

## *Introduction Summaries*

### ***Remember Me*** by Kimberley Comeaux

North suffers an injury, loses his memory, and believes he is a Scottish pastor. Helen hopes he just might fall in love with her, if he isn't bound by his social standings as a duke.

### ***Shirley, Goodness, and Mercy*** by Kristy Dykes

Shirley feels like she's never known anything of life beyond her little country church. She wants more out life. Then she meets Forrest Townsend, the new parson—who just might change her mind.

### ***Miss Bliss and the Bear*** by Darlene Franklin

Annie knits hats and mittens for soldiers. But chaplain Jeremiah Arnold isn't sure he wants a woman hanging around the fort—even one as beautiful and well meaning as Miss Bliss. . . .

### ***A Bride for the Preacher*** by Sally Laity

It's Emma's dream to doctor the needy, and she hopes there might be a place for her in new territory out west. She isn't interested in marriage—until she nurses a certain preacher's fever.

### ***Renegade Husband*** by DiAnn Mills

Audra moves to frontier Colorado to marry the local pastor and is assured a life of adventure. She never realizes how much adventure until her stagecoach is robbed and her future husband seems to be the culprit. . . .

### ***Silence in the Sage*** by Colleen L. Reece

Ever dutiful and just, Reverend Gideon Scott takes a bride in name only. But soon the reverend abandons both family and church in search of truth that will clear his tarnished name.



Six Old-Fashioned Romances  
Built on Faith and Love

The  
*Preacher's*  
**BRIDE**  
COLLECTION

DiAnn Mills, Colleen L. Reece,  
Kimberley Comeaux, Kristy Dykes,  
Darlene Franklin, Sally Laity

**BARBOUR BOOKS**  
An Imprint of Barbour Publishing, Inc.

*Remember Me* © 2005 by Kimberley Comeaux  
*Shirley, Goodness, and Mercy* © 2003 by Kristy Dykes  
*Miss Bliss and the Bear* © 2013 by Darlene Franklin  
*A Bride for the Preacher* © 2003 by Sally Laity  
*Renegade Husband* © 2005 by DiAnn Mills  
*Silence in the Sage* © 2004 by Colleen L. Reece

Print ISBN 978-1-68322-881-3

eBook Editions:

Adobe Digital Edition (.epub) 978-1-64352-121-3

Kindle and MobiPocket Edition (.prc) 978-1-64352-122-0

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial purposes, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without written permission of the publisher.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, and/or events is purely coincidental.

Published by Barbour Books, an imprint of Barbour Publishing, Inc., 1810 Barbour Drive, Uhrichsville, Ohio 44683, [www.barbourbooks.com](http://www.barbourbooks.com)

*Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.*



Printed in the United States of America.

# Contents

<i>Remember Me</i> by Kimberley Comeaux . . . . .	7
<i>Shirley, Goodness, and Mercy</i> by Kristy Dykes . . . . .	117
<i>Miss Bliss and the Bear</i> by Darlene Franklin . . . . .	167
<i>A Bride for the Preacher</i> by Sally Laity . . . . .	213
<i>Renegade Husband</i> by DiAnn Mills . . . . .	257
<i>Silence in the Sage</i> by Colleen L. Reece . . . . .	369
About the Authors . . . . .	469



# **Remember Me**

by Kimberley Comeaux

## *Dedication*

To Josie Delonie Kennedy, my grandmother. And special thanks to Julie Rice and Melissa Alphonso for coming to my rescue and helping me with this project.



# Chapter 1

1815

Trevor “North” Kent, the Duke of Northingshire, breathed in the fresh sea air as he relaxed against the smooth railing of the ship that was carrying him to America. His blond, wavy hair, which he’d allowed to grow longer during the voyage, was blowing about his face, tickling his nose as he focused on enjoying his last day aboard ship. They would be pulling into port in the morning; and although the voyage had been a long one, it had been one of much-needed peace and relaxation, something North hadn’t even realized he required until he was away from England.

For four years, he’d been planning to make the trip, where he was to join his cousins on the sugar plantation that he’d invested in with them. But because of the war with England, travel had been made impossible. Then there had been a personal matter that had caused him to want to reschedule his trip, also, but it had since been settled to his satisfaction.

The delay had also let him go to the aid of his two best friends: Nicholas, the Earl of Kenswick, and his brother, Lord Thomas Thornton.

The two brothers had been through war, the death of their father, a shipwreck, and, through all that, raising Thomas’s motherless son. North had been there for both of them, giving them advice or just being a friend when they needed it. But now both of them were happily married to two wonderful women, and North was glad to leave the men in their capable hands.

All North wanted was to spend time on the plantation and be free from anyone’s problems, except maybe his own. His two cousins were married and hopefully didn’t need his advice or support with anything dealing with the state of one’s mind or happiness.

Now his own happiness was another kettle of fish altogether, and North had high hopes that he, too, would be able to find love and happiness in his future.

But at the moment, his only concern was how he was to travel and find the plantation, which was located some forty-five miles southwest of New Orleans. He’d sent a message to his cousins telling them of his impending arrival, but the captain had told him that because of the war, mail was slow. It had to be routed through ships going to other countries since there was no travel directly from England. His own journey had been made longer when he’d had to travel to France to board one of their ships.

