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DRAGONFLY IN AMBER by Diana Gabaldon. PROLOGUE I woke three times in the dark predawn. First in sorrow, then in joy, and at the last, in solitude. The tears of a bone-deep loss woke me slowly, bathing my face like the comforting touch of him fresh or hand, in solitude. The tears of a bone-deep loss woke me slowly, bathing my face like the comforting touch of him fresh on the creet of a salty river into the caverns of grief rememberd, into the subterranean depths of sleep. I came awake then in fierce joy, body arched bowlike in the throes of physical joining, the touch of how or grief. The sight of the stones was fresh in my mind. A small circle, standing stones on the creet of a steep green hill. The name of the hill is Craigh na Dun; the fairines' hill. Some say the hill is enchanted, others say it is cursed. Both are right. But no one knows the touch of love or grief. The sight of the stones was fresh in my mind. A small circle, standing stones on the creet of a steep green hill. The name of the hill is Craigh na Dun; the fairines' hill. Some say the hill is enchanted, others say it is cursed. Both are right. But no one knows the function or the purpose of the stones. Ex cert of the control of the stones. Ex control of the stones with a statisfied desire, in the reassuring arms of my lover, sleep. The third time I work a statisfied desire, in the reassuring arms of my lover, sleep. The third time I work a statisfied desire, in the reassuring stanting the statisfied desire, in the reassuring stanting the statisfied desire, in the reassuring arms of my lover, sleep. The third time I work a lover, as a statisfied desire, in the reassuring arms of my lover, sleep. The third time I work a lover, as a statisfied desire, in the reassuring arms of my lover, sleep. The third time I work a love a lover of the stone of the statisfied desire, in the reassuring arms of my lover, sleep. The third time I work a lover of the statisfied desire, in the case a statisfied desire, in the case a statisfied desire, in the late of t
t then he drew back, shaking his head decidedly. "Nothing doing, cock," he said aloud, "this way lies madness." Or at least the in erations of rubbish. "Talking to yourself, too," he muttered. The thought of generations of rubbish reminded him of the garage, and en killed in World War II; his mother in the Blitz, his father out over the dark waters of the Channel. With his usual preservative instincts,
                                                                                                                                                                                    he sagged a bit at the knees. The Reverend, who was in fact Roger's great-uncle, had adopted him at the age of five when his parents had be
                                                                                                                                                                                   the Reverend had kept all of Roger's parents' effects, sealed in crates and cartons in the back of the garage. Roger knew for a fact that no on h his parents' memorabilia. "Oh, God," he said aloud. "Anything but that!" The remark had not been intended precisely as prayer, but the do
e had opened one of those crates in the past twenty years. Roger uttered an Old Testament groan at the thought of pawing throug
orbell pealed as though in answer, making Roger bite his tongue in startlement. The door of the manse had a tendency to stick in
                                                                                                                                                                                      damp weather, which meant that it was stuck most of the time. Roger freed it with a rending screech, to find a woman on the doorstep. "Ca
n I help you?" She was middle height and very pretty. He had an overall impression of fine bones and white linen, topped with a of well-aged sherry. The eyes swept up from his size-eleven plimsolls to the face a foot above her. The sidelong s mile grew wid
                                                                                                                                                                                     wealth of curly brown hair in a sort of half-tamed chignon. And in the middle of it all, the most extraordinary pair of light eyes, just the color
er. "I hate to s tart right off with a cliché," she said, "but my, how you have grown, young Roger!" Roger felt himself flushing. The woman I
ut I haven 't seen you since you were five years old." "Er, you said you were a friend of my father's? Then, you know already...." The smi
aughed and extended a hand. "You are Roger, aren't you? My name's Claire Randall; I was an old friend of the Reve
le vanished, replaced by a look of regret. "Yes, I was awfully sorry to hear about it. Heart, was it?" "Um, yes. Ver
                                                                                                                                                                                  n. I've o
                                                                                                                                                                                                               ust come up from Oxford to start dealing with ... everything." He waved vaguely, encompassing the Reverend's death
 he house behind him, and all its contents. "From what I recall of your father's library, that little chore oug
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   next Christmas," Claire observed. "In that case, maybe we shouldn't be disturbing you," said a soft American voice
                                                                                                                                                              ht to las
                                                                                                                                                                                t you 'til
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  daughter, Brianna." Brianna Randall stepped forward, a shy smile on her face. Roger stared for a moment, then re hanged his shirt. "Not at all, not at all!" he said heartily. "I was just wanting a break. Won't you come in?" He wave he tallest girls he'd ever seen close-to. She had to be easily six feet, he thought, seeing her head even with the top o he ducked, to avoid ban ging his head on the study lintel as he followed the women into the room. "I'd meant to c
'Oh, I forgot," said Claire, half-turning to the girl who had stood out of sight in the corner of the porch. "Ř
                                                                                                                                                                er Wak
 nembered his manners. He stepped back and swung the door open wide, momentarily wondering just w
                                                                                                                                                                  n he h
                                                                                                                                                                             ad last
d the two women down the hall toward the Reverend's study, noting that as well as being moderately attractive, the defined from the passed. He unconsciously straightened himself as he followed, drawing up to his four local state of the hall stand as she passed. He unconsciously straightened himself as he followed, drawing up to his four local state of the local state of the Reverend's study was equipped to secape from their confinement, and she tucked one absently behind an ear as she talked. "I'd arranged to come last year, in the fourth wall of the Reverend's study was equipped to come last year."
