

***Two short sexy stories inspired by
Deathly Embrace***

Reading between the lines...

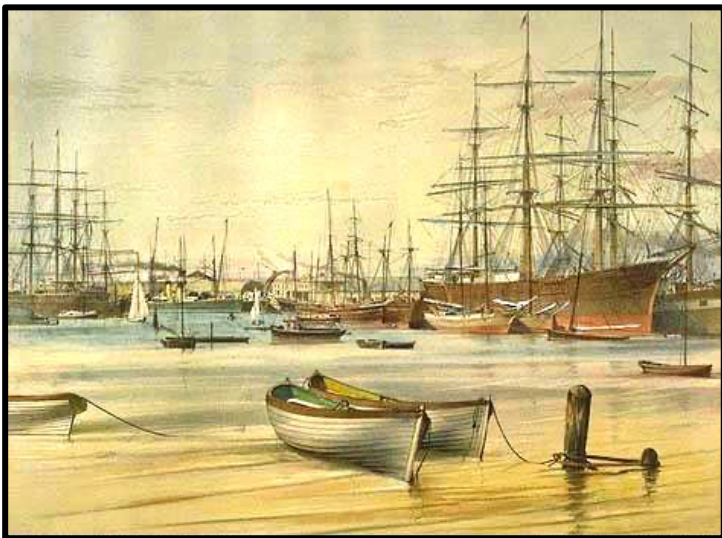
Have you ever wondered about other characters in a novel? They had lives too. Their lives made the story 'Deathly Embrace' possible.

***The Life and Times
of the Honorable
Annie Dunsford***

The Life and Times of the Honorable Annie Dunsford



The Honorable Annabel (Annie) Hanthett was born in England in 1832 to Lady Catherine and Stephen Hanthett, Viscount of Grenluton. Her parents died when she was 17 and she was shipped to Adelaide, Australia in 1850.



Port Adelaide, South Australia, AUSTRALIA, 1800s



Lord Forbes

She arrived by sailing ship and was taken under the care of her Godfather, Lord Forbes.

She was an impressionable young woman with a passionate nature that was soon to get her into trouble despite the firm hand of her Godfather.

At the age of just 18, eight months after arriving in the colony she fell madly in love with Captain William Dunsford.

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She glanced around and there he stood—tall, dark and solidly built. He leaned casually on a shiny new bicycle. Annie almost swooned over the bolts of fabric spread out on the counter in front of her. *Oh my, he is so gorgeous.*

He watched her. They both stilled, staring deep into each other's eyes. The heat of awareness warmed her face. A puddle of molten desire pooled in her nether regions and she stirred restlessly. *I shouldn't feel like this. So brazen.*

But every time she saw a man who appealed to her senses her body responded of its own volition, leaving her aching and damp. *I wonder what it would be like to have a man such as this make love to me, to make me a woman.* She stirred some more, made uncomfortable by the inappropriateness of her own

thoughts. *Goodness I would be a social pariah if they only knew my wicked thoughts.*

“Annie, get your head out of the clouds, and make a choice of fabric for your gown. Mrs Borthwick does not have all day to tend you,” Lord Forbes growled.

She started. “Yes. Of course. Sorry, Uncle Richard.” She turned back to the fabric and picked up the light lavender floral muslin. “Please accept my apologies, Mrs Borthwick for my tardiness. I’ll have ten yards of this one.” She had already lost interest in the fabric

and sneaked another peek at the handsome young man.

He grinned when she peeped in his direction.

Captain William Dunsford



She flushed hot and turned back to the shop keeper.

Her heart fluttered behind her breast. *I must find out who he is. So handsome.* She looked across at her Godfather settling their account. He probably wouldn’t think him suitable. He was so

particular about whom she associated with and that wasn't many in this small colony.

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One week later...

The sound of music drifted out over the lawn. Couples were dancing inside. She took her Godfather's arm as she alighted from the carriage. Shivers danced over her skin. *My first ball in the colony. I'm so glad Uncle allowed me to attend and commissioned a new grownup gown for me. I wonder if my handsome admirer will be here.*

Men lounged on the wide verandah smoking pipes and sipping rum. Their eyes followed Annie's passage up the garden path, and into the ballroom. She deliberately kept her eyes downcast and pressed closer to her Godfather's side. No matter how much she wished to survey the men and find her handsome stranger, she had no intention of appearing impudent.

They approached a short, dumpy lady with grey hair. Her blue eyes twinkled as she glided forward to greet them.

"Ah, Lord Forbes, Richard, so glad you could attend."

Annie's Godfather bowed slightly. "I'm delighted to be invited, Mrs Hawker. Quite the soiree for such a small city."

"Adelaide is much bigger than it appears. Many of our most eligible people are isolated on properties out of town. This event has been in the planning for months to allow them to travel."

"I see. The ravages of distance has its challenges."

"Indeed it does, Richard. And the isolation and dangers for the poor women. They just wait for my events with such

eagerness. She turned to Annie. "And this is your ravishing young ward. Annabelle, welcome to Adelaide. Come, I shall introduce you to some of our young people."

Without waiting for a reply the older woman took Annie's elbow, and steered her toward a gathering of young ladies.

"Shhh, a moment, ladies. I would like to introduce you to the Honorable Annabelle Hathnett; she is ward of Lord Forbes, and newly arrived in the colony. I trust you will all to make her welcome."

Annie smiled, pleased to again be included in a social gathering. Her parents had been keen on socialising and she had always been included. Up until her parents' untimely death in a carriage accident Annie had been allowed more freedom than most her age. The death of her parents and the subsequent journey to the colony of Adelaide had been stressful, and unsettling, and her Godfather's authoritarian approach to her care stifling.

A stunning, statuesque girl stepped forward holding out her hand. "I'm Elizabeth Hawker. Are you enjoying it here in the colony, Annabelle?"

Annie nodded. "It's very strange, so different from home, but beautiful in its own way. I'm not quite accustomed to the heat as yet though."

Another young woman, short and petite, with a mop of brunette curls stepped forward. "They call me Millie. Welcome to Adelaide. I promise you'll get used to the heat and the isolation in a very short time. Now do we call you Annabelle or perhaps Anna?"

