

# TAKEN BY AN ENGLISH PROFESSOR

*The Connaghers 1.5*

*Best read after **Dear Sir, I'm Yours***

Published by  
Joely Sue Burkhart

Copyright © 2009-2016 Joely Sue Burkhart

Cover Art by [Book Graphics](#)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in print or electronic form without the express, written permission of the author.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the product of the author's imagination and any resemblance to any organization, event, or person, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Adult Reading Material

## Taken by an English Professor

*Every day, I put on this nice civilized English professor mask. While underneath, I'm just a bloody, savage barbarian who dreams of razing you to the ground.*

In *Dear Sir, I'm Yours*, Rae finally stopped running from her old English professor, though she never stops writing him letters. This time, she asks Conn to write her a letter detailing his most forbidden fantasies. So she can fulfill them, of course.

But Conn admits that he sometimes dreams of taking her further than she'd ever willingly go.

Will she dare unchain the beast? Or run from him once again?

# Table of Contents

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[The poetry quoted in this novella:](#)

[A Note to My Readers](#)

[More books in this series:](#)

[Other free reads:](#)

# **Taken by An English Professor**

## **By Joely Sue Burkhart**

### Chapter One

*Dearest Rae:*

*Since you've written to me for years about your secret longings and desires, I suppose it's only fair that I share my darkest fantasies with you, too. However, I must admit that I'm reluctant. Not because I don't want you to know, not at all; I'm simply ashamed. I don't want to scare you away, this time for good.*

*You asked me to share my most forbidden fantasies with you, and you know that I'll never fail to give you exactly what you want. Just remember above all, darlin', that I love you more than life itself. If I lost you...I'd be forced to take up residence as another ghost at Beulah Land.*

*The truth is I'm a hypocrite. Byron said it best in Damaetas:*

*Ev'n still conflicting passions shake his soul,  
And bid him drain the dregs of Pleasure's bowl;  
But, pall'd with vice, he breaks his former chain,  
And what was once his bliss appears his bane.*

*Every day, I put on this nice civilized English professor mask. I lecture at Drury and grade bad essays and my colleagues think the most scandalous thing I do is demonstrate swordplay at the local Renaissance Faire.*

*While underneath, I'm just a bloody, savage barbarian who dreams of razing you to the ground.*

*Nobody knows the constant battle I wage to control the darkness eating away at me. Nobody but you. You've seen hints of this darkness, Rae, and I thank the good Lord above that you haven't fled in horror.*

*"Make me," you said, and you know that I love making you do exactly what we both want. I love for you to challenge me into force. I like you to be just a little bit afraid of me. I like to hear those soft little whimpers escape your mouth. I like to feel you struggle against my grip. I especially love the incredible sounds of your pleasure rolling out of your throat in cry after cry.*

*I treasure the knowledge that you trust me enough to glimpse that dark side and not only find pleasure in it but also still love me on the morrow.*

*Trust, Rae. It's so fragile, like a delicate little bird held in the palm of my hand.*

*Sometimes I can't help but close my eyes and imagine tightening my fist on that frantic fluttering little creature, harder, meaner, more than you could possibly want.*

*I'm a dirty, selfish sonofabitch. On a good day, I'm going to take every single thing you'll give me. On a bad day? I can't help but fantasize about taking more than you'll give me.*

*You know I'd rather torment you with pleasure until you give me your safe word, than ever scare you into giving it. But madness whispers in my head:*

She's helpless. Take her. Take it all.

*Don't ever unchain that beast, darlin'. I love you too much to risk it. And please, by all that's good and holy in this world, remember your safe word. Always. When all other chains break, Ozymandias will still render the bloodthirsty barbarian into a penitent man on his knees, begging for your love.*

~ Conn

\*\*\*

“If we already have a real ghost,” Rae grumbled as she stapled another swag of fake spider web beneath the porch eave, “then why does Miss Belle want so many fake decorations? Maybe she’s only worked up because this is the Bed and Breakfast’s first Halloween.”

“Afraid not, darlin’,” Conn replied from the front yard now turned cemetery. “Miss Belle has always loved Halloween. In fact, I think if forced to pick between Halloween and Christmas, she’d choose dressing up like a witch any day. Speaking of which: don’t be freaked out when she refers to her ‘Book of the Dead.’” He raised his voice so that his grandmother would hear through the open window. “That’s merely her cookbook.”