                                                                                                                                                                    augh
                                                                                                                                                                             ter w
                                                                                                                                                                                              as one of
                                                                                                                                                                             t the
                                                                                                                                                                                           last moment.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               nlight winked off the pearl clip in her light-brown hair. The curls were beginning t
the hospital in Boston—I'm a doctor," she explained, mouth curling a little at
hy they had come now, knowing the Reverend was dead, but it seemed im
                                                                                                                                                                                        floor-to-ceiling
one before," said Claire, settling nerself deeper in the nuge wing chair. The fourth wall of the Reverend's stull dy was equippe of we becape from their confinement, and she tucked one absently behind an ear as she talked. "I'd arranged to come last year, in the look of surprise Roger hadn't quite managed to conceal. "But I'm sorry that we didn't; I would have liked's o much to see yo ur polite to ask. Instead, he asked, "Enjoying a bit of sightseeing, are you?" "Yes, we drove up from London," Claire answered. She aglish as I am, though she's never lived here." "Really?" Roger glanced at Brianna. She didn't really look English, he thought; asi deep, with the nose long and straight—maybe a touch too long. "I was born in America," Brianna explained, "but both Mother and Da dd alk Randall." "Frank Randall! Of course!" Roger smacked himself on the forehead, and felt his cheeks grow hot at Brianna's giggle. "Randall had been an eminent historian, and a good triend of the Reverend's; they had exchanged bits of Jacobic arcana for year rister. In the polymeroes of the programment of the Reverend's; they had exchanged bits of Jacobic arcana for year rist.
                                                                                                                                                                             ct,
                                                                                                                                                                                     and then there w
                                                                                                                                                                                                               as an emergency at
                                                                                                                                                                                    her again." Roger
                                                                                                                                                                                                              rather wondered w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ee to see the country; you wouldn't think it to hear her talk, but she's as E
worn loose over her shoulders, and strong, sharp-angled bones in her fa
sband died two years ago," Claire explained. "You knew him, I think—Fra
                                                                                                                                                                                      smiled at her daughter. "I wanted Br
                                                                                                                                                                                   om the height, she had thick red hair,
                                                                                                                                                                                   re-were-English." "Were?" "My hu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       I, but I've only just realized who you are." The name explained a lot; Frank Randall had last visited the manse. "So—you'll be visiting the historical was polite, but nothing more. "We're booked for a trip down Loch Ness th
                                                                                                                                                                                   u're going to think me a complete foo
                                                                                                                                                                                    gh it was at least ten years since Fra
                                                                                                                                                                              ter t his week." Her answering smile e has grown a lot since I was last
  tes near Inverness?" Roger hazarded. "Have you been to Culloden yet?" "Not yet," Brianna answered. "We thought we'd
  afternoon," Claire explained. "And perhaps we'll drive down to Fort William tomorrow, or just poke about in Inverness; the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                "When was that?" Roger wondered whether he ought to volunteer h
                                                                                                                                                                                 trip to Fort William in company with t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      wo attractive women seemed a much more appealing prospect than cleani
lance at her, but she met his eyes with a smile. "Well," he ventured, "if there
  services as tour guide. He really shouldn't take the time, but the Randalls had been good friends of the Reverend's. Besides, a car
 ig out the garage, which was next on his list. "Oh, more than twenty years ago
                                                                                                                 . It's been a long time." There was an odd n
                                                                                                                                                                               ote in Claire's voice that made Roger g
 s anything I can do for you, while you're in the Highlands …" Claire was st
you mention it," she said, her smile broadening. "Oh, Mother!" Brian
overflowing cartons and endless stacks of books. "Oh, no bother at a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     en waiting for an opening. She glanced at Brianna, then back to Roger. "Sin Look at all he's got to do!" She waved a hand at the crowded study, with its
                                                                                                                    ill smiling, but something in her face chang
                                                                                                                                                                              ed. He could almost think she had be
                                                                                                                                na said, sitting up in her chair. "You don't want to bother Mr. Wakefiel
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       d!
