

# Deception<sup>2</sup>



**Deena Gomersall**

A "New Woman" Novel

## **Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers**

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# *Deception*

## part II

**by Deena Gomersall**

### **Chapter Twelve – Recognition**

It was Alan's second day of waking as Marie. Isla had already been in and undrawn the curtains and had given him a tray of breakfast. After eating he had taken all of the pills that were on a small plate and downed them with a glass of fresh orange juice, if he was to get better then maybe he should be taking all of the medication prescribed for him.

Isla returned a little later to take away his plate. By this time Alan had once more pushed himself to having a shower and a hair wash.

Isla laughed. "Yer hair is aw damp Miss, ye should wrap yer hair turban style in a towel tae help it dry an' stop it tangling."

"Ah wouldn't know how to." Alan confessed.

Isla just looked at him and then went for a hand held hair dryer, returning with it and a hair brush. "If ah may be permitted Miss, as yer maid...?"

Alan knew what she wanted to do and nodded consent, getting his damp hair dried couldn't be a bad thing... and its unfamiliar length, had spikes of wet hair scratching at his neck and face.

Isla carefully brushed out segments of hair and blew the hot air from the drier onto the brush as she slowly drew it down to the ends. Before long Alan's hair was fully dried.

"Thank you Isla, that feels so much better."

Isla then lifted Alan's right hand and inspected. "Also Miss, yer nails cood dae with the edges filing a wee bit, ye always took such good care o' yer nails." She suggested.

To Alan, the long pointed nails were a constant irritation and he would be happier to have them cut right down to the ends of his finger tips. But Isla had told him that normally he (Marie) always took really good care of her nails.

"Ah suppose so... if you must." He mumbled, "To me they just get in the way of mah doing anything and feel weird."

Isla just laughed and lifted up the first hand. "Ah am sure ye will gie used tae them all over again."

When each nail was done, Isla looked at Alan, as if she wanted to say something else.

"Is that it Isla? They are done aren't they?"

"Well yes, Ma'am... apart from polish. Ah think ye would feel much better an' feel more like yeself if ye had yur nails painted." She then boldly suggested.

"Oh no, Isla. Ah am not ready for that."

"Nae ready? Ye always hud yer beautiful nails polished. Ye were sae proud of them."

"Isla nagged and nagged. Eventually Alan said she could put a clear or very light colour on them. He wanted nothing bright or obvious. Happily Isla got to work with the manicure box she had brought in; complaining there was nothing too light or inconspicuous in the box and, eventually, with Alan's resigned agreement, painted each nail a mother of pearl.

The nail lacquer on his finger tips felt weird to Alan, tight somehow and it made him feel embarrassed just having it on... it had been bad enough just having elongated ovals. But one thing he recognised in his senses was the smell of the polish. Was it from doing his own nails in the daily life of Marie, or was it recalling the sense of smell when his fiancée had painted her nails?

"There is one other thing ah would like tae add, if ah may, Miss?" Isla asked.

"What is it, Isla?" Alan asked, suspicious of further feminine additions.

"Can ah put this back oan yer finger?" Isla took out a beautiful sparkling diamond ring set in silver from her pocket. "Tis yer engagement ring, miss. It was taken aff yer finger whilst ye were poorly in hospital."

Alan just looked at the beauty of the ring and almost without thinking, splayed out and offered his ring finger to the maid and she slipped it on.

The ring fit perfectly. It had been the real Marie's but had a piece added in by the jeweller to fit Alan's slightly chunkier finger.

"Ah guess, if ah am Brendon's fiancée then ah should be wearing his ring... it's beautiful." Alan said as he continued to look at it's sparkle as if mesmerised.

Through that day many of the staff called in to see him including other housemaids and kitchen staff, Angus the butler, Jamie Ramsay and Brodie the maintenance man... all asking if he was feeling any better and wishing him well.

Brendon had also visited several times. "Logan suggested it may benefit you to walk around the grounds and also to get fresh air in your lungs. It is a fine day outside.., would you like for me to walk around with you. Marie?" He suggested.

"Oh, not today, Brendon. Ah do not feel ready for such an ordeal. Maybe tomorrow." Alan quickly responded. He thought he may be strong enough and knew the exercise would do him good when he had not used his legs much over the past few months, but he did not feel like walking outside and exposing himself as a woman when he still did not feel like one.

