

“A masterful blend of romance, intrigue, and history. From the first line of the novel, readers will engage with the compelling characters who are forging paths through danger and lies to find their way to true faith, hope, and love. Page-turning action combines with depth and richness to create a full-bodied, rewarding read. After such a stirring conclusion to this series, I can’t wait to see what Crystal writes next!”

JOCELYN GREEN, Christy Award–winning author of
The Metropolitan Affair

“*Counterfeit Faith* is a story that raises the question: How do you handle life’s adversities? The faith is evident through every page, and I found myself encouraged throughout the story. Not to mention the suspense woven between the pages that kept me reading until I hit the satisfying end. Readers who love romance, suspense, and a graceful amount of faith won’t want to miss this story.”

TONI SHILOH, Christy Award–winning author

“With clear and compelling prose, Crystal Caudill’s *Counterfeit Faith* is full of mystery, suspense, and romance. As one clue leads to another, the reader is taken on a thrilling chase through Gilded-Age Philadelphia looking for answers until the satisfying end. A beautiful story of faith, redemption, and hope.”

GABRIELLE MEYER, best-selling author of *When the Day Comes*
and *In This Moment*

“*Counterfeit Faith* is a perfect blend of mystery, history, and romance. Caudill once again weaves a masterful tale in Josiah and Gwendolyn’s story as they learn God is the creator of second chances, and He breathes new life into those willing to surrender their plans for His. An intriguing story I could not put down!”

TARA JOHNSON, author of *Engraved on the Heart, Where Dandelions Bloom*, and *All Through the Night*

“In *Counterfeit Faith*, Crystal Caudill expertly weaves a story about counterfeiting, the Secret Service, and nineteenth-century children’s homes while layering a romance between the pages that unfolds alongside the mystery. With a host of sympathetic and likable characters (and a few not so likable), a riveting plot that clips along at the perfect pace, and a relatable faith thread, this book will appeal to fans of Erica Vetsch and Michelle Griep. A completely enjoyable read.”

KIMBERLY DUFFY, Carol Award finalist and author of
A Tapestry of Light

“This series has been perfection from book one, and it just keeps getting better! Caudill creates characters that are easy to love, and Josiah and Gwendolyn are among my favorites. The unique history (Gilded Age! Counterfeiters! Houses of refuge! The Secret Service!), the toe-curling romance, the witty and heartfelt dialogue, the edge-of-your-seat suspense, and the organic faith threads beckon readers to become immersed in this compelling story. If you have ever struggled to trust God, if you’ve ever echoed the gospel prayer of ‘Help my unbelief,’ then you will find your heart at home on these pages—at home, but not unchanged. Another fabulously entertaining and grace-filled offering from Crystal Caudill!”

CARRIE SCHMIDT, blogger at ReadingIsMySuperPower.org and
author of *Getting Past the Publishing Gatekeepers*

“*Counterfeit Faith* weaves fascinating historical details such as the green goods game and houses of refuge for children with questions of faith, family, intrigue, and suspense. A thoroughly entertaining read.”

CAROLYN MILLER, author of the Regency Wallflowers, Regency Brides, Original Six, and Muskoka Romance series

COUNTERFEIT
FAITH



HIDDEN HEARTS OF THE GILDED AGE

Counterfeit Truth (novella)

Counterfeit Love

Counterfeit Hope

Counterfeit Faith

We Three Kings: A Christmas Novella Collection



COUNTERFEIT FAITH



CRYSTAL CAUDILL



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*To my LORD and Savior:
I believe; help my unbelief.*

To Nehemiah:

*You are my energetic, karate-loving boy,
who brings the cheesy and punny to my world.
May you always know how much I love you and appreciate your sharp mind,
and how often I pray for you. And may you never forget that
Jesus loves you more.*

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

—MARK 9:24

CHAPTER I

*April 15, 1885
Philadelphia, PA*

THE SHRILL VOICE OF THE Carpenters' Hall guide grated against Gwendolyn Ellison's raw nerves. Five tours in three hours and still Mr. Farwell hadn't shown. Of the dozen board members for Final Chance House of Refuge, he'd been the only one to believe her. The only one willing to secretly investigate her claims of abuse. Had someone at Final Chance discovered their clandestine meeting plans? Though she tried to appear the relaxed tourist enjoying a day at the home of the First Continental Congress, every muscle in her back and face ached with stone-hard tension.

