

A Revolutionary Engagement

*Book Two in the
Wellington Patriot Series*

“The harder the conflict, the greater the triumph.”

George Washington

Part One:

Engagement of Marriage

Chapter One

*Greenway Court Plantation
Colony of Virginia
September 1774*

The warm sunshine broke over the horizon of a distant hill as Bronwyn Kerrigan walked down the gentle slope towards the well to fetch a pail of water. She had lived on the plantation of Lord Thomas Fairfax, 6th Baron Fairfax of Cameron, for two years now. When her father in Ireland had passed away, her ma and six brothers moved to Scotland to be with Bronwyn's grandparents, but she was given a different option. Scottish Granny Stewart had made arrangements for her to be an indentured servant for Lord Fairfax in the colonies, in the hope that she could make something better for her life.

Bronwyn had taken the treacherous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean where she endured seasickness, storms, a pirate capture, a near-rape, and a touch of lung fever that left her close to death's door. She had also met a British man, Baldwin Wellington, who stole her heart and literally stole her away from the pirates with outstanding heroic measures. He also nursed her back to health when she was sick, at the risk of developing the infection himself. She'd never imagined herself falling for an Englishman, but now she couldn't imagine life without him.

The two parted upon the ship's arrival to the Colony of Virginia and she feared she would never see Baldwin again. She immediately jumped into her duties with fervor at the plantation, trying to push thoughts of him out of her head. However, life had a different fate for her, as he showed up a month later, emaciated from his own battle with the lung fever but as spirited and handsome as ever. The two had been nearly inseparable since.

Bronwyn's duties on the plantations included cleaning the house, ordering and setting out the table for meals, and assisting the elderly Lord Fairfax outside to sit in the fresh air for half an hour each day around midday, weather permitting. She also assisted the steward and the cook in ordering and keeping books on incoming and outgoing supplies. She kept in her possession a set of keys, which locked away expensive and scarce supplies in cup-boards, closets, and chests. She provided the keys to the servants only as needed. In addition, she made many trips down to the well to fetch water each day.

The first pail of water would be boiled over a fire and used for the cleaning pitchers for the bedchambers of the residents in the main house to include herself, Lord Fairfax, and his nephew, Thomas "Bryan" Martin. Bryan was the house steward and also helped manage the land and estates for the lord.

The second pail of water would be used for the morning cooking and coffee, which was Bronwyn's present mission.

There were other servants and slaves who lived away from the great house in a village of small cabins. One of these was Juba, a tall black man who acted as a butler of the household. Another one was Meriday, a thin black male who helped Juba take care of the household by keeping the fires stoked, lifting heavy items as needed, changing the chamber pots, and caring for the horses. Then there was Sukey, a female African slave who arrived at Greenway Court at the same time as Baldwin. She worked in the tobacco fields, alongside Baldwin.

Bronwyn heard sheep baaing nearby, which always made her think of her homeland in Ireland. As she neared the well, distracted by the orange hue of the sky, a strong arm grabbed her around her waist and pulled her back against him. She smiled, knowing it was Baldwin. He often met her at the well for flirtations and kisses. He kissed her neck and then turned her quickly around to face him, pulled her in close and kissed her deeply.

“Good morning, love,” he whispered.

She reached her arms around his back and hugged him tight. “Aye, good morning to ya, my fine braw Jo,” she said, using an affectionate term of endearment learned from her Scottish ma.

“Is this your first pail of water this morning?”

“Nay, ‘tis my second. I cannae linger long, as the lord likes his coffee early.”

“I only have a moment myself, but I had to come and see you. Did you sleep well, my love?”

“Aye, I did.” She looked down at his white linen shirt, thinking about the hard labor in the tobacco fields he would soon have to endure. She smoothed her hand on his chest and looked back up at him. “And you?”

His hand moved on top of hers and he squeezed it. “Not half as well as I would if you shared my bed.”

Her eyes widened but then she grinned. “Why, Mister Wellington. Ye are a vile creature to be saying such things to an unmarried lady.”

He pulled her hand to his mouth and kissed it. “It wouldn’t be vile if we were wed. When are you going to agree to marry me?”

It wasn’t the first time he had proposed marriage to her. He had asked for her hand on a warm day in August, a mere two months after his arrival to Greenway, while the two enjoyed a private Sunday picnic by the stream. He had been visibly nervous during the whole picnic.

“What’s troubling ye?” she’d asked.