                                                                                                                                   II!" Roger protested. "Er ... what is it?" Claire shot her daughter a q
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    elling look. "I wasn't planning to knock him on the head and drag him off," sh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        u
                                                                                                                                      a small historical project," she explained to Roger. "I need someo
 said tartly. "But he might well know someone who could help. It's
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            who's fairly well versed in the eighteenth-century Jacobites—Bonnie Prince Charlie
and all that lot." Roger leaned forward, interested. "Jacobites?" he s
                                                                                                                                                          period's not one of my specialties, but I do know a bit
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         hard not to, living so close to Culloden. That's where the final battle was, you know,
ne explained to Brianna. "Where the Bonnie Prince's lot ran up agains
                                                                                                                                                            he Duke of Cumberland and got slaughtered for the ir p
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ains." "Right," said Claire. "And that, in fact, has to do with what I want to find out
She reached into her handbag and drew out a folded paper. Roger ope TE RISING, 1745—CULLODEN" "Oh, the '45?" Roger said. "These men battle?" Roger rubbed his chin as he perused the list. "That's a simple
                                                                                                                                                             hed it and scanned the contents quickly. It was a list fought at Culloden, did they?" "They did," Claire r e question," he said, "but the answer mi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               of names—maybe thirty, all men. At the top of the sheet was a heading: "JACOB
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               eplied. "What I want to find out is-how many of the men on this list survived that
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ght be hard to find. So many of the Highland clansmen who followed Prince Char
                                                                                                                                                                          They were put into mass graves, with
es were killed on Culloden Field that they weren't buried individually.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                no more than a single stone bearing the clan name as a marker." "I know," Claire
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  eyes, though it was quickly hidden as she reached into her handbag. No wonder
said. "Brianna hasn't been there, but I have—a long time ago." He tho
                                                                                                                                                                        ught he saw a fleeting shadow in her
 if there was, he thought. Culloden Field was an affecting place; it brou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    ver that expanse of moorland and remember the gallantry and courage of the
                                                                                                                                                                         t tears to his own eyes, to look out o
                                                                                                                                                                     ded several more typed sheets and ha
ing on each hand. The silver one on
 cottish Highlanders who lay slaughtered beneath the grass. She unfol
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    nded them to him. A long white finger ran down the margin of one sheet. Bea
 tiful hands, Roger noted; delicately molded, carefully kept, with a single
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     her right hand was especially striking; a wide Jacobean band in the Highlar
em. I thought that might help, since if the husbands were killed at Culloden,
  interlace pattern, embellished with thistle blossoms. "These are the names of t
                                                                                                                                                                                   wives, so far as I know th
you'd likely find these women remarrying or emigrating afterward. Those records is a good bit south of here." "That's a very helpful idea," Roger said, mildly surpris r hand, when you live with one, you do pick up the occasional odd thought." "Of chen you can tell me a bit more about this. Perhaps I could help you with it mysel
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ister? They're all from the same parish; the church was in Broch Mordha—i
                                                                                                                    would s
                                                                                                                                                                                   urely be in the parish reg
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ld think of." "I'm hardly an historian," Claire Randall said dryly. "On the other
                                                                                                                      ed. "It's
                                                                                                                                                                                 f thing an historian wou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      rom his chair. "I'm being a terrible host; please, let me get you a drink, and
                                                                                                                                     A thoug
                                                                                                                                                           ht str u
                                                                                                                                                                                 ck Roger, and he rose f
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    ere kept, and quickly had his guests supplied with whisky. He'd put quite a l alt. Claire, who took her whisky neat by request, seemed to enjoy it much mo id these men came from the same parish? I suppose they came from a single estate; a small Highland farm called Broch Tuarach—it was known locally as
                                                                                                                                                         sorder, he knew
ot of soda in Brianna's, but noticed that she sipped at it as though her glass co
                                                                                                                              ntained ant spray, rather than the best Glenfiddich single m
   "Well." Roger resumed his seat and picked up the paper again. "It's an in
                                                                                                                                teresting problem, in terms of historical research. You sa
                                                                                                                                d, hands folded in her lap. "They came from the same
mal allegiance to Lord Lovat as chief. These men jo
clan or sept—I see a number of them were named Fraser." Claire nodde
Lallybroch. They were part of clan Fraser, though they never gave a for men didn't come until just before Culloden." "Really? That's interesti
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ined the Rising early; they fought in the Battle of Prestonpans—while Lovat's
                                                                                                                                    ng." Under normal eighteenth-century condition
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    s, such small tenant-farmers would have died where they lived, and be filed ti
lily away in the village churchyard, neatly docketed in the parish regist
                                                                                                                                      er. However, Bonnie Prince Charlie's attemp
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    t to regain the throne of Scotland in 1745 had disrupted the normal course of
nings in no uncertain terms. In the famine after the disaster of Culloden
                                                                                                                                           many Highlanders had emigrated to t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   he New World; others had drifted from the glens and moors toward the cities,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  make a fascinating article," Roger said, thinking aloud. "Follow the fate of a nu nces were that a few made it out." He would be inclined to take on the project a
 search of food and employment. A few stayed on, stubbornly clinging
                                                                                                                                             their land and traditions. "It wou
mber of individuals, see what happened to them all. Less interesting if th
                                                                                                                      ey al
ink I ca
                                                                                                                                                I were killed at Culloden, but
s a welcome break even were it not Claire R andall who asked. "Yes, I th
                                                                                                                                                  n help you with this," he sa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  nd was gratified at the warm smile she bestowed on him. "Would you really? T
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           id. a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   on it directly. But tell me, how did you enjoy your drive up from London?" The drive from London. Roger's attention drifted slightly, as he began to plan the re other hand, it was an interesting question. And it was possible that he could
hat's wonderful!" she said. "My pleasure,'
                                                                                                                                                       aid it on the table. "I'll st
                                                          Roger said. He folded the p
                                                                                                                     aper and I
conversation became general as the Randa
                                                               Ils regaled him with tales
                                                                                                                      of their tran
                                                                                                                                                             tlantic journey, and
esearch for this project. He felt mildly guilt
                                                              y about taking it on; he r
                                                                                                                    eally shouldn't
                                                                                                                                                             take the time. On
