

Anne

Carmen Stevens

To the people of the world in general, and
the good
in it that overcomes the evil

There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end it leads to death.
-Proverbs 14:12

Part One

Table of Contents

1 An Unusual Orphan Girl

2 George Doscoll

3 New Opportunity

4 Developments

“All right, Anne,” the nervous boy stumbled, proceeding to loosen the garment in his hands. Now directly behind her, he motioned for her to turn her back. “Forgive me if I am wrong, but it seems to me that putting on and tying this article is very much like...clockwork.” Solely using the potency of his own mind, Rad asked Anne to lift her arms so that he could fit on the piece of clothing. He then started to tighten it, which was, to his humiliation, somewhat uncomfortable for his guest. As he tugged and pulled at the strings Anne would let out a painful gasp now and again, but she was careful not to let her emotions get in the way. However, as Rad repeatedly apologized to the girl she kept brutally criticizing him in her intellect, surmising that he would undoubtedly constrict her to death before she had the chance to meet anyone new that day.

5 A New Life

6 A Chance for Gratitude

7 The Sparkles of Light

8 The Engagement

9 A Fear Awakened

10 The Betrayal

11 A Former Way of Life

12 The Legal Trap

13 Unhappiness

14 A Friend from the Shadows

15 Renewed Life

16 The Captures

17 A Found Enemy

18 The Addition

19 Yielded Suffering

20 A Light in a Corrupted Life

21 Tragic Consequences

22 Additional Consequences

- 23 Unsolicited Blessing
- 24 A Love of Innocence
- 25 Tensions
- 26 Devastation
- 27 The Regression
- 28 A Design's Beginnings
- 29 A Crime of Passion
- 30 Renewal
- 31 Reformation
- 32 "Love is Loyal"

Prologue

She had not been there at the time. She had not the courage to go back. She knew how she could not, anyway. Why would she want to? Her father was nothing but a selfish, sadistic drunkard, always abusing her, always devouring that whiskey. Yet she knew the impulse to rush back and the sudden desire to do so.

Why did Anne suddenly feel like her life was changed?

Her young nose sniffed the thick air cautiously. Was that the stink of old London bathing itself in one of its filthy baths of smoke and fog, or the defective redolence of brick being eaten by a fast fire? Whichever it was, she had to turn back. If her learned instincts whispered to her truly and that comfortless beast of a house was crumbling down onto its firm foundation, perhaps her paltry father had crumbled down on his shaking foundation as well, within it. The horrible building had always been, after all, a rather disconsolate, unwieldy object for Anne in her rather unreliable life. Her father had been no different, yet she had still learned to live fluently and somewhat successfully in the fearful world of London. She knew strongly in her heart, thus, that

she could continue to faithfully persevere, no matter what event fate would next throw her way.

1 An Unusual Orphan Girl

Two years later

May 1768

London, England

The scuffling, wasted street rats chewed and gnawed one another with a hunger filled with chafing pessimism in the destitute streets where the sun had disappeared long ago. Weary, peasant women cowered down in quakes of fear at the world and the fresh epidemic of pain that had swiped it. Drunkards lay in their heavy doses of dementia and alcohol. Their life-hating eyes tossed around in their inflamed sockets recklessly and their brains gradually lost their sanity and

vigor as they waste the days away thinking of nothing, dreaming of days that have gone and will never come back again.

Fourteen-year old Anne Falkman had beheld this all through eyes that esteemed the dire need to be firm and strong, haughty and traitorous. She had always espied the world with beautiful eyes that betrayed their attractiveness but clung fast to life itself and the hope for joy that such a thing as fate could someday bring her.

Anne knew this hope by it growing within her like a tree, and the longer that she forgot about it, when she felt it prick her heart again it had grown taller. She had acquired the seed of this hope through the only years of her life that she had ever known, the most unbearable, heart-wrenching years that no one so young should ever have the curse to possess. They were years that had tested her natural endurance and inner strength, but with poor end results. The compassion and kindness born into her had come to terminate long ago as such characteristics had lost their true shine as the conditions of her tragic life had gripped a sick hold onto them. Never was the girl smiling kind thoughts and words to the passersby on the streets and contemplating compassion for the weeping, but why should she? No one had ever really smiled and sent kind, sympathetic thoughts and words her way through the crude journey that fate had propelled her into. No one had ever really stopped to direct their attention to the neglect that was hers every day of her life. Thus, Anne possessed the knowledge that there was no one in the world who she could trust. She had contracted a vulnerable heart that was, in addition to all of the other negative traits that her personality had taken, sensitive not to offensive words and actions but rather to the uncommon airs of ego and vanity. Daily she paid ignorance and rejection toward many and indifference toward all. She had learned to live in no other way than

this, and to only keep watch on herself and the sacred will to live for a life that was to bring her happiness and reason.