That was when he shifted to sit on one knee with the other leg positioned as though he was about to stand up. He took her hand in his. “Bronwyn, you are a woman of great character and beauty, and I believe you would make a proper wife to me, if you should choose to accept my proposal.”

She had gasped. “Are ye asking for my hand in marriage, Baldwin?” she’d asked.

“Aye, I am.” He cleared his throat. “I know that I have little to offer you, no inheritance and being but a lowly servant right now, but I promise to love you and keep you safe all the days of my life, if it be God’s will that I am able. Would you agree to be my wife?”

“Yes!” Bronwyn had said. She’d jumped over towards him and threw her arms around him, accidentally knocking over a half-drunk bottle of Madeira she had snuck from the kitchen for the picnic. “I would be honored to be your wife.”

He’d kissed her senseless, until she felt the dampness of the wine against her bare leg under her petticoats.

“I love you with all my heart and soul, Baldwin, and I will marry you...someday. But it will have to be a long betrothal.”

Baldwin had been disappointed, of course, but assured her he was willing to wait for as long as she wanted. Bronwyn knew that marriage meant having relations and then possibly wee bairns, which she was not ready for yet. Especially without the help and advice of her mother, who was all the way in Scotland.

It was also against the rules.

Baldwin’s hand caressing her back and roaming down to her arse brought her thoughts back to the present.

She laughed but promptly removed his hand, bringing it around to interlace with hers. “I love you, Baldwin. I’m just not ready to be a ma yet.” She had been resisting his charms, his lips, and his roaming

hands for two years now and they'd come close to joining their bodies together on more than one occasion, but she remained strong.

Baldwin sighed. "There are methods to prevent that." He raised his eyebrows up and down seductively and pulled her in for another long kiss, squeezing her against his chest.

A male voice interrupted their romantic interlude. "Miss Bronwyn, are you down here?"

It was Bryan Martin, the lord's nephew.

Bronwyn and Baldwin quickly parted. "Aye, sir?" Bronwyn said to Bryan.

Bryan appeared around a tall boxwood bush.

"Mister Baldwin, carry on with your duties, please."

"Aye, sir," Baldwin said, winking at Bronwyn before walking away towards the tobacco fields.

"As for you, Miss Bronwyn, come with me." She followed him up the slope, picking up her bucket of water on the way. He continued, "We have an important gentleman expected today, an old friend of the family. I would like you to serve him. Moira has prepared a number of fine sweets and meats to serve with coffee."

"Yes, Sir Bryan," she said. She'd given him this nickname when she first arrived at the plantation. It made him smile and chuckle the first time she'd called him that, so she continued it. She was all about making her employers happy. Within reason, of course.

He grinned at her. "Very good, Miss Bronwyn. Keep your ears about for his arrival."

"Aye, I will." She headed towards the kitchen house.

Moira Fitzsimmons was a widow from Bronwyn's homeland of County Meath in Ireland who sailed on the same ship to the colonies. Her husband Riley had been shot dead by a pirate, Bloody Mary, leaving Moira, her two girls, and Riley's mother to fare on their own. They had previously arranged to work for the Carter family in Virginia on a sheep farm, but upon their arrival to that plantation, they were sorrowfully turned away because of Riley not being with them. They needed a strong abled person for the job and didn't want to hire a woman to do it. Moira remembered the name of Greenway Court as being where Bronwyn was going, and so they made their way immediately to Lord Fairfax's plantation, pleading with Bryan for a position and shelter for her family. With some praise and persuasion from Bronwyn, Bryan agreed to give Moira the position of cook, as their last cook had recently run off with one of the field servants upon his release from indentureship. This was the servant Baldwin had been hired to replace.

Moira, her girls Kayleigh and Teagan, and her husband's mother Nora shared two rooms above the kitchen. Nora looked after the girls and tutored them in the afternoons while Moira prepared meals. Moira also helped tend the sheep and gave advice on their nurture and care occasionally since she and Riley had owned their own sheep farm back in Ireland.

The gentleman arrived by carriage at 10 o'clock sharp that morning. His name was Colonel George Washington. He had been an important figure in the French and Indian War, and Bryan recited all of his past achievements to Bronwyn as the carriage pulled up.

"Colonel Washington is also an old family friend," Bryan told her. "He was very good friends with our cousin, George William Fairfax, who married a woman named Sally that George had been sweet on," he whispered.

