye right here an’ now and be damned who’s watching, ye be giving me your lips an’ cease wi’ the taunting o’ my neck”

“You don’t like it?” I distanced myself puzzled “You usually…mmm”
I mumbled as his lips came to mine opening and closing on them as his palm came to cup my cheek, so I won’t move.
A few moment of that and I felt his tongue inserted into my mouth sealing the deal.

“The problem wi’ m’ nape” he said as he finally let go of my mouth and stroke my cheek, smiling in satisfied indulgence into my face, who were an inch from his
“is nae the way ye treat it, but that ’tis closer to my nipple then m’ lips are and it makes me think
of how ye usually start wi’ m’ neck and move your lips to my…”

Chapter End Notes

a gaol [=darling or sweetheart]
tha mi gad ionndrainn [=I miss ye]
mo luaidhe [=my beloved, darling]
mo caileag [=A girl or woman with brown or black hair/ young female]
bean [adult female human being]
craicte [insane, demented, out of control]
Do mi! [to me]
Dè tha thu a dèanamh?" [=What are you doing?]
From Willie MacMurtry

To Alan, Kenneth, Esq.

December ---, 1743

My dear friend—

I write to you in good Health, hoping and praying for this dispatch to find you the same.

I have received your correspondence just a few days afore and must admit to my dismay and sorrow at the hearing that your betrothal to Muriel MacKenzie annulled.

I confess to finding myself abash and at a loss for words ower the shocking news that the lass played you for a fond.

And acted so false to you as to lie regarding your own bairn.

Your first child.

Please forgive my insolence and loose tongue, but what a baggage, jilt, jade.

I ask again for clemency for my impertinent and malapert.

You ken me a charaid and ken I never find occasions to use such language.

But what cause can one have to do such a thing?

And to a man she herself proclaimed she loved?!

I never kent such depravity and lack of virtue to be in her heart, or I would have forewarned you long ago of her, I assure you.

But as I ride on, from end to end on our fair MacKenzie lands, away for the first time in life from between Leoch’s walls and the grounds that hedge it; I find myself more and more familiar with human crimes and atrocity.

I find that those that you and I have come to ken and hear ‘obout from Father Bain; those we find ourselves fighting from within our own selves, our wants, our desires, our ill-tongue and thoughts; well those I fear to share with you brother, are none so grave as to those I see in my time away.

The gardens of the earth are filled with snakes in their midst and some apples are too darn tempting to no be tasted by us mere sinners.

I mention such things to you, for I think perhaps all this prefatory will bring ‘obout better heed from you to I, as I say my say to you through this hand.

Ailean, I have come to see how hate and hurt in the fairest of people’s hearts can corrupt, deprave and lead to evil doings amongst the Lord’s own children.

This is why I fortify myself to write to you, to speak my mind. To share the understandings I beheld with my very eyes and the things I’ve come to grasp in my own heart and mind to be true in these past long weeks.

For I hold you dear as if you were mo bràthair and no just mo goistidh.

So I have come to fear for your mind, heart and soul after this indecent offense has been done upon you and yon parts.

You ken as I, that we have been friends since we were wee weans carried on our maters’ laps unable to walk our own.

You ken as much as me, that there was no road we dinna take together and no path or man as ever come between us.

We have sworn blood oaths to each other since first we could utter the words, Pledging to guard on the other’s weak side in life and in fight.

We have talked of any subject under the vast blue ether we could think of, and almost always saw eye to eye with one another.
You are dear to me as I am to myself, 
and as I ken I am dear to you.

I bring forth all this to your mind now, for in this dispatch I wish to discard with all proper deliberation and manner. 
I bid of you to no take offense with the familiarity in which I will speak here with you.

I plea for ye to recall our long acquaintance between us and between our families, 
so you will allow me to address you here with these words as I would address my own soul in times of quiet reflection and in the privacy of my mind.

We have always talked sach. 
And in my present distance I wish to do the same with the words I will send you.

Dear Alan, 
you have been bit, aye. 
And played for a dupe. 
But dear brother, 
you dinna love the lass. 
You yourself professed so to me so many a times.

You have sought penance and God’s forgiveness for each of the times you came to her ’oot of the marriage vow. 
Running to confess and repent as to be absolved for each touch you placed on her since first she came to you and removed her robe in front of you with hardly any word beforehand.

You made known your heart to me many a times, since first you joined with her. 
And although I durst no think myself to have any knowledge ower such matters, your words and recounting to me were clear.

The lass had firm hold on your body, but nay on your soul and mind.

Comes to mind the time you said to me that you are beginning to loath your own body and desires, for they hinder you from bring to an end the running to her day and night when she calls for you and asks you to do her bidding.

We talked in length and wondered was it love which you have failed to ken the sight and feel of? 
Or sinners’ lust that must be withstand?

You allowed to me that something in her eyes was ootwart to you and you felt yourself no wanting to spend time gazing into yon eyes once the bedding ended or even hear her speak.

For you said once the lass opened her gab all she e’er did was haiver nonsense and babble; fussing about naught and railing underhanded on this person or the other.

By your own doubt you said she gives you joy and pleasure beyond your knowledge thus far in life, 
but just as long as it is done when you abandon yourself to your licentious compulsion and come into her.

Again, forgive my lewdness, but I speak your own words to you.

My only hope is that this latter reaches you in time and you read it to its end. 
I have spent many a days lettering it since first I opened your dispatch to me.

I wish only to have my words provide you some solace and comfort in your raw time. 
I speak here nay defamation or reprimands of your action thus far.

Please believe me Mac Coinneach, I dunno play the part I ken yon family and friends who surround you at this time do.

‘Tis only I have come to witness another union come to pass afore my very eyes and the events to follow is what I wish so ardently to tell you of.

For as to e’er word or tale you shared with me, of you and your intended; 
us thinking that this was the way things are to be; 
Sean a charaid ‘tis no!

I ken that by the end; 
when you kent all the hochmagandie you have done with the lass procured a bairn, you said that this must be then a match made by God for he had blessed your union with child.

Or so at least you kept saying pale and mortified with shame and fear to the faces of your da’ and the lessie’s.

Perhaps you tried convincing yourself of such a fact, excusing your inability to cease such things. 
Saying that you and the Muriel lass were right for each other, so your actions couldnna be wrang.

Again I judge you no, I only mean to tell you here, now, of my own seeing of what true love really is and what righteous but no less wild passion should feel.

And I tell you Alan, 
you and I have much to search to have it, 
but much to look forward to once we do. 
I speak regarding love and marriage of course.

So despair no the slightest.
And forgive me again, for I ken only now of such matters, and find myself only at present wiser and sager then you that had bedded one yourself, or I would have shared such knowledge with you long ago.

But I do ken it now, brither.

Wi’oot a doubt I ken love.

I can tell you from my own experience of seeing it, the presents it wields and has at her disposal to bestow to those who have her. And the feeling one receives from only glimpsing at the real thing wi’oot even havin’ it as his own.

For the rest of my life I will search for this. And as you are my closest friend and our lives and dome will always lay together, I will gladly tell you in the future if you truly possess it yourself.

I ken that for my own future I will seek no less.

Coinneach, we have ne’er been asked for what we desire of this life, our paths were told to us, our hearts were to be given to the highest bidder.

So you will find yourself truly conflummixt of my boldness, but from henceforth I will only pave my way at the light of what I wish to do and reach.

I take this right and desire and place it above serving my chieftain, above soldering for the MacKenzie’s and most of all above my father plans and decree for me.

Aye, I ken your stamagaster. I tremble myself as I write these words.

But I canna take back what I have learned and beheld and my only desire now is to seek and find what a fellow to arms received but a short time ago.

I will seek love, Alan, true love. Knowing I will be able to ken when it will come and when nay.

But I haste and digress and have failed yet to share with you how I ken such matters.

You may recall the man by the name of James MacTavish, which we all ken is Fraser, but pretend otherwise.

Weel I bore you no with the details of how the matter came to pass, but I share its events with you.

The healer? The conjure woman newly come to the castle? The one we all play the gowps to the truth that the lady is prisoner to Himself and Dougal?

Well a spy she in nay and found herself in graver danger by the hands of her own kind then the one our Scott’s hands placed upon her.

But the details as to how all this came about are none so important that they canna await my return to the castle for the telling.

Here I will only tell you the end of the tale, which in it the mistress found herself in need of protection only a marriage contract could suffice. Dougal was forced to change the weedae from a Sassenach to a Scot.

I ken you have ne’er approved for the outlander to stay in our midst. So I wilna regale you again of stories and tales of how the lady is virtuous, courageous and wise. I will tell you only of the things I have witnessed between her and her husband. And I wager you all the scones and oatcakes you can eat that you yourself will come to see her as a true woman of valor.

To help save the mistress, James Alexander took the ban-lighiche in baund of wedlock.

I ken the subject to be a painful one at present to you. But mind that I am your bana-ghoistidh and will never lead you false for no reason. So I beg of you; hear me. Need to my words with an open and tolerate heart.

I do must confess with some mortification beforehand that once mairit the couple have taken over all my interests and attentions as of late.

I fear to admit such depravity, but do mind that I nay watch from some ill- lust compulsion.

Well, as I did promise to be simple- hearted, honest and faithful with my words to you here, I’d no just say that ‘tis ill- favored to watch their tokens of affection to one another. For you must ken brother, ‘tis quite a vision to behold.

But my motives hold in them also a true heart and a well-intended aim.

A true heart that holds no knowledge of such matters and yet yearn and hunger to enquire how love should look or feel.

For as I mentioned afore and as ye ken ’obout me, my experience and knowledge of the fair sex
are lacking to say the least; and to see how the man treats and speaks to his beloved and how deep and profound her reaction is to it.

Why I tell you mo charaid, although I feel myself speechless by the sight of them, I find myself braw and all my questions, regarding such mysteries that are called women, or the rune a relation with one entails for me being finally answered and with no words needed.

The sight and the truth of it is so swith wi' virr and devout that none can be deluded into thinking it to be a lie as you encounter with your intended was.

I ken I might ride you mad as a wet hen regarding the couple many a more times. Only I find myself enthralled by the sight of them and canna remove my gaze from them all through the days and nights.

I start my story with the other day, when all the men partook in a celebratory draft in reverence to my Lord Broch Tuarach’s nuptials.

The draught was as water in a linn. And by the time the night turned black as a door knocker, no man amongst the rent party wasna so deep in his cups as to see naught but his own mug.