“The captain has just informed me a storm is headed our way.” A Scottish-accented voice spoke beside him, stirring North from his thoughts.

North turned to Hamish Campbell, the minister who was traveling to Louisiana to be the new pastor of a church there. They’d become friends during

the long voyage, and North wondered at the troubled look in the older man's eyes. "Well, it is too early in the season to be a hurricane, so I would imagine that it'll pass over us quickly. We are very close to the port, so I don't think there is cause for too much worry," North tried to assure him.

Hamish gripped the railing in front of him as though it were a lifeline. "I know you might think me daft for saying this, but I'm not sure I'll make it to Louisiana."

North stifled a sigh as he felt the need to comfort yet another friend. He knew God was the compelling force in his life that urged him to reach out to people, but he sent up a quick prayer that the Almighty would see fit to give him a little break during his stay in Louisiana.

"Hamish, my dear fellow, these ships are built to withstand storms. Are you sure you are not just experiencing a case of nerves about your new post?"

"Not at all," Hamish insisted as he reached into his plain, brown coat and pulled out a small, worn Bible. He held it against the rail in both hands, his thumbs stroking the leather cover reverently. "It's. . . it's more of a feeling, I suppose. I've been sensing for some time that my time on earth is almost at an end."

Hamish's words put a chill in North's heart as he struggled to understand. "You are not so old that you will soon die," North reasoned. "And, too, why would God send you all the way over here if He did not mean for you to become the pastor of the church at Golden Bay?"

Hamish didn't answer for a moment. The slightly balding man, who was near North's size and height, just stared off into the now choppy sea as if contemplating his next words. Finally he muttered something that North couldn't decipher and turned to him, his eyes serious. "I think it has something to do with you."

North raised a dark blond brow. "I beg your pardon?"

Hamish nodded his head. "Yes, that must be it! I have felt compelled to befriend you ever since I boarded the ship." He held up his Bible in a strange moment of contemplation and then thrust it toward North, hitting him in the chest. "Take it, please!"

North's hand automatically caught the Bible, but he immediately tried to give it back to Hamish. "What do you mean, 'Take it'? Will you not need this to construct your sermons and what have you?"

Hamish ignored North's attempt to return the small book and turned back toward the railing. "I will not be needing it, I fear. I beg you to take it and—"

Hamish's plea was interrupted when one of the ship's crew ran over to them and gave a brief nod to North. "Your grace! The captain's askin' all to clear the deck." He pointed out to the increasingly rough waters. "We're lookin' at some rough weather ahead. You could be washed overboard."

North agreed with the young sailor, but when he motioned for Hamish to begin walking toward their cabins, his friend shook his head and pointed to one of the chairs a few feet away from them. "I must retrieve my spectacles. I left them lying on the chair," he insisted as he began to head toward the chair and away from shelter.

The wind was picking up, and North could hear large waves hitting against the

ship's hull. It seemed as though the noonday sky had gone from sunny to almost dark in just a matter of minutes. North knew he could not leave Hamish alone, so he tucked the Bible inside his coat and began to walk quickly to him, although the swaying of the ship was making the task very difficult. The ship jolted sharply, and Hamish stumbled and then fell. North was able to grab hold of a deck chair and steady himself before moving to where his friend had fallen.

"Are you all right?" he called loudly over the wind.

Hamish nodded as North helped him stand back up. "I didn't realize the weather could change so fast," he commented as they again steadied themselves against the swaying deck.

North focused on getting them to the chair to retrieve the small wire-framed spectacles. Once they were finally in Hamish's possession, North led him to the railing. "Use the railing to steady yourself and follow me," he yelled as he looked back to make sure the older man was holding on. Together they began the trek back to their cabin.

A large wave slapped hard against the ship, spraying them both with water. North found it hard to hold on with the chilling wetness making both the railing and the deck slippery. Finally, they were mere steps away from the door that led to their cabins. North glanced back to see how Hamish was faring, but his attention was caught by the vast wave that was several feet above the ship and heading straight toward them.

He tried to yell for Hamish to hold on, but there was no time. The water hit both men with more force than either could withstand. As the water swept over the ship, North could feel his body being picked up. Panicked, he tried to keep his head above the water while at the same time looking for his friend. But then pain exploded in the back of North's head. Though he tried to fight unconsciousness, the pain was too great.

His last thought was a prayer that Hamish had somehow managed to keep from being washed overboard.



*Two Weeks Later in Golden Bay, Louisiana*

The large and rather bored-looking alligator barely glanced in Helen's direction, despite her yelling and waving a broom about like a madwoman to shoo him away from the house. After about five minutes of this, Helen finally gave up; plopped herself down on the grass, not even giving a care of her dress as she would have months ago; and glared at the huge reptilian beast.

Before coming to America three months earlier, Helen Nichols had not even heard of an alligator, much less thought that she might stand so close to one.

No, Helen, a gentleman farmer's daughter, had been gently brought up in her native England with no more cares than what pretty ribbon she'd wear for the day. It had sounded like such a grand adventure when Claudia Baumgartner, granddaughter and heir to the Marquis of Moreland, approached her with the offer of paid companion to her little sister, Josie, in America. Claudia had explained her parents wanted an English girl to provide not only companionship to the lonely

girl who lived on her parents' plantation, but also to instruct her in the proper ways of a lady.