"Everyone calls me Annie."

"Shhh everyone, here come the boys. Get your dance cards out. And Henry Rossiter is mine, by the way," Abigail said.

“Oh shhh, Abigail. Mr Rossiter will be doing the choosing and it might not be you,” Elizabeth said.

Everyone giggled. Abigail blushed. Annie felt sorry for her. It would be awful if Mr Rossiter picked someone else. She turned, as one with the girls surrounding her, and watched the first two young men approach. They were both handsome, and obviously braver than the others who all stood huddled in the far corner.

“That’s Mr Rossiter, the tall blond one, and the other is Hamish McGregor, heir to the famous Willparnetta and Taratinga sheep stations just north of here.”

Annie shuddered with nerves. What if no one asked her to dance? She would be left standing here in the corner and it would be so embarrassing. She’d never been un-partnered for even one dance back home.

Henry Rossiter made a bee line for Abigail, not at all shy about being obviously enamored with the pretty brown haired girl.

Hamish McGregor paused a few feet away then came forward and bowed to Elizabeth. “Would you do me the honor of this dance, Miss Hawker?”

Elizabeth bobbed a small curtsy. “I would like that very much, Mr Macgregor.” She took his arm and he whirled her into the middle of the waltz.

Annie watched them, acutely aware of the other young men approaching en masse. A couple of girls giggled.

“Miss Hathnett, would you do me the honor of the next dance?”

Annie flinched at the voice so close to her left arm. She turned.

The young man bowed. “Percy Hawker at your service. The next dance is a quadrille.”

The tension eased from her. She could dance a quadrille with stylish elegance and silently she thanked her hostess for ensuring she didn't become a wallflower.

"I am most appreciative of your invitation, Mr Hawker."

"Please call me Percy, after all I am your junior by a couple of years."

"Thank you, Percy, but you must call me Annie in return."

As the last bars of the waltz faded Percy took her arm and led her onto the dance floor.

Her heart stopped then jerked into a pattering rhythm. There he stood. Just to the side of the other men gathered at the rear of the room. He balanced a glass of cordial in his hand. He seemed even more handsome than she remembered and very dashing in his evening attire.

As they moved around the floor she lost sight of him. She glanced around, seeking a glimpse of him even as she effortlessly followed the steps of the dance under Percy's lead. Her throat constricted and she struggled to swallow. Every nerve ending tingled and only her gloves stopped her hands being clammy in her partner's grasp.

When they circuted again she almost came face to face with him.

He had moved to the front of the throng—right on the edge of the dance floor. He watched her with an intent gaze.

Annie's heart somersaulted. Awareness surged through her. *Oh my Lord, he is so handsome. He's seen me. Will he ask me to dance? Oh goodness I can't bear the thought that he should not. But he did smile. I must find out who he is, but discreetly.*

Uncle Richard would definitely not approve, he considered her far too young for romantic interests. But she could never explain to him or anyone about the thoughts she had and the

reaction of her body to any attention from a handsome young male. Most would consider her shameless for having such inappropriate thoughts and urges, but she couldn't stop it. She envied married women and the rights they had.

As Percy returned her to the group and disappeared to secure her some refreshment Annie peered discreetly between the gathered women seeking a glimpse of him. The floor cleared as the band took a break and the girls took seats along the wall. Annie sat between Elizabeth and Millie and sipped the cool cordial Percy had brought her. She couldn't see him. She assumed he had retreated with the men to the cool of the verandah.

The summer heat lingered even though it was well into autumn. Annie found the ball room hot and stuffy. She patted the perspiration from her forehead, wishing fervently to be able to seek the cooler air outside. There she might find him, but that would be unseemly. She rued the fact that the social rules her parents had mostly ignored back in England had a tight grip on the colony's social order.

Moments later the band returned and played the introductory bars of a waltz. A shadow loomed over her. She looked up. Her heart leapt behind her breast. He stood there smiling.

"Will you do me the honor of this waltz?" He held out his hand for her dance card.

Numbed by his closeness Annie handed him her card in silent agreement.

With several jerky strokes of the pencil he filled the whole thing in right to the last dance. Without a word he handed the card back to her.

Annie swallowed against the lump in her throat. Elizabeth touched her arm. Annie turned to her. The other girl shook her head. A tremor of excitement ran through Annie. She was doing something rebellious apparently. She tucked the ribbon on her card over her arm and held out her hand. He took it. Even through the gloves her palm tingled under the touch of his. He helped her rise with the slightest of pressure.

He bowed slightly. "Captain William Dunsford at your service, Miss Hathnett."

Nerves sang along her skin. *He knows my name. Goodness he went to the trouble to find out.* A warm pool of awareness settled in her nether regions.

Elizabeth tugged at her skirt, but Annie ignored it. Aware now only of William Dunsford and his masculine aura. He towered over her at six foot four. He was physically blessed with broad shoulders, slim hips and long muscular legs.

His moustache twitched as he smiled and led her onto the floor. His palm was warm on her back and his fingers entwined with her smaller ones as he guided her around the floor with elegant precision.

Annie struggled to breathe—the combination of corsets, hot air and his nearness. She thought she might expire of happiness. His scent—fresh soap, cigar smoke and a tang of cologne—tantalized her dormant passion. A sweet ache of desire spread across her hips. She wanted to move closer, but protocol deemed it unseemly. They moved as one. She stared up into his grey eyes trying to interpret the flickering shadows she saw.

"You are new to the colony, Miss Hathnett?"

"Yes, just last year I came to live with my Godfather, Lord Forbes."

“Are you enjoying the new way of life—the rawness, the wildness, and worthy endeavor of the colonists?”

“Oh yes. It’s exciting to be part of something so new, so different from home.”

“And do you plan to stay permanently?”

She nodded. “Yes, my parents are no longer with us so there is nothing for me in England.” *And I plan to stay right here, in your arms. And what might come in the future I dare not even contemplate.*

The conversation lapsed and together they traversed the floor. Annie allowed herself to sink into a dreamy world of imagination. Dangerous thoughts that unleashed a kaleidoscope of emotions and sensations to swirl through her body and mind.

William didn’t bother to return her to her seat, but held her lightly beside him as they waited for the music to recommence. Dance after dance Annie remained willingly in his arms, intoxicated by his nearness.