The front door opened. Unseasonable cold swirled into the room, carrying with it the tap of shoes against the black and beige tiles. *Please be bim*. She surreptitiously shifted her attention toward the sound. Just another tourist huddled in a woolen coat. Perhaps she'd missed Mr. Farwell's entrance and he was holding back for fear of being recognized by someone in the room. She edged closer to the fireplace, lit to ward off the chill brought in by the light snow, and searched the bright, open room. Half a dozen men wandered the space between the gilded-frame membership board, tall iconic columns, and congressional chairs, but none of them resembled the one she sought.

Her stomach churned. This was the last tour of the day. If Mr. Farwell didn't show, she'd be forced to return to Final Chance—and her position as matron over the girls' ward—unescorted and without answers. Once again, she peeked at her cupped hand to read the note he'd concealed inside the bouquet delivered to her office that morning.

Meet me at Carpenters' Hall, one o'clock. Tell no one. What I've uncovered is worse than you suspected and far more dangerous. We need to handle this carefully.

She swallowed around the permanent lump that had formed in her throat upon the note's arrival. What could be worse than the abuse of boys under the care of Final Chance's superintendent? And was the danger directed at them, or her, or both? Danger to herself—while unwelcome—could be tolerated, but toward the children? She wouldn't stand for it. Society might deem them worthless criminals, but they deserved to be safe and have a chance at reformation and an honest life.

As the tour herded toward the Sack-Back Windsor chairs once used by the Congressional delegates, Gwendolyn drifted toward George Washington's portrait hanging next to the window. She hoped to seem lost in admiration of the painting even though her scrutiny was fixed on the alley entrance. With Carpenters' Hall nearly boxed in and hidden by the businesses surrounding it, the wrought iron gate was the only way to access the property from Chestnut Street. Plenty of people bustled past the entrance, but the confident stride of Mr. Farwell never materialized. True, he could approach from the side alley, but the back door hadn't been opened in two tours.

Something must have happened. The watchmaker was punctual, without exception. To be nearly three hours late bespoke a calamity.

In a final grasp at hope, she surveyed the Hudson Street entrance.

A familiar, lone figure with folded arms and hat tugged down over his long face leaned against the wrought iron fence.

She sucked in a breath and gripped her collar.

Quincy Slocum, a former Final Chance inmate and seed planted by the devil himself.

No moral reformation techniques attempted in Quincy's three years at the institution had touched his conscience, yet he'd been released last year at sixteen without objection from anyone but her. Did he follow her now merely to satisfy a grudge, or had someone from Final Chance assigned him the task of silencing her after her pointed inquiries? Whatever the reasoning, his strategic position to allow him observation of either exit declared sinister intentions.

Gwendolyn rejoined the small tour group that now studied the banner that had been carried during the Grand Federal Procession. Wisdom dictated she not leave the premises alone, and that meant striking up a conversation that lasted until she reached the streetcar. Once there, Quincy wouldn't be able to act without drawing attention to himself.

As the guide concluded his speech, Gwendolyn appraised the prospects. The three single gentlemen were out of the question. Her position as matron over the girls' ward required an irreproachable reputation, and a lady did not engage with single men. The only other female in the group was a young lady of about fourteen, standing on the arm of a grandfatherly gentleman. Doe-eyed teen girls tended to have one important quality: the propensity to prattle.

When the building closed for the day, she followed the pair down the front granite stairs into the swirl of flurries brought on by winter's last grasp at spring. At the walkway, she matched pace with the girl. "What a fascinating tour. Did you enjoy it?"

The man raised an eyebrow at her impertinent intrusion and rebuffed her with silence as they walked across the Hall's yard toward the narrow alley.

Thankfully, his companion seemed eager to engage. "Oh yes! I particularly enjoyed learning about Mr. Robert Smith." Her wistful sigh hinted at girlish infatuation. "He was a true American hero. Imagine the suffering he must have endured as he stood in the frigid Delaware, building obstructions to thwart the British. It's so sad that he caught pneumonia and died before seeing the fruits of his sacrifice."

The designer of Carpenters' Hall certainly had a new admirer. The

young thing continued to gush, allowing Gwendolyn the freedom to observe Quincy slink through the gate ahead of them. Would it be too much to hope he'd disappear somewhere and forget about her? When the girl's rambling dwindled to nothing, Gwendolyn engaged the gentleman. At least if Quincy tried to grab her as they walked through the entrance, the man would notice and be forced to act in her defense.

