

CANADIAN CROSSINGS

BOOK TWO

*The*  
HIGHEST  
OF HOPES

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SUSAN ANNE MASON



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For my dear friends since high school,  
Michelle and Colette. Thank you for your love  
and support and our monthly tea dates!

And to my cherished friend, Katarina,  
who passed away ten years ago. It's a comfort  
knowing you're cheering me on from above!

Be strong and take heart,  
all you who hope in the LORD.

Psalm 31:24 NIV

## PROLOGUE

LATE MAY 1919

Emmaline Moore stepped up to the ship's railing and peered through the mist to catch her first glimpse of the Nova Scotia shoreline now becoming visible. It was a most welcome sight after a week at sea.

A week since she'd left her home in England to embark on this journey.

Six weeks since she'd found her beloved grandfather dead on his bedroom floor.

Two weeks since she'd sold Grandad's watch shop and handed over the key to the new owner.

All because of a packet of letters she'd found in his desk that had turned Emma's life upside down.

She shivered and pulled her collar up around her chin. Beside her at the rail, Grace Abernathy, a friend she'd made on the voyage, turned to give her a wobbly smile. Emma's emotions too were running high—sadness at leaving the people she'd met on the ship and nervousness as to what the future would hold for her now.

"Are you still planning to spend a few days in Halifax before heading to Toronto?" Grace asked.

Emma glanced farther down the rail to where Jonathan stood gulping in the sea air. Her dear friend and traveling companion had suffered extreme seasickness the entire journey and still looked ready to empty the contents of his stomach over the side of the ship. “I think we have to. Not that the ship’s doctor isn’t competent, but I won’t be satisfied that Jonathan’s truly all right until another doctor pronounces him healthy. Plus, he’ll need a few days of rest to get his strength back before we set off on the next leg of the trip.”

“Of course. You must put his health above everything right now.” Grace gave a slight shrug. “I would have loved the company on the train though. Quinten’s not sure where he’s headed, but he has some sleuthing to do in Halifax first.”

Quinten Aspinall, another kindred soul searching for family members in Canada, was a true gentleman who had served as their protector during the voyage, keeping away unwanted attention from other males.

Emma smiled. “Perhaps we’ll all meet up in Toronto once we get there.”

“Perhaps we will.” Grace turned to face the water, but not before Emma caught sight of tears welling in her friend’s eyes. She reached over to squeeze Grace’s arm, silently offering up a prayer for her well-being.

The ship’s horn sounded as a warning to prepare for docking.

Emma’s heart pumped harder in her chest. They’d reached Canada, the country that would hopefully become her new home. What would she find here? A welcoming family or further rejection?

She cast a guilty glance at Jonathan, who looked her way and waved. She managed a brief wave in return. What would he do when he learned that her intention for the trip was not exactly as she’d indicated? She’d kept one important detail of her plans to herself. One she knew he’d do everything in his

power to thwart, and because of that, she couldn't tell him until the timing was right.

Resolutely, Emma pushed away the twinge of guilt. After all, Jonathan was the one who'd insisted on coming with her. She'd been perfectly happy to make the trip alone, but he wouldn't hear of it. Even his Aunt Trudy had joined his petition to keep her from going, but when she realized Emma would not be swayed, Trudy had supported Jonathan's decision to travel with her. Unable to fight the both of them, Emma had finally relented, secretly a bit relieved to have his company. Jonathan's presence aboard the ship had provided her a great deal of comfort—it helped knowing her best friend was in the cabin down the hall. All she could do now was pray he'd forgive her when he learned of her true intentions.

Another blast of the horn shook Emma from her thoughts. She squared her shoulders as the ship slid closer to the dock, vowing to put all regrets behind her. There was no point in looking back. The past was filled with nothing but loss and grief. It was time to look ahead to a future that brimmed with possibilities.

Soon, with God's blessing, she would embark on a new life with a family she'd never met, but who, Emma prayed, would accept her graciously into their fold.

Maybe then the emptiness inside her would finally be filled, and at last she'd feel whole.

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## CHAPTER I

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JUNE 1919

There was no turning back now!

The shrill scream of the steam whistle signaled the locomotive's departure from the last stop before they reached their ultimate destination of Toronto. Emma gripped the wooden armrests until her fingers ached, though it did little to rid her body of the tension building within her. Perhaps it was due to stress and fatigue, but on this final stage of her long journey, a cloud of doubt had crept in to plague her.

Had she made the worst mistake of her life, selling everything she owned to journey halfway across the world? For the first time since leaving England, Emma feared she may have.