She had barely moved out of his hold when supper was announced, but before she could react a large hand tightened on her other arm.

“I’ll be escorting you to supper, Annie. Bid you dance companion good evening.”

An icy wave of reality washed over her. Uncle Richard. *Oh bother. He’s noticed and is not happy.*

“Goodnight, William. Thank you for your companionship.”

William Dunsford inclined his head slightly. “It has been my pleasure, Miss Hathnett.” He bowed to her Uncle. “Good evening, Lord Forbes. Miss Hathnett has been telling me she enjoys being here.”

Her Uncle’s displeasure in her choice of companion communicated itself in the tightness of his grip. He frowned at

William. "My *ward* has little choice in the matter, and she is a very impressionable young woman. I bid you good evening, Dunsford."

Annie cringed at the tone of dismissal. Obviously her Godfather did not approve of William.

As they moved toward the supper room he leaned in close to her ear. "Captain William Dunsford is not for you. He is only accepted in such circles as this because he is the nephew of Mrs Hawker's cousin and the colony lacks a suitable social set."

"But, Uncle Richard, he's so dashing, and such an excellent dancer."

"That may be, Annie, but his standing and prospects are negligible in the colony. He is not for you."

Annie sank into a mire of resentment. She had already fallen deeply in love with William Dunsford and intended to have him as hers.

Two days later an invitation to take afternoon tea at the Hawker residence arrived from Elizabeth. Annie squealed with excitement. Her first social engagement without her Uncle, and to the very house William resided in.

"Uncle Richard, Miss Hawker has invited me to afternoon tea tomorrow at three. Can I go, please? She will send a carriage."

"Of course, Annie, this is one connection I favor you nurturing. Elizabeth Hawker is a fine young lady."

Abigail, Millie and Elizabeth greeted her like a long lost friend when she arrived and immediately guided her to the garden. As they got seated under the old gum in the centre of the garden Mrs Hawker had so lovingly created to replicate her English one, talk turned quickly to the subject of love.

Abigail immediately dominated the conversation with her renditions of Henry Rossiter's finer points. They all laughed as Abigail pretended to swoon as she talked.

And there was no doubt from the way Elizabeth talked softly about Hamish that she was very much in love with the Macgregor heir. She refused to be daunted by the fact that the young man in question had only danced two times with her at the ball.

As she listened Annie quickly convinced herself that both Abigail and Elizabeth's emotions were far inferior to those she felt for William Dunsford. But after her Godfather's reaction she was reluctant to mention William here in case the girls also scoffed at him. She started back in disconcertion when his name was connected to her a moment later.

"I think my cousin William has a thing for you, Annie. I think he would have taken you to supper if your uncle had allowed it."

"He's so handsome..."

"Yes, but extremely impoverished. He only has his army wage. Mother says his grandfather turned out to be an absolute rake and compulsive gambler. The old man squandered the family fortune in just a few years."

Abigail leaned forward. "And I hear rumors William has some of his grandfather's tendencies for the ladies. The other day I also heard Father says he is known to frequent the secret poker games held in a couple of houses of ill repute."

Elizabeth blushed. "There is always going to be talk, but I like William. He has carved a reasonable life for himself here in the colony. Do you like him, Annie?"

Annie nodded. "He is extremely handsome and acted most pleasantly toward me on the night of the ball. Being near him makes my heart flutter. But Uncle Richard says he's not suitable."

All the girls giggled.

"Parents and guardians can be so rigid. They just don't understand how one's heart can just fall in love. One has no control over such happenings. If you like William you should follow your heart, Annie," Abigail said.

Disappointed she hadn't seen William, Annie nevertheless went home with the girls' endorsements ringing in her head. *Yes, Uncle Richard would never understand the affairs of the heart—my heart. He's nothing more than a crusty old bachelor.* She was even more determined now to have William for her own. And with some lies and manipulation she contrived further brief meetings until at last her opportunity came.

~ ~ ~

"Ah, my sweet, sweet, Annie. To hold you thus is beyond measure."

Her heart fluttered like a captive bird behind her breasts. His scent whirled around her. His hands were warm on her upper arms as he pulled her closer. She didn't resist. This situation had taken considerable scheming to achieve. To be this close. To have him actually hold her was more than she had hoped for.

His head dipped. She turned her face up to him and closed her eyes.

The first soft caress of his lips seared through her. Her heart lurched, and her breath caught in her throat. The pressure increased. She tasted him as his lips slid slowly over hers. Then

they were gone. She opened her eyes. He hadn't moved his face away. She gave just a whisper of a smile. She didn't want to appear too forward.

His lips claimed hers again—this time with demanding pressure. He held her so close her breasts squashed against his muscular chest. His tongue thrust against her mouth. Tension danced across her skin. She allowed him to ease his tongue between her lips. His mouth now completely covered hers with his tongue probing inside. She tentatively met his exploration with her own tongue. At the first touch he pulled her even harder against him. She could feel the outline of his male body intruding against her soft curves. Fire sparked in her nether regions.

Now his arm encircled her waist. "Come Annie; let me make love to you. Let me introduce you to the womanly arts." She pushed away. "But we mustn't, William. It would be unseemly. We have only just become acquainted and Uncle Richard does not approve of our liaison."

"Do not be afraid, Annie. I can sense your desire—your passionate soul." He reached up and cupped her breast. His thumb stroked her nipple through the thin fabric. She moaned.

"Tell me it does not feel delightful, and I will stop."

"I cannot lie, William. My body sings with the pleasure you bring. But it is unseemly, and I know nothing of what transpires between a man and a woman."

He placed light kisses on her face. "And nor you should my darling, Annie. It is for the man to show a woman the pleasure of such physical intimacy."

"A husband, William, I think."

"Of course, Annie, but will your Uncle let me become your husband."

"No, he will not."

"Then we must take what pleasure we can find. Our intimate association may give him pause to re-consider his opposition to our nuptials."

"How, William?"

He kissed her again. "Never you mind, my jewel." He pressed her hard against his lions sliding his hands down to cup her buttocks as best he could over the fabric of her skirt. His mouth claimed hers again.

