

Chapter One

*London, England
December 1783*

The ship turned the corner from the North Sea and made its way into the long winding River Thames. Before them was the Port of London. Bronwyn Rowan Wellington stood by the rope railing of the ship, looking over this foreign land of which she had never stepped foot in and never wanted to. Until now.

She was searching for her husband, Baldwin, who had been a soldier in the Continental Army for the United States during the war with Great Britain. A year before the war ended, Baldwin had purportedly been taken prisoner and brought to the Tower of London. Baldwin's older brother, Willoughby, had vowed that he would petition for Baldwin's release. He hoped that since the war was over, King George would release its many prisoners.

There was a light rain as the ship pulled into the harbor, and the winds blew hard across the bow of the ship, blowing Bronwyn's skirt and petticoats. She held onto her hat so it would not blow away. Willoughby and his wife Moira, Bronwyn's Irish friend, stood beside her. They looked at the gray, dark town with its cobblestoned streets and many pedestrians and peddlers walking past.

Once the ship was tied up, the trio gathered their belongings and disembarked along with the other travelers. It had been a long two-month journey, and they were all glad to get back on firm ground. Bronwyn was especially eager, as this was her second journey across the Atlantic Ocean, and she was weary of ocean voyages. At least there had been no pirates or storms on this crossing.

Willoughby led Moira into the crowded cobblestone road and hailed a carriage. He paid two young boys to fetch their trunks for them on the ship, where Bronwyn stood waiting. She followed the boys as they hauled the trunks onto the waiting carriage. Willoughby held the door open for her to enter the carriage, where she sat across from Moira, and Willoughby took a seat beside Moira.

The carriage pulled off in the direction of the Tower of London, as directed by Willoughby. Bronwyn admired women with their pretty dresses, capes, and hats. Being the first of December and the days shorter, there were candles lit in all of the shop windows. Tall cressets filled with burning wood were surrounded by peasants looking for a bit of warmth.

They arrived at the enormous Tower of London, and Willoughby got out of the carriage. "I will return shortly," he told the women. The horses and driver rested while Bronwyn looked at her surroundings, wondering if Baldwin was behind these walls. She rubbed her cold, gloved hands together nervously, trying to be patient, when all she wanted to do was run through the gates and open every door until she found her love.

"It won't be long now," Moira said, trying to reassure her. "We'll get Baldwin."

"I thought Willoughby was going to petition the king first. What if he is here, but we cannae get him out?" Bronwyn asked, knowing Moira probably didn't have the answers she was seeking.

"He wanted to make sure Baldwin was actually here first before he sought out the king."

"Verra well," Bronwyn said.

Finally, Willoughby came back to the carriage. His expression was unreadable but Bronwyn feared it was not good news, for he was not smiling. Willoughby talked to the carriage driver briefly and then opened the carriage door.

"He is not here."

Bronwyn covered her mouth with her hand and gasped. Fresh tears prickled her eyes. "Where is he?"

“He was taken to Edinburgh Castle.”

“In Scotland?” She had heard about the horrors of that prison from her Granda Stewart.

“Yes,” Willoughby said.

“But he is alive?” Bronwyn asked. “When did they move him there?”

“Three months ago when the war ended. Benjamin Franklin and some other men had petitioned for the release of American prisoners. However, there was a mix-up among the prisoners about which ones were to be released because the war had ended, and which ones were to be taken to Edinburgh. Illness broke out amongst the prisoners here and they had to clear out a section. Some of those went to Edinburgh. Baldwin was one of those.” Willoughby hesitated, his jaw hardening.

“What else is there?” Bronwyn asked.

“It seems that Killian had forged my signature to have Baldwin named as a prisoner of the state rather than a prisoner of war. That is the other reason he was not released with the other Americans.”

Bronwyn sighed in disgust. Killian Doran, her childhood friend, had been the one who captured Baldwin during the Battle of York Town in Virginia and sent him overseas to be imprisoned rather than sending him to an American prison camp. Now learning that he forged Willoughby's name so that Baldwin would not be released after the war, Bronwyn was furious.

“Let us go then,” she urged. The sooner they got moving, the better. She was of course disappointed that Baldwin was not here and that she would not be seeing him today, but she had to think positively. She had to have hope that she would find him.

“I did not know if you perhaps wanted to rest for a bit before traveling to Scotland,” Willoughby said.

