

“I remember your Granny and Grandda. Everyone would stop their own dancing to watch them, they were so good together. A match made in heaven my own Granny would say.”

“Yes, they were. They would dance and soon they’d be laughing and whispering and before you knew it, they would disappear behind their blanket and to their bed together. I miss them every day. They would have kept Michael on the straight path.”

“Lovely people they were. Did they teach you the *Haste to the Wedding*?”

“They did.”

“Then whistle it in time to the steps. Let’s see what you remember.” Sorcha stood next to Declan, beginning the steps to dance when his first notes sounded. Hop on the left foot, hop back, hop on the left foot again, bring the right foot back and down behind, hop the right foot bringing the left foot back, and repeat.

She watched as Declan attempted to follow her movements before collapsing on the ground, overcome with laughter at his clumsy efforts. “Oh, Declan. You may be hopeless!” the words escaped between her gasps of merriment.

Declan slumped to the ground next to her before remarking, “I told you. You’ll need to find another dance partner for the wedding.”

“I don’t want to go with anyone else Declan. Say you’ll go with me. I didn’t mean to laugh at you.”

“Oh well. I don’t blame you, Sorcha. Are you sure you want to go with me?” Declan was sitting next to her, his gaze lifted to observe the moon and stars, his breath held as he awaited her answer.

“I’m not looking to hang my wash next to yours Declan. It’s a wedding ceilidh, is all. Let’s practice some more.” She rose with her words and started the steps again, this time with her arm around him as they moved. Declan had stopped whistling to concentrate on his steps but found himself newly distracted by the feel of her body touching his own.

“Sorcha I...” Speech failed him as she raised her head to attend to his words. The moonlight washed over her features, her eyes widening in her surprise at his expression, one she never expected to see from him but had dreamed about on more than one occasion. He bent his head to her and found her lips, the kiss he had longed for more than he could ever imagine. She returned the caress of their lips, the soft touch changing into something more ardent, more needy as they stood barefoot in the grass of the meadow.

They broke the embrace, their eyes never leaving each other’s before a sad reality settled over Declan. “Sorcha. I value our friendship more than anything. If I have overstepped, I hope you will forgive me, and we can go on as before.”

“Did you not like my kiss, Declan Fitzgerald?” Sorcha’s words were harsher than her expression, which hovered somewhere between confused and hurt.

“Oh, Sorcha. It was more than I could ever have wanted. It’s just, you deserve someone better than me.”

“I believe that is for me to say Declan. Come here!” she demanded.

Declan smiled, and Sorcha's heart soared at the rare look brightening his face. She lifted her face and waited. His amused laughter cracked her lips into a smile. A smile that soon shifted as his lips found hers once again.