Annie sagged against him her body softening and warming with his nearness. She didn't understand the sensations surging through her, but she didn't want them to stop. "Dearest William, I will be yours."

He chuckled and scooped her from the ground. He carried her across the garden and up the stairs, to his living quarters over the stables. The curtains were drawn against the heat of the summer sun dimming the light to romantic softness.

He laid her gently in the middle of the big bed then climbed onto the bed after her. He leaned close trailing kiss after kiss over her face, down her neck and into her décolletage. Her nipples tightened and pressed against the confining material of her corset. Her breath came in nervous little huffs.

"I'm not sure, William. I want to be with you, but I am afraid."

"Shhh, little Annie. There is nothing to be afraid of. I will not hurt you. My desire is only to give you the pleasure your body cries out for. Do you not feel it, in here?" He touched her breast.

She nodded.

"And here?" He slid his hand down over her abdomen and buried his hand in the folds of her skirt until he could almost touch her most intimate parts.

Her woman hood tightened with the most pleasant tension.

"I will show you the pleasures, if you will let me."

She reached up and pulled him back down to her. He kissed her lingeringly all the time caressing her breast through her bodice.

“Let me show you, Annie.”

Shudders danced through her. She so wanted this, and yet she was afraid. She knew nothing of such things except for what she had seen on the farm and heard whispered amongst older women.

“Yes William, love me as a woman should be loved.”

He smirked and reached up to open the front of her bodice. As each button popped he placed a kiss on her exposed flesh. Annie trembled. Then he withdrew and pulled her from the bed. With one sweep he pushed her bodice back over her shoulders. It fell to the floor. He turned her around and unlaced her corset and untied the ribbons on her skirt. Her skirt and three petticoats shushed to the floor.

Heat raced up her face. He kissed along her shoulders and across her back. Her knees softened and she thought she might crumple, but his hands encircled her waist and he eased her corset off. Instinctively she covered her breasts with folded arms. He chuckled, took her by the shoulders and turned her around.

“Do not cover your beauty from my view. A man likes to appreciate the beauty of the female form.” With gentle tugs he eased her hands down.

She quailed under his scrutiny. No man had ever seen her exposed.

He didn’t take his eyes off her as he shed his coat, boots and undid his shirt. Annie stared in wonder as his male attributes were revealed—a broad angular chest with a light sprinkling of dark hairs between his nipples, and muscular arms that glowed

with the rich tan of an outdoors man. His torso narrowed to a slim waist and hips and long legs. He eased his boots off.

Clothed only in his pantaloons he came to her, his hands rested on her waist as he eased her back to the bed. He lifted her onto the covers, and pushed her into lying position before he pushed her knees apart. He moved closer, easing between her thighs. From this vantage point he studied her. She lay trembling under his gaze. She studied his upper body, afraid to peek lower than his waistband. He leaned down and suckled at her breasts. Annie shivered. Heat flowed through her. With tentative fingers she touched his bare skin. He kissed her then pulled back.

"Come help me undress." He pulled her back into a sitting posture.

She reached up and touched the waistband sliding her fingers over the buttons holding the front flap in place. She made no attempt to undo them.

William chuckled. "Shy are we?"

She peeped up at him from under her lashes. "Just a little."

"Come, I shall help you."

Annie recoiled slightly. She wasn't sure she wanted to see what William had in his pantaloons. It was a much whispered about thing—the male appendage. Young girls speculated, married woman either whispered with loathing or delight depending on their own character, and that of their husbands.

William took her hands in his and guided her fingers through the process of undoing his buttons, first the ones securing the front flap then the three holding the waist band. William pushed his pantaloons down revealing white drawers. There was an obvious budge in the front. Annie glanced at it, then away, as she shrank back from William's obvious manliness.

"I'm not sure if I'm ready for this," she whispered.

"Come, I will be gentle and you will enjoy my touch." He eased her back onto the bed and with some shuffling awkwardness he removed her drawers. She lay on the covers totally exposed. She trembled. William eased closer, still on his knees. She could smell him, a strange scent, warm and tangy. It stirred washing over her to pool of heat between her legs.

"Such exquisite beauty, my love." William leaned forward and caressed her breasts. Her nipples tightened, every nerve ending tingled. The ache between her legs increased.

He leaned closer. Annie shut her eyes finding it all too intimate. His mouth covered her nipple. She flinched in surprise, and didn't open her eyes. He sucked, gently. She stirred as an unknown sensation curled around her private parts. He sucked the other breast. He ran his hands down her body, past her navel and into the thatch of hair that covered her woman hood. She squirmed.

"Lay still and enjoy," he whispered.

"But I'm...I'm embarrassed to have you touch me thus," she whispered.

"Nay, my beautiful one. Let me explore and enjoy your gifts. Let me give you pleasure."

"Is this how it's meant to be?"

William chuckled. "Yes, and more. I shall bring you such exquisite pleasure that you will beg me for more.

She opened her eyes when she felt the bed rock. William eased his drawers off. She saw his appendage, standing straight out for his body, dark and swollen. Below, his balls dangled floppy and hairy. She gasped. *Oh my God, it's so...big. And he's going to put that in me.* She squeaked and shut her eyes.

William chuckled and lay down beside her. His skin burned hot against hers. She cringed away, but he tucked his hand over

her waist and pulled her back against him. "Do not be afraid, I will not hurt you. Just a little sting at first then only pleasure."

"Oh William are you sure."

"Shh, relax. "

She lay perfectly still as William ran his hands over her body—her breasts, her buttocks and thighs. Her body buzzed with pleasant sensations.

He brought his hand up between her thighs. Her first impulse was to clamp them together, but he pushed against them to indicate she should part her legs. She moved a fraction. His hand was smooth and cool as it slid between her thighs and up into the apex of her legs. She gasped as his hands explored her intimately. She lay there motionless struggling not to cry out as sensations rushed through her.

He eased her legs further apart. She cringed, but did not resist. She kept her eyes closed. With gentle stroking movements William ran his fingers all over her intimate area. She squirmed. A moan escaped.

"Does this feel good, Annie?"

"Oh yes. I have never experienced such pleasure."

"There is more to come."