"And you, sir. What did you think of the tour?"

He raked Gwendolyn's appearance from the worn straw hat to the scuffed boots and pulled his ward to his other side, as if shielding her from a pickpocket attempting to cut her purse strings. Of course he'd assume the worst. While her position as matron and head officer was respectable for a single woman, it did not afford her anything better than the dull wool dress worn by most factory workers. Although, even if she did reveal that she oversaw the care and reformation of juvenile delinquents, he didn't seem the type of man to change his opinion of her.

"And just where is your escort, miss?"

She held her breath as they passed through the gate.

One step.

Two steps.

Three steps.

No hands seized her.

She released her breath in a hazy puff. "They abandoned me, sir, and I hoped your presence would serve as a barrier to unwanted attention until I reached the streetcar. I'm certain a gentleman such as yourself wouldn't deny a lady the protection of his presence."

"A woman who gallivants alone is no lady and deserves whatever advances are made upon her." He abruptly pivoted toward Hudson Street when they reached the corner. "Come, Penny. I'll not allow you to consort further with a woman of such low breeding."

Low breeding, indeed. He must consider himself a righteous Pharisee and her a repulsive Samaritan. She should've known better than to expect anyone but God to come to her aid. He was the only One whom she could rely upon.

A streetcar bell clanged, and she spun just in time to watch her transportation pull away. If she'd not wasted time with that Pharisee, she might've made it. Although she hadn't spotted Quincy yet, waiting for the next streetcar wouldn't be safe, and she'd never make it to the Second Street station before it left from there too.

Hang good manners. She lifted her hem and jackrabbited toward the departing car.

Appalled stares and muttered disapprovals met and followed in her wake. The car slowed as it approached the midpoint of the next square in front of Independence Hall. With a fresh spurt of determination, she sprinted onto Fifth Street.

Horse hooves rose up in her periphery, and the horses' startled shrieks pierced her ears. She snapped her gaze to the wagon ready to barrel her down. So much for Quincy being her biggest concern. She squeezed her eyes shut and braced for the impact.

A hand clamped around her arm and yanked her back onto the sidewalk as a whoosh of air revealed how close she'd come to being trampled.

"Careful now, Matron Ellison. I'd hate for a wagon to kill you."

Quincy. The malicious quality of his adenoidal voice could never be mistaken for a hero's. Her heart pounded against her chest worse than the agitated horses' hooves against the cobblestone.

Mustering a courage that could only come from God, she met the flinty glower of the boy whose features she'd always felt were too squished together for such a large surface. "I'd prefer my death to come by old age."

"Then you'd best be minding your own business. Asking questions is detrimental to your health. Just ask Mr. Farwell." Quincy forced his arm through hers in a mockery of gentlemanly behavior and propelled her down Fifth Street, away from the bustle of people—and the police station next to Independence Hall.

"What have you done to him?"

"You'll find out soon enough. I only wish I could be there when you find out his fate."

“If you’ve hurt him, I’ll turn you over to the police.”

“You should be more worried about yourself. I intend to make sure you understand the seriousness of your position.” The fingers of his free hand stroked her arm as if she were a pet. “Maybe I’ll start with setting flame to your skirts like the witch you always were.” Quincy stopped walking, lost in the imaginings of his depraved mind. “Yes, that’s what I’ll do. Just a foretaste of what can happen if you open your yap.”

There was no doubt he’d do it. He’d tortured animals that he’d claimed to adore. How much more delight would he take in harming his enemies?

“You wouldn’t risk it. There are too many people around, and the police station’s only a dozen yards away.”

“You’re right. It’s too crowded here.”

His free hand slipped underneath their arms to his pocket. The wooden handle of a knife emerged. In one swift movement, he shifted it into the fist beneath her pinned arm. He angled the blade’s edge toward her and tugged her close. The point pierced through the wool of her coat and dress to scrape against flesh. Any movement contrary to his and she’d likely suffer a punctured lung.

“What say you? Shall we go for a ride?”

“I don’t see as I have any choice.”

“Maybe you got smarts after all.” He guided her toward the hack stand outside the Philadelphia Library.

