

Kitty and the Thief

I was once the victim of a fraud. The worst part about it was that I kind of liked it. My illustrious career as a finder of things was not always so pure, you see. When you're looking for lost things, you run into a lot of other people's treasures. You also run into a lot of people who want other people's things.

I needed money and I was low on cases, and didn't have a day job. You know, the hard luck story. This run down castle of mine, believe it or not, was even more of a pit before this adventure. I was endeavoring to improve matters when my exploits began.

I never knew his name, and I will always think of him as The Thief. He stole the item he wanted me to find, and he stole my heart. Sappy, right? The lines for a bad romance novel. Cue Lady Gaga. Anyway, I was dumb then, and thought I could show off. I succeeded in both showing off and being dumb.

Let's see...what had I been doing the day The Thief walked into my life? Oh yeah, I was going through some of my late father's papers in the library. I had just finished planning out how I was going to turn my drafty Dracula's castle into a cozy cottage, and was looking for the blueprints of the place. My dad had lovingly designed the castle for my mother...out here, in the middle of nowhere. Midwest. USA. Wisconsin. Where the closest village was called Rooster Bush. It was always fun to tell people my alma mater.

Incidentally, it is still called Rooster Bush and I still live in the castle lovingly built and consequently destroyed by my father and his wise investments turned sour. That's another story. I was looking for the blueprints so I could give them over to the contractors who were kind enough to offer me a remodeling estimate.

I had my platinum blonde hair tied up in a scarf. I was wearing my oldest, most faded, most full of holes, pair of jeans. Several cobwebs were accessorizing my torn t-shirt and my head. I was cleaning and digging through the really old stuff. That's when I heard the doorbell echoing through the cavernous entrance hall. Every castle had to have one.

Wiping back a strand of hair, and a few hundred sticky webs, I stretched from my squat in front of dad's trunk and tottered stiffly to my front door. Opening the door revealed the sexiest salesman I had ever seen. We must have stared at each other for five minutes before even uttering a greeting. I am not ashamed to say he looked like one of my favorite actors, and he was staring at me like I was his next starlet.

"Uh...I'm sorry." He brushed his hand over his receding, but saucily still wavy, hair and blinked his sea foam greenish blue eyes at me.

Wrong starlet, I guess. "Oh, um, may I help you?" I tried not to sound too hopeful.

"Huh?" He was still staring at me.

"May I help you? You know?" I nodded toward his briefcase. I had to nod twice. "Proclaiming my saved soul? Or maybe selling some life insurance? I assure you I could probably use both."

He coughed a chuckle. "Uh, well, no actually I am here to see Miss Katherine Montrose, and I just thought, well, I kind of thought I was looking at Marilyn Monroe...a grubby one, certainly, but all the same."

That's when it hit me he had a British accent, was calling me Marilyn Monroe, and my knees were feeling pretty liquified. "Uh huh..heh, well yeah I guess I do bare a certain resemblance." I patted my cobwebbed shrouded scarf and tugged back some more locks of hair. "It's natural..."

He had stepped into the foyer, or whatever the heck people called my entrance thing. "What?" He eyeballed me with a raised eyebrow.

"Uh, my hair..." I blushed like a fool. "Never mind...Ok so you're looking for Katherine Montrose and not Marilyn Monroe. Well, sorry to disappoint you, but I am Katherine and *not* Marilyn."

The man, who had not introduced himself, just blinked at me some more. "Uh, right... ok...so, I would like to hire you."

I stared at him. "Oh...well, I am uh..." Crap. I really did need the money, but I was promising myself a few weeks off to get things in order for the remodelers. This was a big castle, after all. I studied my guest and noticed his clothes were expensive, his hair product or cologne smelled expensively spicy and his boots were clean. He had not been in Rooster Bush long. "So..." I gestured to my library door. "Please, come in and sit down."

What followed was a long drawn out conversation in my library with me jumping up to fetch coffee and my guest, who I will call Jude, since he looked like a stand-in for the actor Jude Law, told me about the item he wanted me to find.

At the end of his story, which involved hijackers, the black market, art collectors and a few religious fanatics, I was staring at a photo of an artifact. It was a jeweled bauble, said to have belonged to some saint of something or other. I understood the religious fanatics' involvement. "And you say it has been in your family for years..." I murmured, my doubt, obvious.

"Yes, that's right."

I pulled myself away from imagining him in a victorian suit and cravat and eyed him. "Well, I'll have to do my research."

"Of course."

"And we will have to make up a contract."

"Certainly."

If he purred at me any more I would write up any old thing into a contract that would make Rumpelstiltskin proud. "Right, ok..."

"You've got some idea then?"

"Pardon?" I was catching onto his British cadence and word choices.

"For finding it. You have some idea?"

I glanced down at the bauble that looked like some kind of princely plaything. "Yeah. Actually I do know where to look for it."

"Oh my god, that's fantastic."

I raised an eyebrow. "Yeah. I guess so...I do make mistakes sometimes..." I didn't want to give him an overinflated idea of my abilities. "I'll still have to do some research. There will be travel expenses, uh, insurance, transport, that kind of thing..."

"Of course," The Thief said.

I shook my head. I probably was a goner right then, and shouldn't have convinced myself of his resemblance to the British actor, but then he thought I looked like a spider web covered Marilyn Monroe, so I decided not to keep score. "You've got an awful lot of confidence in me for never having done business with me before." I ventured there. I didn't want to, but I needed to know his background.

Maddeningly he responded with something along the lines of "You come highly recommended, Miss Montrose."

I replied with equal flippancy. "Call me Kit."

A broad smile widened his handsome face and I melted into the palm of his hand, living in my fantasy

of working for a famous actor.

The weeks that followed took me back to my nomadic childhood. Jude and I traveled to Rome. We visited Spain and the Riviera. Greece, France, Germany...He wined and dined me all in the name of research, and I was hot on the trail of his jeweled ball. Ahem...er, yeah...the artifact.

Anyway, it was one of the more romantic adventures, of course. I found the bauble. It was....where was it? Oh yes, it was hidden in some chamber of an idyllic ruin of a chapel buried under brambles in Scotland. The thing had a crazy lifespan. I handed it over. He handed me a check. We kissed goodbye and I never saw my fantasy Jude again.

Nope, instead I went back to Rooster Bush, Wisconsin and my drafty castle, which was somehow nowhere near as fabulous as the places The Thief and I had explored. I was subsequently arrested.

My one and only arrest, I assure you! Captain Regan Gallagher, good old Reg, camped out in my library, boots up, resting on my dad's papers, his arms folded, and a big grin on his face. When he said "caught ya" I nearly threw my suitcase at him. The jerk.

I had gone through all kinds of questioning. I told the whole story, and Judge Hilary couldn't prove I had any previous knowledge the bauble was stolen property. It had merely been placed where my thief couldn't find it. His partner had double crossed him, apparently. He had given me no indication whatsoever about the truth, of course. He hadn't even given me his real name. I think he was amused that we went on calling each other Jude and Marilyn. It was a whirlwind romance and a job for me, that was all. Fortunately, Judge Hilary believed me, while Captain Reg "Regulations By the Book", police chief of Rooster Bush, wanted me behind bars or to be his own personal crime dog.

"Anyone who can find a piece of stolen antique junk, thousands of miles from where its thief thought it was supposed to be, needs to be on the police force."

He tells me this weekly if not daily. Depends on if I see him at the coffee shop or not.

I've mostly forgotten the adventure with my thief. It probably would have made a good film. Jude Law would look pretty good with a platinum blonde on his arm. And yes, it is natural.