Smoke billowed past the passenger car windows, momentarily masking her view of a sparkling blue lake amid the rolling countryside—not quite as scenic as the landscape in Wheatley, but certainly prettier than she'd imagined. Emma smoothed her hand over a stomach that was roiling with a mixture of anticipation and dread. She had no idea what to expect upon her arrival in Toronto, and the very real fear that she'd placed too great an importance on this trip continued to nag at her—as well as the uncomfortable feeling that she hadn't really consulted with



God before making her impulsive decision. What if Jonathan was right about giving her father fair warning before simply appearing on his doorstep? What if her father wanted nothing to do with her?

Emma leaned back and took a deep breath. Nothing would be gained by this tiresome worrying. Only time would tell whether her journey would be worth leaving everything behind—or not.

In the seat beside her, Jonathan slept with his head against the window. He still looked somewhat green, a color that seemed to haunt him since their ocean crossing. Who knew he would make such a poor sailor? Despite the doctor's pronouncement that he was fine, their six-day sojourn in Halifax had done little to restore Jonathan's equilibrium, and the extreme jostling of the train for the past two days had only exacerbated his condition. Because of the constant nausea, he'd barely been able to keep down more than a few saltine crackers and tea and had slept most of the time.

A door opened at the far end of the car, and a man in a conductor's uniform entered. He stopped at the first seat and requested to see the occupants' tickets, as he'd done after every new stop.

Several rows ahead, a young girl slipped away from her mother and darted into the aisle. Despite the jerky movement of the train, the girl managed to race toward Emma, a grin of triumph lighting her face.

She came to an abrupt halt at Emma's seat and stared, eyes dancing. "Hello. My name's Sarah. I like your hat."

Before Emma could reply, a bearded man approached. "Sarah, you must stay where your mama and I can see you." He lifted the girl into his arms and dropped a kiss on her cheek. "Come now. You can give the conductor our tickets."

Sarah threw her arms around the man's neck. "Then can I have some candy, Papa?"

The man chuckled, gazing at the child with such adoration

that Emma's throat tightened. "If you promise to stay in your seat, you may have a peppermint," he said.

Emma watched them until they disappeared from view, but the image of the man's expression as he held his daughter remained seared in Emma's mind, igniting a flicker of hope.

She'd traveled four thousand miles to receive a look such as that.

When the conductor reached them, Emma handed him the tickets. "How much longer until we reach Toronto?"

The man's expression brightened as he met her inquiring gaze. He appeared to be a little older than Jonathan, perhaps twenty-five or so, but his uniform gave him an air of authority. "About three hours, miss."

"Thank you." She bit her bottom lip. Only three hours until she'd disembark in the city where Randall Moore had been living for the past twenty-two years. Twenty-two years that Emma had believed her father to be dead. Was she daft to come so far in search of him without writing first?

Jonathan seemed to think so. He'd tried to get her to postpone her trip until she'd contacted Randall. However, the fear that her father would reject her before she'd even had the chance to meet him had spurred her to take immediate action. A letter could be ignored, but it would be a lot harder to dismiss her when she was standing right in front of him.

"Are you all right, miss?" The conductor peered at her, a concerned frown wrinkling his brow. "You're not feeling ill, I hope." He glanced over at her companion, perhaps fearing she had succumbed to motion sickness as well.

Emma managed a smile. "I'm fine. Just a bit nervous is all."

"Heartier than your husband, I see." He chuckled as he punched their tickets.

"He's not my husband," Emma replied quickly. "Just a dear friend who was good enough to accompany me on this trip."

Curiosity animated the man's rugged features. "First time to Canada?"

"Yes." She squeezed her gloved hands together on her lap. "I'm here to . . . visit some relatives I've never met before."

The train jerked as it rounded a bend, and the conductor grabbed the back of the seat to steady himself. "I'm sure they must be as excited as you are. I know I would be to have such a lovely guest arriving." He winked at her. "As much as I'd love to hear more, I'd best get back to work. Enjoy your stay in Toronto." He tipped his cap and set off down the car.

"Already breaking hearts all over the country, I see." Jonathan's wry voice brought heat to Emma's cheeks.

"Don't be silly. He was just being friendly. Like all the Canadians we've met so far."

Jonathan opened one eye to give her a disbelieving look. "I doubt they'd be as friendly if I were traveling alone."

"Go back to sleep, Grumpy Gus. You have three more hours until you're free of this torture."