All but me that is, for you ken the last to come onto the ranks is the first to watch for the rest. When it was all but done and the reeling and jeering were calmer than the lion roar they accustomed themselves throughout the festivity.

And even the chanting was one I could find myself croon after wi'oot blushing or of need to go to confession for speaking such words.

I hummed along with Ned and Murtagh as I watched around me as most of the twenty man- at - arm were found sprawled on the ground, snoring and farting ‘oot loud under, praise the Lord, the OPEN ether.

“A little Learning is a dang’rous Thing; Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring: There shallow Draughts intoxicate the Brain, And drinking largely sobers us again.”

Jamie much worse for it himself, ower taking-in six tankards of grog and most of the whiskey flask, departed from us.

I watched in concern ower his standings as he staggered to his beloved. I thought better he should swoon like the rest did where they stood, then try to safely arrive to his destination.

Which was of course the form of his sleeping, treasured wife, who was swaddled in their sleeping covers on the ground at the other end of the encampment.

For earlier she said that such a thing seems to her to be quite the bachelor stag and should be fancy -free and with no birds or doves involved.

Aye, I ken she says the oddest phrases, the mistress does, for I canna for the life of my comprehend what is a bachelor stag, or why, from whatever place she hails from, would there be birds or doves in such a thing?

And I have yet to see a stag in such a way he canna tell a bed of leaves from a rock or woman from a man, which was the result of this festivity.

Every man just crumbled at the point where he stood, no minding if it were another men’s body he fell upon or snuggled for warmth with.

But no Jamie, he put one heavy wobbly unsolid foot after the other, careening slowly on his shammie- hochts, almost tumbling with every step as if the ground kept slipping under his feet.

He was assuredly nay walking in his usual deftly bounce, which we have accustomed ourselves to expect of him.

But he did all he could in his power to reach her, to reach his lady. He refused to allow naught to stop him till he finally came to her.

I tell you brother, it was most painful to watch.

Once he had though, reached her that is, he allowed himself to slump roughly on his knees by her, as she laid on her side, her back to him.

He brought his heid under her palm which rested on her hip and began nuzzling it.

He was as a dog burrowing his snout beneath his master's palm, slowly inching it up so he could place himself beneath it, begging to be pampered and patted.

Out of a complete state of sleep the Mistress’ palm rose and smoothed back the hairs atop of Fraser's crown.

They are newly mairit, but she from only a light touch to her skin, could ken her husband’s feel and needs.

Jamie at once croodled further into her, collapsing half atop of her, but still making sure the
Mrs. Fraser puzzled drowsily to him
"Mmm?"

"I'm drunk" Jamie simply said as if he were a wee wean admitting to his parent he Spilled the milk cog.
"I can smell that" she teased him, coming to lie on her back, bringing her hands to cradle his heid and placing it on the side o' her body.

"I'm drunk Sassenach" Jamie said again, now as if seekin' somethin' of her by such a statement.

She maneuvered them to fondle his face and crown to sooth him and then kneaded circles into his temples to ease the sair heid she kent on her own he had.

Her fingers yielded soft and hard fondling, running themselves through the tendril of his hairs and skull.

There ivory- whiteness disappearing as they were dipped into those crimson- chestnut locks, that shimmered to their full color as the small fire near them blazed and illuminated them.

The snowy opal colored fingers fully emerged as she brought them to be laid and skim their path on his face, rubbing in certain spots and making the bridegroom groan deeply with pleasure.

I tell you Alan,
you and I both ken the man I speak of.
We both have been bested by him in cards and in training, be it sword, fists or marks.

And that he towers over most of the men you and I consider to be the tallest amongst the highlanders.

To say he is as a formidable foe to face in any circumstances even a merry one is making light of what that man can do and become.

Aye, to all accounts James Fraser commands respect and awe w'out even demanding it. Needing only to stand afore you for it.

But that man?
The man I speak of and watched enchanted at.

That man was transformed to a small Cheetie, seeming to look like a young burke our age.

If we thought him a heidsman with none above him, James Fraser met his match in his wife.
And he seems fain and most fortunate with that fact.

Jamie placed his arm around his Mistress' waist, purring like the cheetie I described him to be.

Yon cheetie that seem to be given cream and no mere milk;
and that yon cream was handed with a promise that this was to be received e'ery day and in abundance for the rest of his life.

He buried himself in her.
He molten into her, as she carried on with her heeding of him.
His entire aghaidh and corp were emanating only sonas and sona ri broòg as if all was right now.

He reached where he belonged.
Where he would be cared for.
He came home.

So deep were her adoring acts to him, that I felt myself lulled to sleep just by the mere sight of it.

With his nose squarely buried between her- well ye ken where- and with the man seeming to be fully lethargic by now,
Jamie still dinna fail to release such a spread to his lips, which commenced to come about since first he stood that day in the church saying
"I James Alexander Malcom MacKenzie Fraser take –tee, Claire Elizabeth Beauchamp…".

I tell you Kenneth, if e'er we were worrit of our future knotted with unknown women we kent none 'bout, wondering how can love truly come from a union arranged to us by others.

With his nose squarely buried between her- well ye ken where-
and with the man seeming to be fully lethargic by now,
Jamie still dinna fail to release such a spread to his lips, which commenced to come about since first he stood that day in the church saying
"I James Alexander Malcom MacKenzie Fraser take –tee, Claire Elizabeth Beauchamp…".

I find myself quite prood in my assistance to help such a union come to path afore a priest and in a church.

Then put your mind at ease mo bancharaid and let me inform you that one James Fraser that we all ken was a doting and a much soughed after man in the eyes of much of the castle’s lassies, which I wager still keenly await his return and the chance to gain his attention, well that man, wed a complete stranger, known to him but a few months.
Alan, the man sees none but her!
He has grown completely infatuated and captivated by her and doesna seem to wonder the slightest perhaps another of his own choosing will come as a better fit.

And I can assure you 'tis no just him.
Between them two, there is somethin'.
I canna fully ken what 'tis or how to call it just yet.

For I feel calling what they hold amongst them love and respect feels as if I am trying to put into words somethin' that words canna encompass.

Perhaps 'tis both too ancient and yet too new for words that exist at present time.

Aye, like the past and the future collided in them and the present as no yet fathom what to do with the two.

All I ken is that when I see it, 'tis so beautiful and breath taking that I can feel it in my bones and I envy to find my own.

If only I had a way to make you see how he was under her hand and how she granted him all her care and tenderness, just for him.

There wasnaa any bedding Alan, no ill-words or ill-doings were bartered between the two or any words for that matter and still they seemed happy and at peace.

You have failed to share with me of such a moment between you and Muriel.
Nay even once.

So here is my first advise to you Coinneach,
when searching for a wife, seek for a healer.
I Ken I surely will.
The magic and ability their hands hold is freely giving under wedlock, as it seems that we should count ourselves very blessed to receive it.

She might a Sassenach be, but a more compassionate woman I dinna ever see.

And one James Fraser fooled them all by seeming to have the knowledge of such things beforehand.

For I remember him the night afore his weeding.

I came back from the stables into the common room where I found him swarfed form, sprawled on the inn's table after the men had their talk with him, which I wasna allowed to be previewed to.

"Somethin' only a wed man should ken" Murtagh told me.
And when I inquired how, him, an unwed man himself and many more that were assembling themselves to exchange a word with Seumas ken of such matters, I was send away with a swift kick in my rear to mind the horses that were already fed and cleaned for the night.
I should ken, for it was I who did so earlier in the hour.

The time I speak of then, was when I made my way gingerly back, entering the common apartment and coming to where they sat.
I found that all but Jamie were awa aff.
Than an awa by the looks of it.

Jamie was sitting on one of the low wooden furm by the tables in the center of the room.
His torso bent onto the table, his heid sunken and fasten onto the surface of the table, his arms were stretched above his heid, across the table, his palms clutching the table's ends tight.

I came to stand by his right shoulder, feeling a bit aghast, for the man dinna look weel at all, and poked him gently on it.
I only meant to check for some sign of life and wellbeing and almost pissed myself as a very deep growl came from the man.

"Haaaa" he said adding a sob "I dinna enjoy that one bit"
His voice muffled over his face still buried into the table; right where for some reason there was a small dinge on the table's surface, as if a grubber plunged itself repeatedly at that spot.

I could see it had the same shape as Jamie's forehead, when Jamie finally lifted his heid to look at me with bloodshot watery eyes, long face and flushed skin all over.

"Dinna want to e'er go through that a third time around" He snarled, seeming to me truly miserable.
He grabbed my arm and pulled me to him and onto the bench in one strong sweep pull.

"Christ" he blurted hoarsely as if he wasna the one that spoke much at their wee crack.
He cupped my cheeks with his palms begging me
"Please duno let them near me again.
Please Weelum man, anything ye wiss MacMurtry, just please, they no come near me again!" he pleaded with all his might.

"Aye" I stuttered as his palms squeezed my face hard.
I wasna able to understand naught at what transpired and when did it happen before that the man wasna willing to go it again a third time, but as the man was obviously air mhisg, so I kent no true answer or logic speech will be coming 'oot from him tonight.

As you will read on, you will see my inference was more than correct.
"Perhaps bed Jamie? Ye seem to be o' need of it, ionmhainn a caraid " I suggested to him, contributing my best advice as to make sure the wedding was to come to pass the next day.

"Aye" he said and slammed my heid down into the table as he used his grip on me as leverage to rise to his feet. He used only one palm of his on my shoulder to smash me down as he got up.

Dear Lord protect us, Alan. That men is strong!

He just about snapped my shoulder straight aff.

I do believe I almost found myself in the same predicament he was in when first he came across the Mistress.

Although watching the two of them now, I find myself wanting to break it aff on my own, if it meant the heavens might send me a healer of my very own.

But I ask your forgiveness for straying from the subject in hand.

My da' always said I had a mind of a daydreaming bumblebee.

I return to the story at hand.

Jamie as you come to gather was in no state to find his own bed for the night.

And I found myself the only man for the job, for he went down on his knees beseeching me for dear life no to call 'oot to Murtagh as I said I should, so as to help me lug his carcass to his bed.

His exact words to me were that I was in no circumstance to let one of those

'May the holy one help them, incurable ignoramus, dunce, fools, that wouldna ken what to do with a woman if they werena paying her' men come near him even if he was in such a way as to give up his ghost to his maker.

He was willing to come with me only after I pledged I wouldna, or to be polite about it, he willingly swung his arm around my shoulder and collapsed atop of me, burying my nose directly into his oxter.