combine the project with some of the nece
BITES, MISCELLANEOUS. The thought of it
                                                                   ssary clearing
                                                                                                                   up of the Revere
                                                                                                                                                               nd's material: h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   w for a fact that there were forty-eight cartons in the garage, all labeled JACO
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     he tore his mind away from the garage, to find that the conversation had mad
                                                               wa s enough to
                                                                                                                    make him feel fa
e an abrupt change of subject. "Druids?" R
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    o his glass, checking to see that he really had added soda. "You hadn't heard
                                                                                                                            t dazed. He
                                                                                                                                                                                        e d suspiciou
                                                                                                                                                                                                                sly i
about them?" Claire looked slightly disappoint ed ought it something of a joke." Roger scratched his head, ruffling the th
                                                                                                                                 "Your fath
                                                                                                                                                  er-the Re
                                                                                                                                                                                     verend—he knew about
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   em, though only unofficially. Perhaps he didn't think it worth telling you; he th
                                                                                                                               k black hair. "No, I really don
                                                                                                                                                                                    't recall. But you're right,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                e may not have thought it anything serious." "Well, I don't know that it is." She o
rossed her legs at the knee. A streak of sunlight gleamed down the shin of
                                                                                                                                     stockings, emphasizing
                                                                                                                                                                                    the delicacy of the long
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              one beneath. "When I was here last with Frank-God, that was twenty-three years
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 authentic they might be; most likely not very." Brianna was leaning forward no sm and all that, you know—but his housekeeper, Mrs. Graham, was involved wi kind on the dawn of Beltane—May Day, that is." Roger nodded, trying to adjust dawn. All he could remember of Druid ceremonies himself was that some of the
ago!—the Reverend told him that there was a local group of—well, moder
                                                                                                                         n D
                                                                                                                                                                                 d call them. I've no idea
                                                                                                                                         ruids, I suppose you
w, interested, the glass of whisky forgotten between her hands. "The Rev
th the group, so he got wind of their doings from time to time, and he tip
                                                                                                                                                                                  ial notice of them-pag
                                                                                                                       eren
                                                                                                                     ed F
                                                                                                                                               rank that there wo
                                                                                                                                                                              uld be a ceremony of so
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sti
 o the idea of elderly Mrs. Graham, that extremely proper person, engagi
                                                                                                                                                  agan rites and dancing round stone circles in
                                                                                                                    in p
 m involved burning sacrificial victims in wicker cages, which seemed
rly nearby. So we went up there before dawn to, well, to spy on them,"
                                                                                                                II mo
                                                                                                                                                    re unlikely behavior for a Scottish Presbyte
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 n lady of advanced years. "There's a circle of standing stones on top of a hill, fa
                                                                                                                                                     ontinued, shrugging apologetically. "Yo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 now what scholars are like; no conscience at all when it comes to their own fiel
 , let alone a sense of social delicacy." Roger winced slightly at this, b
dancing in the midst of the stone circle. Frank was fascinated," she
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                re," she said. "Mrs. Graham included, all wearing bedsheets, chanting things an even to me." She paused for a moment, eyeing Roger rather speculatively. "I'd h? I believe membership in such groups is often hereditary; maybe there's a daug
                                                                                                                                                        ed in wry agreement. "And there they
                                                                                                          nodd
                                                                                                                                                          with a smile. "And it was impressiv
                                                                                                      added,
 ard that Mrs. Graham had passed away a few years ago. But I wonde
ater or granddaughter who could tell me a bit." "Well," Roger said slo
                                                                                                                                                          ... do you know if she had any fam
                                                                                                                                                           wly. "There is a grander left all on his own." If anyth
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 iona's her name, Fiona Graham. In fact, she came to help out here at the manse
 fter her grandmother died; the Reverend was really too elderly to be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                could displace his vision of Mrs. Graham dancing in a bedsheet, it was the thou a nd went on. "She isn't here just now, I'm afraid. I could ask her for you, thoug
  ht of nineteen-year-old Fiona as a guardian of ancient mystic know
                                                                                                                                                               ledge, but Roger rallied game
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               en u p too much of your time already." To Roger's dismay, she set down her em
ke al acrity. He noticed that Brianna Randall bit her nails. This small evidence of
   Claire waved a slender hand in dismissal. "Don't trouble yoursel
                                                                                                                                                                f. Another time will do. We've
  y glass on the small table between the chairs and Brianna added
                                                                                                                                                                 her own full one with what I ooke
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 d li
                                                                                                                                                                   him, and he didn't want
 nperfection gave him the nerve to take the next step. She intrigued
                                                                                                                                                                                                         her t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               o, wi th no assurance that he would see her again. "Speaking of stone circles
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 o g
                                                                                                                                                                   scenic, and not too far f
ne said quickly. "I believe I know the one you mentioned. It's quite
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     He smiled directly at Brianna Randall, registering automatically the fact that
                                                                                                                                                                    rhaps I'd start on this
she had three small freckles high on one cheekbone. "I thought pe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                th a trip down to Broch Tuarach. It's in the same direction as the stone circle, so
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    project
maybe ... aaagh!" With a sudden jerk of her bulky handbag, Claire
                                                                                                                                                                       Randall had bumpe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          d both w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ky g lasses off the table, showering Roger's lap and thighs with single malt wh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   began picking up pieces of shattered crystal, despite Roger's half-coherent att
isky and quite a lot of soda. "I'm terribly sorry," she apologized, o
                                                                                                                                                                       bviously flustered.