Jonathan shifted in his seat, straightening to look out the window at the passing countryside. "It's not so bad. Better than being on that ship." He turned to look at Emma. "I suppose our first order of business when we arrive will be to secure lodgings."

Emma nodded. Her thoughts flew back to her safe little room above Grandad's watch shop and a wave of homesickness hit hard. What if things went wrong here? There was no cozy flat to go back to. No suitor waiting in the wings either. Her last letter to Lord Terrence had made sure of that.

"Should we try the boardinghouse Grace mentioned?" Jonathan's voice brought Emma out of her musing. "It will likely be more reasonable than staying at a hotel."

"That sounds like a good place to start." Although the impatient part of her wanted to delve right into locating her father, practicalities had to be considered before that could happen.

“And if there’s no room, perhaps the landlady could refer us elsewhere.” Jonathan’s brown hair was sticking up in all directions from being plastered against the window for most of the morning. A shadow of a beard hugged his jaw, which was unusual for Jonathan, who normally prided himself on being impeccably groomed. Further proof that he still wasn’t feeling up to par.

Emma pointed to his wayward tufts. “You’d better freshen up or you’re likely to scare the proprietress off. You look like an outlaw right now.”

He scowled at her as he ran his fingers over his jaw. “You try shaving in a room smaller than a closet. Besides, with this constant motion, I’d likely slit my throat.”

Emma forced a laugh. “I’m sure there will be a restroom at the Toronto station. From what I hear, it’s quite the grand place.”

“It is indeed.” The man seated across from them lowered his newspaper. “Recently renovated and everything. You can get a great shoeshine there,” he said to Jonathan.

“Sounds like you know the place well.”

“I travel for business, so I’ve spent my fair share of time waiting for trains there.” He smiled. “I’m Stan Olsen. Born and bred in Toronto. If I can be of any help, let me know.”

Emma restrained herself from barraging the poor man with questions. In a city the size of Toronto, chances were slim that he’d ever heard of her father.

Jonathan shot her an inquiring look, then leaned forward. “As a matter of fact,” he said, “we’re looking for someone. I don’t suppose you know a man named Randall Moore?”

The man’s brows rose. “Not personally. But most Torontonians know who he is.” He turned the newspaper back to the front page and handed it over. “Just finished reading an article about him. Bottom right-hand column.”

Emma's pulse raced. "Not in the obituaries, I hope."

"No. He's very much alive and kicking." The gentleman's eyes held a trace of amusement.

"I'm almost afraid to ask what that means." Jonathan held the paper between them so Emma could see it.

The headline of the article read *Mayoral Candidate Randall Moore Ramps Up His Campaign*.

Emma exchanged a look with Jonathan, then bent closer to read the smaller print.

Despite his recent defeat in the Toronto mayoral race, Professor Randall Moore has kicked off his next campaign with a bang. In light of the close finish in January's election, it's apparent that public support for Moore is reaching an all-time high. "Tommy Church can't win forever," Moore stated. "And I intend to be the one to unseat him."

The University of Toronto professor's bold declaration has issued a clear challenge to the mayor. If Moore's popularity continues, it seems he might indeed unseat Mr. Church in the next election.

Emma's mouth fell open. "He's running for mayor? Isn't that a rather mammoth undertaking?"

Mr. Olsen nodded. "A lot of time and money go into the campaign, especially for a candidate trying to unseat the current mayor who's been elected three years in a row." He crossed his arms over his chest. "What do you want with Randall Moore?"

Emma laid the newspaper on her lap. It wouldn't be fair for anyone else to learn about her visit before she had the chance to meet her father. "He's a . . . distant relative. I promised I'd look him up when I got to Toronto." She made to hand the paper back, but the man waved it off.

"You keep it. You might want to save that article for your family back home."

“Thank you.” She folded the paper and placed it in her handbag.

Mr. Olsen didn’t need to know that she had no family left. That Grandad was gone, leaving her with nothing but lies and deception.

Emma swallowed the hurt that rose in her throat.

She only prayed that once she met her father, he would provide her with answers to the questions that haunted her. Otherwise this arduous voyage would all be for naught.



Jonathan entered the dining car of the train and steadied himself with a hand to the wall. A low din filled the room. Seated at the cloth-covered tables, various passengers chatted over plates of food, their conversation punctuated by the clink of silverware and china.

Jonathan’s stomach, however, rebelled at the variety of smells that assaulted him. Bacon, beef, and a hint of barley soup. He wished he were up to eating something solid, but tea seemed the only thing that could ease the constant nausea that had plagued him since leaving the shores of England.