Good Lord the man is tall.

"Perhaps a wash afore ye marry Jamie wilna come amiss." I suggested trying to put my two doit in as to help the poor bride that would be forced to come near such a stanch.

"I shall tell the innkeeper’s wife to fetch some hot water for ye to bathe in" I suggested.

The man reeked of very cheap tipple and as the man was also sweating profusely from brow to foot, it was steaming oot of him in such a way, my eyes were getting watery just as his were.

"Hot baths" Jamie snorted in mirth, as I struggled to prop him up and find some good standing as to be able to carry him to his bed, which by the Lord’s good gracious was on the same floor we stood at.

"She almost left me ower 'hot baths" he snorted again and seem to lose all reason at that point.

"Aye weel, perhaps she smelt ye coming Jamie" I said trying to direct the man to the room where the men all slept.

Only Jamie wasna having any. He on his part seemed to want to go upstairs to where the Mistress slept.

"Jamie, dè tha ceàrr thu? What r’ye doin'? 'Tis no the way!" I cried after him as he pushed himself off me and swayed, staggered and stumbled as he made his way to the stairfit.

"Let go" he waved his hands at me to discourage mine who were trying to halt him.

"I want to go to sleep wi’ m’wife" he said standing under the two flight of stairs to her chamber. He squinted his eyes as if estimating the undertaking he was about to take.

According to his disheveled shirt that hanged askew and was trickling from his kilt, his flushed face and droopy eyelids, he stood no chance.

But as I said afore, Jamie would no allow for any obstacle to come between him and her. Or no state even his to hinder him from her.

He bit his lower lip and clutched at the rail, mounting the first stair.

"A charaid Fhrisealaich she nae your wife yet!" I tried talking sense to the man.

"Ye canna scare her such by comin’ to her demanding her company afore the formality. She wilna be willing to marry ye tomorrow" I cried after him as he pushed himself off me and swayed, staggered and stumbled as he made his way to the stairfit.

"Doùn do chraos!" He ordered me, appalled by the thought of what I suggested, but then smiled gleefully as if remembering something I ken naught 'obout "Besides she likes it just fine"

"Jamie!!" I was appalled myself of his words.

Jamie by all accounts ne’er spoke of women such.

"Besides ye ne’er touched her Sheumais" I tried my hand at reason again "Ye canna ken if an’ what she likes"

"Hooo, I made sure to ken verra weel what she likes and how" he assured me, sounding so enigmatic to me I raised my hands in surrender.
I tell ye Alan, I ken the man was to be truly in his cups by the point I speak aff and making right of his words were no to be had, but I found my mind turned to mush trying to understand the logic the man followed as he came about to saying his words.

By the end of our exchange in yon night I found myself wondering perhaps he spoke a different tongue than the Lord’s own English.

In the meantime, Jamie was spouting very low guttural hostile sounds from his throat as he went on with his harsh battle against the staircase.

After reaching the first landing though, he broke down and dwindled himself onto the rail, wedged his chest and face between the spaces in the rail and dropped on it.

"Just gonna wait here a moment for the world to stop spinning an’ then I shall go to m’ wife, aye” he said leaning his face on the rail, open mouthed and drooling a bit from the side of his mouth.

"Jamie she no your wife yet!!! And she most assuredly wilna merry ye if ye go to her wi’ such insolent. I ken the woman is no blushing maiden but still friend, ye canna!!" I said firmly, bending to him to see will he let me now carry him to his own bed.

An arm was ‘oot-stretched alarmingly swiftly to me, grabbing me by the lapel of my waistcoat and pulled my face to his very menacing and all at once very alert face.

"This wedding is happenin’ ye hear me?? I will kill anything an’ anyone in m’path o’ that. She is mine!!!!!!!” he shrieked and snarled at me.

"Aye, aye Fhrisealaich. I dinna mean naught by it, truly” I hurried like the devil to reply, apprehensive for m’ life at that point

"’Tis only I meant-” I tried explaining my say.

"She takes care o’me Willie” he spoke to me, by the blessing of the Lord up above, much calmer now.

"When I am in a bad way, she heals me and sets me right” Jamie said as if explaining his actions to me.

In a most putrid stenchy way into my face, I might add.

"So if anything hurts I must go to her. Tuig mo chraid??”

"But Jamie” I stammered through my words delicately, afraid to awaken the great beast once more

"I ken she heals, aye, only I dunno think she does so in the dark hours while in bed"

The most peculiar, shrewd, half-twit smile lit the man’s face.

"That's what ye think” he said trying perhaps to wink, but succeeding only to shut his eyes tight and opening them again.

Then he looked into my face and said with all the sternness and earnestness he could in his present state

"MacMurtry, ‘is most important” he ordered, bringing his finger into my face to make his point clear

“An’ ye be wise to mind it as such.

When ye wed, ye must come to me to talk and ask all ye need to ken.

Nae to them, nay, ne’er to them”

He said pointing to where the snores and farts of the other men were sounding quite clearly.

"They are bad people advise giver” he said losing ability at this point to speak properly.

"She who will choose ye to marry her will run to the stones on your wedding night if ye choose to listen to their say” he said slurring at his words.

"They are verra scary people Willie. They frightened me tonight.

And last time too!

Christ, when they were all but done wi’ me last time, I was almost content when it seemed as if me an’ Claire will do naught on our wedding night.

No that I wasna so scared myself afore.

And after what they told me-” he went on rambling, utterly lost in his own thread of thought and memory of things that hadna come to pass yet.

"Sweet bleeding Jesus, I was almost happy to do naught to her.

For I sure as hell dinna want to do what they told me to do to my Claire.

Why, I cared for the lass greatly. I dinna want to handle her in the way they kept saying I should. And them saying how she wilna like it and I should be done with it fast and clean as to no bother her for she was a lady.

I dinna want to bother my bride” he pleaded with me to understand him.

“Christ and St. Andrew, brother of peter” he crossed himself, or at least I believe that was what he was trying to do.

What he did do was just smack himself in a few spots on his face and chest.

“Willum if I listened to them, I would still be a virgin today!!!!

Do ye ken that? I wouldna ha’ touched my love ‘oot of fear over their saying.

An’ I would’ve found myself too afraid to take my pleasure over what I was doing to the poor lass.

Can ye imagine the awfulness and the travesty!!!?

To no make love to my magnificent creature and all for the reason of them!!!?!” he asked me truly appalled by the idea.
"May they all go to hell and wilna have a drop of whiskey to quench their eternal thirst!!"

He bellowed in the direction of the men’s chamber.

"Jamie" I reproached him for his harsh words “surely ye dinna mean such things!

He obviously dinna, for a man that speaks of stones as if they were a place,

that says such affirmations as that the woman and no the man is the one to choose who she marries,

and that speaks of a night that hadna happened yet or of outcomes to a crack he just had with the men for the first time as if it happened many days ago and twice before,

well such a man need no be taken at his words for the time bein’.

Or so I decided as I frowned at him, unable to understand the man less than if he would have told me he just met the cow on the moon.

"I was so scared o’ touching her Willie and after all they told me… errr… I feared for my life.

But she guided me, she loved me, she made love to me and she will love me like no other” He said raising his face to gaze at the closed door that Misses Beauchamp laid behind.

"Aye, I’m sure she WILL do so, friend" I said worrying a little less ower the man.

His final words suggested he was at least getting the times right in his speech now.

And a part of me sent to the heavens the same prayer Jamie was pleading for the Mistress to do in the future.

I did truly hope she would.

"For the Lord’s sake” Jamie said still looking admiringly at the closed Mistress’ door “When ye first go to a woman such, MacMurtry ‘tis like… Like…”

His eyes closed into two drowsy, content slanted slits, his lips stretched to pure bliss, and his hand ’oot-stretched to the door caressing lightly at the air.

He was surely no with me anymore.

"Sweet bleeding Jesus, I wanted to pour all of me into her from the first thrust.

Christ the feel of her. It took my breath away the first time.

And since then ‘tis all the time such.

All I want to do is just to pour myself into her. To be inside her” he said enthralled by some magical memories in his heid.

“And when I do. When the pleasure is too hard to bear and I do.

She holds me so tight to her as I shake an’ tremble.

She protects me till I ha’ my wits back ‘about me.

Willie man, she keeps me safe and whole when I canna” He said sounding so thankful.

And then he cocked his brow and said in a mischiefful smile

“And by Dia! Nach am oire a tha ‘n ton chrurinn alaim”

I thought Jamie hadna laid with a lassie yet, but I suppose I found myself corrected for the man seem to yearn for someone and something he most assuredly had already had.

Sitting on those stairs he was in a complete stupor, but he was basking and reveling in some memory. That a second later strengthen his resolve and brought him back to his feet at once, to regain his mission to come to the side of his future wife.

Thinking perchance she will feel the same as the lassie he had afore and longed and yearned for now?

I do wonder bràithreil, do all lassies feel the same?

Perhaps that was what confused you of your feelings and as for the real nature of the one that deceived you so?

"Now” Jamie said gripping the rail sternly and pulling himself up more stairs

“I need to be inside … I mean beside m’ wife”

He then began laughing at his blunder

“I duno think I can be in anything tonight. Though the wee besom keeps proving me wrong to that affect as weel.

I come to her sure I couldna possibly be able to… and soon as I come near … poofff it comes up” He said letting "oot a snort of amusement at his witiness, which yet again I failed to comprehend.

Besides I found my haund full at playing gairdian to keep the Mistress’ honor and unmolested form undisturbed by such attention as Fraser was obviously inclined and willing to perform on her at the moment, to care ower much about all the gibble- gabble he was spewing.

"Then why bother the lady if ye Ken yourself ye’re in a bad way Seumas, mac an fhear dhuibh?

I mean ye canna touch her yet, for she isna yours yet to touch.

And by your own words ye said that even if by some miracle, which I ken no how such a thing will come ‘about, she will let ye anywhere near her, ye yourself stated ye canna do naught, so why create turmoil and trouble?”

"I need sleep!!!” he roared at me

“And I sleep wi’ her!!”

He added as if he couldna understand how I dinna Ken such clear facts of life.

“I must ha’ her in order to sleep weel” he clarified again for me.

"Too many scary things in the night might come calling if she nae there to be m’ light” Jamie said losing his battle again and melting onto the stairs.

I durst say ‘tis was the arguing with me that worn him down.

Thank the Lord.

