

ROMANCE AT RIDGEFORD HALL by Kate Ellington

EXCERPT

Jane gripped the banister and started up the stairs, but before she could go a few steps a large hand covered hers. She gasped and turned around.

Conrad stood on the lawn, just on the other side of the banister. “Good evening, Jane,” he said, looking up at her. “I’m sorry I startled you.”

“I wasn’t startled,” Jane said, trying to compose her features.

He raised a brow.

“Perhaps a little,” she said, smiling. Since he showed no sign of mounting the stairs, Jane withdrew her hand and joined him on the lawn. When she reached his side he looked down into her face.

“I apologize again,” he said.

“It’s no matter. Are you here with your family?”

“Yes, they’ve already gone up.”

“So have mine.”

After chatting about the weather and a few mutual acquaintances, Conrad surprised Jane with his next comment.

“You seem...subdued tonight, Jane,” he said. “Is anything wrong?”

She was surprised he’d noticed, and then immediately worried this meant she was a bore. What kind of remark was that to make to a woman? Jane considered lying and making a witty retort, but instead told him the truth.