But adventure was not the only thing that compelled Helen to leave her family and friends behind. It was the same reason she ventured often to her best friend Christina's home when she heard a certain person had arrived. It was the reason she allowed Christina, who was also the Countess of Kenswick, to provide her a whole new wardrobe for the London season, even though she was mostly snubbed by those who were of much higher class. It was the first thing she thought of in the morning and what she dreamed of at night.

Helen Nichols was in love with North, the Duke of Northingshire.

And the duke was traveling to America, just twenty or so miles from where she was living in Golden Bay.

Helen knew it was foolish to believe that she would even see North while he was staying at his plantation. Yet she knew the Baumgartners, her employers, were acquainted with North's relatives and held out a small hope they would at some point socialize with one another.

She didn't even know if North had arrived in Louisiana. So day after day, she'd kept a keen ear out to hear any news about the Kent plantation. So far, though, she'd heard nothing.

"What are you doing?" a young voice sounded behind her. Josie Baumgartner, Helen's precocious thirteen-year-old charge, skipped around and plopped down in front of her. With wildly curly brown hair, freckles, and a mischievous gleam constantly glowing in her hazel eyes, Josie looked just like the wild child that she was. In fact, Helen despaired ever turning the young girl into anything remotely resembling a proper lady. She liked to ride astride horses, fish while wading in the swamp, and climb trees. Those were the semi-normal things she did. The other activities consisted of playing practical jokes, collecting every creepy-crawly thing she could find, and voicing her opinion about every subject her father and mother would bring up at the dinner table, usually expressing an opposing view.

But despite her incorrigible behavior that would likely leave most of English society agog, she was an extremely likeable girl with a personality that made it hard to reprimand or be angry with her for long.

Helen sighed as she answered Josie's question. "I am trying to get this big lizard to move away from the front door so I can go into the house." She pointed at the ugly beast. "But it seems he is determined to ignore my commands."

Josie giggled. "We have five other doors, you know. Why don't you just go through one of those?" she reasoned in her drawn-out American accent.

Helen sniffed. "It's the principle of the thing, my dear. I will not be ruled by a slimy green creature!"

Josie jumped up and crept closer to the alligator, though still at a safe distance. "Did you know they eat small animals? Dorie LeBeau said one ate her cat once."

Helen shivered with disgust. "Well, that's just uncivilized, isn't it?"

Josie turned back to Helen with a look of long-suffering. "You think *everything* is uncivilized if it's not from England."

Helen stood and brushed off the skirt of her gown. "Well, of course I do," she

stated matter-of-factly. "We're the most civilized people in the world!" She had a brief recollection of Christina and her running about the countryside with dirty dresses and faces. They were forever rolling about with puppies and kittens and trespassing on others' property to climb their trees. Not a very civilized way to behave for a couple of young ladies.

Helen wisely kept the memory to herself.

"Well, we can go get Sam to come over here and kill it. They make for pretty good eating, you know," Josie said, interrupting Helen's thoughts. Sam Youngblood was a Choctaw Indian who lived on property adjoining the plantation. He also fancied himself in love with Helen and was forever trying to barter horses or cows with Mr. Baumgartner for her. He said it was the Choctaw way.

Helen told him the practice of bartering for a woman was just plain barbaric!

Helen shivered again as she got back to Josie's comment. "*Ladies do not eat—*"

"I know, I know," Josie interjected. "*Ladies do not eat anything that crawls* around on its belly. It's *quite* uncivilized!" she mocked, using Helen's higher-pitched English accent.

"Scoff if you must, but you will do well to—"

"Miss Helen! Miss Josie!" a male voice called out from behind them. They turned to see George, the Baumgartners' house servant who usually ran their errands in town, running up the dusty drive.

Though the Baumgartners owned many slaves to run the vast plantation that consisted of thousands of acres, a sugar mill, the slave and servant quarters, not to mention the huge three-story white mansion, they had freed many of those who worked in the house and the higher-ranking field hands. The Baumgartners were good people who treated every worker and slave fairly, but Helen secretly felt the whole slave system was unjust and inhumane.

"What is it, George?" Josie asked as he stopped before them and tried to catch his breath.

"The preacher. . ." His voice cracked as he took another deep breath. "They found him. He ain't dead like they thought."

Helen and Josie exchanged a disbelieving look. "You mean he did not drown as we were all told?" Helen attempted to comprehend. Just over a week ago, the people of Golden Bay had been informed that the preacher for whom they'd been waiting had fallen overboard with another man and had drowned. The Baumgartners, LeBeaus, and Whitakers were all distressed and saddened, since it was these neighboring families who had gotten together to build a church and then pay for his voyage from Scotland.

If this news were true, they wouldn't have to go to the trouble of searching for another minister!

"A couple of fishermen fished him out of the gulf and took 'im back to they cabins 'bout thirty or so miles from here," George explained. "They sez that he didn't wake up fer about fo' days, but they found a Bible on him that had his name on it. They sez he didn't know who he was when he finally woke up, but after they told 'im his name and that he was a preacher headed for our town, he seemed to remember."