Only four stoop left to his journey’s end, but the man was already sprawling himself on the stairs tread boards.
"She’s soft Willie" he said as his face reached the stairheid and plumped itself onto it as the rest of his body dangled down along the stoops.

"And she’s always cold" he added to make sure I ken he must reach her "And I warm her. She needs me to warm her Willie. ‘Tis m’ job. And by Christ and all that is holly, I love m’ job"

The softest smile appeared on his lips as he said it. "’Twas gone in a blink to be replaced by a rough guttural snore. So loud was the snore that Jamie awoke himself up with it.

"She’s so bonny is she nae?" he mumbled to me half going back to sleep.

"Aye she is that I said turning him on his back to face the ceiling so I could place my hands in the man’s oxter and pull his carcass all the way to the stairheid, as I realized that this would be where he will spend his last night as an unwed man.

I figured the least I could do was to make sure he had a smooth surface to lie upon and no break his back and neckit. Which he most assuredly will do if I left him lying such with his body all twisted and distort-looking along the depth and height of the stairs.

Be it a brouky, rough, foul-looking surface, but at least an even one. So as to perhaps still afford the man the use of his back and extremities at his own wedding day.

His words of warmth reminded me to bring back with me two blankets, once I got him sleeping on the landing. One for the poor man to find some warmth of his own and one for me. For I was also obviously spending this night on the same surface, by the man himself, as to make sure of his and the mistress’ good health, comfort and security.

Only I couldna leave Jamie till I was sure he be all but asleep, or he might reach the Mistress and prevent the merry occasion he himself seemed so unswervingly resolute to keep.

But Jamie dinna relinquish himself to sleep just yet. He stared at the rafters above him with his eyes half-open, seeing very different images then the rickety well worn-out shingle above him.

“Do ye even ken how she will love me MacMurtry?" he said so softly I almost missed the hearing of it. “My poor lass, I dinna even think she kent it herself yet laddie. Truly. I think she doesna even ken herself the depth o’ her love and devotion to me. Even now!” he said marveling at his enlightenment, gazing in awe into the upper limits of the roof but seeing uppermair.

“I think she discovers more and more o’ her love to me wi’ every passing day that we are together, but she no ken yet herself how vast and endless ‘tis. My dear Poor brown haired lass, she nae ken how much she is truly mine. Do ye think she e’er will?" he asked as if he was a wee wean asking his da’ how such and such in the world works.

I wasna at all sure I was neither the recipient of yon question or that he truly required some reply from another.

I was set right for he continued all by his lonesome, as I went on with my hard-labored tries to haul him limb by limb to the top.

“Poor lass forsooth for the nay knowing, but a conniving wench forbye” he added wi’ a thoughtful frown. “Here I was content wi’ loving her all by my verra lonesome till the day I die. Nae caring even if she will hate me for taking her such, just as long as she be safe and wi’ me. Truly I cared nae the slightest” he added wi’ a solemn expression at me so I will grasp the truth of his words.

“’Tis nae as if I dinna strongly hoped she will grow to like me, perhaps care or even learn to love me the slightest” he clarified.

“But I was truly willing to be the only one in the marriage that would be willing to die and do all I can for the other” he vowed.

“I just wanted her to be the woman I will do all this for, that is all“ he concluded.

A wild smile spread on his lips and his eyes narrowed, making him seem as a big drowsy leopard that just feasted on a full grown stag. Nay, nae a stag but a doe, aye, a big plump succulent doe, which he hunted profusely before snaring and left her to his mercies.

“But she” his all face ignited “she fooled me Willie. That crafty glorious creature o’ mine tricked me”

“What? I queried only half listening to the man, as I was straining myself to great degree in order to try to hoist the man through the last few inches, so he would be leveled on the landing.

This was by no means an easy task, the bloody man weighed as a full grown stallion.

“She made me marry her believing my life to be wi’ unrequited love and instead” he let ‘oot yet another snort. “There she was unwilling to leave me, then unwilling to let me sink and die without her and then-” he cried ‘oot.

“Holy mother of God and all the saints that followed! And then when all was but lost, she even took me through time itself with her. Till the ends of the world and back” he blew ‘oot his words in astonishment and shook his heid in
amazement, but then grimaced as the movement proved to be too difficult in his current state.

“She will risk everything for us, even herself, time and again.
I canna stop her from doin’ so.”
He said as if defending himself for no bein’ the only warrior in their household.
Which let me just remind you brother, hadna even been built yet!!!

“She will care for naught as long as I’m there wi’ her”
Jamie clutched me by my waist coat and brought my face to his very foul smelling one again.

Only over me standing above and opposite to him my eyes came to be in the same line as his mouth this time.
His eyes stared transfixed into my chin;
perhaps thinking it was my forehead.

“What do ye do to a woman that fooled ye such mo charaid? Ye must tell me” he demanded of my nose

“How can ye ever repay her for that!!!!”
I dinna trouble myself with the thinking or answering to such things, for the man was obviously deranged, foolish, silly and giddy all at the same time by this point.
So I made do with untangling myself from him as I went on bein’ in a complete state of bafflement and silence.

Moreover, once on a flat plane Fraser just curled himself to his side, eyes closed and began to whizz and snore as all the other dwellers in the inn tonight.
I was just about to leave to fetch us the covers when a hand ‘oot- reached to all directions around him on the floor.
From complete sleep mind you, and I wager you my best blade he hadna the slightest idea he was doing so,
the man searched all around him for something.
Then he frowned seeming most unhappy.

“Where r’ye Sassenach? Come to me. I want to hold ye. I need to hold ye” he said, again I remind you ‘oot of complete sleep.
“Where r’ye? You always come when I call” he said, looking as if he dinna understand what was wrong.
“Wot do ye touch ye” he said between his snores and deep breaths.

“Lay my hand on ye just between your thighs to feel your warmth” he said belching a soft belch from the side of his mouth.

“Aye, aye Frisealaich” I said returning back to him, realizing it was too dangerous to leave that man so close to his heart no matter what state he was in.

“Ye shall do so tomorrow” I promised, as I sat myself by his heid, leaning on the second storey’s rail.

“Afther tomorrow ye could ha’ her all ye like, or at least I wish it for ye wi’ all m’ heart. Ye are a good man Jamie” I told him

“Ye deserve she’ll treat ye well back, as I ken now ye surely will her. An’ perhaps somewhere in the future, she will love ye as ye so fictitiously concocted in that heid o’ yours she already does” I patted his shoulder as I pulled his plaid on him.

“But in the meantime Fraser, oidhche mhath leat.”

Jamie smiled another small feeble smile at my words.

“Aye, ye’re mine. Oidhche mhath leat fhein” he said and curled into himself as to a small ball.
Disappearing from all the world, to obviously dream of his lady love.

I did wish someday she could be his such as he said and perhaps someday I could find one as such to be mine.
For he spoke of many things I could ne’er have thought to seek or ask of in a woman.
But I kept reminding myself of the saying, na h-abair diug a choidhche ris an eun gus an dig e ás an ugh.
Curbing mine and hopefully his fanciful visions.

But, my dearest of my friends, that man knew.
He foretold all the events to come and was even diminishing what she will be and how she will act to him.
What I was quick to dismiss as a fool’s hope that obviously went distracted ower the tipple.
Spewing words that I must myself admit left me truly diverted by them, but wasna considered by no means to be true.
Made themselves known anew as the speech of a soothsayer.
Perhaps we will find ourselves with sight if we would be bungfu and well into our cups as well.
All he said she does, or to be exact will do:
Heal him, holds him and allows him all of her, ask for his warmth, no letting him go.
All and so much more I see she does, as I watch the man sleeping entangled in her, their bodies knowing a language only they speak.

If he stirs from his side to lie on his back, she turns to him, snuggling herself into his oxter.
If she sleeps on her stomach, he enshrouds himself atop of her, his heid lulled fully on her stomach.
or chest.
And as he said, if they both lie on their backs next to one another his palm will rise, searching for
her again,
this time finding what he sought after and settling itself between her legs.

Again I apologize profusely over my tongue and speech describing such things, but I am so
captured and enslaved at how they do so from complete slumber, I simply lose myself.

Some mornings, when he must make shift and leave her to join the hunt for dinner,

she sits him down between her legs, as she herself sits on a rock and clubs his hair.
Running her fingers through his mane as he leans into her talking.

They talk so much to one another.
All seeming to look as the most natural easy thing in the world.

She ne’er fails to end such toiletries with a kiss to his nape and he ne’er leaves her wi’oot a twitch
to the heid for Murtagh to come to be at her side now that he canna.
Than he turns on his knees to hold her around her waist saying he wishes to go hungry so he
could stay with her,

and she teases him as she bites his nose
“But I can’t. So go, feed me my dear man”

Then she cradles his heid to her, whispering to his forehead as she kisses it
“Go my hunter [--------], but hurry back or I’m coming after you and.”

“Aye, aye I remember I wilna like it one bit” he says lifting himself higher on his knees and taking
her lips
“Dear Lord, I’m still waiting when I wouldna”

At that point the only thing one can do to separate the two is to simply haul the man bodily away
from his woman.

Aye, a true prophet yon Fraser turned ’oot to be.

For I promise you Ailean, when she allows him to hold her at night, she does seem to make
whatever hunts a man, such as he, in his sleep, to turn to dust.
Dust that’s blown in the wind of her sweet words into his ear,
which she whispers day in and day ’oot in a voice that is reserved only to him.

And the man kent all that awaits him beforehand.
His athair must’ve taught him verru veel afore the hour of his death, Sith air a h-anam.

And I dinna even mention the other handling she, let us say, provides him with.
I blush to mention so and wouldna think to do so to no other but you brother.
I assure you.

But the day afore last, I searched for the man to have a word or two with him,
Shamefully coveting to ken the knowledge his da’ conveyed to him before his passing.

I searched for him by the pond a short distance away from the encampment knowing he walked
the mistress to lave herself there.
Which she seems to do a few times a day, if one can believe it.

But Jamie seems to tolerate her peculiar oddity and strange Sassenach’s whims just fine.
As I suspect one should learn to do when dealing with any woman, chiefly his own.

And they do say love makes all things swallowed easier and sweeter.

Just another proof that such a love was no the case for you.

Finding nay of who I sought after, I bent by the pond’s bank to have a drink.
Only to find myself after sampling such sweet, refreshing delights,
stoking and shoes free and the hem of my breeches hoicked up as I paddled and waded through
the water indulging a childish fancy.

The waters were lively and merrily and I felt myself revived from the hard day ride that was.
But then I stepped on a too slippery a rock and found myself whammle and stumbling heid first
into the water.