He rubbed more, concentrating on one spot that seemed more alive than the rest. Waves of sensation crashed through her. His fingers entered her. He stroked her hot flesh with his fingers while rubbing the intense pleasure spot. Annie gasped. Tension balled in her woman hood right under Williams's fingers. She writhed. He caressed. Her breath came in huffing pants.

He carefully knelt between her legs. Annie tensed. *This is where he puts it in. Will it hurt?*

"Relax my love, just a moment of pain then only pleasure."

More pleasure. I can't believe.

Slowly he lowered himself onto her. She stilled, suddenly terrified.

He probed gently with his hardness. Annie tried to pull away from his intrusion.

"Lay still, my love. The worst will be over in a second. Lie still I do not want to hurt you"

He kissed her mouth, eyelids and cheeks. One hand played with her nipple. She could feel his appendage just touching her hot wet flesh. She tensed. He waited. The sensations throbbed through her and she relaxed. Then he entered her, a little bit, then withdrew and then pushed in again. The intensity of the sensation caught her by surprise. He pushed again. This time he slid right in. She gasped. The sense of pleasure, then a sharp tearing sting. He continued to slide into her. Then he stilled.

"Annie?" He kissed her. "Speak to me, Annie. Say it didn't hurt too much."

She opened her eyes. "Just a little, but it is gone now."

He kissed her again. "Excellent. Now for your reward."

He began to thrust in and out. His appendage filled and stretched her. Each downward thrust bunched pleasure wave on wave in her womanhood. It centered on where he thrust into her, but with each thrust it grew.

She clung to him. He kissed her. She raised her knees and clenched them against his waist. Tentatively she lifted her hips to meet his downward motion. She cried out, arched her back and dug her nails into his back. Wave after wave pounded through her. Her body shuddered and her bones melted. Even her hair stood on end. She cried out again and again. William thrust faster and deeper. She struggled to breathe as every inch of her body shuddered and clenched with pleasure.

She sighed and sagged. William thrust deep and groaned. He stilled then sagged onto her. The slickness of their perspiration was warm between them. William eased off her and lay on his back. He panted. She turned to him and he wrapped his arm around her.

“Oh, William.”

He chuckled. “So you enjoyed it then?”

She buried her face into his chest. “Yes, very much.”

He chuckled again. “Good.”

~ ~ ~

After the first time Annie couldn't get enough of William's lovemaking. Her body craved the surge of sexual release the act brought her. And William did not object to satisfying her urges.

When the illness began Annie worried she'd caught something from the unclean water or poor sanitation, but when she missed her second monthly she guessed she was with child. She fretted on her predicament for more than a week then as she slipped into bed with William she told him her fears.

“This is good news, my love. Now we will approach your godfather and see if he will give his blessing for our nuptials.”

“I suppose he'll have no choice.”

“Not if he wants to protect your reputation, and his own.”

They made love and dressed. This time William accompanied her home.

Lord Forbes greeted them with brusque politeness.

“I have come to ask for your Goddaughter's hand in marriage, Lord Forbes. We are in love and she carries my child.”

Lord Forbes clenched his fists. His face turned beetroot red. "I should have you whipped for this, Dunsford," he bellowed. "You've seduced an innocent child and destroyed her prospects."

"But Uncle, we love each other," Annie said.

He glared at her then sighed. "I suppose I saw it coming. You are much like your mother, willful, passionate and uncontrollable. But at least she made a good match."

"Uncle, William is a good match. He loves me."

"And this is what you want, marriage to a landless, moneyless soldier."

"William will make good in the colony, Uncle. We shall be happy."

"He might make good, but not on your money. He'll never touch a penny other than your current allowance. I'll see to that."

William lurched forward his fists clenched. "You cannot deprive Annie of her inheritance."

Lord Forbes stood upright and glared. "I will deprive you, not her. The money and the house I will buy and install you in will remain in trust for her descendents. A Dunsford will never own it."

Annie stood rigid between the two men. At this moment she hated her Godfather. How dare he lock her money away? To so disparage William, to intimate he would squander her fortune. She cringed against the shame of it.

"How far along is your pregnancy, Annabelle?"

"About four months."

"Hell and damnation. No time for theatrics. As soon as the bans are called you will wed, in a quiet intimate ceremony."

"But Uncle..."

"No, Annabelle. You have made a choice, and this is the result."

Her Godfather's indictment shattered her romantic dreams. No big splashy wedding, with an invitation list rivaling Mrs Hawker's ball. A quiet shameful event was to be her penance.

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Two weeks later she made her vows with less than a dozen present. Mrs Hawker and her girls had come, but the conversation was stilted. They all knew and Annie was shamed. Mrs Hawker had already expressed her fury at William for his actions, but also offered a small allowance as a wedding present to stay in place until William was thirty.

As they left the church William turned to her. His expression was almost a sneer. "It's done. You are mine now."

There was a glint of hardness in his eyes and sharpness to his mouth. Something that hadn't been there before. Unease rushed over her. *Have I made a mistake? I love him so, but do I really know him? And now there is no turning back.* As he helped her into the carriage she felt the child move for the first time. *There was no going back. It was done.*

***The Short, Sweet
Romance
of
Ada Dunsford
and
Thomas Hamilton***



*The Short, Sweet Romance
of
Ada Dunsford
and
Thomas Hamilton*

Ada Dunsford

“But, Ada it’s a farewell social for the boys going to the war—just supper and dancing. It’s more than a year now, and well past time you were getting back out and about,” Charlotte said.

Ada shrugged. “Perhaps, but...”

“Come on Ada. You loved him, but he’s gone. You are still here. You can’t give up on life for goodness sake, you’re only twenty two,” Alice said.

The front door slammed. Edna walked in. “I agree with Alice. It’s time you moved on.”

“I have nothing suitable to wear,” Ada said.

“Shhh your excuses,” Alice said grabbing her arm. “You can wear something of mine.”

A wisp of excitement danced across her skin. *Perhaps this is what I need. But I feel disloyal to Charlie.* She quashed her feelings. Charlie was dead in the trenches of Gallipoli and she had to go on.

Ada allowed herself a small measure of pleasurable anticipation as her three friends riffled through Alice’s wardrobe

choosing then discarding half a dozen dresses before they settled on one.