Sure enough, Miss Belle stomped over to the front door and glared at them both. Rae never thought she’d wish the old lady would wear more pink, her trademark color, but even retina-searing Pepto Bismol would be an

improvement over Miss Belle's costume.

She wore an orange-and-purple-striped broomstick skirt down to her ankles, a goblin-green satin poet's shirt, and bright red sparkling shoes straight out of *The Wizard of Oz*. At least her Spandex tights matched her horrendous green shirt. Even her old-fashioned straw hat had been replaced by a traditional black witch's hat—with a huge orange bow in the front.

"Don't spoil Rae's first Halloween with us," Miss Belle demanded. "If you give away all my secrets, she won't enjoy the party nearly as much. Now you two hurry up. You don't even have your costumes on yet!"

Rae concentrated on hanging a huge hairy tarantula on her fake web. She knew that Conn was going to wear his warrior garb he typically wore for Renaissance Faire demonstrations. He'd planned a mock fight with his best friend and math professor extraordinaire for tonight's festivities. So far, he didn't have any idea what her costume was—and she planned to keep it that way as long as possible.

She scrubbed her damp palms on her jeans and jumped down off the ladder. Her stomach already felt tight and trembly with nerves. *Am I going to have the courage to pull this off?*

Conn gave the incredibly realistic tombstone another shove so it leaned as if it'd been a part of the yard for decades. "I'll be back in about an hour with Mason. He's meeting me at the cottage." He looked up at Rae and she gave him a hopefully excited—instead of nervous—smile. "You still won't tell me what your costume is?"

"Nope," she replied tartly, imitating his grandmother's no-nonsense

manner. “You’ll see soon enough.”

He reached through the porch railing and gripped her calves. “Why the secrets, darlin’?”

He had incredible hands. His powerful fingers dug into her muscles, firm and strong, just shy of actually hurting. He might be an English professor by day, but in his bed he was all domination. The slight squeeze of his fingers made her swallow and sent a warm wave of desire sweeping through her. The butterflies disappeared and she made the low, ragged sound in her throat that he loved to hear. “I want to surprise you.”

His eyes blazed like sapphires, but he released her. “How will I recognize you?”

Miss Belle smacked him on the top of the head with her witch hat. “If you can’t recognize your one true love despite a simple costume, then you don’t deserve her. Now get—I’ve got to start my cauldron boiling!”

## Chapter Two

Conn caught his friend's sword on his blade and used his momentum to shove Mason stumbling backward. Despite the approach of Halloween, the days were still warm and golden. His shirt stuck to him, and with the setting of the sun, began to chill on his back.

Just as sweaty, Mason gave him a disgusted look. "You were supposed to take it easy on me. I have a date tonight!"

Giving him a sweeping bow to end their demonstration, Conn laughed. "What are you complaining about? Every night is date night for me."

"Yeah, but you can take a shower," Mason grumbled. He sheathed his sword and glumly swiped a hand through his dark curly hair that was just as plastered as Conn's shirt. "Do you mind if I hit the shower at your place before driving down to Joplin?"

They both bowed to the cheering onlookers. "Make yourself at home."

"I won't be long," Mason promised. "I told Tess I'd pick her up by eight o'clock."

Conn glanced at his watch and winced. "You know it's at least an hour and a half drive, right?"

Mason tossed a grin back over his shoulder. "Only if I follow the speed limit."

Shaking his head, Conn sheathed the sword on his hip and started to unbuckle the heavy leather belt.

Arms wrapped around him from behind and Rae whispered, "Don't. I



think the sword is sexy.”

Simple white linen sleeves covered her arms, tapering to delicate points over her wrists. His heartbeat quickened and he started to turn around to get a good look at her costume, but she tightened her grip on him. “I’m sweaty.”

“I don’t care.” She rubbed her face against his shirt. “In fact, I like it. I like it a lot.”

“Well, I certainly don’t want to stink up your lovely costume, so let me get a good look at you.”

Reluctantly, she loosened her arms so he could turn around.

She was dressed in a kirtle that would do any Ren Faire maiden proud. A heavy red brocade overskirt split down the front to show the fine snowy linen beneath, accented with tiny pearls and golden embroidery. A matching cloth covered her hair, giving him just a glimpse of a braid curled around her head and dotted with pearls.

“You look like you stepped out of a fairy tale.”

“Is it right?” Rae smoothed the skirt and tugged absently on the left sleeve. “Mom’s been sewing this for weeks. I wanted it to be as historically accurate as possible, so there’s no buttons or grommets and she sewed everything by hand. The only thing we did compromise on was the corset. We used synthetic whalebone.”