When I stood back up again I heard voices coming,

I was bedraggled and unkempt to say the least and knowing the other men would chastise and
abash me proper for it, I dabbled deeper into the water to hide behind a huge, cairn-size boulder,
that towered in its midst.

I tell you all this so you will find me nay so at fault for the event of how I inadvertently and
unwittingly found myself trapped behind a boulder as the couple made their way to yon pond.

At first there were only laughing in merriment, so I inclined myself to listen some more to them, so
as to learn further as to how things between a man and woman should be.

For I find their talks so captivating in my studies of love.
They talk as you and I do.
With no fear of condemnation, denunciation or shame.
And the exchange of wisdom which they both hold in abundance is quite apparent.

Fraser was talking to her, asking her “What does that one do? And that?”
In regards to her healing knowledge on herbs and plants.
“Those?” she said and I heard her picking them from whatever vine or shrub they grew on to examine them.

“Those are Juniper berries they’re actually quite good for you and their very tasty too here try one. No wait. Don’t eat those they’re still green you have to look for those that already ripened to their blue and black color. Here my love, have these”

And I could hear them suckle joyously and delightfully at something very juicy and succulent.

“They taste much better on your lips Sassenach” Jamie informed the Mistress, still sounding most busy with his suckling.

“There also much used to flavor gin and I do believe you are acting quite tipsy, as if you had some Mr. Fraser”

“I’m only applying myself to my studies Mrs. Fraser. ‘Tis most important to explore fully what one has just discovered” he said sounding as if he was still drawing something with his lips.

“Ho, I do believe that you have scouted and probed this specific terrain quite extensively before Mr. Fraser”

“Fine” Jamie sounded resigned “but ye should ken that the rode most traveled is the bonniest”

“Really, how said that?”

“Me. Just now” he answered

And they both laughed.

“Here Sassenach, their flower is verra bonny in your curls” he said and I heard him pluck a few

“All white everywhere and a wee bit of red at its end, like the changes in your hair”

“Why thank ye Mr. Fraser” she said and giggled.

“Ye’re quite welcome Mrs. Frerraserrr” I heard his Scottish burr bear witness to a genuinely happy man.

He also does this for his lady.
His English-love enjoys his deep Scottish voice, or so she claims every time she wholeheartedly laughs at him for it.

“And what’s that Sassenach? The bulge in your pocket?” he went on with their fun as they succulently enjoyed their gathered fruits.

And apparently was being in a position to be close enough to sense the bulge he spoke of.

“Ho, that one is Ginseng root. I brought it from the little garden I cultivated near the surgery at Leoch” she said and I heard a swirl of fabric as if something was extracted from one’s pocket.

“Why? What does it do?” Jamie queried curious.

“Well many things” she told him

“Improves the liver, sharpens the memory, strengthens the immune system, calms the nervous and enhances… well, it stimulates, well it spurs…” The mistress just kept stammering at her words till she finally abandoned her tries and just went on to giggle again, sounding partly amused, partly nervous and mostly embarrassed.

“I ken that giggle Sassenach. Go on with your words. It enhance, stimulates and spurs what exactly?” Jamie pressed the matter further.

“Well it is only… well it vitalizes the blood flow, so it is also very good for…”

“For…?” Jamie dinna dither.

“Well its very good and helpful at making the one organ that… well… works almost solely on blood, work better” she concluded and I could hear the perplexity in Jamie’s voice matching the one in me.

“Ha? What does that mean?” he demanded “I thought the whole body needs blood, no?”

“Well, yes. For life, all the organs need blood, only this one needs it to… well to awaken himself or he wouldn’t be able… Ho, for the Lord sake” she said exasperated

“The root is mostly used as an aphrodisiac and to stimulate and awaken sexual potency and stamina in the male member”

Coinneach, mo cha mhóir múin mo.

Jamie on his end dinna sound at all so aghast as to lose control of his bodily function as I was at hearing the high-born, noble-born, gentle Mistress Claire, that does have a mouth on her but still!!!

I only heard Jamie laugh lightly as if the lady speaks of such things always and one shouldna take so too much to heart her sayings and asked

“I beg your pardon Mistress, but do ye find that your husband has need of such things? or requires assistance in that regards?” he teased “for if so he is more than willing to drop his kilt an’ prove ye verra, verra wrong.

So wrong ye’ll be crying for leniency and clemency by the hour’s end” he added sounding very willing to rise to the challenge.

“Promises, promises” she teased back and they laughed in a way that made it clear both parties were quite happy and content with what the other offered thus far.

“He is only a man and can’t be expected to have as much stamina as a woman” she continued

“Any more assistance and I won’t be able to walk’, is that what you were hoping I would say?” she went on with her teasing.

“Weel such truths wilna come amiss” Jamie confidently informed her.
"I'll keep that in mind" the Mistress said and her voice told that she was coming closer to the pond.

"For the moment though, if you crumble and stir some of it in your tea it elevates your body’s temperature to help you sustain the cold."

I was so scared for my concealment to come to an end, I ridiculously held my breath, as if such a thing could offer assistance in my predicament and closed my eyes as if I was back to bein’ a wean that believed that if he couldna see others they couldna see him.

"I do believe that is my job no?" Jamie questioned just as the Mistress let ‘oot a faint ‘whoop’ as if something pulled her back.

"Well you weren’t doing your job properly till the wedding now did ye?" Mrs. Claire said sounding, thank the Lord for small blessings, aff an’ away from the pond.

"And what does that one do Sass..ena..ch? Jamie asked sounding muffled

Well those are your lips Mr. Fraser. One would think you will be able to answer what they are able to do better than anyone” she said sounding as if she wasna ‘bout to leave her husband’s side anytime soon .

"And yours Mistress Fraser?" Jamie asked after a few moments of silence, sounding as if his face were buried in some surface "What can yours do?"

"Mmmmm” she answered him sounding as how she was now tight-lip to yon surface as weel.

"I like that” said a sounding a bit ‘oot-winded Jamie after she seemed to move to other surfaces releasing his lips fully to speak.

"I think I like that function the best...mmm” I heard him groan a second after I heard his shirt bein’ pulled and moved over his skin.

"Aye. I liked that one just fine” he sounded as if sucking his own breath in

"Can ye do that lower down though, much lower down that is?" he queried invitingly.

A few seconds past and I heard him squeal in a high pitched breathless sound and I heard a heavy body forcefully collapsing itself on a trunk of some tree.

"Aye, Jesus ha’ mercy, aye, right there” Jamie said gasping for more breath, as I heard the trunk of yon tree being scraped as if it was run through with bear claws.

"Ho dear Lord, I love ye” he gasped carrying on with much declaration of love for her and to whatever she was doing.

The Mistress for some reason dinna repay with kind or even spoke one word to reply to Fraser’s endearment or his blaw in the lug to her.

Which I found myself being hurt on his behalf and a bit puzzled to say the least.

For the Mistress Claire so clearly felt the same and in e’ery other circumstances had proven time and again her devotion to him.

But I suppose that this is our next lesson to be learned, friend.

When such a love exists, ‘tis so already known and established, one doesna need to find himself needing to prove it e’ery time.

I can assure you Jamie dinna seem to mind her silence and lack of words the slightest.

If anything the men was quite happy to be the only one to speak what was on his heart, which seem to inflame itself with e’ery flitting moment.

“Christ, I love bein’ married!!!!” he professed, choked with emotion to her.

"Sweet bleeding e’erything, I was born to be married to ye. Only ye” he said sounding as if he meant every word of it wholeheartedly and ardently.

A second later I thought I heard a branch crack, but still no word from his lady.

I ken brother, that as you are reading this you are questioning how I hadna made myself scarce long ago and left the couple to their private declaration of love to one another or to be exact ‘bout it one to the other

and leave them be to the doing of other things I ken none ‘bout.

Which you perhaps might be able to enlighten me in regards when I return home.

But I can assure you that even wi’oot the knowing, when I looked down into the water I was flushed and blushing all over my skin.

I obviously had no right to be previewed to such things amongst them.

Only I couldna very well emerge from behind my rock and no seem as if I was listening in on them in the first place.

Or to make matters worse, I was in prospect of coming ‘oot to find them in the middle of what was obviously a compromising position, which meant my surely demise at the hands of Fraser, happy as he might have seemed to be at that moment.

So I tried putting my fingers in my ears to preserve their privacy and dignity as much as I could.

Daftly I ken, but I wished to grant them as much of the respect and stature they deserved.

The bulk of my assistance to such endeavor came to my surprise from the Mistress herself when she did finally speak and informed Mr. Fraser, that have longed time ceased with his affirmation of love and was only repeating his lady Cristian given name again and again sounding as if he was having the life sucked ‘oot of him more and more each time he did so, well to that man Mrs. Fraser made clear that if he wouldna be quiet she will desist with what she
was doing.

All ye could hear after that were a few tree branches shivering in the wind and a few very, very
low voiced groans and one long silent whimper in a deep Scottish voice.

A while after they left and I emerged to join the rent party.
Unable to meet no one eyes, feeling as if they all could ken where I been and what I unwillingly
witnessed;
I, from the corner of my eye, noticed Jamie laying sprawled on the sacks of grain that were heaved
on the good’s wagon.

His body wholly slack and baggy, his heid slung back and a huge glowing content smile that
dinna go missing till the next day was fixed on his lips.

And at the day I speak of, ‘dear’ Mr. Mhor was pushing all of us to the end of our tether.
Even Ned, which usually takes-in his tongue and manner with a polite stride,
asked him politely but firmly to shut his gob before he will shut it for him.

Feeling bored Angus went on to jest and tease on Jamie, knowing the man’s temper to be short
and hot and always good for a laugh when he losses his heid and opens his mouth.

But no.
A companion for the taunting wasna to be found in Jamie.
Fraser just kept smiling a dreamy- half-twist smile at Aonghas, as if he was looking straight through
him, ignoring all the gibble-gabble and ill- gab Angus was stabbing him with ower his expense.

I dinna ken what was the charm she placed on him, for as I told you I could hear no words from
her.

But Mr. James Fraser that by all account held a huge resemblance to his grandfaither Jacob
MacKenzie in temper as weel as looks,
seem to be so cantie, blessed and at peace with the world;
that one should really worry if he is still able to brandish and flaunt a sword at his foes, and no just
embrace his rivals and beg to make peace with them.
He half looked as if he was ‘obout to kiss Angus himself in greeting.