"Here put this on. The color suits your eyes and brunette hair."

Alice pulled out a matching pair of shoes.

"I love this dress, the ruffled skirt and lace peplum so suits me with my short legs," Ada said.

"Better short than tall, like me. All the boys are put off by my height. Now sit still while I do your hair. We have to hurry or we'll be late for supper."

They walked the two blocks to the church hall. A spectacle not seen in town much these days the hall was alive with noise, lights and people. The roadway seethed with a mass of cars, carriages and bikes.

Ada clutched Charlotte's arm. She trembled with excitement. "I didn't realize the event would be so magnificent. Lots of people."

"Yes, and Mr Bathcombe, M.H.R. is going to give a speech and make a presentation to each of the enlisted men."

They easily found seats at the tables. Ada tried to listen to each presenter with dignified concentration, but her gaze kept straying to the enlisted men. So, like Charlie in their khaki uniforms.

Mr Bathcombe returned and called all the enlisted men up to the stage. Everyone stood and applauded. Ada studied the men. Well, boys really, most of them seemed young, and she guessed many were barely eighteen. She shivered. These men, young, handsome and physically strong were going away to kill and be killed. Like Charlie, these gallant young men had willingly

offered their services to King and Country. She wondered how many had really considered the fact they may never return.

One after the other the men came forward as his name was called and Mr Bathcombe presented each with a safety razor and wished them good luck and a safe return.

He stepped forward as his name was called.

“Private Thomas Dunsford.”

Ada’s heart stopped, jumped, then pounded. He had to be at least six foot four, broad shouldered and slim hipped. His uniform contoured his body right down to his shiny black boots. The slouch hat perched cheekily on his head. She could just see tendrils of dark hair peeking out the side.

As Private Dunsford collected the gift, he glanced out over the gathered crowd. His gaze settled on her. She stared straight into the bluest eyes she’d ever seen. His grin softened the rugged lines of his face into boyish charm. She tore her gaze away as a sudden wave of sexual awareness rushed through her, quickly followed by a hot flush of embarrassment and shame. Charlie was the only man who had ever sparked that reaction in her.

Thomas
William
Hamilton



With the presentations complete they moved to the chairs now being spread along the walls of the hall. The tables had been cleared and moved out of the way. The band came onto the stage and began to warm up.

Ada kept her gaze on the floor, afraid to watch as the men began to move across the room and choose a dance partner. Deep inside Ada so wanted him to ask her, but the staid and proper part of her hoped he didn't as guilt about Charlie surged through her.

She sensed his presence and glanced up. He grinned. Her heart turned somersaults. She panted little puffs of air. Perspiration ran down between her breasts. *Oh dear God, help me.* He held out his hand. There was no mistaking Private Thomas Dunsford's intention.

"Would you do me the honor of this dance, Miss?"

Heat rushed up her neck and face. She gave a vague hesitant smile. There was open encouragement in his expression.

She inhaled a deep breath. "It's... "

Alice poked her.

"Ada Spriggs. And yes, I would love to dance, Private Dunsford?" She placed her hand in his and tried to untangle her parched tongue from the roof of her mouth.

He drew her up and toward the floor. "Please call me Thomas, Miss Spriggs."

"It's Mrs Spriggs actually."

Thomas glanced around. "And your husband won't mind, or is he away fighting?"

"I'm widowed, Thomas. Charlie died in the first landing at Gallipoli."

"Oh, I'm sorry for your loss, Mrs Spriggs."

"Please call me, Ada."

He placed his hand lightly in the small of her back and holding her hand he guided her into the centre of the floor.

"This war business is unpleasant, but one must do one's duty to King and country."

She nodded and gave herself up the sweeping movements of the dance. Every time she peeped up at him, Thomas watched her intently, his mouth drawn up in a gentle curve.

As the music ended he escorted her back to her seat. "Would you like some refreshment, Ada?"

She nodded. "That would be lovely, thank you."

He started to move away then turned back. "Will you please save the next dance after this one, for me? I believe it's a foxtrot."

"Yes, of course."

As he walked away Edna and Alice turned to her.

"On first name basis already? Ada, that is so forward," Alice squeaked.

Ada shrugged. "It was easier, besides I cringed every time he said Mrs Spriggs."

"Of course, love. It's so good to see you enjoying yourself, finally."

"I feel a little guilty about Charlie, and I'll never forget him, but I have to make a life without him."

"Exactly what we've all been saying for months," all three girls chorused.

By the time Thomas returned with a glass of non-alcoholic punch her three companions had been taken onto the floor by young men in uniform.

Thomas sat beside her. She sipped her drink, not sure what to say, but acutely aware of his thigh resting next to hers. A familiar warmth blossomed in her nether regions. She was very

attracted to this man beside her. *Or perhaps it's just deprivation of intimacy. I so enjoyed it with Charlie.*

"Do you have children, Ada?"

She shook her head. "No. Charlie and I were married for such a short time before he was shipped out."

"It must be very hard for you. Do you have family to help?"

"I was fortunate. With all the men going to fight, my late husband's employer, Mr Duggan, gave me Charlie's old position as a clerk in his emporium. And I moved into a house with my friends and older sister. We share the expenses. I manage quite well."

"Sorry if I've been intrusive. Shall we dance?"

She put down her glass and stood. He took her into his embrace and they glided across the floor. Ada relaxed against him soaking up the warmth and appreciating the hard muscular angles of his body. She inhaled deeply of his scent. A heady mixture that made her head spin. His big hand encased hers, their fingers entwined.

As the night wore on he pressed her closer with each dance until their hips were touching—moving in perfect rhythm with the music.

As they twirled to a standstill from a vigorous two step Thomas hooked his hand under her elbow. "Shall we adjourn to the garden for some fresh air?"

"That would be lovely." Ada allowed him to guide her through the throng to the rear doors, across the verandah, and down into the small, grassed garden. All the time tendrils of anticipation and uncertainty flickered through her. *Will he try to kiss me? Will I let him? Should I allow such liberties?* She wanted him to kiss her. To hold her close. She wanted to feel like a woman again.