Josie clasped her hands together. "Why, that sounds like a bona fide miracle!" she exclaimed. "Is he in town? Can we go see him?"

"Yes'm, Miss Josie, you sho' can. That's why I ran back lickety-split." He ran the back of his sleeve across his beaded brow. "They's wantin' the mastah to come out and give 'im a proper welcome with any food or house gifts to help 'im get settled."

"Oh, this is exciting, isn't it?" Helen whispered eagerly as she looked from George to Josie. "It will be so refreshing going to a proper service again instead of waiting for the circuit preacher to pass by. It will be just like it was in—"

"England! We know, we know," Josie finished for her with exasperation. "Let's just hurry up and tell my parents so we can meet him!"

It didn't take long for the family to assemble the goods they had set aside for the new preacher and to load their wagon and carriage. Ten or so minutes later, they pulled into the small town that consisted of the blacksmith, a general store, and the newly built church. The town was actually owned by three plantations, unlike many others along the river that were self-contained. The three families signed an agreement that they would share the profits from the businesses as well as the labor to keep them running.

There was already a small crowd in the tiny yard of the church, with its small parsonage on the side. Mr. and Mrs. Baumgartner stepped out of the carriage first, followed by Josie and Helen.

As they drew nearer, Josie walked on her tiptoes, trying to see over everyone's heads. Helen, herself, tried to see around them but could only see the top of a man's head. In fact, the hair was such a pretty golden blond, a person couldn't help but notice through all of the dark heads gathered around him.

Helen was finally close enough to see better, and as the crowd parted, she was disappointed to see the man's back was turned as he spoke with Mr. Baumgartner. She studied his longish, wavy hair then the width of his broad shoulders for a moment. He seemed almost familiar to Helen, as if she had met the gentleman before, yet she was sure she had never heard of a Hamish Campbell until she had arrived in Louisiana.

"Oh, I wish Papa would turn him around so we could see him! I had imagined he would be an older man, but he appears to be younger than I thought," Josie whispered as their neighbors chatted excitedly around them.

"Indeed," Helen murmured as she tried to inch her way closer to him. She noticed he was quite tall. Though they seemed to be a little ragged and faded, his clothes were very well made, cut like those worn by the nobility.

When she finally was able to hear him speak, Helen suddenly realized who the preacher reminded her of.

He was the same height and build and sounded just like. . .North, the Duke of Northingshire.

Helen briefly rubbed her brow, thinking that of course she must be mistaken and perhaps had been in the sun too long. The preacher was supposed to be a Scot-tishman, and the accent she thought she heard was clearly a cultured English one.

"Ah! Here are my wife and daughter," Mr. Baumgartner said, motioning

toward Helen's direction. "Let me introduce you."

As she began to turn, Josie bumped her as she scrambled to go to her father, and then Mrs. Baumgartner stepped in front of her, again blocking her view. She heard the man speak to her employer and daughter and again was struck by his rich voice.

*I just miss North. I am clearly hallucina—*

"And this is Josie's companion, Miss Helen Nichols, who has come from England and been with us for two months now," she heard Mrs. Baumgartner say as she stepped back. For the first time, Helen got a view of the tall man's face.

For a moment Helen said nothing, frozen by the sheer shock of seeing the man before her.

It *was* North!

And he was smiling pleasantly at her without so much as a gleam of recognition shining in his light blue gaze.

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Nichols," he responded smoothly with a nod.

Helen was horrified that he did not recognize her. She had spent many hours in his presence in the past and thought it humiliating that she didn't seem familiar to him at all. But then she had a second thought: Why was he pretending to be a preacher?

Confused, she found herself blurting, "North? Do you not remember me?"



## Chapter 2

An immediate hush fell over the group as every eye turned to stare at Helen, including North. Helen focused only on him as she watched the strange expressions move across his handsome, strong face.

At first he appeared to be afraid, but then it went to what looked like confusion, and then it was as though a mask fell across his face, shielding her from his thoughts entirely. He seemed to compose himself as he nervously glanced around the group and then turned his gaze back to Helen.

His eyes were unreadable as he smiled at her and finally responded. "Of course I do. It's just. . . I suppose it has been quite awhile, hasn't it?" Helen wasn't sure if he was telling or asking. Neither would make a bit of sense to Helen since she'd only seen him four months ago. "It is good to have a friend nearby," he finished cryptically, perplexing her even more.

She was about to ask him what he was doing here, but he turned from her suddenly, stopping any further communication between them.

Doubts assailed her as she thought maybe the man wasn't North after all. Perhaps he had a cousin that looked like him.

But then, she amended her thoughts, why did he pretend to know her?

Oh, it was very vexing on her nerves to reason his behavior all out in her mind.

"You know him?" Josie exclaimed, startling Helen back to the present. "Why didn't you tell us you knew the preacher?"

Helen shook her head absently as her eyes stayed on who she was sure was the Duke of Northingshire. "I didn't know his Christian name. I've always called him North," she lied, since she knew very well that his name was Trevor Kent and certainly *not* Hamish Campbell!

Josie frowned. "You addressed a preacher by calling him North? That's strange and not at all the civilized thing for a lady to do." She paused for effect. "According to you."

