

11 June 2015, Wyndham's Oak, Dorset

Emily leant back against the broad trunk of the tree, closed her eyes and breathed in deeply. Her father was always a proponent of the benefits of fresh air and she certainly needed them. She was waiting for Iain and he was late as usual. *He'll be with her again, no doubt. She'll have made an excuse to delay him.* There was always an excuse. Emily had known his reputation before they got together but she convinced herself she could change him. She would be different. She'd be the one to keep him. Instead, she spent their time apart wondering what *they* were doing. Whether he professed his love for her. Whether he was going to leave. Emily had made a decision though and told him they needed to talk. She was tired of being messed about.

Something brushed against her forehead and she swatted it away impatiently. *It would be just my luck to get a mosquito bite in the middle of my face today of all days. I've got to tell him that it's time to make his mind up. Her or me.* That's why she'd asked him to meet her by the tree. She'd been teaching her class about the Monmouth rebellion earlier that week and it had inspired her to be bold. They'd hung some of Monmouth's supporters on the very spot she was now sitting on, when the rebellion failed and she admired that they were willing to fight (and die in some cases) for what they wanted. For what they believed they were owed. She wanted to make a point. She and Iain had been together for two years now. She'd waited long enough.

Something brushed her face again. She opened her mouth as she swatted it away again. Then screamed. A pair of feet dangled in front of her face, the lace from the white socks encasing the legs must have been what had tickled her. Backing away in horror, she felt the rough bark of the trunk scratch her back through the thin sundress as she slid up the tree, unable to bear the thought of that *thing* touching her again. She moaned quietly as she realised her bag was still on the floor. Backing around the side of the tree, she stretched an arm out and groped blindly for the strap, pulling it towards her in relief as her fingers closed around the thin leather. Stumbling slightly, her feet catching on the uncut grass, she hurled herself away from the tree, the breath catching in her throat. Iain would have to think what he wanted when she wasn't there to meet him. She couldn't stay there, not in that place. Not with the ghost.

High in the branches of the tree, concealed by the broad swathe of foliage, Melissa stifled a giggle. *It was almost too easy,* she thought, as she hauled the dummy back into the tree. Iain had never been the most subtle of people and she'd found out about his wandering eye not long after their marriage. She stayed with him because of the children mainly, but this time he'd seemed different. She wasn't going to beg him to stay – quite the reverse actually, she'd packed his bags ready for when he got home later – but she was damned if she was going to let them get off scot-free. Putting the fear of God into Emily had been fun but it was almost too easy. For a teacher of history she was amazingly gullible and loved to see ghosts everywhere. (Melissa had discovered that little pearl of information via Iain's credit card statement – the ghost hunting trip certainly hadn't been purchased for her.) Melissa smiled grimly. *Oh yes,* she thought. *I've got far more fun planned for those two.*