The air was balmy, the garden quiet, and the music from the hall just a soft melody on the air. Ada could hear voices on the other side of the trees, whispered words. There were others taking advantage of the air and the seclusion of the garden.

He steered her to a far corner, under the dappled shadows of a bottle brush. He turned her to face him. She stared up into his eyes hardly able to breathe.

With a gentle touch he ran his fingertips across her cheek. "You're a beautiful woman, Ada. Very desirable." He brought his thumb up and caressed her mouth.

Tension tightened in her womanhood. Her nerve endings tingled with awareness. He cupped her chin and lifted her face upward. He leaned closer.

"So very kissable," he murmured.

Ada stilled as his head blocked out the subtle light. She closed her eyes. His lips touched hers. The subtle movement of his mouth over hers sparked a need so strong Ada leaned into him and parted her lips. She trembled. A tiny whimper escaped. He deepened his tentative exploration. Gently probing with his tongue. She opened her mouth and he took command, increasing the pressure and inserting his tongue deep enough to touch hers, to stroke and entwine.

He tucked one hand behind her head as she tilted it backward entangling his long fingers in the silken tresses. With the other hand he embraced her waist and pulled her tightly against him. Her breathing ceased and she sank into his kiss, under his spell as she melted into a pool of wanton desire.

There was no mistaking his arousal. With vigorous strokes he plundered her mouth with his, both hands now cupping her buttocks and drawing her closer.

At last, gasping for air, they parted. Thomas stared down at her. The blue of his eyes fractured with shadows of desire. He touched her mouth with his fingertips.

“God, Ada, I want more. Do say if I’m taking liberties you do not want.”

“Nay, Thomas, you do not take unwelcome liberties.”

He captured her mouth again with his.

Desire exploded inside. She pressed closer.

He pulled his mouth away and eased her from him. “I want you, Ada, but not here, not now.”

So intoxicated with the re-awakening of her sexual needs she would have let him take her right there in the garden. Her body hummed. “When?”

“Soon. Before I go. But I want it right between us. Something for us both to remember. Come, let’s dance, for soon I have to return to the camp.”

Ada allowed him to lead her back into the hall and onto the floor. She knew as well as he did that what crackled between them would have easily ignited into something uncontrollable if they stayed in the garden.

As he twirled her around the floor for the last time he held her close. He then guided her to her friends already gathering their things.

“May I call on you, Ada, if I can get a furlough?”

She nodded. “Yes. I don’t work again until Wednesday.” She wrote down her address.

He took the slip and walked away.

“Goodness Ada, What have you done?”

“Nothing, yet.”

Alice frowned. “Sounds like you’re planning to.”

"I never said that, but Thomas is gorgeous. I feel as if I've known him all my life. I believe we belong together."

"Ada!"

She grinned at Charlotte standing beside her. "I can't help it, my heart just fell in love from the first moment I saw him."

"He's going to war next week, Ada, you'll only get hurt. He's probably only wanting a good time before he goes."

She shook her head. "It's not like that at all."

"Then what is it like?"

"Love...I don't know how to describe it."

"And Charlie?"

"Charlie's dead as you so bluntly informed earlier tonight."

"Just be careful, Ada. I don't want to see you hurt."

~ ~ ~

She refused to join the girls at church on Sunday morning, clinging to hope that Thomas would suddenly appear on the doorstep and carry her away for a romantic tryst.

"You're being foolish, Ada. They won't give them leave now so close to embarkation. Besides you'd be starting something that has no future. Come with us," Charlotte urged.

Ada shook her head. "No, I'll stay, just in case." Her spirits already drooped. Her sister was right. There was little or no chance Thomas would be allowed to leave the camp. She sighed letting her melancholy have free rein as the door closed behind them.

She fiddled in the kitchen swinging back and forth on whether she would bake a cake or not. There wasn't much butter left and she only had two eggs. She put the ingredients back in

the cupboard and picked up a novel she'd started reading. She settled on the couch. Her eyes drooped.

The rat tat tatting on the door startled her awake. Her heart leaped. She glanced at her watch. She'd been asleep barely thirty minutes. She scrambled out of her chair and with a quick glance in the mirror she hurried down the hall to the front door. He stood on the step, resplendent in his full uniform and bouquet of flowers in his hand.

"Thomas, you came."

"Yes. I told a little white lie about me Mum, and they approved leave until four on Monday. Will you spend the time with me, Ada?"

Her heart pounded with an out of sync rhythm. To dream about it was one thing, but to actually do it was another. Such a liaison went against all of her upbringing. Then she squashed it thoroughly. *I'm not some virgin teenager. I'm a widow. And I'm lonely. Be damned to them all.*

Thomas seemed worried by her hesitation.

She beamed up at him. "Yes, Thomas, I'll spend the time with you."

He leaned in and kissed her, hard.

She took the flowers and put them in a vase, packed a small valise, grabbed her coat and headed through the door. She stopped, returned to the table, and scribbled a note.

Gone with Thomas. Don't worry about me. See you on Monday. Ada.

She propped it under the salt shaker.

Thomas waited on the step. He took her case and her arm as he walked her to a car at the curb.

"Where did you get this?"

"It was my father's before he passed."

Thomas helped her into the front seat then placed her suit case in the back.

"Where are we going?"

"We're going to my house down by the coast."

"You own a house?"

"I inherited it from my godmother."

A vague sense of unease washed over her. She knew so little about this man she was about to fall into bed with. She shoved the uncertainty aside. He would be gone in less than forty-eight hours and might never return.

The house was compact and neat with a white picket fence and blue shutters on the windows. It had an abandoned air around it with empty flowerbeds lining the garden path. He led her to the door and unlocked it. It swung open.

"What will you do with the house while you are away?"

"My sisters will rent it if I'm gone more than six months and inherit it if I die."

"Oh."

He hooked his arm around her waist. "Don't think about all that now. This is our time."

She gazed up at him tears filling her eyes. He leaned down and kissed her slowly, sensuously on the mouth. Ada tucked her arms around his neck winding her fingers through the short strands of dark hair.

He tucked one arm behind her and swept her up into his arms. With three strides he crossed the threshold and kicked the door shut behind them. He didn't put her down, but strode along the darkened passage and into the first room on the left.