empts to stop her. Brianna, coming to assist with a handful of line
                                                                                                                                                                        n napkins seized
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               om the sideboard, was saying "Really, Mother, how they ever let you do surgery, I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   ve got his shoes soaked with whisky!" She knelt on the floor, and began busil
don't know. You're iust not safe with anything smaller than a brea
                                                                                                                                                                        d-box. Look. vo
 mopping up spilled Scotch and fragments of crystal. "And his p
                                                                                                                                                                          ants, too." W
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      pping a fresh napkin from the stack over her arm, she industriously polished
  Roger's toes, her red mane floating deliriously around his knee
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       as rising, as she peered at his thighs, dabbing energetically at damp spots
                                                                                                                                                                           s. Her head
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         shes on the motorway and tax forms for the Inland Revenue and the Blob
on the corduroy. Roger closed his eyes and thought frantically of
                                                                                                                                                                             terrible ca
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              cra
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         a Randall's warm breath misted softly through the wet fabric of his trous
from Outer Space—anything that might stop him disgracing hims
                                                                                                                                                                             elf utterly a
ers. "Er, maybe you'd like to do the rest yourself?" The voice ca
                                                                                                                                                                             me from som
                                                                                                                                                                                                              e wher
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           nd the level of his nose, and he opened his eyes to find a pair of deep bl
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              e arou
ue eyes facing him above a wide grin. He rather weakly took the
                                                                                                                                                                               napkin she
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             im, breathing as though he had just been chased by a train. Lowering
                                                                                                                                                                                                              w as
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ering h
his head to scrub at his trousers, he caught sight of Claire Rand
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              n of mingled sympathy and amusement. There was nothing else visib
                                                                                                                                                                                all watching
                                                                                                                                                                                                            hi m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  with an e
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              xpressio
e in her expression; nothing of that flash he thought he'd seen i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                lustered as he was, it was probably his imagination, he thought. For
                                                                                                                                                                                 n her eyes j
                                                                                                                                                                                                            us t b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ore the catastrophe. F
why on earth should she have done it on purpose? "Since when
                                                                                                                                                                                   are you in
                                                                                                                                                                                                           tere
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ed in Druids, M
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ama?" Brianna seemed disposed to find something hilarious in the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   and the grin she had been hiding then was now plastered across
dea; I had noticed her biting the insides of her cheeks while I w
                                                                                                                                                                                    as chatting w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         oger Wakefield
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    hospital staff meetings every Thursday," I said. "Bit drafty, thoughing to seriousness. "It isn't the Druid ladies I'm after, so much."
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ntertaining than
her face. "You going to get your own bedsheet and join up?" "B
                                                                                                                                                                                    ound to be mo
                                                                                                                                                                                                         re
  " She hooted with laughter, startling two chickadees off the w
                                                                                                                                                                                      alk in front of us
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         'No," I said, switc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        -I haven't been in touch with her for more than twenty years-
There's someone I used to know in Scotland that I wanted to fin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       't an address for her
                                                                                                                                                                                       d, if I can. I hav
but she had an interest in odd things like that: witchcraft, old b
                                                                                                                                                                                        eliefs, folklor
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     All that sort of thing. Sh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        e once lived near here; I thought if she was still here, she mig
ht be involved with a group like that." "What's her name?"
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ip as it slid from my curls. It slipped through my fingers and
                                                                                                                                                                                         ok my head
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    rabbing at the loosened cl
bounced into the deep grass along the walk. "Damn!" I said, st
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            as I groped through the dense stalks, and I had trouble pig
                                                                                                                                                                                           ooping for
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     My fingers were unsteady
king up the clip, slippery with moisture from the wet grass. The
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 Geillis Duncan tended to unne
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             rve me, even now. "I don't know," I said, brushing the curl
                                                                                                                                                                                             thought
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                she'd have a different name by
s back off my flushed face. "I mean—it's been such a long time
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              now. She was widowed; she might have married again, or
                                                                                                                                                                                              . I'm su
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 Suddenly she said, "What did you think of Roger Waket
be using her maiden name." "Oh." Brianna lost interest in the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            d walked along in silence for a little.