Helen licked her lips nervously as she tried to answer without too much lying involved. "I knew him when he wasn't a minister." She finally dragged her eyes away from the confusing man and tried to appear nonchalant. "I don't suppose I knew him as well as I thought." That was an understatement!

"Well, you shall have plenty of time to get to know him in the future," Josie reasoned as she took Helen's hand and pulled her toward the nice lawn beside the church. "Let's sit over there and wait for my parents."

Helen agreed and allowed Josie to pull her to the white wooden benches, which were placed under a great oak shade tree.

As soon as they sat down, Josie immediately brought their conversation back to the preacher. "Don't you think he is the most handsome man you've ever seen?"



And to think you know him!" she expressed in a lovelorn tone. She sat up and looked at Helen as if she were suddenly hit with an idea. "He is unmarried, and you are unmarried! You would make a great match!"

*If only it could be so*, Helen thought longingly. But until she figured out why North was pretending to be someone else, she could not even wish for it. "Josie, he did not even recognize me. How could you think he would want to marry a lady that has made no lasting impression in his mind?" She sighed. "Besides, I am here to work and teach you to be a lady. Wishing that I would fall in love with North just so you will not have to learn your lessons on etiquette will only bring you a headache."

Josie sat back on the bench and groaned. "Why does being a lady seem so boring?"

Helen hid a grin. "One day when you become interested in a young man, he'll expect you to act like a lady and then you will thank God I bored you so!"

"I will never be interested in boys!" she declared.

"That is too bad, for I have a feeling you will grow up to be quite a lovely woman one day," a man's voice spoke beside them.

Startled, Helen turned and looked up to find North standing over her. "North!" she exclaimed automatically but then quickly amended, "I'm sorry. I mean *Reverend*."

He seemed preoccupied as he presented her a small smile. North quickly stepped closer, whispering in an urgent voice, "I must speak to you alone, Miss Nichols." He nervously glanced around as if to see if anyone was watching him and then looked briefly at Josie. "There is some very important information I need, and I'm positive that only you can help me."

Helen felt butterflies of excitement fluttering about in her chest, just as she always did when North spoke to her. It didn't matter if he was acting like the craziest man alive or that he was pretending to be a minister, which Helen imagined was a big faux pas in God's book! All that mattered was North, the love of her life, had asked to talk to her. Alone!

She jumped up with more enthusiasm than was warranted, for she startled both Josie and North. "Of course, you can speak with me!" she said brightly as she reached down to pull Josie up from the bench. "Please be a dear and excuse us, will you, Josie?" she threw to her charge without so much as a glance and then latched her arm around North's elbow. "Let's walk, shall we?"

North looked a little dazed but gave her a tentative smile. "Not too far. I would not want to bring suspicion on your character or mine. I may not remember much, but I do know that talking alone with a young woman out in the open public is considered a social blunder if she is not accompanied by a chaperone."

Helen stopped suddenly upon hearing his words, let go of his arm, and turned to stand in front of him. "Did you just say that you might not remember much?" She shook her head. "What does that mean?"

North stood there, staring down at her, looking more handsome than ever before. His countenance, however, was not the easy-going and self-assured gentleman she'd known in England. Instead he looked tired, confused, and not at all the

confident man he should be.

He took a deep breath as he stared off to his left for a moment then slowly brought his gaze back to her. "I do not remember who I am." Helen gasped, but North held out his hand so that he might continue. "I apparently fell off the ship that I had been on during a storm. Two fishermen dragged me out of the water and brought me to shore, where I finally came to my senses. But that is where every one of my memories begins. I wouldn't even know my name except I had a Bible inside my coat that had the name Hamish Campbell etched into the leather."

Helen could not even speak for being so dumbfounded by his story. She had never heard of a person forgetting his own name and past. "So you don't remember anything? Not your family, friends, or any sort of past memory?"

He shook his head as he walked past her to lean against the oak.

"And no one knows you've lost your memory?" she asked as she walked over to him.

"No, I didn't want to make everyone think I'd lost my mind or had become crazed." He took a minute to rub the back of his head then continued. "To tell you the truth, when the fisherman that I was staying with finally told me he'd found out where I was heading and that I was to be the vicar of a church in Louisiana, I felt even more confused. I pretended, however, that I suddenly remembered." He looked back to Helen. "That is why I am so anxious to talk to you. You know who I am. You and you alone can tell me about myself, what kind of family background I have or anything that might possibly help me to remember. . .*something!*" His eyes bore into hers as if he were trying to read her thoughts. "You can also confirm I am indeed who they say I am or if it is some sort of mistake." He paused and seemed to try to calm himself with a deep breath. "Helen, am I the Reverend Hamish Campbell?"

Helen opened her mouth to inform him that he definitely was *not* the good reverend but stopped before any words could escape. A thought suddenly seized her—a truly wicked thought.

If North knew he was a duke, a nobleman, sixth in line to the throne of England, then Helen could never hope to win his affections for he would be socially far above her station.

But as a reverend. . .

Oh, surely she could not consider it, much less go through with such a deed! But she could not help it. If North believed he was a reverend, then he would be in the same class as she. The barrier of position and means would no longer be an obstacle, and the brotherly affection North always showed toward her could change into something more if he believed he was Hamish Campbell.

