

7/2/21 Prompt: The Island

Homesick.

The isle of emerald green. A turf fire in winter. His family's white-washed cottage.

Finn MacDonnell tried to forget.

Through the treacherous 1911 Atlantic crossing. The hurried stop at Ellis Island. The long months scraping the skies of New York City. Working to the bone for cheap wages, most of which sailed back to Ireland. Still, the American dream beat starvation and despair. Barely.

A chance encounter outside a Manhattan hotel changed everything.

Flailing hooves, wild eyes, her screams of terror. Adrenaline and experience kicking in, Finn pulled her behind him and approached the horse, his voice soft, his actions gentle. Moments later, the beast was calm. Grateful, the young socialite clung to him.

"You saved my life! Please, sir, stay until my father returns."

He obliged.

"Well, now...Mr. MacDonnell, is it? We're mighty grateful for your assistance," said the patriarch with a Southern drawl. "You have quite a way with horses."

"Can't remember a time without them, sir," Finn replied honestly.

"We could use someone like you."

Next thing he knew, he was on a train headed to Tennessee to work as a groom at The Plantation, a farm transitioning from Thoroughbred racing to smooth-gaited saddlehorses, courtesy of the 1905 anti-betting laws. Settling in, he made a quiet life for himself, hoping one day to become a trainer.

Then, he got her letter. Padraig's little sister was all alone. Of course, he would help.

Two months later, Oona Ryan stepped off the train, scared but strong. Brave...and more beautiful than his memories.

As dusk fell the day after her arrival, she sat by his side in the yard, smiling tentatively at his joke. It wasn't a laugh, but he was patient.

Skin the creamy white of lime. Warm curls dark as peat. Eyes verdant green.

Finn was home.

(Continued from One Year. The Plantation is loosely based on several wonderful Mid-Tenn farms, my favorite being Belle Meade Plantation southwest of Nashville. THE BARN *swoon*)

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