"Tomorrow then? Please say you will. You will deteriorate in here if you don't get out and you need to strengthen your legs."

"Yes, yes... then... maybe."

<....>

You haven't had any major headaches today? No Chest pains? Pains in your side; here? What about the area around your groin? You did suffer severe bruising and damage plus some lacerations around there caused by the steering column." Logan asked Alan the following morning.

"No. Ah do have some minor discomforts and some...., like deep aches in mah body, but nothing too severe."

"Well most of the bruising is now yellow which is good and the bruising around your nose and around the eyes have almost gone. The swelling around your vagina has also almost faded away."

"Why would I have gotten swelling around there?" Alan asked.

"As I said, when the front of the car impacted, it pushed everything inwards and, with your legs apart on the pedals; that is the area where it struck you. Such trauma was bound to swell. Other damages

such as your head and chest were sustained as the car rolled on its side down the hill. It is lucky there was a car following, the driver pulled you out before the car exploded, as it had caught fire.”

It was a final test for Alan to see if everything he was being told, fit. He had wondered about the swelling and scarring around the vagina, he was also aware that such would happen if sex change surgery had been carried out... but everything seemed to tie in with the common tale he was being told.

On Logan’s part he was sticking pretty much to the truth of the real Marie’s accident itself as he knew Alan could read up on it at some point, and he had seen the newspaper report that Angus had shown him. Marie really had been pulled from the car by a following driver and she had still been alive at that point. She had later died from her injuries in hospital which had never been disclosed.

“Ah... ah don’t like thinking too much on the accident. Mercifully it is all still a blur. Even the accident ah was in, in my dreams, is blurry.”

“I still find it quite amazing that you created an entirely new life just in your dreams which culminated in a car accident just as happened in your real life. Dreams can do that, how often do we wake from a dream and a part of it still seems real from something happening in the wide awake world. The human brain really is quite fascinating. But with you, my dear, you seem still trapped in the dream and that is where we need to beat this thing. Stop the dreamt story that is in your head, move it out so that you can become you again.” Silently Logan was overjoyed that Alan was now referring to his real life as ‘a dream’.

Alan sighed. “Ah have tried so hard to not think on that life... and to try remembering mah own life. But it is so difficult.”

“Remember my advice. Get out and look around. Recall familiar things. I heard Brendon had wanted to take you out yesterday... go with him today. He misses having your company, you know. It hurts him

deeply that the person he loves so much cannot remember him.”

“Ah know. An’ ah do feel sorry for him and he has been so concerned and so tentative these past few days, it must be horrible for him.”

“Well then give him a chance. And, the fresh air will do you good, plus you need to get yourself mobile. You are still quite weak and I do not want your legs becoming unable to weight bare.”

Alan smiled. “Ah will go around the grounds this afta noon, ah promise. But I do not want to meet any knew faces ah should know but don’t.”

“That’s my girl. Hey, maybe we will even have you riding your horse again before long.”

“What? Ah have a horse?”

“Of course you do. You love her to bits, a lovely chestnut mare called Angel. Ask Brendon to take you to the stables when you go out.”

Images of the horse and videos had all been played to Alan while he was in a sedated state... along with lots of images of the grounds of Sedgewick Hall, all waiting to be recalled by Alan upon seeing them.

It was a little later that day that Isla came to Alan’s room to help him get ready to go outside. Alan flushed with embarrassment when Isla brought him some underwear. He had worn panties the day he awoke along with the nightdress and had swapped for a fresh set from then on, but that was all he had worn. But now, along with a fresh pair of panties for the day there was a matching bra, too.

“Do ah have to wear that?” He asked timidly.

Isla looked at him daft. “Ay, coorse ye need tae wear a bra, Miss. You’ve worn bra’s ever since ye developed. They will be swinging aboot an’ making ye sore if they arenae harnessed.”



Alan had to just deal with what was in his head, that he was a man wearing a bra for the first time, and that something in his head was telling him that wearing a bra was just wrong. However Isla soon had his breasts cupped and the shoulder straps secured over his shoulders before fastening the bra securely in the back. One trick that he missed was that she had to adjust the shoulder straps a little as Alan's shoulders were broader than Marie's had been.

"Right, I'll get you a pair of trews and a jumper ta wear as it's a bit braw oot there today."