I tell you one more thing afore I see to a way to send these many, many words to ye, which I have
wrote along our merry trails for days on days so I could tell you all I have come to learn.

When next you search for a wife,
search for a knowing lady that is well traveled!!

Remember the stories that were filled with dragons and kelpies, fairies and siths and one very
scary story of the Blue men of Minch that had us swearing we travel nowhere by ship?

Comes to mind how much we yearned and hungered to hear such tales and even now enjoy to
find our place around Loch’s fires and hearths to hear them all again?

Well the mistress comes from faraway lands you and I have ne’er heard of and she kens better
tales then you and I have e’er been told by others.

One day as I took my turn in the wairdin and went ‘obout my patrol around the encampment.
Which I speak of ower my need to clarify that I had no haund in the matter and that I wasna by no
means coming after or peering and leering on the couple.
Truly.
You have my word on that. ’Twas my turn in the guard-duty ye ken?

And when asked by Ned why was he so uncompromisingly insistent as to no take his lady away
from the encampment and from the prying eyes in it, so he could spend the apparent time alone
with her he so desired,
and was even presented by Ned with cause to part with us,
saying to Jamie he could say to Dougal that they were to go and gather some herbs for her
physickin’;
Jamie only shrugged and said that these are dangerous times and from past experience he wilna
risk her no matter what.

So with these two reasons in your mind,
I urge you to understand how I found myself a few steps behind their chosen bearings to be
gether, a spat distance away from the camp.

The Mistress was sitting upright on the plaid he laid ‘oot for them.
Jamie was seated between her legs with his back leaning into her, his heid resting on her shoulder.
Her arms were draped around him and one palm idly stroked his cheek and caressed his hair back.

Jamie and she were looking to the far distance, just where the sun was leaving the sky and coming
onto the earth to disappear into it; no to come back till the next day.

Mistress Claire couried into Jamie’s back and kissed his foreheid.
Jamie’s lips twitched into a soft smile and then he brought his finger to his lips and taped lightly on
them twice.
The Mistress, apparently realizing right aff what he meant by it, curved herself to bring her lips to
his and kissed him softly.

It seemed as if a kailie- flee was flapping his wings lightly on his lips almost hovering above.
I dunno ken why but It made me smile only to see it.

The couples kisses and embraces are many a one.
But this was different.
Tender, serene.
And with such a light touch it was most tranquil in its almost stillness.

I canna describe the sight so much as what it made me feel.
I feel myself embarrassed to admit it and wouldna e'er do so to none but you Coinneach,
But in that moment I felt myself wishing to join them and to be held such,
Inside that circle of adoration.

The kiss seemed to be so tender and yet I could almost feel it on my own lips.
'Twas just 'obout a shared love, a deep bond and a devotion beyond the years they both lived.

Quite different from their passionate embraces and fondling.
Those I find myself blushing and fanning myself just for having a glimpse at.

I tell you my friend, to watch them,
it is as if one was reading a book about love and its words were proven to be so powerful and
spellbinding that they enter their beholder becoming real feelings and sensation in him.

He arched his back and stretched himself on the mistress asking
"Where else did ye go Sassenach? I love your stories. Tell me another.
But nay 'obout elephants with huge ears that can fly or people walking on ropes in the air up
above.
I love those that are real, the ones weye traveled with your uncle. Tell me of those Sassenach.
Tell me of the world"

"Fine" the Mistress laughed “No Dumbo or tightrope walkers for you then”

"Or the trapeze ones too. Why would a grown man find it weel-witted to swing and whirl
himself in the air is beyond me. Is the man so bored he wants to crack his on heid to forget it?" The Mistress trembled with amusement at this remark, just as I, as always, frowned, wondering
perhaps the invented their own language by now.
For the most part I canna fnd gumption in their speech at all.

"Do you mean trapeze artists Jamie?” she asked filled with mirth “Fine I won’t tell you about the Circus then. Although those are real things”

“Sassenach, I may ha’ never seen one, as ye ha’ that is, but I ken just fine an elephant canna fly no matter how big his ears might be!” Jamie said berating her playfully for trying to fool him.

"Not that part. I meant… never mind… let me see " the Mistress searched in her thoughts and
memories with a finger to her lips.

"Well, what about a love story that was so great that when it died the king built such a monument
for the memory of his beloved and to profess his undying love for her that the tomb stands today
as one of the most beautiful sights in all the world and as one of the greatest expression of love?
Will that do for you?” she asked teasingly.
She seemed to enjoy teasing him quite a lot I noticed.

“Aye, aye, the great pyramid of Giza, the tomb of the great Pharoah built for his love” Jamie chanted as if he was repeating what he has been told in an English voice, rolling his eyes as he did so.

"Ye told me all ‘obout that one. Where ye had your first kiss no?” Jamie growled slightly

"Aye lass, I remember all to weel the story ‘obout the place where that savaged heathen took ye
on and then took your lips for the first time.
Truly enjoyed that story Sassenach, all those expressions of love ye saw that were truly most ‘romantic’ as ye said” Jamie said rolling his eyes again sounding as if he dinna like it one bit.

“Ho hush now my barbarian pagan” the Mistress smacked him lightly on his shoulder “If I remember correctly your mouth was profusely otherwise engaged in others as well.
‘Not a monk’ if I recall.
Witnessed some of it myself if memory serves”

“Weel Sassenach, had to hone my skills for a certain lady’s pleasure that will walk into my life
later on” Jamie smiled mischievously and began stroking the mistress calf under her skirts.

It wasna a licentious touch or I would have left aff’ an away.
’Twas only a continuum to the previous sweet cosy closeness and soft passion from afore.
It wasna an act of carnal lust but of love and familiarity that they both shared.

As if they both had free hand to touch each other as they wished.
Her body was his,
And he could hold and stroke it freely.
And his was certainly hers to do with as she pleased.

“All for my benefit was it?” the Mistress teased again, bringing her arms to envelop Jamie further
into her, rocking them slightly.
Jamie burrowed further to her, sighed in contentment and said with all earnest
“Always”

And before you could say knife, the veil that protects and conceal them from others once they are
together arose and they were in their own world.

I was so entranced by the sight of it, I wasna aware that time went by and that I was just standing
there watching them all daft aboot and with a gowpit smile on my face.
I only noticed such things when the mistress spoke again and I felt my lips were chinking from being stretched so wide and for so long.

“Anyway I wasn’t speaking of the pyramid” she said kissing his forehead again.

“But ye said…” puzzled Jamie.

“Well there were many love stories that ended with a palace shaped cairn. Man as it seems acted quite the same throughout history in the memorial of their love. And apparently men believe size matters”

She grinned with much hilarity at her wit regarding the likeness of men to one another and at her knowledge as to how they work or think.

I suppose both sexes keep wanting to ken of one another. I ken I surely do.

Women are much the queerie to me and in my time on the rode it seems to me that Auld Knacksie was much mistaken aboot them.

“The one I spoke of was the Taj Mahal. And to your delight I kissed no one there. Although it is quite a romantic spot to do so at” the Mistress said pulling on Jamie’s ear playfully.

“Howo, tell me of tazz mhahal then. Where is it and… is it there now?” Jamie enquired

“Well it was completed in its entirety in… let me recall…yes, 1653” she answered as if this wasna the oddest thing to ask “So I suppose if you could ever survive a journey there you could easily sail on a boat to see it for yourself. Today that is”

“Boats” Jamie snarled in revulsion “I hate boats”

“Yes I’m quite aware of that. I do believe you proven that beyond any Reasonable Doubt. I know I will never doubt it again as long as I live” she said rolling her eyes at some memory she held.

Jamie rose from her and turned to sit in a way he could gaze upon her.

“Then tell me ‘obout it Sassenach. Describe it to me so I could see”

Aye, I ken your mind mo charaid,

What sense was it to ask if a thing was there when she claimed she traveled there and sae it hersel?
When did the Mistress e’ver been on a boat with the man she just met but a few months ago?

And why would any man e’er leave such a couthy spot that the Mistress’ body and arms indulged him in when he could hear the story just fine from where he sat, particularly with her nibbling at his ear?

I swiftly received an answer only for the latter.

See, as she told him of this Taj Mahal or ‘crown of palaces’ as she called it.

She was using her hands, her expressions and her entire spirit to describe to him this far-awa’ land called India and of the spiced-scented, dancing to a flute snakes city of Agra.

Her voice pleasant as it might be, and believe you me ‘twas, wasna the one telling the story.

All of her was.

And Jamie looked at e’ry piece of her with a light in his eyes that opened wide as he listened to the love story of emperor Shah Jahan and she made in his entirety of white marble and glistening precious stones mausoleum he ordered to build as to house the tomb of his most beloved and favorite wife of the three, Mumtaz Mahal.

“Three wives??” Jamie exclaimed breathlessly “I ken the heathen’s ways are to be depraved an’ improper, but by Saint Basil the Great Sassenach, three wives? I find it difficult to handle one. Three of ye would outright be the death o’ me before sunup”.

“You find it difficult do you?” the Mistress asked narrowing her eyes at him and snaking her thumb and finger into Jamie’s half open shirt-front and nipping at the man’s tit, just as I noticed two distinct bite marks on Jamie’s upper chest and one juicy one where neck met shoulder.

Did she bite him, brother?!

Did he let her?

“Ouch” Jamie whined rubbing the spot when she finally let go of him “Aye I do. Painful too!!”

“Fine so you can go follow your Saint Basil’s writings as how to live as a monk then” she told him snuggling her nose to his “I dare you”

“Too late Sassenach. Satan himself sent me his best succubus temptress to snare and stray me from that path for good” he said bringing his palms to her neck and skimming his lips on hers.

“And now I canna stop even if I wished to” he whispered into her “Nae, I’m hers forever”

I closed my eyes and turned my back on them at that point, spinning back only to listen to the rest of the story, which she went on with the telling once her lips wereena otherwise spoken for.

I only wanted to hear the story ye ken?

‘Twas quite interesting to hear of a woman that was so beautiful that her own name meant The beautiful ornament of the temple.

And how the Mughal emperor loved her so that when it was obvious she was to die after giving birth to their 14th child.

Aye I ken friend.

Fourteen?? Me and Jamie both at that point gasped and rubbed our faces unbelievingly.
And I was starting to question was his whole kingdom comprised of only his own children.

In any case when Mumtaz felt herself by wi’ it, the favorite wife and beloved companion asked her husband to build a palace so majestic and big that the whole world will come to see it and know how much he loved her.