ield, Mama?" I glanced at her; her cheeks were pink, but it mig
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          om the spring wind. "He seems a verv
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 nice young man," I said carefully. "He's certainly intelli
                                                                                                                                                                                                ht be
gent; he's one of the youngest professors at Oxford." The intel
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          I had known about; I wondered whether
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   he had any imagination. So often scholarly types didn
                                                                                                                                                                                                  ligen
t. But imagination would be helpful. "He's got the grooviest ey
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   of his brain. "Aren't they the greenest you've ever se
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       rianna said, dreamily ignoring the question
                                                                                                                                                                                                   es,
en?" "Yes, they're very striking," I agreed. "They've always be
wning. "Yes, Mother, really! Did you have to say 'My, how you'
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ke that; I remember noticing them when I first
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     met him as a child." Brianna looked down at me, fro
                                                                                                                                                                                                    en
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ing!" I laughed. "Well, when you've last seen some remarking the difference." "Mother!" But she fizz
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   n?' when he answered the door? How embarrass
                                                                                                                                                                                               ve g ro
one hovering round your navel, and suddenly you find yoursel
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ing up his nose," I defended myself, "you can't help
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         iskv." "Mo-THERRR! They'll hear you!" We were
ed with laughter. "He has a very nice bottom, too," I remarked,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   er going. "I noticed when he bent over to get the wh
                                                                                                                                                                                         just
nearly at the bus stop. There were two or three women and an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                              entleman in tweeds standing by the sign; they turned to
                                                                                                                                                                                               elderly
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           stare at us as we came up. "Is this the place for
the Loch-side Tours bus?" I asked, scanning the bewildering
                                                                                                                                                                                          av of noti
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             s and advertisements posted on the signboard. "Och, aye,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             one of the ladies said kindly. "The bus will be
                                                                                                                                                                           c I early Americ t tim e, is it?" I smile
comin' along in ten minutes or so." She scanned Brianna, so
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           in blue jeans and white windbreaker. The final patriotic note
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             was added by the flushed face, red with supp
ressed laughter. "You'll be going to see Loch Ness? Your firs Scotland." "Oh, is it?" This attracted the attention of the othe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                      d a t her. "I sailed down the loch with my husband twenty-odd yea
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              rs ago, but this is my daughter's first trip to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ded around, suddenly friendly, offering advice and asking questio
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ns until the big yellow bus came chugging
                                                                                                                                                                                 dies and they crow
ound the corner. Brianna paused before climbing the steps, a dmir she said, laughing. "Think we'll see the monster?" "You never
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          of green serpentine loops, undulating through a blue-paint lake, e
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 dged with black pines. "This will be fun,
                                                                                                                                                                              picturesque drawing
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             of the day in a state of abstraction, wandering absently from one
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    task to another. The books to be packed
                                                                                                                                                                          d. Roger spent the rest
for donation to the Society for the Preservation of Antiquities lay
                                                                                                spil li
                                                                                                                                         out
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 on, the Reverend's ancient flatbed lorry sat in the drive with its
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     bonnet up, halfway through a motor ch
                                                                                                                                                                                  eir cart
eck, and a cup of tea sat half-drunk and milk-scummed at his elbow a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ing. What he should do, he knew, was get at the job of dism antling the heart of the Reverend's stu
                                                                                                      s he
                                                                                                               ga z
                                                                                                                       ed b
                                                                                                                               lan
                                                                                                                                                     kly ou t at the fallin
                                                                                                                                                                                 g rain of e
                                                                                                                                          h to keep hims elf, and wh
dy. Not the books; massive as that job was, it was only a matter of decidin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          the SPA or the Reverend's old college library. No, sooner
                                                                                                               g w
                                                                                                                       hic
                                                                                                                                                                                 ich should
                                                                                                                                                                                                  be dis
                                                                                                                                                                                                             patched to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    or later he would have to tackle the en
rmous desk, which had papers filling each huge drawer to the brim and protrudi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              dispose of all of the miscellany decorating the cork wal  
I that filled one side of the room; a ta
                                                                                                                                 ng from its dozens of p
                                                                                                                                                                  igeonhol es. And he'
                                                                                                                                                                                                 d have
                                                                                                                                                                                                              to take down and
                                                                                                                                                                                                              want to be doing these the lings, necessary as they were; he wanted to be wore king on Claire Randall's project, tra
, he thought, if he were being he onest with himself, he wanted to tackle Claire Raendall's project because he wanted
sk to daunt the stoutest heart. Aside from a general disinclination to start the tedious
                                                                                                                           job, Roger was hampered by
                                                                                                                                                                   somethi na else. He
cking down the clansmen of Culloden. It was an interesting enough project in its wa
                                                                                                                   y, though probably a minor research
                                                                                                                                                                     iob. B ut that wasn'
                                                                                                                                                                                                 t it. No
                                                                                                              Randall, as knights were supposed to ha
to go round to Mrs. Thomas's guesthouse and lay his results at the feet of Brianna
                                                                                                                                                                                                             of dragons. Even if he didn't get res ults on that scale, he urgently wanted some excuse to see her and talk with her
                                                                                                                                                                      ve done with the
                                                                                                                                                                                                heads
again. It was a Bronzino painting she reminded him of, he decided. She and h
                                                                                                        er mother both gave that odd impression of hav in
                                                                                                                                                                            g been outline d som
                                                                                                                                                                                                             ehow, drawn with such vivid strokes an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   d delicate detail that they stood out from their background as though they
d been engraved on it. But Brianna had that brilliant coloring, and that air o
                                                                                                                                                                                                              you with their eyes, to be about to speak fr om their frames. He'd never seen a Bron zino painting making faces at a
                                                                                                    f absolute physical presence that made Bronzino's
                                                                                                                                                                            sitters seem to follow
                                                                                                                                                                                                              t take a lot of time just to look over the records
glass of whisky, but if there had been one, he was sure it would have lo
                                                                                              oked precisely like Brianna Randall. "Well, bloody hell,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             at Culloden House tomorrow, will it? You," he said, addressing the
                                                                                                                                                                           he said aloud.