What positive influence had Anne known in her short life, an influence that had softened nature's evil mold on her and given her a light to live in? Throughout her fourteen years of life, she had known not one. Her father most certainly had not been an influence at all, as he had ignored her for most of the time and other times assaulted and abused her. In her memory lay the dark traces of a snow-laden city, a roaring fire, and a large shadow mumbling irrelevant, random names of people and places as it staggered across the lavish drawing room that daily reeked of dirt, liquor, and potential violence. She wondered how many times the mind of this shadow had shattered, noticing her trembling behind a partition or piece of furniture and dragging her out mercilessly, delivering the effects of the liquor's poisoning onto her physically, sexually, and emotionally. Even as a child she had marveled continuously and wondered how such a raging man could possibly be her father and why he was so fond of methodically harassing and beating her.

Anne had wondered this through the first eight years of her life, years filled with despair, torture, tears, and a growing lust for the most minuscule crumbs of relief, for she was indeed, to everyone around her, a filthy, starving cur. She had wandered through the city's ghettos like a lost mongrel, begged pathetically for nutrition and comfort outside the houses of the upper class, washed herself in the Thames, and slept faithfully in a narrow lane adjacent to her home when her father had been consumed in his worst drinking fits. She had received little attention from any human in her lifetime, as many did not view her as a homeless orphan living anywhere in London but rather an ungrateful wretch who spent time away from her father and rolled in the

pigsties because she was desperate to know a life that was not rich with her father's security and love. In actuality, Anne's life was a piece of hell, yet in her intelligent brain was the comforting knowledge that she had made it thus far into the world, which could only mean that there was going to be a chance for fate to bless her yet. She knew not when, of course, but surely there would be a time for change, and this was the only dream that she had ever hung onto and she lived in constant fear of it dissolving away.

The woman's name had been Madame Button, a rather strange name for a woman of high status and wealth in that part of England, and such a name naturally helped Anne to remember the lady. She recalled how this gossip had floated through the streets with her lavender, peach, and azure skirts tossing, thoroughly hurling verbal insults to the citizens of lower class in the city, including Anne herself, who had lost count on how often she had wanted the woman to disappear. However, eventually she gained enough bitterness and rebellion within her so that she did not pay a great amount of attention to Madame Button, but there had been a brief encounter with her that Anne knew she would remember for always.

There had been a certain ceremony in London to welcome and fawn over Madame Button when she had first entered there six years ago, in the obscene winter of 1762. Eight-year-old Anne had been searching among some garbage in a dust-swept lane while the skinny, grey rats had scampered away from her with larger pieces of food than she could even discover. The bitter wind bit at her bare, scratched legs cruelly and shivers ran through her cold-blooded veins as she listened with contempt to the joyful shouts, cheers, and songs of the people as they set their eyes upon Madame Button and embraced her presence. As indifferent and contemptuous as Anne had felt, she could not control the involuntary turning of her head to steal a curious glance at the

happening. The arrogant woman sat in an erect position at the edge of her seat in her grand carriage, displaying a raised chin and closed eyes to her company and a set line to her firm mouth, plainly instructing young Anne to steer clear of her.

Madame Button contained a notorious reputation as being not only an arrogant, strict mistress but also one who performed a thorough accomplishment of coating gossip and rumors through the whole of England and France, for she had not been a lovable figure while residing in Paris. In fact, she had been so hated by Paris's citizens that she had been excommunicated from all of the churches in the city and would have been forced out of it had she not taken leave herself. London had, however, somehow longed for the woman's presence and company, as it was known that the city officials had knowledge that Madame Button had offered a helping hand to the less fortunate, graciously giving them food to eat, water to drink, and a warm shelter to sleep in, but such a "knowledge" turned out to be completely false. She had only spread such a fact everywhere in pathetic attempts to acquire even more wealth and fondness than she had been born into.

Thus, Anne strove to avoid such a person, dodging frantically between tunnels, ghettos, and lanes whenever her senses informed her that Madame Button was approaching and running away whenever the woman threw her ice-cold eyes upon the girl. Her efforts added up to nothing in the end, for as she one day sat forlornly on the damaged stair of an ancient warehouse, her white hands trying to wash away the effects of a bleeding scab on her leg, she became so consumed in her task that she did not even notice the lady standing over her with a threatening stance. When she did notice, though, oh, was there never such a desperate, terrified child that tried to escape from such a braggart's dirty hands! Madame Button had succeeded in grabbing

Anne by her lovely, golden hair just a moment later and had jerked the girl up to her face, surprising her by spewing a mouthful of spit onto her before shrieking wildly at her.

“Now then, you impish little girl! Did you honestly think that I would always fail in capturing you and teaching you a well-deserved lesson, hm? Well, you are going to get such a punishment now, ha!”

The terrible gossip then launched a long procession of heavy blows and insults on Anne’s small body, hard, excruciatingly painful blows that were much more severe than the physical abuse that she daily received from her father, blows that a woman should not even be able to carry out, causing Anne to yelp with every illegal touch. After what seemed like an eternity to Anne, Madame Button loosened her occupied hand and the child fell roughly to the ground, tears streaming down her face, to which the woman pretended to be sympathetic.