The mention of being given Trews, (Trousers), was at least some good news for the already chagrined Alan. For someone who was supposed to have been female all of her life, he felt very ill at ease wearing feminine clothes.

Isla helped Alan dress in a pair of black cotton ankle socks, a pair of khaki coloured ladies slacks and a thick, mauve coloured knitted jumper. She also had a pair of knee high brown boots for him to wear which, mercifully, had a low heel.

Isla then brushed through his shoulder length hair and put pins in at the sides to keep his hair in place.

"Ah'll just apply your make up Miss and you are ready for the aff." Isla said as she finished up with a spray of hair lacquer.

"Oh, no... please, no make up. Ah won't feel comfortable."

"But... Oh, ah suppose it's on account of feeling like a man because of the dream ye had." Isla replied with a sad look on her face. "Ye so used to like looking pretty, I do hope ye will get tae feel that way again. What aboot just a tooch of powder tae take the shine off ye face?"

"Ah suppose that would be okay." Alan answered resignedly.

Before leaving, Alan looked in a full length mirror. In spite of not being over femininely dressed, he looked unmistakably like a pretty, young woman. It gave him a very queer feeling inside.

For the first time since regaining consciousness, Alan left the sanctity of the bedroom he had been living and sleeping in and descended the stairs with Isla by his side. He was feeling a bit wobbly on his weakened legs.

As he stepped down the lower steps he looked around the spacious entrance hall. Flashbacks of seeing that hallway before invaded his mind. He...as Alan and with the woman he had married... Barbara. Alan stopped suddenly.

"Ah can't do this. Ah can remember..., remember arriving here that night... with mah wife... this very same hallway." He said in anguish.

Brendon, who had been sitting in a chair patiently waiting for Marie to be made ready, leaped to his feet and went up quickly to the former man. "Darling, it is okay... You are just mixing that cursed dream with what you are so familiar with again. I can't start to imagine what it is doing to you, but you will be okay. This hallway, this whole house, it will all be familiar to you. You were born here, you love this house."

Brendon took Alan's hand and brought it gently to his lips, noticing the varnish on the finger nails. "Come along, let's take that walk and hope it will bring back all of your real memories." Gently he persuaded Alan to take the last few steps and coaxed him into going through the front door.

Outside, the air was fresh with a slight breeze that blew through Alan's hair. It seemed so long since he had inhaled fresh air. He allowed Brendon to hold his hand both to keep him from stumbling and to lead him around.

In his 'dream' Alan and Barbara had come to Sedgewick Hall in darkness, they had gone in and out of the front door and not seen the main building of the home, the large garages, the fields or the sta-

bles that were fenced off around the back, nor any of the landscaped gardens. Yet, as he walked around, he knew he had somehow seen it all before. But how? Unless he really was Marie.

Brendon first led Alan to the stables. There were four horses stabled there. "Do you recognise your horse?" Brendon asked. Alan looked over each one. "That one, that's Angel isn't it?" He replied pointing to the horse with the chestnut colouring and stripe of white down the nose."

"You see, you do remember?" Brendon said joyously.

Alan spent twenty minute feeding the horse some straw and stroking her face. For the first time he was really beginning to believe he was Marie and that he really had had the most realistic and bizarre dream. How stupid everyone must have thought he had been acting and behaving.

Brendon then took Alan down by a stream and they walked hand in hand over a stone bridge to the other side

"We often walked down here by the burn, come... come over to this tree." He said in high spirits as he began to pull Alan along and up a slight slope. There was a large larch standing out alone, beyond it was a forest.

"Look... do you remember this. We carved our names upon this tree last year." He said.

Alan looked at the tree. Upon the bark there had been carved the words 'Marie and Brendon forever', inside a large heart. The carving was a little weather worn, not fresh... If there was any chance at all that this whole thing was a set up, for whatever reason, those carvings had been made long before Alan had even come to Scotland with Barbara.

He turned to look at Brendon to apologise for his behaviour and saw there was now sadness in the man's face. Alan realised that Brendon was remembering happier times, before the crash, when every-

thing had been normal and he and Marie had been a normal couple in love.

Brendon shook off the moment and led Alan back over the bridge and then following the stream down its course for a little while. Eventually they came to a stone built wishing well.

“This wishing well is where we first kissed and made a wish to live happily ever after. Do you remember any of that?” He asked.