"Miss Nichols? Were you indeed telling the truth when you said you knew me? You suddenly seem confused about. . ."

"You are!" she blurted out before she could think twice about it. "I. . .I mean. . .you are. . .the reverend. . .Hamish Campbell," she stammered as she began to already feel the weight of the lie she had just told.

He let out a breath as he ran a hand through his shimmering blond curls. "I

was hoping. . .” He paused and began again. “I don’t know what I was hoping. It’s just that I do not feel like a Hamish Campbell. I cannot imagine choosing to be a vicar, either. I do have a sense I am a follower of God and have attended church in my past, but. . .being a vicar does not seem to. . .*fit!*” He threw his hand in the air with frustration.

*If he only knew!* Helen thought guiltily. “What sort of man did you imagine yourself to be?”

North seemed to think a minute before he answered. “I really don’t know, except I look at my clothes, and though they are faded and worn from being wet and then dried in the sun, I somehow know they are very finely made and that the fabrics are not something a poor man would wear.” He held up his long, lean hands. “I look at my palms and see no evidence of calluses from hard work.”

“Perhaps you spent your time in studying and contemplation,” Helen inserted. “I suppose you could be right, but it doesn’t explain the clothes.”

All the lies were making Helen very nervous, and she wasn’t finished telling them yet. “Perhaps your family is somewhat wealthy, but as you were the youngest son, you chose the church as your occupation,” she improvised.

He raised a dark blond brow. “Perhaps? You mean you don’t know?”

“Uh. . .” Helen scrambled to answer him without telling another lie. “We were introduced through a mutual acquaintance and saw each other only a few times after that,” she answered truthfully.

His expression fell to a frown. “Then you don’t know me well enough to tell me anything significant?”

Helen breathed a sigh of relief, hoping that this revelation would stop his questions. “I am sorry, but no.” She looked toward the crowd and noticed the Baumgartners were looking her way. “I’d better go. My employers are about to leave.”

She started to walk off, but he stopped her by touching her arm. “Wait! May I ask you one more question?”

Seeing the confusion in his beautiful blue eyes, Helen could not turn down his request. “Of course you may.”

“Everyone keeps telling me I have journeyed here from Scotland, yet I clearly do not have a Scottish accent. Do you know anything about this?”

This question she could answer truthfully. “Actually, I do. You were raised in England, but later your family bought an estate in Scotland, and you would spend summers there. I suppose you’ve moved back there recently.” She felt compelled to put her hand over his. “Good-bye, Nor. . .er. . .I mean Reverend. I’m sorry I was not more helpful.”

He gave her a small, preoccupied smile, nodded, then stepped away from her.

Helen took one last look back before she ran to where her employers were waiting for her. As she suspected, they were full of questions.

“You must tell us how you know our new preacher, Helen!” Mrs. Baumgartner ordered immediately as they settled in the carriage. Imogene Baumgartner looked much younger than her forty years. Though she didn’t have the style the ladies in England had in the way of clothes or hairstyles, she was always very

prettily dressed in her flowered cotton and linen gowns that she so preferred, her dark brown hair knotted low on her neck.

Robert Baumgartner, on the other hand, sat quietly, as he usually did whenever his wife was going on about something, preferring the solitude of his thoughts as he looked out of the carriage window. Helen often wondered if he regretted his choice of marrying the daughter of his father's butler. After all, it caused him to be disinherited from his father and, in turn, to renounce his claim to the title of Marquis of Moreland. Josie had told Helen they'd taken his small inheritance from his mother and moved to America soon after.

It seemed like such a grand love story, and since Helen was also in love with a man above her station, it gave her a small hope her own life could have a happy ending with North by her side.

"Helen, dear?" Mrs. Baumgartner prompted, shaking Helen from her thoughts.

After remembering her employer had asked how she knew North, Helen answered, "I knew him briefly through a friend." She wished Mrs. Baumgartner would take the hint that she did not want to talk about it, but the woman was very persistent when she wanted to know something.

Imogene stared at her as if waiting for more, but when Helen remained silent, she tried again. "He certainly was wearing a very fine suit of clothes to be a poor vicar. I almost had the feeling when studying his bearing and regal pose that he might be a nobleman!" She leaned closer to Helen from across the carriage. "Do you know if he is indeed from a noble family?"

Helen could feel sweat beading on her forehead, and it wasn't just because of the humidity. "I know he is from a wealthy family."

That answer seemed to be enough for Imogene. She leaned back and folded her arms as if pleased with herself. "Of course he is. I am quite good at spotting a gentleman of means." She paused and frowned. "Although he must be quite a younger son and not entitled to the wealth if he has chosen to be a clergyman."

"Must he?" Helen answered, trying desperately not to lie.

"Well, of course he must!" Imogene declared. "But his misfortune is our good luck. I had not looked forward to trying to find another vicar to take his place."

The questions seemed to be at an end as they rode the rest of the way in silence. But Helen's reprieve was only a brief one.

"Helen, it just occurred to me he might be a good match for you!" Imogene exclaimed as they exited the carriage.

Josie piped up, "I had told her the same thing!"