After a while when his Persian princess died the emperor was so grief-stricken none could console him. But he did keep his promise to her and even after all the artists, craftsmen and close to twenty thousand workers were done with the building of the thing.

The emperor ordered them to go on and to construct it better and stronger. For ten more long years after that, saying it must be as ravishing, noble and divine as his queen was. He ordered it must also last and live forever as their love would and that its beauty canna dim throughout the years the slightest.

And Mistress Claire assured me and Fraser it dinna.

I swear it to you Alan. Such a love transpired and the Mistress sae what was built in the name of it. For ten long years the man refused to let go of his love and of the memory of his wife. Could you imagine such a thing? Can you imagine such a man? Do you ken of one such a man?

And the Mistress said the emperor got his wish for million and millions of people go to visit the place every year.

You should have heard Mistress Claire speak of it, describing all of it to her own husband. As, if she couldn’a bring Jamie to the palace, she would bring the palace to him.

She spoke of intricate enormous marble domes and arches, detailed flowers carved into the marble and four slender towers around it with balconies all made with workmanship that have never been seen before.

She spoke how every detail was made to reflect the queen’s beauty and to keep her safe from any harm.

She told Jamie that her uncle told her that most towers that were built in those days tended to fall, especially if they were as tall as the ones in the palace, so the emperor decreed for them to be built in such a way that if they would e’er collapse they would fall away from where the queen’s marble tomb laid. Which he placed right in the center of it all.

So all this lavish resplendent will always surround his love. Everything around and about her.

All with perfect symmetry so that no matter which direction his queen would gaze upon she will see it all the same, every detail, every precious stone.

A whole palace Alan.
A perfect palace made in luxury and splendor.
For a woman.

Mistress Claire took Jamie through it all. She strolled with him through the gardens which she said were almost a thousand feet in size, all filled with ornamental arrangement of flowerbeds. She told him of the abundant of roses, daffodils, and fruit trees all around and they both compared it to the gardens of Versailles as if in some point they were both there together, which I found most odd.

I stood there unable to walk away as her fingers told the story of the place, creating shapes in the air that weren’a there and in a blink of the eye appeared.

Another blink and they vanished as if by magic removing themselves to become a new vision instead.

Jamie cupped her cheek and looked into her eyes smiling. And all of a sudden her face that were busy and hard-at-working in the telling of the tale lit up and she smiled too. I think w’oot even knowing she did so.

As if when one smiles the other canna stop from doing the same.

She then began describing the marble ‘reflecting pool’ she called it. Telling him how the waters reflect the palace in them.

How long and clear the pool and its water were. Jamie was looking into her eyes as if they reflected now what she sae then.

She took the hand that cupped her cheek and painted on it all the small pictures the mosaic stones told of, portraying all the flowers and the vines that decorated everything and were edged into the marble.

She described how the walls glittered and how the light from them changed depending on what crossed by them.

Her delicate fingers stroke the air as if she was touching the walls, or all of a sudden she pointed up above her heid as if she was standing under to the archways she crossed as she took Jamie around the palace.
I’m sorry brother but it made me renounce our pledge to give up sailing. And damn be with the Blue men of Minch. Unless someone will find of a better way to do so, I’ll be taking to the sea I think, at least for a short while, the world sounds too braw and fine to miss.

When the mistress spoke of the tomb itself she told Jamie that unlike in the pyramid of Giza, where the Pharaoh had separate rooms for him and his wife, Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal are buried together. Shah Jahan's cenotaph is beside Mumtaz's. He lies just as he ordered, beside her close.

“As weel he should. As weel should any man do, and no part from his wife ever” Jamie told her “But, I do wonder. The other wives they dinna fash or bee’ all ‘bout it?”

“Well I suppose they were used to obeying their husband’s word blindly no matter what he said” she answered him shrugging her shoulders.

“Weel the heathen might ken a bit better than us on that account. A blindly obedient wife…” Jamie seemed to muse on the words approvingly

“And ye Sassenach, ye dinna learn naught in your long time away as how to submit and comply to your husband’s word wi’ no argue or fuss ‘bout it?” he added, grinning from ear to ear all mischiefful, and then closed his eyes tight and opened them again as if in a very badly missed blink.

“Tell you what, as soon as you become emperor of an entire kingdom and are able to take my head off for stirring a foot wrong, I’ll start heeding and cooing on your every word” she replied, returning his mischief grin and then added

“Until then though, do be careful or I’ll start heeding and cooing on Saint Basil words on how to become a nun”

Jamie's smile disappeared promptly.

“So hush, because I was just telling you about the calligraphy on the Great Gate that reads his eternal words to her and I kind of like that part. It said, ‘O Soul, thou art at rest. Return to the Lord at peace with Him, and He at peace with you’” she quoted from her memory “which I thought was a very lovely thing to say on a tombstone. I was far too young to think of such things or too young to fear about thinking of such things to be exact, you know as all that are young and think themselves invincible. But it did make me wonder for the first time what I would like to have written on my headstone”

“Sassenach” Jamie seemed no longer amused or entertained and his dour expression was most magnified by his scolding tone

“What?” she frowned, seeming a bit shaken by such a change in his temper.

She tried making him laugh again

“Well in the center of the crypt there are other inscriptions as well saying ‘O Noble, O Magnificent, O Majestic, O Unique, O Eternal, O Glorious...’” she cocked her eyebrow

“Do you think I should be so vain as to consider those?” she teased and leaned forward to kiss him.

For the first time in all the times I sae them together, Jamie pulled back from her

“Dinna speak such things Sassenach” he frowned “I canna think of ye such”

“But” she said

“I die first Sassenach! Ye nae leave me alone in the world wi’oot ye, do ye hear me?” he said in a hoarse cracked voice, sounding for the first time in life since I met Fraser scared, truly and honestly scared.

“I was perhaps strong enough to send ye awa’ before, I think, I mean when I sent ye the second time, but no more. No now I ... somethin’ changed Claire. I dinna ken what for I would tell ye if I did. Perhaps ‘tis we have been longer together or we have shared far more than before. I dinna ken truly. But ye are now my wife more than e'er, and so I dinna think I can go on wi' oot ye now, I ...” his voice broke completely and his eyes darted onto the ground as he lowered his face and everted his gaze from her.

“Jamie” she said choked with emotion and brought a light touch to his temple

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you with talks of death” she said kissing yon temple lighter than the tender kiss from before.

Jamie’s eyes slanted further and narrowed with tender pleasure he felt by it.

“Besides” Jamie let ‘oot a rueful snort “if anything were to happen to ye, it wilna, but in this imaginary world of yours if so, I dinna think I would be able to move, let alone lift a finger or a nail to build a palace in your honor, I reckon I would be too busy curling myself into a ball on the ground crying and praying for my own demise”

A second latter I heard the Mistress sniffing her nose, obviously pulling back the tears. A moment later and she tried to make light of the mood again, saying with a shaky smile

“I doubt very mach Jenny will let you stay long like that and I’m sure your second wife, which I suspect she’ll arrange for you in a trice, will—”

“Sassenach” Jamie’s voice thundered in horror

He rose on to his knees in front of her, towering in fury above her seated shape. He cupped both her cheeks in his palms as to may allow her to move or glance from naught but him. His face stood a splinter away from hers as to make his words quite clear.
"When I told ye 'Never another but me' Sassenach" he said agitated
"I also meant 'Never another but ye' do ye understand me Claire? Say ye understand me!!" Jamie demanded a reply for her, shaking her face very slightly but wholeheartedly.

Only none came.
The Mistress just stared into his eyes.
Both looking so sorrowful and holding so much pain between them,
as if they mourned over something in their past and looking as if a threat of them parting at one point or another did menace above them.

Which I failed to see how such a thing possible, or for me to have missed it, being on the road with them and watching them closely for the mere week they were mairit in.
But the whole conversation eluded my grasp or understanding.
Whatever pain they held, dimna take hold for long, for in those dark forlorn faces, their eyes held such passion and life also.
Slowly but with no doubt, they were becoming as two strong warriors bringing forth all of the power and skill they possess to fight anything that could e'er keep them apart.

The Mistress brought her hand to his lips.
She ran her thumb ower his lower one, parting it slightly from its companion.
As she pressed on it lightly, a white spot appeared between his engorged with hot blood lips. Jamie parted his lips further and bit her finger beginning to smile.
The Mistress closed her eyes in rapture and gasped.
"Yes" she said in a roaring whisper into his face.
"Never another but you for me Jamie and never another but me for you. I vow" She opened her eyes to him and said ardently "Never another but us"

Jamie had her pinned to the ground on his plaid so fast I hardly apprehended it was happening.
Taking her lips feverishly and straight forrit with no preliminaries or asking if she was willing. Which as it turned 'oot to be was ample enough, for she was fumbling her dress and his kilt up while kissing him just as passionately back.

I, of course, turned immediately as to flee, abashed and mortified; but froze when a cry of angst came loudly from Jamie and her's direction.
I turned back, hand on the hilt of my dirk, ready to defend them from the assailant that obviously came upon them, but only saw Jamie hurling himself from her and staggering back on his feet to distance himself from her laying form, which I politely ignored till she would make herself decent again.

"Christ Sassenach, ye ken we canna"
"What? Why?" she protested, readjusting her stomacher that wasna quite in the same place I saw it last.

"The deserters Sassenach I wilna risk ye such ever again"
"But Jamie we're miles away from where…” she disputed
"It doesna matter, there may be others such as them that might-" Jamie trailed off on his words
"I wilna risk ye e'er again such. Especially no for some demented slinkin' dog lust of my own. Me allowing ye to take me into your mouth is bad enough and shameful on my part, but my hands then are still free to… weel ye ken… and I can find some strength, the Lord only ken how, to open my eyes and scout around… but to lose myself completely in ye… no, this I wilna do. I'm no the three and twenty heid-banger coot that doesna ken better by now"

"Well you are in fact twenty-three agai-" Jamie chastised her.
"Fine" she complained at once to his word, just as he wished her to act afore and pulled her skirt down and arranged herself to become a well-respected lady once more.

Jamie whimpered watching this.
Aye Ailean, I tell no lies.
The man let 'oot a wine at the sight of her actions, quite obviously grasping what it meant and most regretting his words.

"Are you sure Jamie? There is careful and there is over vigilant" she enquired as she heard the sounds of his regret.

Jamie moist his lips and fumbled with his fingers considering, but then shook himself and determined with vigor
"NO. I ken better"
He was repeating his previous words, perhaps thinking if he said them enough times, he could find the strength to follow them.