Alan sadly shook his head. “No, not really, the wishing well looks vaguely familiar but is it any different to any other wishing well?”

Again the expression on Brendon’s face turned to sadness. Alan felt his heart drop.

“You know, your friend Logan told me the day before yesterday that with things I cannot remember right now ah should begin making fresh memories.”

The words from Alan surprised Brendon. Was he getting the meaning correct? He looked deep into the eyes of the person standing close before him.

Alan was feeling bad. It seemed certain that Brendon deeply loved him and was hurting that he had now, seemingly, lost that love. In fairness Brendon was a big, well built handsome man. Any girl would be pleased to have him on her arm. He felt he could be attracted to him if it wasn’t for the stupid dreams and feeling he should be a man. But, if he kept shying away, he could lose him. Brendon was being a rock for her to remember herself.

Two months of female hormones and anti androgens were also playing their part, slowly shifting thoughts and perspective. The Alan in the dreams had not been gay, but Marie was not gay either. It seemed now more than likely he really was Marie, a heterosexual female, who had been in love with the man in front of her. The two of them looked into each other’s eyes for the longest moment.

Brendon took the initiative. For him he had to get rid of any thoughts of the person he was with being a former man, do as Logan had suggested. Look at the person he was with as the pretty female she appeared to be. He leaned forward, hesitantly at first, and slowly touched his lips to hers. He was delighted when she responded rather than pulling away in disgust and they kissed for several minutes before breaking.

For Alan the kiss was strangely familiar, the firmness of his lips, his taste, the smell of Brendon's cologne in his nostrils and even the taste of the pipe smoke which he occasionally had. It all went even more to reaffirm in his mind that he really was Marie.

Alan looked up at the towering figure of Brendon. He had enjoyed the kiss, the sexual touch from another person after all the mental turmoil he had been going through, a person that he now felt sure he had been in love with and who cared so much about him. "Ah need to take things slowly Brendon. Please allow me to adjust in mah own time." He asked.

Brendon himself was overjoyed for other reasons; the plan was actually working. "Of course darling, take all of the time you need. I am just over the moon that you are coming back to me. I love you, just remember that." He said softly.

Brendon truly was delighted. He had serious doubts that anyone could make a person think they were someone else, especially a person of a different gender. Soon now he could reacquaint this bogus Englishman with Charles Taverner and hopefully get the marriage back on track before it was too late and Taverner died.

The two walked back to the manor much differently to the way they had left. Smiling, with a spring in their step, walking closely together with Alan's arm tightly linked to the muscular arm of Brendon, he felt as though a great weight had been lifted.

Through the following couple of days Alan had allowed himself to adjust more and more to the life of Marie. He now only used the bedroom to sleep in and, down in the living quarters, he talked frequently to the staff., to him, getting to know them all, over again... as well as trying to relearn about himself.

He took all of the medication given to him, looked through family album pictures and, more than once read and reread the article about Marie's car accident where he had been seriously injured and taken to hospital.

"I have to bow down to you, when you first made the suggestion that we could use this man as Marie I would have suggested you be locked up in an asylum. That we could make a man believe he was not only a female but a different person to his real self seemed preposterous..." Frobisher told McKlintock as they sat in the study having a glass of whiskey.

"I have to confess, I had little hope in the mind change myself though I knew with some of the breathtaking break through that we have had in recent years we could definitely change the body to that of a woman... the facial reconstruction was a little more difficult and, although not absolutely perfect, anyone looking at our new Marie and a photograph of the old one would identify them as being the same person." Logan responded with a little chuckle and a feeling of pride.

"The big test is when we introduce the Sassenach to Taverner... will the old fool buy it or has this been the biggest, costliest mistake of all time?"

"Or will Taverner even pass away before we get to the test? We have to have Marie fully conditioned and ready to meet Charles but we also need to move swiftly. According to Aiden Carson, Taverner is getting weaker and each passing day could be his last."

"So why don't we take the chance before losing it? It is something that does concern me greatly. Frobisher put to his friend.

“Because it has to be at the right time, it’s crucial. It could be a disaster if they meet and the artificial Marie still had doubts of being Marie, or Charles not being her father and Taverner will pick up on any uncertainty, he is no fool.”