“It’s gorgeous, darlin’. I know several period fanatics who’ll want your mom’s phone number. They’d pay handsomely for this kind of hand stitching.”

Smiling with relief, she wrapped her arms around his waist. “Well, you

know history was never my favorite subject, not when I had you for my English professor.”

His chest felt tight and it was all he could do not to throw her over his shoulder and race Mason to the cottage. “Does this mean you’ll dress up the next time we hit the Ren Faire circuit?”

“As long as you wear a codpiece and tights.”

Wincing, Conn leaned down and brushed his mouth against hers. “My maiden’s wish is my command, but I heartily hope you change your mind.”

“I’m kidding,” she whispered. “You know I love your warrior garb too much to make you wear something else.”

The soft little catch in her voice sent his blood pressure rocketing up another notch.

She pressed something into his hand and leaned up to whisper directly into his ear. “Do you think we can escape Miss Belle’s party in the next thirty minutes or so?”

He wrapped his hands around her upper arms and pulled her closer. Her gown rustled against him and he suddenly wondered exactly how historically correct she might be dressed. For instance, if she’d chosen to wear drawers...or nothing beneath the heavy skirt. “We can escape now.”

“Isn’t Mason going to take a shower?”

He growled out a curse and released her. Laughing softly, she turned away. Her skirt swirled about her ankles, giving him a glimpse of the delicate linen stockings she wore. Damn it all to hell, she knew what white did to him. The thought of her lying in his bed with chemise flung back to show her

incredible legs encased in those stockings...

“My, my, Dr. Connagher, such language! Perhaps I should have brought Miss Belle’s pink parasol, even though it clashed horribly with my skirt. It sounds like you might need me to whack you a couple of times.”

“Thirty minutes,” he growled out. “Mason should be gone. Then bring out that parasol, darlin’.”

“No.”

Her refusal shot through him as though she’d dumped a bucket of icy water over his head. Straightening, he knew he must be glaring at her, but she merely shook her head, peeking at him over her shoulder, and kept right on walking. “I’ve got something else planned, Dr. Connagher. In thirty minutes, read my note. Then find me. I’ll be waiting for you.”

*Thirty minutes my ass.* He unfolded her note.

*Damaetas: Take me. Love, Ozymandias*

He had to brace himself against the porch while he concentrated on breathing. In five little words, she’d managed to convey her wish to play out his forbidden fantasy and also assured him of her love and her ability to stop him. Dear Lord, she wasn’t terrified of this fantasy; in fact, she’d set the whole thing up. She’d even waited until he was dressed appropriately, sweaty and jacked up after fighting with Mason.

Conn whipped his head up, searching for her, but Rae had disappeared into the gaily-dressed partygoers. Taking a firm grip on his control, he strode into the crowd.

*This warrior is going on the rampage.*

## Chapter Three

Breathing as hard as the corset would allow, Rae ducked behind a giant oak in the backyard. She hadn't been able to see him in the crowd, but she could feel him, as though a powerful tank rumbled straight toward her. She should have known a man like him would refuse to wait thirty minutes with her challenge dangling before him. She shivered and rubbed her arms. Night had fallen, turning the normally tranquil yard into a murky, chilled forest, complete with eerie fog settling in the low ground.

It might be her imagination, but the fog seemed to be pouring from a huge iron pot simmering away on a bonfire. What the hell did Miss Belle have in there? *I probably don't want to know.*

Apparently nobody else wanted to know, neither. If any of the guests had been back here, they'd moved on, leaving her alone.

A loud crack made her jolt like a frightened deer. She pressed her back tighter against the tree until she felt the bark digging into her skin through the many layers of clothing. She strained her ears, holding her breath. Maybe it was Miss Belle coming to check on her concoction. Or a lost guest. It didn't have to be—

Conn clamped a hand over her mouth and dragged her away from the tree, keeping her turned away from him. She couldn't see him, but she knew it was him. Her body would know him anywhere, although his usual scent of leather books and musk was more raw than usual. This man *wore* leather.

“Did you think you could hide from me?” Even his voice was lower, rougher than the smooth Texas drawl so familiar and dear to her. “Or maybe you thought you could run.”

She tried to kick backwards, but her leg tangled in the heavy skirts. She threw back her elbow as hard as she could into his ribs, but he didn’t even grunt.