                                                                                                                                                                                                  "It won
 desk and its multiple burdens, "can wait for a day. So can you," he
                                                                                               aid to the wall, and defiantly plucked a mystery novel fro m the shelf. He
                                                                                                                                                                                                glance
                                                                                                                                                                                                             d around belligerently, as though daring any of the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   furnishings to object, but there was no sound but the whirring of
the electric fire. He switched it off and, book under his arm, left t he stu-
                                                                                                 dy, flicking off the light. A minute later, he came back,
                                                                                                                                                                                                             the dark, and retrieved the list of names from the tabl e. "Well, bloody hell anyway!" he said, and tucked it into the po
                                                                                                                                                                             crossing the room in
                                                                                                                                                                                                            rt, and went up to bed. We had come back from Loch
cket of his shirt. "Don't want to forget the damn thing in the m
                                                                                                   He patted the pocket, feeling the soft crackle of the paper just over hais hear
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        Ness blown with wind and chilled with rain, to the warm com-
ort of a hot supper and an open fire in the parlor. Brianna ha d b egun to y
                                                                                                     awn over the scrambled eggs, and soon excused
                                                                                                                                                                                                           a hot bath. I stayed downstairs for a bit, chatting with
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    Mrs . Thomas, the landlady, and it was nearly ten o'clock befor
                                                                                                                                                                       hers elf to go an d take
e I made my way up to my own bath and nightgown. Brian na wa s an early
                                                                                                       riser and an early sleeper; her soft breathing gre eted me as I pus hed op
                                                                                                                                                                                                           en the bedroom door. An early sleeper, she was als o a soun d one; I moved carefully around the room, hanging up m
clothes and tidying things away, but there was little deanger of
                                                                                      waking her.
                                                                                                          The house grew quiet as I went about my wo rk, so t hat the ru stle of
                                                                                                                                                                                                            my own movements seemed loud in my ears. I ha d brought se veral of Frank's books with me, intending to donate th
em to the Inverness Library. They were laid neatly in the bottom
                                                                                                                                                                                                          ok them out one by one, laying them on the bed. Five hardbound volumes, glossy in bright dust covers. Nice, substa
                                                                                     of my suitca
                                                                                                          se, forming a foundation for the more squas hable ite ms abov e. I to
ntial things; five or six hundred pages each, not co 👚 unting index a 🛮 nd illustratio 📉 ns. My late husband's Collected Works, i
                                                                                                                                                                                                            the Fully Annotated editions. Inches of admiring reviews covered the ejacket flaps, comments from every recognized editions.
                                                                                                                                                                                                      n
spert in the historical field. Not bad for a Life's W o
                                                                                                                                                                   pact, weighty, authoritative
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  . I stacked the books neatly on the table next to my bag, so as n ot to forget them in the morning. The titles on the
                                                                                         ht. An accomp lishment to be proud of. Com
e spines were different, of course, but I stacke d them s
                                                                                          the uniform "F rank W. Randall"'s at
                                                                                                                                                      the ends lined up, one above the other. They g
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           lowed jewel-bright in the small pool of light from the bedsi de lamp. The bed-and-breakfast was quiet; it
                                                                              o that
was early in the year for guests, and those the ere were had I
                                                                                           g since gone to sleep. In the ot
                                                                                                                                            her twin bed, Brianna made a small whuffling noise and roll
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ed over in her sleep, leav ing long strands of red hair dr aped across her dreaming face. One long, l
are foot protruded from the bedclothes, an d I pulled the blanket
                                                                                             gently over it. T he impuls
                                                                                                                                      e to touch a sleeping child never fades, no matter that the child is a go od deal larger than her mother, and a woman—if a yo ung one—in her own right. I smoothed the
                                                                                                ed in her slee p, a
                                                                                                                                 brief reflex of contentment, gone as soon as it appeared. My own smile lingered as I watche d her, and whispered to her sleep-dea f ears, as I had so many times before,
hair back from her face and stroked the c rown of her head. She smil
od, you are so like him." I swallowed the e faint thickening in my throa
                                                                                                                            ly habit, by now—and took my dressing gown from the chair back. It was bloody cold at night in the Scottish Highlands in April, but I was asn't yet ready to seek the warm sanc
                                                                                                       it was near
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  . I closed the ed oor softly, still seeing the sprawl of long lime bs, the splash and tumble of red silk but damned au thoritative." The small parlor was dark and cozy, the fire burnt down to a steady g
uary of my own twin bed. I had asked the landlady to leave the fire bu
                                                                                                             in th e sitting roo
                                                                                                                                                  m, assuring her that I wou ld bank it before retiring
