

After a morning of sore fingers from haphazard embroidery and an enforced rest after luncheon, Brynnde finally found herself free to seek the sun and air of the lawn. Her mother had instructed the servants to bring out tables and set out tea, and Brynnde sailed by where Ladies Averland and Crabbage sat conversing, snatching a biscuit on her way to the archery targets. She fancied she heard her mother's gasp, that intake of breath ready to rebuke her for her cheekiness, but the words turned into, "Lady Darley! Please do have a seat!" Brynnde breathed a prayer of thanks, sent up on a sigh of relief.

She was the first lady to arrive at the lawn but discovered the men had already started. Her brother and Graeme Sommerford were laughingly arguing over a shot one of them had made, and Brynnde reflected they had grown friendly quickly.

As if reading her thoughts, a voice at Brynnde's ear said, "They seem to be fast friends."

Brynnde turned to find Garrick Sommerford—Lord Burbridge, she reminded herself, though the name did not suit him, was far too stuffy—at her shoulder. She frowned, not liking having been snuck up on, nor having her thoughts so openly spoken by someone else. "It would seem so," she agreed.

Garrick raised his eyebrows. "You disapprove?"

"Not at all," said Brynnde. "As a rule, my brother shows good judgement in his choice of friends. If he were laughing with *you*, I might wonder, but as it stands..." She gave a tiny shrug.

Garrick placed a hand over his heart. "You wound me, Miss Archambault. Are you still angry about yesterday evening? What if I were to swear I almost never suffer such verbal clumsiness? That it must be your stunning beauty that has caused me to trip over my own tongue?"

Brynnde looked hard at him, the angelic halo of his sunlit hair, the twinkle in his slate-colored eyes. He was laughing at her! Again! “Insufferable,” she muttered and stepped away to find a free target. She had a sudden and acute need to shoot something.