Roughly, he jerked her around. She swung her fist at his face. He didn’t duck or move aside, so she caught him on the jaw so hard that her entire hand ached, but he barely even turned his head with the blow.

His eyes roiled like steely thunderclouds on the horizon. The distinctive angles of his face were fierce, lined with canyons and dark with shadows. “Go ahead, Rae.” Despite the vibrating tension in his body, he spoke calmly as he wrapped his leather belt around her left wrist. “Hit me again. You know I’ll repay you in kind.”

She shuddered. He would indeed, and her backside already braced for the stinging hot pain of his palm.

“No?” He said mockingly, arching a brow. She fisted her sore right hand but resisted the urge to slug him again. Giving her a knowing little wink, he looped the leather around her right wrist and bound her hands much tighter than he’d ever done before.

Her knees trembled and her brain felt as muddled as the thick wet air of the night. She’d always loved bondage, but this felt...*real*. The leather bit into her flesh. Arrogant and more than man enough to make her bend to his will—exactly the way she liked it—this Conn was harder than ever, wavering on the

edge of violence.

He loosened the laces of her gown's bodice and stripped it over her head, leaving her clad only in the thin, nearly sheer chemise and corset. The silk brocade had been ridiculously expensive, so she was glad it would be spared whatever he had planned. She felt exposed, though, worse than naked in these foreign clothes designed to give her no protection against a man intent on claiming her body.

Reverently, he draped the kirtle on a branch to keep it off the ground. "I thought I'd throw you over my shoulder so I could grope you all the way to the cottage, but I've changed my mind."

He bent down, retrieved his sword, and unsheathed it. Her eyes flared wide and she stiffened with alarm. She'd never envisioned him using his sword in their play. The damned thing was way too real, very sharp, and so heavy she could barely pick it up.

With a quick lunge, he planted the blade deep into the loose soil at the base of the tree.

She sucked in her breath as far as the stays would allow and raised her gaze to his. He smacked the leather sheath against his palm, and all the blood drained of out her face and race south at full speed ahead. He'd never spanked her with anything but his hand.

"Run."

Wary, she took a step, hesitating like a rabbit frozen in approaching headlights. The last thing she wanted to do was give him her back. What chance did she have to escape with her wrists bound and lungs cramped by this stupid

corset?

Absolutely none whatsoever.

“Come on, Rae. You ran from me for five long years, so you’re good at this.” He flicked the sheath and leather bit her outer thigh hard enough that she yelped. “I said *run!*”

Fisting her bound hands in the billowing linen skirt, she whirled and ran for her life.

## Chapter Four

How could she be lost? Rae had made the five-minute trek from his cottage on the edge of Miss Belle's property to her house every day for weeks. At night with ghostly fog blanketing the trees and hills into an unrecognizable landscape, nothing looked familiar.

Wheezing for breath, she stumbled and slipped through the darkness. Trees crowded the endless path, branches snagging at her hair that had long ago tumbled loose. Her headdress was tangled up in a thorny patch at least a hundred yards back. The air was so damp and heavy she couldn't pull it into her compressed lungs. Light-headed, she didn't dare slow, not with the heavy crashing thuds behind her. He didn't have to run to keep up with her panicked flight hampered by the unfamiliar clothing.

The steady thwack of the sheath against the tree trunks directly behind her sent a fresh flood of delicious anxiety flooding through her veins. The leather sheath bit much deeper than his hand ever did. She could still feel the burning marks he'd managed to land: White-hot fire spread to a melting heat that threatened to liquefy her bones. If she slowed, she knew what she'd get.

*So why do I want him to catch me?*

Rae searched for a place to hide, some wall or door she could fling up to block his path. Nothing would stop him for long, but she needed a minute to gather her wits, calm her knotted stomach, and catch her breath before she passed out.

Her ankle turned on a stone. The plain leather shoe slipped off, tripping



her even worse. Falling, she flung out her bound hands, flailing for something to catch.

A powerful arm snaked around her waist and whirled her around. A hard shoulder slammed into her stomach. She hung down his back, dizzy and upside down, but that didn't stop her from fighting. She drummed her fists against his back and kicked and squirmed against his grip, until he clamped his hand on her buttocks beneath the chemise. Those powerful fingers squeezed hard and then pushed between her thighs in a rough caress. And damn her traitorous body, but her thighs fell open and a ragged moan escaped her lips.

He laughed, a low, wicked chuckle that sent fury whipping through her. She reached lower, grabbed his leather-clad ass for leverage, and sank her teeth into his flank.

