

**THE CASE OF THE PECULIAR  
INHERITANCE  
by Samantha St. Claire  
EXCERPT**

“THAT SHOULD DO it.” Dr. Taylor Whitman sat back and studied Rose with amber eyes that reminded her of brandy in candlelight. At the moment, his eyes had a wolfish glint as he perused her with something more than clinical interest. The moment passed quickly, and the softness returned as his lips curved into a wide smile, revealing normal teeth with no pronounced canines. Except for the thin diagonal scar creasing his right eyebrow, he was a decidedly perfect specimen of manhood. Not for the first time, Rose wondered how a man of such bearing should have wielded a scalpel instead of a sword.

The doctor reached out and touched the tip of her nose. “You’re a very lucky young woman, Miss McKenzie. If that piece of metal had struck you an inch lower, you could have lost the use of that attractive blue eye.”

Rose touched her temple, fingering the stitches. “Only two?”

Dr. Whitman shook his head. “You have my deepest sympathies, Mrs. Pennyworth. I think the patient has not only a laceration but a brain injury as well.”

“Is that what you call it? A brain injury? If it is, I think she had it before the explosion.” Mrs. Pennyworth huffed and left the room, calling back, “If you’ve an interest, there’s breakfast chilling in the morning room.”

With less humor in his eyes, the doctor turned back to Rose, his smooth brow creased in disapproval. “Seriously, Rose, you need to be more careful. You push your studies too far sometimes. Magnesium is unstable in the best of situations. Do you know how many photographers have been maimed and even killed by mishandling it?”

Rose met his intense gaze with her own studious one.

The doctor frowned. “Did you hear me?”

“Did you know that your left eye has gold radial lines? It’s only in the left eye. Like striations one might find in gold ore. Fascinating,” she said as she shifted her focus from one eye to the other. “One

day you must tell me how you came by that scar.” She touched her fingertip to his warm skin and traced the thin line stretching from his hairline to his eyebrow.

Dr. Whitman brushed her hand aside. “You’re impossible.”

“And you’re angry.”

With lips compressed and frustration apparent, he snapped his medical bag closed. For a long moment, he stared at her before shaking his head and taking a step to the door.

Rose reached for his wrist and gripped it firmly. “No, I can tell. You’re angry. Your right eye twitches, like now. You can feel it, can’t you? There! I saw it again. I wonder if it’s in rhythm with your pulse. Have you ever tried timing it?”

Dr. Whitman gently but firmly plucked her hand from his sleeve. “Let’s go to the museum, shall we? I believe we were going to try to arrive before the midday crowds.”

“You’re right! What time is it?” Rose started for the hallway. “I’ll just pick up a wrap from my room.”

“Miss McKenzie?” Mrs. Pennyworth rounded the corner, nearly colliding with her employer. “Excuse me.” She stammered, bringing a hand to her breast. “There’s a lady here to see you.” The housekeeper looked over her shoulder, then leaned forward and whispered, “I think it’s a professional visit. She asked for the dee-tec-tive.” Mrs. Pennyworth always said the word in clearly distinguished syllables, making it sound like three separate words, and not very polite ones at that.

“Oh? Well, that’s wonderful! Please, show her in.”

“Perhaps I should leave you to speak with your client in private,” Dr. Whitman said, already starting for the door.

“Oh, no! If she’s distressed by some criminal activity, I’m quite certain your presence would comfort her. It’s necessary for a client to feel relaxed in order to recall all the details of a case.”

“If you think so.” Dr. Whitman set his bag on the table and took a step back, folding his arms across his chest.

She nodded approvingly. “That’s good. You look very professional standing just that way. How do I look?” She poked her fingers ineffectively into the precarious mass of curls atop her head. “I imagine my stitches give an impression of an adventurous nature. Do you agree?”

“Or that you are extremely clumsy.”