He claimed her mouth again slowly as he eased her down to the floor. He pulled her hard against him. She kicked her shoes

off even as he reached for her hat. He pulled the pin out with a slow slide. Ada quivered. She touched her hair conscious it would be flattened by the hat and the heat.

Thomas chuckled as he pulled her hand away and began to pull the pins holding her tresses up. Tendrils fell. He paused and curled his finger around one of the brunette strands. With a gentle tug he pulled his finger away, letting the curl slide around his digit. It danced in the air before it fell onto her shoulder. He pulled the rest of the pins out.

Ada stood there, her breasts rising and falling with agitated breathing. As her hair tumbled he stroked his way across her cheek then down her jaw and neck. Here he stopped and with steady hands he caught up her string of pearls and lifted them over her head. He let them slide from his fingers onto the bedside table.

He kissed her again—this time exploring each feature of her face. Tiny butterfly light kisses on her eyelids, the tip of her nose, and her mouth then down her jaw and trailing into her cleavage.

Shudders ripped through her. The ache between her legs intensified. He lifted his head and placed a kiss on her forehead. He gathered her dress in his hands and dragged it slowly up over her head before letting it flutter to the floor. Heat flowed up her face.

She reached out and undid his belt. It clattered to the floor. She twisted the buttons open on the tough material of his jacket. He let go of her hips and shrugged the heavy jacket off revealing his khaki undershirt.

As she undid his waist buttons, he unbuttoned her corset. His pants fell to the floor at the same moment her corset did. She giggled as he struggled to pull off his boots without hobbling himself. She sat back on the bed and watched.

He finally freed his feet of the heavy footwear and pulled his trousers and socks off. He stood there in his union suit the bulge of his erection obvious under the lighter material. He stepped toward her and with trembling fingers undid the buttons at the neck of her camisole. As it fell away from her body he pulled her underwear down with one long stroke.

She shivered. Naked, vulnerable. He ripped his own buttons undone and dropped his underwear. She gasped at the beauty of his body. The wide shoulders, muscular chest and rounded biceps. Almost too frightened to look she followed the trail of hair down past his navel. His member stood out from his body. She reached out and touched him.

He moaned, and stepped forward. She parted her legs and he moved between them. He caressed her breasts, one in each hand. She ran her hands up over his chest and back again to his abdomen.

“Touch me, Ada,” he murmured.

She reached out and wrapped her hand around his appendage. The skin was hot and silken over the hardness of his throbbing flesh. She stroked the shaft up and down. Thomas groaned then pushed her back onto the bed. He climbed in beside her.

Ada’s whole body quivered and jumped with awareness. As he ran his hands over her skin he dropped his head and suckled at her breast. She stroked his hair.

As he sucked he ran his hand down her body and between her legs. She parted them to give him access. He lifted his head and kissed her—a deep intimate probing of her mouth.

As he touched her inner flesh she jumped.

He broke the kiss. He appeared worried. “You don’t like my touch?”

"You surprised me. I've not been touched like that before."

He chuckled. "Then you have missed the best."

He continued to explore the soft moist flesh. But this time he watched her. She let her eyelids droop.

"No, Ada, keep your eyes open. I want to see your expression when I touch you. I want to see your pleasure when I do this."

An intense spark of heat radiated from his touch right through her body. She gasped then moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue.

"Or this."

She almost shied away as ecstasy roared through her

"Oh Thomas." She squirmed.

He continued stroking, soft then firm, then soft again.

She panted. He eased himself over top of her still stroking.

She moaned. "Take me Thomas, please take me."

He hesitated, but continued to stroke her.

Whimpers escape, she lifted her hips.

"I want you. Take me." The sensation balled between her legs. She pulled him to her. He repositioned himself so his member touched her, then slid slowly in.

"Oh God, Thomas. Oh God," she cried, and he began to thrust deep and fast. She wrapped her legs around his hips and lifted hers to meet his.

He kissed her, taking command of her mouth, stifling her whimpers. She clutched his shoulders.

Sensation exploded, radiating from where he thrust into her. Her legs jerked. She arched her body and threw her head back gasping for air. Overcome with self-consciousness at her abandoned enjoyment of his lovemaking she opened her eyes just for a moment. Thomas smiled as he watched her. He seemed to be enjoying her loss of control under his intimate

ministrations. *He wants me to enjoy this.* She closed her eyes and allowed herself to be swept away on a tidal wave of tempestuous carnal gratification. Every nerve quivered, her hair stood on end and she struggled to draw in air. Explosive jerks shot through her. She cried out. Thomas thrust faster. She slipped over the edge, sensuousness wrapping her in a cocoon of ecstasy. Thomas groaned, thrust deep and stopped. He held himself still, breathing hard until she sagged beneath him. Only then as she gasped in air did he withdraw his member and lay beside her. He breathed hard. Ada turned to him barely able to move her limbs. He cuddled her close and with one hand pulled the blanket up over them.

~ ~ ~

She woke and could tell from the slant of the sun through the blinds it was late. She was also alone in the big bed. She reached out. The paper crackled and the scent of roses filled her nostrils. As she touched the pillow a single red rose rolled onto the sheets. She grabbed up the note. Terror strangled her heart. She already knew what the note said. Tears filled her eyes. She swiped them away, and read the three sentences Thomas had written.

*I could not bear the pain of goodbye. It's better this way.
I'll write when I can and if I return I will love you again
and make you my wife, if you so desire.
Stay at the house for as long as you like.
Love Thomas*

"Oh Thomas, Thomas come home safe to me."

~ ~ ~

Two months later she suspected she was pregnant and despite the difficulties it would bring she was pleased. She wrote a letter to Thomas, not sure if he would even receive it. Three months later a letter came from Thomas. He was delighted she was carrying his child and proposed. She replied saying yes.

Two weeks after that she received a letter for Sarah Hamilton. Thomas had been killed. Her world collapsed around her. She struggled to face each day. It was only the child that motivated her to get out of bed every day and face the world.

Two months later she received a letter from Atkins and Crane, Lawyers. Thomas had left her the house and a small allowance. She cried.

One month later she booked herself into the hospital as Ada Hamilton-Dunsford and gave birth to a son. Ada named him Thomas Hamilton-Dunsford.