“I have been resting and waiting for three long months, years really,” Bronwyn said. “I am ready to keep going. If you are willing.”

“Does that suit you, my love,” Willoughby asked Moira. “Are you feeling well?”

“Yes, I am quite well. Let us continue with our journey, by all means.”

“Very well.”

Willoughby spoke to the driver again and then got into the carriage. The carriage pulled off, and Willoughby explained. “We will proceed to a stagecoach station where we will take a coach to Edinburgh.”

“Bless you,” Bronwyn said, thankfully. “How long will it take?” She knew it was a long way to Scotland from London.

“Ten days,” Willoughby announced.

Bronwyn sighed.

“We will find him,” Willoughby assured her. She nodded.

The carriage arrived at a stagecoach station moments later. Willoughby paid for their fare, and a man helped him haul their trunks onto the stagecoach. In no time, they were settled in seats and were on their way.

They passed through the large city, past quaint homes, and eventually into the hilly countryside. They stopped at stage stations along the way north where tired horses would be replaced with fresh ones. The coachman needed rest too, and they would stop at coaching inns at night. Here they would have a bite to eat and drink, as well.

Finally, several days later, they arrived close to the sea, and Bronwyn suspected they were close to Scotland. The last station before Edinburgh was in Berwick-Upon-Tweed, which offered a lovely view of the coast on one side and a river on the other. The coast reminded her of her home in Ireland.

It was perhaps fortuitous that they were going to Scotland. Perhaps after they rescued Baldwin from prison, they could visit her family in the Highlands. She had to believe that Baldwin was alive and well and that Willoughby could obtain his release. She would not leave Scotland without him.

Chapter Two

The stagecoach soon reached its destination, stopping at a stagecoach station in Edinburgh, Scotland.

“We have arrived,” Willoughby announced.

Bronwyn looked out the window at her ma’s homeland of Scotland. It was her first time in Edinburgh and her first time back in Scotland since she was very young.

The tired group unloaded their trunks, and Willoughby suggested they check into an inn and leave their bags so they would not be encumbered by them at the prison. Bronwyn agreed. Moira decided to rest at the inn, while Willoughby and Bronwyn walked up the cobblestoned road towards the castle.

Edinburgh Castle stood on top of a hill, built on a huge rock, an ancient volcano. It was massively big. Bronwyn had never seen it with her own eyes before. They were stopped at the castle’s iron gates where Willoughby explained their reason for being there.

“I am an officer with the British Army, Willoughby Wellington, and I am here to see a prisoner. This is the prisoner’s wife with me, as well.”

The sentry looked them over, looked at a ledger by his side, and agreed to let them in. “Ye may enter,” he said in a Scottish accent.

Willoughby and Bronwyn walked around the curved road that slowly sloped upward past stone walls and through more arched gates. They came to a large plaza at the top which offered a grand view of the town below and the cold North Sea. There was a Governor’s House on one side of the plaza, where gentlemen stood outside chatting. The plaza was bustling with activity from British soldiers along with local townfolk. There was a church, a great hall, and a royal palace here, as well. It was a city in and of itself. Bronwyn remembered her Granny telling her that Mary, Queen of Scots, gave birth to her son, King James VI, here at the palace. It was surreal to finally see it in person.

Bronwyn tried to keep up with Willoughby, who walked quickly, wandering here and there, looking for the prison, asking folks along the way. They were finally guided to Dory’s battery, where they were told they could enter the area where the prisoners were housed. There was a lot of activity between some townfolk who were talking to the prisoners through a perimeter fence.

“Over there,” Bronwyn said, pointing at the prisoners. “Do ye think Baldwin could be one of those men?”

“Let us go and see,” Willoughby said.

They pushed their way through the crowd to see the prisoners, but they didn’t see Baldwin among them.

Bronwyn followed Willoughby over to some stone steps which led to another sentry and a gate. Willoughby again explained their purpose for being there and they were allowed inside. The stench and filth inside was overwhelming, nearly enough to make Bronwyn heave.

“Och, Willoughby,” she said sadly. He held her hand and they were led by a soldier through a dark passageway to an office. Inside was an officer sitting at a desk, looking over papers.

“What is this?” the officer asked.

“Sir, my name is Captain Willoughby Wellington. I have just arrived from America after the war.”

“Ah, nasty bit of business, wasn’t it?”