across the quilted blue spread. "Not bad for a Life's Work, either," I wh
                                                                                               ispered to
                                                                                                                   the dark hallwa
                                                                                                                                                                y. "Maybe not
                                                                                                                                                                                         so compact,
ow of flame along the backbone of the main log. I pulled a small armcha
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               y feet on the fender.  I could hear all the small usual sounds of mod ´ern life around me; the faint whir
                                                                                               ir up befo
                                                                                                              re the fire and propp
of the refrigerator in the basement  below, the hum and whoosh of the ce ntral h  eating that made the fire a c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        omfort rather than a necess ity; the passing rush of an occasional car out side. But under everything was the
e deep silence of a Highland nigh t. I sat very still, reaching for it. It had b
                                                                                                          twenty years since I last felt it, but the
                                                                                                                                                                                                               r of the dark was still there, cradled b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                etween the mountains. I reached into the poc ket of my dressing gown and p
ulled out the folded paper—a c
                                          opy of the list I had given Roger Wakefiel
                                                                                                                                                                                                      need to see the names. I unfolded the paper on my silk-clad knee and sat blindly staring at the lines of illegible type. I ran
                                                                                                      d. It was too dark to read by firelight, but I didn't
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                tting the dark outside come t
my finger slowly across each
                                          line, murmuring each man's name to mys
                                                                                                    elf like a prayer. They belonged t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            he cold spring night, more than I did. But I kept looking into the flames, le
                                           me. And speaking their names as thou
                                                                                                gh to summon them, I began th
                                                                                                                                                                                e fi rst
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 steps back, crossing the emp ty dark to where they waited. 2 THE P
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    LOT THICKENS Roger left C
o fill the empty places inside
                                                                                               ing feeling of bafflement. What
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           urnin g up some odd twists, and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   seemed a fairly straightforwar d job of historical research was t
ulloden House next morning
                                            th twelve pages of notes and a grow
                                                                                                                                                                             had a t first
                                                                                                                                                                      of Cullode n. This in it
                                                                                                                                                                                                                          self was nothing remarkable. Charles S tuart's army had rarely had
no mistake. He had found
                                   only three of the names from Claire Ra
                                                                                           ndall's list among the rolls of the dead
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     a cohere intiroll of enlistment, as so
                                                Bonnie Prince apparently on
                                                                                         whim, and many had left for even less reason, before the names of their men could be inscribed on any official document. The Highland arm y's record-keeping, hap hazard at best, had disintegrated alm
me clan chieftains had ioi ned the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ally ducking to av oid bumping his head.
ost completely toward the end; there was little point in keeping
                                                                                        a payroll, after all, if you had nothing with which to pay the men on it. He carefully folded his lanky frame and inserted himself into his ancient
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    Morris, automatic
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           iven clan regiment, m en might have deserte
                                                     he opened it and frown ed at the pages he had copied. What was odd about it was that nearly all of the men on Claire's list had been shown on another army list. Within the ranks of a g
Taking the folder from under his arm,
                                                                                    that would have been nothing unusual. No, what made the whole thing so i ncomprehensible was that the names on Claire's list had shown up—enti re and co mplete—as part of the
d as the dimensions of
                               the coming disa ster became clearer:
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           e Master of Lovat's re
giment, sent late in the
                                                                                    campaign to fulfill a promise of support made to the Stuarts by Simon Frase r, Lord Lovat. Yet Claire had definitely said—and a glance at her original s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       heets
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  confirmed it—that
                                                                                 h and west of the Fraser lands—on the border of the MacKenzie clan lands, in fact. More than that, she had said these men had been with the Highland ar
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              of Presto npans, which had oc
om a small estate call ed Broch Tuarach, we ell to the sout
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               my since the Battle
curred near the begin ning of the campaign. Roger shook his head. This made no kind of sense. Granted, Claire might have mistaken the timing—she had said herself that she was no historian. But not the location,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            surely? And how
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        could men from
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              the estate of Broch
                          iven no oath of allegiance
                                                                 to the c hief of clan Fraser, have been at the disposal of Simon Fraser? True, Lord Lovat had been known as "the Old Fox," and for good reason, but Roger doubted the at even that
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  redoubtable old Ear
Tuarach, who had g
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               I had had sufficien
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ord George Murray, beefi
                           something like this. Frowni ng to he imself, Roger started the car and pulled out of the parking lot. The archives at Cul loden House were depressingly incomplete; mostly a lot of picturesque letters from Le
wiliness to pull off
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ng about supply p
roblems, and thing s that looked good in the muse um displays for the tourists. He needed a lot more than that. "Hold on, cock," he remin ded himself, squinting in the rearview mirror at the turn. "You're meant to be fin d
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       ing out what happened to the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ones that didn't c
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