He made his way to the bar, where a large balding man in an apron was wiping the counter. Jonathan sat down in one of the chairs. “A cup of Earl Grey tea, please.”

The man blinked. “How about orange pekoe?”

“That will do. Thank you.”

The fellow turned, lifted a pot from behind him, and grabbed a cup with the other hand. He studied Jonathan while he poured the hot beverage. “Didn’t I see you in here this morning with your wife? Couldn’t help but notice her.” He winked at Jonathan.

Jonathan had been in with Emma for breakfast but had only been able to get down a few swallows of tea. “She’s not my wife. Just a very good friend.”

“Oh, I get it.” The man waggled his brows.

Jonathan held back a groan. He’d come on this voyage to keep Emma safe, not sully her reputation. “No, sir. I don’t believe you do. Emma considers me a brother.” He poured some milk into the tea and took a quick sip. “Not that I’d mind changing that opinion.”

“A brother, eh? You must have known each other a long time.”

“Indeed. Since the age of ten when I moved next door to her. Emma and I were both orphans—or so she thought at the time.” He lowered his cup. “She helped me cope with the loss of my family. We’ve been best friends ever since.”

The man peered at him. “I’m guessing your feelings changed once you got older?”

“For me, yes. But not for her. I’m trying to figure out how to remedy that.” Jonathan shifted his gaze to the counter. Why had he just spilled his innermost thoughts to this hefty stranger with coffee stains on his shirt?

“Ah, unrequited love. I totally understand.” The big man’s belly hung over the bar as he leaned forward, ready to share a confidence. “There was a girl in my hometown. Never could get her to notice me. Hope you have better luck, pal.”

“You and me both, sir.” He raised his cup in a mock salute and drained the contents, then rose to make his way back to the next car.

Emma had taken his spot by the window and was dozing in the seat, her long lashes a dark smudge against her skin. Jonathan sat beside her and inhaled deeply. The stuffy air in the train did nothing to help his stomach, nor could it calm his worry.

His dearest friend was in for a huge disappointment, and Jonathan had no idea how to prevent the crushing blow she would soon receive. Emma seemed blinded to the fact that her father did not appear to want her in his life. If he had, he would have made more of an effort to contact her. More than

a handful of letters that Emma had never received until the day she'd cleaned out her grandfather's desk.

Yet Jonathan couldn't blame her for wanting to meet the man. He just wished she'd waited to correspond with him first, to better ascertain the chance at being well received, but she claimed she needed the element of surprise in her favor. From Jonathan's experience, the sort of surprise she had in mind rarely worked out the way one intended.

Something he would do well to remember himself.

He reached up to pat the breast pocket of his jacket where the envelope that held his future rested. A measure of guilt weighed on his conscience at keeping this information from Emma. But if he'd told her before they left, she would have demanded he stay behind. He'd had a hard enough time convincing Emma that Aunt Trudy would be all right without him for the summer. In truth, Jonathan hated leaving his aunt to manage her dress shop alone, especially after just returning from four years at war, but in the end, he'd had no choice. There was no way he could allow Emma to travel halfway across the world alone.

His news could wait for a more opportune time. In fact, if everything went according to his expectations, they might be on a ship home within a few weeks. He pressed a hand to his still tender abdomen. Not a trip he was looking forward to, but it would be worth the seasickness to have Emma home where she belonged.

With him.

Jonathan snuck a glimpse at Emma's profile as she slept. Dark curls framed her heart-shaped face, and her pert nose was peppered with light freckles. But it was her stunning blue eyes that captivated him the most. Those eyes could turn from mischievous to furious with little warning, reflecting every thought and emotion that flitted across her delicate features. He still found it difficult to comprehend how the girl he'd grown up with—the



one he used to view as a little sister—could have turned into the woman who had captured his heart so completely.

Yet the question remained. How would he ever get Emma to see him as anything other than her best friend and surrogate brother?

Jonathan rubbed a hand over his whiskered jaw. He must look a sight after being sick the whole voyage over. He'd thought he could use the time on the ship to get closer to Emma, to reestablish their bond that was somewhat strained after the war. And then there was her relationship with some baron that had started near the end of the hostilities, while Jonathan was recuperating in France. Thankfully, she'd come to her senses and written to Lord Terrence the Terrible—as Jonathan had secretly taken to calling him—before they set sail, turning down his proposal of marriage. One less obstacle for Jonathan to overcome.

However, he would now have to make up for lost time and begin to woo the woman he was determined to make his wife.

If only he could be sure there was a chance Emma would one day reciprocate his feelings.