The tall, distinguished Colonel Washington bent low to exit the carriage, dressed in military regalia. He walked over to greet Bryan warmly, bowing low before him and taking his tricorne hat off while doing so. Bryan bowed in return, patted him on the back, and walked with him into the house. The colonel acknowledged each servant with a slight bow as he passed them, to include Bronwyn.

A black man also came out of the carriage and began unloading the colonel's trunks. Juba walked over to help him.

Bronwyn hurried in the house to serve the coffee for Colonel Washington, Sir Bryan, and Lord Thomas Fairfax. Lord Thomas had been seated in the parlor and he stood up with the aid of a cane when the colonel entered the room. The two greeted in handshakes and then sat down on plush chairs and sofas while Bronwyn poured the coffee. Lord Thomas wore his fashionable clothes from England rather than his favored frontiersman clothing, no doubt in honor of the colonel's visit.

"George, meet Miss Bronwyn Kerrigan, our housemaid. She hails from Ireland with a Scottish mother," Bryan said.

The colonel stood and bowed to Bronwyn, causing her to blush. "Pleasure to make your acquaintance, Miss Kerrigan."

Bronwyn bowed politely in return and then excused herself from the room. She walked across the oyster shell path to the kitchen house to retrieve a tray of sweet breads, hard cheeses, and cured meats from Moira. She carefully carried the heavy-laden tray back to the gentlemen.

Upon her return to the parlor, Colonel Washington was speaking about furniture. "After George and Sally moved to England last year, I have finalized the sale of all the furniture. I myself purchased several fine pieces for Mount Vernon, which is timely in that construction has begun on its expansion. I will always look upon Belvoir and its inhabitants with fondness, some of my happiest moments."

"Ah, yes. Belvoir will never be the same as it once was," Lord Thomas remarked.

Bronwyn stood over near the door in case her services were further needed, as instructed by Bryan before the colonel arrived.

"You have done well for yourself, George," Lord Fairfax continued. "What are your latest accomplishments?"

"I was in Williamsburg a fortnight ago for the first Virginia convention and was chosen to be one of seven delegates to attend the Continental Congress in Philadelphia in October. I am on my way there now and wanted to visit you and Bryan first."

"What is it that you hope to accomplish there?" Bryan asked.

George took a sip of coffee. "As I have written to George William, the taxes made on Americans by the mother country has reached a concerning level. Your cousin, Bryan Fairfax, has written to me urging to make more petitions to Britain, but I feel our efforts have been met with deaf ears. The harsh treatment in Massachusetts will surely be a small facet of restrictions made over the whole of the Colonies." He was obviously referring to the Intolerable Acts, as the colonists called it; stiff punishment as a result of the Boston Tea Party. The colony was put under military rule and the port in Boston closed.

"What can be done about it?" Bryan Martin asked.

"We need to develop a continental-wide importation agreement."

"Surely this cannot be met with success? What if they send more regiments over here to enforce their restrictions?" Bryan asked.

"Let them. The time to sit on our hands has passed. If needs be, we should be ready to take action."

"You mean fight them?" Bryan asked. His face showed eagerness and a tinge of excitement.

"If we must," the colonel said.

"Gentlemen, let us not speak of such things. I dare not hope that my new country should be in such great conflict with the mother country," Lord Fairfax said.

Bronwyn started feeling flush to the point of perspiring under her shift. The warm air in the house seemed to have reached the point of stifling. She decided to open the doors and hoped that maybe the conversation in the room would lighten with her distraction.

She opened the carriage front door first and then walked straight down the hall to open the opposite door, creating a breezeway. Warm moist air made its way into the house, moving Bronwyn's skirts in its

wake, having an immediate cooling effect. She propped the doors open with a brass door porter before going back into the parlor.

“How are Martha and the children?” Lord Fairfax asked when Bronwyn returned to the room.

“They are well. Martha is overseeing the work done on the house,” George said.

“How long will you be staying with us? Surely you have no need to be in Philadelphia before a fortnight.”

“If it pleases you, Lord, I would be inclined to have a few nights’ rest before traveling further.”

“Very well, then. We are pleased to entertain you.” Lord Fairfax stood up with the help of his cane. “Miss Bronwyn, would you accompany me to the verandah for a bit of fresh air?”

“Of course,” Bronwyn said. She hooked her elbow with his and led him towards the carriage front door.

“Bryan will entertain you further, George, or you may join me on the verandah if you so desire. It feels a bit stuffy in this house just now.”

“Perhaps I could entice George to a hunt,” Bryan said.

“That sounds like a fine idea,” George agreed.