Imogene clasped her hands together as if thrilled with her idea. "You are a gentleman's daughter, Helen, and he is a gentleman! If you married him, you could stay right here in Golden Bay with us. Wouldn't that be just the thing?"

Just thinking about living in the rugged, swampy lands of Louisiana forever made Helen shiver with horror. But on the other hand, if she could spend her life with North by her side. . . perhaps it might not be so bad.

"I barely know him. . .," she prevaricated, but Imogene was not one to let anything distract her.

---

## REMEMBER ME

---

“We have all the time in the world for that!” she declared. “Leave it to me, dear, and you shall see yourself wed by fall!”

As Helen followed Imogene and Josie into the house, she wished her employer’s words could be true; but if North remembered who he was before he could fall in love with her, her hopes of even being his friend would be permanently dashed.

## Chapter 3

The more North learned of his life, the more confused he became. Many days and long hours since he was rescued, he tried to find just the tiniest of memories, just the smallest tidbit to help him feel less lost, less bewildered.

The only information he'd heard that felt as though it belonged to him was when Helen Nichols had called him North. The more he said it to himself, the more the name seemed to fit him, as though he'd finally had one little piece of his missing life back.

But saying it did not bring any more memories or any other sense of familiarity like he hoped and prayed it would. There was nothing in his mind other than a few memories since he'd awakened. The rest was this large, gaping black hole that refused to give up any answers.

Now as he sat in the tiny house the church leaders had shown him to, with its two rooms divided only by a large piece of cloth, he felt more out of his element than ever.

Since he had nothing but his deep-down gut feeling to rely on, North assumed he had never lived in such a small, barren house, nor had he ever known anyone who had. Before they had left him, he'd been shown the barn behind the house, where a cow and a few chickens were kept. He trusted the feeling of dismay that washed over him when they told him that the animals would give him all the milk, eggs, and poultry he could eat.

They actually expected him to *milk* the cow and somehow get eggs out from *under* the chickens. Then, if he actually wanted to *eat* chicken, he would have to *kill* one to have it?

Appalling!

He almost told them so, but when they said that North should be familiar with the animals since he had been raised on a farm, North bit back any retort he had been about to make.

Helen Nichols had left out that little piece of news. If his family had been wealthy, why would he be milking his own cows?

Confusion crowded his mind as he thought about it. Perhaps they'd lost their money, he tried to reason, which is why he never tried to pursue a deeper acquaintance with Helen Nichols.

Oh, yes, those thoughts had run through his mind when she'd informed him they barely knew one another. The very first thing that popped in his head was he must have been a blind fool to let such a beautiful, delightful woman slip in and out of his life so easily.

And she *was* beautiful, with her inky black curls that fell about her rosy cheeks and those dark blue eyes that seemed to look right through him straight to his heart.

When he realized he was contemplating pursuing a woman instead of focusing on his immediate problem, he jumped up from his hard, wooden seat and stomped out of the cottage.

As he breathed in the cooling air that the darkening sky had blown in from the gulf, North strove to find some sort of peace, anything to take the uncertainty from plaguing his heart and mind. Spying the church that was in front of his cottage, he began to walk toward it. The church leaders had told him the building had been used seldom, only when a traveling preacher was in the area.

North thought it looked as lonely as he was, standing there empty with its freshly painted walls and its dark, gleaming windowpanes. Again North tried to look inside himself, to find some sort of connection with the church, to feel the calling he must have had—but he came up empty.

God must surely have some reason for taking away his memory, North tried to rationalize. Perhaps in his forgotten past he needed to learn a valuable lesson, or perhaps someone's life would benefit from his dilemma. Of course, he couldn't think of one thing that would benefit anyone, but he was only a man, and God was all-knowing, so there must be a reason.

Briefly, North reached out and braced both hands on the smoothed planks of the church. "Help me, dear Lord, to remember. If I have been called by You to serve as Your minister, then I want to know that certainty once again. I am frightened by what lies ahead of me, Lord, and I have an idea that I don't feel this way normally. But most of all, dear God, please do not let me fail these people." He stopped as he once again felt the enormity of his situation bearing down on him. "In Jesus' name, amen," he finished quickly and backed away from the church.

He was about to walk back to his cottage when the sound of horse hooves broke the calm silence of the night.

North immediately recognized the two-wheeled, small curricule as being one of excellent quality, though he wished he knew *how* he knew this! Instead of focusing on the frustration that was boiling up within him, he watched as a tall, slim, brown man climbed down from the conveyance and walked toward him. The man was dressed in a black suit with a fluffy white cravat tied at his neck. North noticed there was an air of self-confidence about him in his walk and posture, and he wondered, not for the first time, about the class system within the slave and nonslave community.

"Rev. Campbell," the man's deep voice sounded as he gave him a brief bow. North returned the gesture, and the man continued, "I've been sent by Mr. and Mrs. Baumgartner, sir, of the Golden Bay plantation. They would like to extend to you an invitation to dine with them this evening."

*Food!* It was the only thing that stood out in North's nutrition-starved mind. He was invited to eat food he wouldn't have to cook, milk, or kill.



"Oh, this dress is wrong!" Helen wailed as she stood in front of her mirror, critically surveying the light blue taffeta. "The ribbon is wrinkled, and the material just droops in this heat!" She dramatically grabbed two handfuls of hair on either



side of her head. "And just look at my hair! It will do nothing but curl! I look like a ragamuffin."