Hissing beneath his breath, he jerked her off his shoulder and tossed her backward. She tried to shriek, but the corset made it sound more like a squawk as she landed in a pile of hay.

Lying tumbled on her back, looking up at the grim-faced warrior who stood with feet braced wide apart and eyes dark with lust, Rae swallowed hard and tried not to whimper.

*Hurry, please hurry.*

He yanked his shirt over his head. His hands settled on the enclosure of his pants, and she broke. Rolling, she scrambled to her knees, skidding and wading through hay.

He slammed into her, carrying her back down into the straw with his full body weight. Hay dug into her cheek and stabbed through the linen. For long

agonizing moments, he simply lay on top of her, his breath hot and heavy against her face, the raw scent of sweaty, aroused warrior filling her nose.

In a low voice more like the professor's and not the barbarian's, he whispered, "*In mind a slave to every vicious joy;/ From every sense of shame and virtue wean'd.*"

He was testing her, waiting to see if she would give her safe word and call the whole thing off. If she were so terrified she couldn't manage to quote something back to him, he'd take that instead of Ozymandias. This was her last chance to wave the white flag—or snap the red one directly on the bull's nose.

He despised his first name, so...

"I always knew you were a fiend, Verrill Connagher. *'Fickle as wind, of inclinations wild.*"

He sighed out her name against her cheek, his lips tender, and then his fingers tightened incrementally on her hair until her eyes burned. Leisurely, he shifted to his knees, straddling her thighs.

He worked the chemise out from beneath his knees so he could flip the skirt up. Air chilled the backs of her thighs and buttocks, but the heat of his gaze made her flesh burn.

"Very good, darlin'," he purred, kneading both cheeks in his big hands. "I commend you on your historical accuracy. But first—" He tossed his shirt down by her head. "—Put this under your face."

She couldn't help but laugh then, albeit raggedly, for even while playing the role of the bezerker who would ravish the helpless maiden, he still remained in control—and cared—enough to make sure she didn't end up looking like a

pincushion with hay sticking out of her face. Deep down, he feared he was a very, very bad man who might hurt her beyond her tolerance for pain, but his tenderness even in the midst of his “forbidden” fantasy confirmed the truth she already knew in her heart.

Conn was a wickedly passionate, fiercely dominant man who loved her too much to ever really hurt her.

Burying her face in the damp linen, she moaned deep in her throat, grateful the sound was muffled by the cloth. The shirt smelled like him and was almost as good as having her face tucked against his throat.

Fisting a hand in her hair to ensure she stayed put, he kneed her thighs apart. Leather rubbed against the tender inner skin of her thighs. He rammed his knee up higher, grinding against her, while he trailed the sheath along her hip, the small of her back, her ribcage. He let her think about it long and hard, how that sheath had cut across her skin, sharp and intense. The harmless implement could be oh so vicious on her tender skin if he chose to be brutal.

Her muscles coiled and flinched, trying to anticipate where he'd land the first blow. Leather stroked higher, teasing a path of trembling fire along the curve of her breast, her shoulder, her cheek, even across her lips. Then it whistled backward and cracked across her ass.

Crying out, she jerked away from the blow, from him, ignoring the pull on her scalp. It burned, too much, surely too much—but he rubbed his thigh against her and the pain blurred to something else. Molten heat curled within her. He fed that fire, expertly landing scattered blows to her backside and outer thighs, keeping the pressure against her groin until she sobbed out his name

and shuddered beneath him.

He wrapped his left hand around her nape and it was like he'd cut the puppet strings commanding her body. Something about his hand on her neck always turned her body into mush. She burned, inside and out, a throbbing, stinging mess of tears and sweat and longing, but she couldn't move a muscle.

"Next time, wear my collar. It matches your costume perfectly."

She shifted her head in as much of a nod as he allowed, but that wasn't enough for him, not in this mood. He gripped her right hip and jerked her back to her knees, keeping her head pinned low. "I gave you an order, Rae."

"Yes, sir," she gasped out, digging her fingers into his shirt beneath her cheek.

He lowered his chest against her back and his heat seared her through the thin linen. "Why do you wear my collar?"

"Yours." She panted, pushing her hips back as hard as she could. He rubbed against her folds, letting her feel the thickness of his cock, but he didn't slide inside. Her heart pounded, her ears roared, and she ached so badly it hurt more than any blow he'd ever thought to deliver. "I need you, Conn, please!"