“Well he is... okay, sorry, I mean she is coming along really well in the acceptance. I have been pulling out all of the stops, just as you suggested. Now don’t ye laugh or ah swear I’ll knock yer heed off yer shoulders... but we have kissed on a couple of occasions now.” Frobisher told his friend as he flushed red with embarrassment.

“Why should I laugh? That is excellent. We can assume the man was heterosexual given he had just married so, to kiss with another man shows that she is feeling comfortable with her given sex now or she never would have.”

Meanwhile, up in Alan’s bedroom, Isla was also working on the new Marie. She had a tray of cosmetics by her side.

“Ah will apply as much or as little as ye feel comfortable wi’ Miss, but ye always so valued the make up ye wore an’ hardly ever went oot through the duir not wearin’ any.”

“So what do you suggest? What would I normally have worn through a day like today?” Alan asked inquisitively.

“Ye need fooundation fur sure and ah would like tae put some mascara an’ a touch of eye shadow on for yer eyes and a tooch of lipstick... this reddish broon would dae just fine.” Isla suggested.

Alan thought it was time he really started getting back to being Marie; everyone had been so good and so patient with him since his illness and loss of memory. Plus, he had begun to develop feelings for the handsome Brendon... feelings, he felt sure, were the love he had always had for him which were re-emerg-

ing again. He had felt something inside of himself each time they had kissed over the past two days.

Isla smiled. She had always enjoyed the times when Marie had allowed her to do her make-up and it was just like having her Mistress back again. She could easily accept this person as being a near replica replacement for her. Carefully she applied the light gray eye shadow and tried to get Alan not to flutter his lashes as she awkwardly stroked the mascara on them, she then traced a lipstick over Alan's lips.

For Alan he was experiencing snippets of memory again. He kept his thoughts to himself but knew in his mind he had experienced the application of eye shadow and mascara before, he also knew he was familiar with the waxy taste of the lipstick. All of this helped put him more and more at ease with who he now thought he was.

When he walked down stairs with Isla, wearing black cotton trousers, black slip on shoes that had a low heel and a bow at the top and wearing an orange and white patterned top which had thin enough fabric to show the black straps of the brassier he was wearing... the bra tented out the patterned top in a feminine way so he couldn't help but feel feminine.

He wanted to look his best for Brendon; it was only right after all of the anguish the man had been suffering during Alan's loss of memory.

When Frobisher saw 'Marie' walk into the study he quickly raised to his feet, followed by McKlintock. "Marie, you look... you look lovely, it is so heart warming to see you getting back to normal." He praised whilst being astounded by the knowledge that this very attractive person, wearing full makeup, was once a man.

"Indeed so my dear, you look stunning, and looking again like the Marie we all love and care for." Logan complimented.

Alan blushed before walking to Frobisher and kissing him upon the cheek. "Thank you Brendon,



and thank you for being so patient with me. Ah really do want to look nice for you.” Alan replied.

Isla stood in the doorway, hands clasped in front of her and a look of satisfaction upon her face.

## **Chapter Thirteen - Reacquainted**

A few more days rolled by as Alan did his best to try and remember a life that was not, in reality, his to remember. He wasn't yet ready to meet any other family members or friends as it was taking all of his time in just getting to know the staff and their names.

Throughout, Isla kept trying to push the transformed man along. He constantly felt awkward in allowing her to make up his face but, once it was on, he could almost forget that it was.

Isla encouraged him to attempt make-up application himself but he thought the eye cosmetics were too tricky and the most he attempted was applying lipstick. Isla also tried persuading him to wear dresses or skirts, Marie had two huge closets full, but for now he felt more comfortable in ladies slacks.

Each day he would walk out around the grounds with Brendon, more for the fresh air and exercise. He had now decided the story of his being Marie, a female, had to be true and yet there was always something that wasn't sitting right, in his head. He put that down to the memory loss and the long strange dreams he'd had.

“When you are feeling well enough we can walk down to the lake, darling... you always liked it down there and sometimes we would go fishing together.”

“Fishing? Ah used to go fishing? Ah have no recollection of ever going fishing at all.” Alan responded with a furrowed brow.

“Sure you did, and we used to go out hunting for deer.”

Alan couldn't get his head around any of that, the impression he had in his mind, of the man he had thought he was, was that he was an animal lover and disliked the thought of them being hunted and killed.