"Are you sure?" the mistress questioned again, inclining her stare to a spot just under Jamie's waist.

"Aye, weel he might no ken better but I do" Jamie said adjusting his kilt
"And by the name of that which is Holly, stop looking at it Sassenach! 'Tis nae helping its situation a bit"

"Fine" said the mistress lifting her shoulders and slumping them back down in surrender, which only meant her bodice very lightly slid aff her skin exposing a bit of her shoulder.

Jamie stopped his 'outstretched hands and brought them back to him whimpering again.
She arranged it and said
"I only thought you were as tired as me at only slightly touching and fondling each other and not... well you know… Mmphm"

"Of course I ken" Jamie burst 'oot "Ye think there is another reason I canna keep my hands to myself from ye in spite of them all around us?"
He said obviously meaning the men-at-arms.

"Well, I thought it was because we were on our honeymoon" the mistress smiled looking exactly as the Lilith Jamie blamed her to be.

"Of course that too" he said in a guttural grunt
"No that I require an occasion to wanna gie it to ye" he added as if for fairness sake.
"Jamie!!!" she rebuked him for his chosen words, but with the same tempting smile from afore.

"Weel ye started it!!!" he rebuked her back "But if I canna ha’ ye fully I at least must touch ye all the time, or I swear on my cock I’ll burst!!!" he complained

"And ye looking all bonny and fair dosena help the slightest" he went on with her grievances upon him.

"And if you wiggle your fine slender fingers beneath my navel one more time in the mornings” he cautioned “by Christ Sassenach, I’ll take ye wi’ them watching!!!”

"Well I’m sorry I didn’t know I was doing that” she said, unclear to me if piqued or amused.

"Of course ye dunno” he said even more furious over that fact
"’Tis just somethin’ ye do sometimes ‘oot of sleep when ye’re close to stirring. Only it makes me wanna gie ye such a morning awakening” he growled as if he was a beast preparing for the hunt "’till ye’ll be unable to squeal or wiggle ‘bout no more” Jamie said looking ravenous at his wife.

At this point I did leave in order to allow to them their business and affairs. I only tell you of this last part now to make a point.
Fraser fighting himself such, even with her so willing, made me think of you. I’ll haste to clarify.

See, they are marrit Alan. The man has no unwelcomed events of them joining. As you had with Muriel. On the contrary, at their waddit state ‘twill be a blessing.
But he wilna risk her for his satisfaction. No even with e’ery bone in his body saying differently. And trust me brother, it did, and I leave this to your own mind to imagine.
And yet with all the danger to name and body, you did no, mo charaid. When it came to your desires and wants you risked the lass.
Deceiving hag that she is, aye, but you kent none of it afore and yet you dinna stop yourself coming to her and risking her.
If there is any doubt in you after all I mention here that Jamie love his lady more than life then you are a bigger clot-heid than I could e’er think you such. And I mention this for you love is what prevents him from taking his pleasure fully from her.
Knowing that if he will lose himself fully in her, he willna be able to protect her.
From what exactly I dinna seem to ken from his words. Only that he kens for sure of some danger to be had if he follows his yearning.
So mo naomh, I end with the same words I began to you in this correspondence.
Dear brother,
you dinna love the lass, or truly cared for her. For if it to be so, the purity of such feelings would have been the hinder you so ardently desired to possess, every time you repentant for going to her.
And now that I have brought into light with my words for you to see and ken love and how things should be between a lass and a man. Do you no see? Truly see?
And believe you me, To hold oneself from a lady such as the Mistress when she is in your bed e’ery night and obtainable e’ery day is much more the envy of any man than the skelf harlot ye had in your bed. Again, please forgive my cussing tongue, I only feel myself fair madie on your behalf for the betrayal done upon you.
And nay only the bedding act itself. Do you no ken that to able to talk an’ listen to yon lady, such as I wrote to you here he does, to share with her, to learn, to even yell such and talk of any subject with none a thing to be forbidden or unholy between them two.
Do you no think such things are much desired to be had with the lass you will spend all your days and nights with?
I am regretful and abashed of the thinking such things, let alone at the saying of them, but I think
perhaps my da’ wrong with the guiding me only to search for a lass that could cook well enough to calm my belly, needle well enough to keep me clothed and clean well enough to keep the dome I will reside in pleasant and nay more.

I think I will search for one I could talk to, such that could take care of me when I canna, that will give me pleasure and wisdom both, that will make me laugh or that will force from me such declaration of love I will be unable to keep to myself as Fraser couldna.

I ken such things that I tell you may sound false and mockable. As if a man should ask for his woman’s protection or opinion on such and such. I do remember quite well Father Bain’s cane teaching us the words of Auld Knacksie that said a woman should be silent. And that the lasses you and I have come across, havna proven to be neither witty or knowledgeable to be able to dispute such a saying.

But with all that I have told you, do you no see such a creature to be real? And do you no find yourself crave the same for yourself?

I end this hand as I began, That my only hope and wish is that my words and recollection provided you some solace and comfort in your raw time.

And I ask to remind you again that I speak here nay defamation or reprimands of your action thus far.

As you yourself ken well I dinna then when it all began. I canna Judge I think what I havna had myself. Which I soon hope will change.

Till then, keep well brèthair and bana-ghoistidh. Dinna despair for I think you lucky to nay marry a false-hearted, Baggage shrew that canna offer room in her heart and heid to none but her scheming thoughts and wants.

I bid and pray to find you well and braw in my return.

As always with most respect and affection
And as always your most dear friend

Willie MacMurtry

Chapter End Notes

Dictionary:

abash {= perplex, embarrassed}
abashed {= perplexed, embarrassed}

fond {= Foolish, naive, innocent}

baggage {= An insulting term for a woman}

jilt {= A harlot, whore; A woman who gives her lover hopes, and deceives him} jade {= An abusive term applied to woman; something like bitch}

a charaid {= Friend}

hand {= handwriting}

Ailean {= Alan}

mo bràthair {= male having parents in common}

mo goistidh {= very close friend}

bit {= Deceived, duped, taken in, tricked}

durst {= Dare}

allowed {= Admitted}

ootwart {= Outwards, cold, aloof, distant}

haiver {= Babbling chatter/ Nonsensical gossiping}

railing {= Ridicule harshly}

doubt {= Fear, believe}

Mac Coinneach {= son of Kenneth}

events {= outcomes}

tell { TEll—Not only say or relate, but also count or enumerate}

Sean a charaid {= old friend}

hochmagandie {= Fornication}

wrang {= Wrong. A mistake, fault, error, an untruth}

brither {= Brother}

dome {= Any sort of dwelling}

Coinneach {= Kenneth}

conflummixt {= Confused, bewildered, under shock}

father {= Father}

stamagaster {= A great and sudden disappointment, an unpleasant surprise, a shock}

gowps {= A fool, act the fool}

weedae {= A widow}

ban-lighiche {= Female physician or healer}
in baund {= Marriage bond}

bana-ghoistidh { = very close friend/bosom friend}

mind {= remember}

swith w’ virr {= Vehement}

draught {= Drink}

linn {= A waterfall}

shammlie-hocht {= Wobbly-knees}

cog {= A wooden vessel with metal bands, used in milking cows, carrying water}

juistice {= Justice}
sair heid = [A headache]
lang – heidit = [Profound, intelligent, shrewd]
heidman = [A chief, commander, a leader, a superior, a foreman]
fain = [Pleased or willing under the circumstances]
aghaidh = [face]
corp = [physical structure of a human]
sonas = [good luck / happiness / passion]
sona ri bòg = [smiling / extremely happy / being carefree or unaware of grimmer realities]
right and sharp = [quickly]
bidd = [wish, invite]
haund = [hand / help / assistance]
prood = [spread]
mo bunchairaid = [person whose company one enjoys]
Coinneach = [Kenneth]
swarfed = [A faint, a swoon, a fit of insensibility]
Seumas = [James]
apartment = [Not a rented dwelling, but a room]
awa aff = [Leaving].
Than an awa [Long ago]
furm = [A low wooden bench]
dinge = [A blow, the impression made by a blow, a dent]
grubber = [A large heavy hammer]

crack = [conversation]

Wleetum = [William]
wiss = [wish]
air mhisg = [intoxicated after drinking too much alcohol]
ionmhaim = [precious to or greatly valued by someone]
a caraid = [person whose company one enjoys]
dè tha ceàr thu = [What is wrong with you?]
stairfit = [The bottom of the stairs]
A charaid Friselaich = [friend Fraser]
Dùin do chraos! = [shut your big mouth]
Tuig = [understand / Get the meaning of something]
William = [The personal name William]

Dia! Nach ann oirre a tha 'n tòn chruinn alainn = [God, she has the most wonderful round ass]
bràthaire = [of or characteristic of brothers]
haund = [hand]
gairdian = [A guardian]
Seumas, mac an fhear dhuibh = [James, son of the Black One]?
stairheid = [The top of the stairs, top landing in a tenement]
necki = [neck]
brouky = [Dirty, grimy]
uppermair = [higher up, further up]
oidhche mhuath leat = [(a) good right (be) with you!]
Oidhche mhuath leat Ùrainn = [goodnight to you(self) m'darling!]
na h-abair diug an eun gus an dig e às an uigh = [but please don't count your chickens before they're hatched]
events = [Often used for outcome]
distracted = [Insane, raving]
diverted = [Entertain or amuse]
bungfu = [Completely full, drunk]
athair = [father]
Sìth air a h-anam = [Peace on his soul].
whammle = [staggering]
mo cha mhòr minn mo = [me very close to to urinate / To allow urine to flow from the bladder out of the body].
blaw in the lug = [flattery]
tease = [Annoy, vex, torture]
Aonghas = [Angus]
gipple-gabble = [Chatter]
il- gab = [Insolent, impudent language, to use such language]
cantie = [cheerful, pleasant, Contentedly, merrily]
waitlin = [Guarding]
courted into = [To snuggle up to nestle]
kailie- flee = [A butterfly]
gumption = [Common sense, understanding]
daft aboot = [Infatuated with]
gowpit = [Stupid, silly]
quereie = [Rather strange, oddish]
Auld Knacksie = [Saint Paul]
by wi' it = [Done for, as good as dead]
heid-banger = [An idiot, very stupid person]
mo naomh = [having divine aid, or protection, or other blessing]
brèthair and bana-ghoistidh = [brother and bosom friend]
Baggage = [hussy]

End Notes

First love scene ever would like to know what you thought
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!