"For centuries, women were chattel," he growled out against her ear. "A man saw what he wanted, and he took it. He ran her down, slung her to the ground, threw up her skirts, and took his pleasure. Just like I'm going to take you now."

He slammed deep, so deep, without any hesitation. He knew she was ready. He knew what she wanted. And she wanted him out of control, reckless,

taking his pleasure.

Taking her pinned, helpless, willing body as hard as he wanted.

Why on earth would he think she might be afraid of this? Of him? A strange sense of power welled within her, fueled by his deep, pounding thrusts and the low, guttural sounds from his chest.

*Only I could ever give him this fantasy.*

This time it was his turn to groan out her name on a shuddering cry of pleasure. “Rae, my Rae, my love.”

## Chapter Five

Conn cradled her in his arms, and she nuzzled deep into his throat, her arms around his neck. She made a delicious hum of contentment against his skin.

“Where are we, anyway?”

“The old barn.” He scanned the hay to make sure they’d gotten everything. She was still missing at least a shoe and her kirtle, while he needed to go back and fetch his sword. All before his noisy grandma noticed half of Rae’s clothing scattered all over the property.

He frowned, noting the condition of the hay. It was fresh and golden yellow, not dried out and musty. Nobody had used this barn for years. All of the livestock had been sold ages ago because the Healys had been overseas for most of his adult life. So why would there be fresh hay in this old ramshackle building?

He carried Rae home and all he could think about was the day he would carry her across the threshold as Mrs. Connagher. He hadn’t formally asked her yet, although she knew very well what he wanted. Once she’d come into his bed he had absolutely every intention of getting his ring on her finger and his name on hers.

But the timing had to be right. She loved him, but was she ready to marry him? Could she put up with his bossy, demanding ways for the rest of her life? Had she enjoyed letting him ravish her senseless as much as he thought—or days from now, would she lie awake, alone and scared, and wish that she’d

escaped him before it was too late?

She squirmed in his arms so he set her on her feet. “Look!

Who did that?”

He’d been so wrapped up in his thoughts that he didn’t even notice the strange stack of items on his doorstep. His sword was propped in the doorframe, her shoe hooked over the hilt, her kerchief tied around the pommel, and her red gown carefully folded into a neat package.

“Your sword weighs a ton,” Rae said. “Surely Miss Belle didn’t carry it all the way down here.”

“I wouldn’t put it past her.” He stroked her cheek, searching her gaze for any regrets or hesitation. “You all right?”

“Mmmm.” She stretched up and brushed her mouth against his. “There’s just one thing troubling me.”

He narrowed his eyes, braced to hear the worst. *Dear God above, don’t leave me, not now. It’ll kill me to lose you.*

“If I’m going to occasionally wear your collar in public, then don’t you think it only fair that I wear your ring too?”

“Rae, darlin’, are you...” He swallowed and cupped her face in both shaking hands. “Are you asking me to marry you?”

“Yes, I believe I am. On one condition.” She pulled her head back and glared up into his eyes. “If you tell Miss Belle— or God forbid, your mother— before I’m ready, then I will chase *you* with your sword this time.”

“They’re going to know when they see my ring on your hand.” Conn hooked his arms beneath her ass and lifted her up high in his arms. It was all he

could do not to whoop like an idiot at the top of his lungs. “*Damaetas ran through all the maze of sin,/ And found the goal when others just begin.*’ You’re my goal, darlin’. You always have been. Do you have any idea how much I love you?”

Laughing, she stroked her fingers over his face. “I think you just showed me out in that old barn.”

Her laughter cut off and she stiffened in his arms. “Rae?

What is it?”

“I thought...” She searched the shadows, so he turned and scanned the trees, too, but he didn’t see anything. “They were just there. Two people, walking hand-in-hand up the path. I could have sworn it was Miss Belle, but whose hand would she be holding?”

Only Colonel Healy’s, and he’d been dead for a decade. Chills rippled down Conn’s spine but he threw open the door and carried Rae inside. “Happy Halloween, darlin’.”



The poetry quoted in this novella:

“Damaetas,” by Lord George Gordon Byron

## A Note to My Readers

I love to hear from my readers, so if you have feedback on this free story, feel free to e-mail me at [joelysueburkhart@gmail.com](mailto:joelysueburkhart@gmail.com). If you enjoyed this free story, please spread the word!

More books in this series:



### [The Connaghers](#)

Other free reads:



### [Letters to an English Professor](#)

## [The Horse Master of Shanhasson](#)