“Well, you see, it is a nasty bit wherein my brother was captured and taken as a prisoner to the Tower of London. Yet after the war, he was not released as he should have been but rather was brought here.”

“Are you saying your brother was a Yankee?”

Bronwyn wanted to respond to the man's disdainful comment, but Willoughby placed a hand on her arm to keep her silent.

"He was, sir," Willoughby said.

"That is unfortunate," the officer said. "Why would you be wanting him out then?"

"Sir, he is my brother, no matter which side of the war he fought on, and he deserves to be released."

The officer sighed. "Very well. What is the name then?"

"Baldwin Wellington."

"Wellington, Wellington," the officer said, looking at papers. "Ah, here it is. It says he was captured for treason."

"Treason, sir?" Willoughby said, glancing at Bronwyn.

"Aye, treason. He had signed an oath to the Crown to fight on our side but then later switched sides to become a Patriot," he said with disgust. "Therefore, he committed treason. He is awaiting sentencing to be hung."

"No!" Bronwyn could not be silent any longer. She felt faint at the distressing news.

"Sir, there must be a mistake here," Willoughby insisted. "The war is over and details about treason during such war are immaterial at this time. I must insist that you release him into my care at once."

"Let me see what I can do," the officer said, standing up. "Give me a moment, if you please. Stay here."

The officer left the room, closing the door. Bronwyn sat down in a chair, clutching her heart with her hand.

"I did not come all this way to watch my beloved die," she said, watching an insect crawl across the floor. She looked up suddenly with a thought. "Let's break him out."

"Break him out? We cannot do that, Bronwyn."

"Please, Willoughby. They are not going to release him, I just know it." She batted away tears in her eyes.

"We do not want to end up in prison ourselves, Bronwyn. Let us see what the man says. I will appeal to the king if I must."

"Verra well," Bronwyn said, sighing. She held onto the chair with one hand and bit the skin around her nails on the other hand nervously, trying to be patient.

Willoughby paced back and forth, glancing at a clock every time he passed it.

The officer finally returned. "We can release your brother, and your husband, Madam, on one condition."

"What's that?" Willoughby asked.

"We shall require money for his expenses while he has been here..." he glanced at his papers, "for the three months he has been in our care. For food, drink, bedding, coals, candles, and anything else he has needed to maintain his health."

"Very well. How much would that be?" Willoughby asked.

"Fifty pounds," the man stated.

That seemed a steep price to Bronwyn and she feared Willoughby would not pay it.

"Done," Willoughby said, pulling coins from a bag from his pocket. He counted out the required amount and placed it on the table, sliding it across the table towards him.

"Very good. Pleasure doing business with you, Captain Wellington." The man quickly scooped up the coins and placed them in a drawer. "If you will follow me, I will show you the way to your Baldwin."

Bronwyn stood up quickly and followed the two men out the door, down the hallway, down some steps, and down another hallway until they came to the prison cells. Many men whistled and yelled out obscenities at Bronwyn as she passed. She looked at each one of them, searching for her husband.

"Ah, here we are," the officer said. "Baldwin Wellington, would you please come out. Today's your lucky day. You are being released."

The other four men in the small cell looked back at a gaunt looking, dark-haired man with long hair and beard. He was pale, held his stomach, and was lying on his side on the floor. Bronwyn could not tell if it was Baldwin or not.

“Mister Wellington, please come forth,” the officer said again as he unlocked the iron grille door. “Your brother and wife are here.”

The gaunt man responded immediately, turning his head slowly to look over at the cell door and past it to Willoughby and then Bronwyn. His eyes watered when he saw her. She recognized those brown eyes, even in the dim light.

“Baldwin,” she whispered, trying to smile even though he looked like he was barely alive. It did not matter. He *was* alive and she couldn’t wait to hold him in her arms.

Baldwin tried to stand up and fell on wobbly legs.

“Uh, he arrived to us in this condition, I swear to you,” the officer said. “He had apparently been at the Tower in London for a year.”

“Aye,” Willoughby said.

The officer and Willoughby each grabbed an arm of Baldwin’s and helped him exit the stone vault. He smelled of urine and vomit, but Bronwyn happily took Baldwin’s arm from the officer.

“Och, mo chridhe,” Bronwyn said, putting her arms around his thin back as the officer locked the cell door. Happy tears filled her eyes, and joy filled her heart and soul. At last, she had her husband back.