“Oh, my dear child! Are you hurt so badly? Come, come, cease your crying and I will tell you a story.”

At the sound of her voice once again, Anne glared hatefully at her elder before struggling to stand, but the fat hand had already come to her shoulder, its tough bones forcibly applying pressure to make the child stay put. Anne, finally being consumed of energy, reluctantly allowed herself to remain seated, wondering with some fear what else this feminine monster was going to do to her.

Madame Button slowly kneeled down, stealthily creeping toward Anne now with eyes that appeared so gracious and tender that Anne actually suspected that she had instantly changed after beating her, but this was not the case at all. What the woman was doing was one of the

things that she did best: giving false information to people of the lower classes for her own enjoyment and leisure, only what she was about to tell Anne was a rare speech of historic truth, but Anne did not know it. The yellow hands reached for and took hold of Anne's frail ones, administering a couple of reassuring pats on her equally frail arm before beginning her story.

“Anne, my dear child. Have you any knowledge about your family history and why your social status has been continually degrading through these past years of your life?”

Anne stared vehemently into the madam's eyes.

“Well, then,” Madame Button went on, as if the child had replied in the negative, “I shall make it my duty to inform you, and when you have acquired such knowledge you will by all means tell everyone you know of my gentle deeds and love for you and your cursed friends.” She stuck out her hand before the girl. “Have we a bargain, my dear young lady?”

Anne's sapphire eyes dilated at the exciting thought of gaining a knowledge of her family and herself, and she eagerly replied that she would be glad to hear such a story and report it to everyone, in spite of herself.

A rather sinister smile crept along Madame Button's ugly mouth as she nodded happily. “What a good little girl you are! Then let me tell you everything.”

Anne nodded back eagerly, leaning forward to learn the smallest detail possible, not inquiring at all if what she was about to hear was the absolute truth.

Anne's father had been named William Falkman. He had been a common man of low station when he had fallen in love with an Elizabeth McFarkley, a beautiful, loving young

woman of first-class society. She had likewise fallen for William, but was constantly harped upon by her egotist, persistent parents, who always insisted that a daughter like theirs was not about to be united with such a “common boy”. William and Elizabeth, however, loved each other too much to know any kind of negativity, and when the verbal harassing of Elizabeth about her love affairs came to a sufficient point, the two lovers finally decided to escape from such pressure, and elope. Elizabeth especially had treasured such an idea, as the love that she had had for William was far greater than was the love that she had possessed for her parents and their constant injustices.

Eloping was a bad decision. The sweet and naive Elizabeth never imagined that her own family would break ties with her because of her personal wants and dreams, but that was exactly what had happened. Elizabeth McFarkley, the gorgeous daughter of a wealthy politician, had made the choice to marry a man of much inferiority, and the consequence was the cessation of any further communication between her family and herself. When the surrounding areas became informed of such a consequence, they were heartily surprised to learn of how indifferent Elizabeth continued to act, in spite of such shame. This was because she finally had what she had always ached and prayed for—the perfect man to be her husband, and there was absolutely nothing in the world that could bring her down. Others did not know this, though, and they talked about Elizabeth secretly amongst themselves, calling her a “thankless, shameful braggart”.

No matter the cold, vulgar thoughts and feelings of these members of society that Elizabeth had grown up with, she and William, after marrying, decided to purchase a large, luxurious house near London. The home was bought with the sale of a number of quaint items that Elizabeth had run away with. As inconvenient as it had been for Elizabeth to run off with

such special belongings, she had loved them too much to leave them behind, and furthermore, her intelligence had prompted her to bring them along directly after she had made the decision to elope with William. She had had a certain instinct that had told her that the money produced from the selling of those objects would prove to add up to a sufficient amount of money. As companionable as this house had been for the star-crossed lovers back then, it was the same house that Anne violently abhorred with a fierce retribution that coursed wildly throughout her being, as it had been the nightmare of hell for her, hell produced by the purest paternal abuse of every kind.

According to Madame Button, Anne's parents had had a flawless first year of marriage, but Anne had already guessed that. She was well aware of the ugly life that she lived and wondered how a person like she, with a pain-filled life, could otherwise have come into the world but with sufficient pain on the part of her parents.

Indeed, the story thus continued. William had not been able to find a doctor in the time before Elizabeth had gone into labor with Anne, even as he had run through the whole of London on the foaming back of a horse. His youthful heart had been filled with terror for his poor wife, who had been screaming and crying in utter anguish for hours from her labor pains. He feared that Elizabeth was too frail to give birth to a child, and those fears were only to be confirmed a couple of hours after William had returned from his harried journey with no success whatsoever.

When midnight struck on that chilly night of April 4, 1754 Elizabeth did, with tears and trembles harassing her delicate body, give birth to Anne. The child, if anything, had appeared to be even healthier than her mother. William had performed the whole delivery of the infant on his

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