Millie, the young slave woman who served both Helen and Josie, propped her hands on her slim hips and made a *tsk*-ing noise as she shook her head. "Miss Helen, I don't know what's wrong with yo' eyes, honey chil', but there ain't nothin' wrong with that dress or yo' hair." Millie took Helen's arm, pulled her away from the mirror, and directed her to sit at her dressing table. "Now yo' jus' got yo'self all in a lather 'cause o' that young man who's comin' to dinnah, tha's all! Now sit still and let me fix yo' hair up real pretty."

Josie took that particular moment to let herself in the room without so much as a knock. "I knew it! I knew she was sweet on the preacher!" she crowed with delight.

Millie stopped brushing Helen's hair to shake the brush in Josie's direction. "Miss Josie, I done tol' ya and tol' ya. You gonna listen at the wrong do' one day, and it's gonna get yo' in a mess o' trouble!" She pointed the brush to the chair next to Helen. "Now sit yo'self down, and I'll get to yo' hair next."

Josie did as she was told because Millie, slave or no, just had the kind of voice you obeyed. It was then Helen noticed the dress the younger girl was wearing.

"Josie, you can't wear that old dress to dinner!" she blurted with horror.

Josie frowned as she looked down at the plain beige dress made of slightly wrinkled cotton. "What's wrong with it? I've worn this to dinner lots of times, and you've never said anything about it."

Helen took a deep breath to calm her nerves, and then in her best teacher's voice, she instructed, "When guests are dining with your family, you must dress in a more formal manner." She noticed Millie looking for a hairpin and opened her drawer to find one for her. She then continued, "Especially when you have a guest like the d—" She stumbled over the word *duke* and quickly corrected herself. "—er, North."

Josie let out a breath to show her frustration with the whole conversation. "He's just the preacher. It's not like he's the president of the United States."

*No. More like the Duke of Northingshire.* If Helen's nerves were this frazzled with trying to keep her story straight and not saying the wrong thing, how was it going to be in front of North?

What a mess she'd gotten herself into!

In the end, Josie kept her plain dress on, and with her hair done up "pretty" by Millie, Helen decided, droopy or not, her dress would have to do, also. She noticed as she approached the three adults that the Baumgartners wore their usual casual attire; and when she saw North, she was glad they did.

Of course he would have no other clothes! How silly of her not to remember that all his belongings had not been brought from the ship. And even when they were, would he realize the garments belonged to someone else? Would he remember that his own trunks contained the finest clothes England had to offer and not those of a poor vicar?

She had to remind herself not to get into a mental tizzy as she walked up and greeted him.



“Hello, Reverend,” she greeted as she tried to ignore the guilt she felt over calling him that false title. “Are you getting settled in?”

The smile he gave her was lacking in confidence, and his words were those of someone putting on a brave front. . .and failing at it. “Uh, yes, I think so. I’ll just need time to adjust to the. . .uh. . .culture change.”

The Baumgartners all laughed at that, and though Helen joined them, it was only out of politeness. Since she, too, was still experiencing quite a culture shock, it was difficult to joke about it just yet.

They were all seated in the dining room, which boasted a long table that could easily seat sixteen people. Helen was not accustomed to such extravagance, since her own family manor was of modest means. Neither was she accustomed to all the house servants that worked around the clock to make sure the family had all they needed.

No, she wasn’t accustomed to such a lifestyle, but she knew North was. This was apparent only to her as she watched him walk into the room without so much as blinking at the expensively carved furnishings or the heavy blue brocade and satin drapes framing the ten large windows in the room. The only thing that caused him to pause was when he noticed the large cloth-covered fan above the table that was framed in the same carvings as the table and chairs. Attached to the fan was a blue satin cord that ran along the high ceiling all the way to the corner, where a small child was pulling it, causing the fan to swoosh back and forth, creating a breeze.

“Remarkable,” was the only comment North made as he seated himself by Mrs. Baumgartner and across from Helen. There was a smattering of small talk as they were served their first course, and Helen noticed North was clever enough to keep the conversation off himself by inquiring about the plantation and Mr. Baumgartner’s plans for it. Under normal circumstances, it might have been enough, however North had never dealt with Imogene Baumgartner.

“Oh, enough about business! You must tell us about yourself, Reverend. I quite expected you to have a Scottish dialect and am curious as to why you do not,” she voiced, interrupting the gentlemen’s conversation.

Helen could actually see the nervous sweat start to bead on North’s brow as he paused before answering. “I was raised in England but spent summers with my family in Scotland. I later moved there, but my accent was already established,” he answered, parroting the explanation she’d given him earlier.

“And what town were you from in England?” she persisted.

North glanced briefly her way, and Helen could see the rising panic in his eyes. He had no idea where he was from, and Helen scrambled for a way to answer for him. Her only problem was that by saying the name of Northingshire, it might make him remember suddenly who he was. So she thought of the town next to it.

“Lanchester, isn’t it? In County Durham? I believe you mentioned that town when we last saw one another,” she blurted out; and from the odd looks by the Baumgartners, she knew her answering for him in such a forceful manner seemed quite odd.