

“To my beloved granddaughter, Miss Mary Claire St. James DeWinter, my sole surviving grandchild,”—as if poor, disowned Phillip no longer existed—“the house at Westfield Court and all my remaining possessions and assets—” Edna St. James sat very straight in her chair and glared balefully at her niece, and several of the others gasped, but Mr. Prentice was not finished. “Providing only that she fulfill two necessary stipulations. Firstly, that she permit my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Edna Carrington St. James, widow of my beloved son Marcus, to remain in residence at Westfield Court for as long as she lives, and Secondly, that she, as a young woman in need of protection and guidance, marry within one year of my death and remain married. If she fails to marry within the stipulated time or is divorced or widowed and fails to remarry within a year, Westfield Court and the entire estate is to be bequeathed to the State of Massachusetts, for whatever purposes it may deem fit.”

Everyone stared at Mary Claire. She was so white that her scars were more visible in contrast, and Neil half rose from his chair in case she was about to faint.