"Ah think there are some parts of my life I would rather stay forgotten." He suggested.

"You will feel differently when you regain all of your memories," Brendon laughed, "but for now, it is going to be your birthday in three weeks. Is there anything you would like as a present from me? And do you think you would be up to my arranging a birthday party for you?"

"Mah birthday! ...In three weeks?" Alan exclaimed. "No, that has tae be wrong. We will only be in July in three weeks. Mah birthday is the seventeenth of November."

Brendon screwed his face. "No, honey, your birthday is the eighteenth of July."

Alan was dumb struck. He really felt that his birthday was 17th November. If this was supposed to be a part of his dreaming, it was one thing dreaming he was a man, born in England when he was supposed to be Scottish... that he had just married the woman he loved and had dreamed up a whole family... but even in this most elaborate dream, why should he have given himself a birthday different to his own? He'd always had such a good memory for dates.

Alan didn't respond further to Brendon, his mind was in a whirl. 17th November was his birthday... the 9th of July had been Barbara's, his Mom was 8th April, and his father's was on the 19th February. Barbara and he had married on the 11th April, as close as they could get to his Mother's birthday. How could he have invented all of these dates in a dream?

Alan was subdued for the remainder of their walk and retired to his bedroom on their return. Brendon felt concerned about this new twist and phoned Logan for his advice. They had been doing so well up until now with edging Alan to believing he was Marie Taverner.

Sitting on top of his bed, deep in thought, Alan heard footsteps passing by on the corridor. He wondered if it was Brendon or maybe Isla... if it was Isla he felt he needed to talk to her and tell her of his latest concerns and confusion. Opening up the door he peered out he saw it was Angus.

Angus was carrying a tray of food and heading down a corridor that led to the back of the house, an area he had never been to and where he didn't think anyone else had a room... yet Angus was taking hot food down there.

Meanwhile, downstairs Brendon was speaking to Logan on the phone. "I've made the mistake of saying Marie's birthday; it has caused him to start thinking and analysing again." He confessed.

"No, you have not done any wrong. It may be a bit of a set back but, if we are to keep her believing she is Marie, she needs to know all of Marie's details... the fact of Marie's birthday would only come out sooner or later and needing explaining anyway. Getting married for one... she would need to give details of her birth to the registrar, and the date on her birth certificate. It is better to have come out now than later. I will try talking to her when I am over next."

"Don't leave it late Logan, come over tomorrow if you can. The sooner we fix this the better."

"I'm supposed to be taking Caitlin out all day tomorrow... my way of trying to make up for the lack of attention given to her recently and being away so much from her, that all of this has caused. She has not been very happy with me of late... it has been affecting my marriage." Logan responded in annoyance.

"But this is important. Time is a factor, you keep saying that yourself. If he starts over thinking things again it could jeopardise the whole thing, it could set us back weeks." Logan replied anxiously.

"Oh! ...I'll see what I can do, I'm not promising anything, nor do I see what true help I can be. You would be equally able to try talking to her and easing her,

yourself.” With that Logan put the phone down, ending the call.

Alan didn’t have much interaction with Brendon since their walk. He had gone downstairs for the evening meal and had sat watching television a little before going back up to his room. He was feeling totally confused all over again. Why did he have a date for his birthday so deeply in head which, apparently, was not his birthday at all? It made no sense. And why could he recall birthdays of what was supposed to be, members of a fictitious family... a family invented in a dream?

Alan slipped out of the clothes he had worn for the day, cleaned his face from the make-up and pulled on his nightgown before sitting on the bed again.

As his mind worked overtime he again thought about Angus and the food he was carrying... where had he been going? Was anyone else living in the home? Maybe there could be some answers.

He stole out of the bedroom, barefooted, walking across the thick pile carpet. Down at the end of the corridor was a bedroom where Alan could hear classical music playing. With baited breath Alan walked down to the door and stopped, raising his hand ready to knock.

He hesitated and then tapped lightly on the oak wood door a couple of times.

“Hello? Who’s ‘at?” came a gruff male, Scottish accented, voice.

Alan didn’t know how to respond so just stood there silently for what seemed a long moment.

“Whoe’er it is come on in and tell me whit it is ye is wanting an’ stop annoyin’ me.”

Alan lowered his hand to the brass handle and turned it, then, pushing the door open a little, he stepped inside.