When two men jogged down the library steps and turned their direction, Quincy angled his body toward hers and tilted his cap to shield his face from view. For a breath, the blond man’s eyes met hers, and hope for a rescue swelled within her breast. Then his focus skittered away, and he walked past, talking to his companion without a second glance. She should’ve known better than to hope. Heroes were in short supply in her life.

“At whose behest are you working, Quincy? I’ll compensate you handsomely for telling me and then releasing me.”

His derisive laugh proclaimed his refusal. “No questions. We’ve got

eyes everywhere. Play by our rules and, aside from a few burns, there's no need to worry. But if you speak one word to anyone, even your precious little girls, we'll know."

He stopped at the first empty cab. "Christian and Carpenter Street." With a jab meant to remind her of the weapon he wielded, he released her arm and shifted almost against her back. "After you."

Getting in that hack meant submitting to torture—maybe worse, if he lost control. *My saviour; thou savest me from violence.*

"Get moving."

She'd move all right, but not inside. With one boot on the foot iron, she gripped the hack's frame and drew in a deep breath. May this horse be as unnerved as the ones that nearly trampled her. On a prayer, she rent a shrill scream that would lead either to her death or her salvation.

CHAPTER 2

UNNATURAL LIGHT GLINTED FROM A couple's entwined arms and distracted Secret Service operative Josiah Isaacs from his brother-in-law's ramblings about the Philadelphia Library's vast collection. The momentary light must've been the sun reflecting off a button. Josiah shook his head and tried to concentrate on Robert's words, but philosophy and classical literature failed to hold his interest. Why had he listened to his sister Abigail's suggestion that he take the day off work and go with her husband to the library? He had a routine for dealing with the anniversary of his wife's death, and while he loved his brother-in-law, Robert's subject matter failed to engage his mind like untangling a counterfeiting case would.

Light glinted again, and he squinted at the metallic object that quickly disappeared.

That was no button.

The familiar zing of warning coiled his gut into knots. A signal he'd learned not to ignore.

So as not to arouse suspicion, he evaluated the situation with a single glance. The man's unnatural, angled walk and tilted head betrayed an attempt to hide his identity. His companion's comely face, however, was clearly visible. Wide copper eyes stood out against her ghost-white pallor, and when their gazes met, unmitigated fear cried out to him.

Wherever the couple was going, it wasn't with her consent. Josiah

snapped his attention back to Robert to avoid alerting the woman's partner that he'd noticed.

As soon as the couple passed, Josiah elbowed Robert. "Stay here. I might need you to run for the police."

Robert's thick brows shot toward his receding hairline, but Josiah pivoted to follow the couple without further explanation.

From the back, the man looked to be in that awkward age between youth and manhood. Likely he hadn't even grown enough hair to shave. Although, were anyone to call him a hobbledohoy, he seemed the type to knock out a few teeth to ensure the slur wasn't repeated. The woman's feminine frame posed no competition for his stocky build, and though her posture slanted away from his one-armed hold, the majority of her body remained unseemly close to his. If Josiah wasn't careful, she could be injured in any attempt to free her.

They stopped at the hack stand several yards away, and Josiah slowed his pace to watch them out of the corner of his eye as he pretended to study the Philosophical Society's building across the street. After a short exchange with the driver, the man shifted behind the woman, providing a clear view of their profiles.

And a knife.

Of all the days to play unarmed tourist with Robert. No one walked away from a knife fight unscathed. It'd be so much easier if he could just draw his Colt and tell Shaveless to drop the knife. However, the woman could easily become a shield for the criminal.

Josiah continued his seemingly distracted walk toward them. Just a few more feet and he'd be close enough to act.

"Get moving."

The knifepoint pressed against her back, forcing obedience—and the blade—into full view.

Perfect. With Shaveless's arm fully extended, the edge of his knife facing away, and his focus solely on the woman, the risk of injury was lessened.

Drawing on his years on the track and field team in university,

Josiah slid one foot forward and bent slightly at the waist. This was no hundred-yard dash, but preparation and speed would make the difference between winning or losing this battle. Every muscle tensed, ready to push him forward the moment she disappeared inside the cab. He forced steady breaths and concentrated on where the knife touched her back. She stepped onto the foot iron, and his hand edged forward despite his intent to keep an inconspicuous stance as much as possible. One more step; then he'd sprint and tackle.

Her other foot lifted, and her body pulled away from the blade.

Then she screamed.

His body shot forward without his leave, as if in response to a race gun's firing.

The horse spooked beside him.

Josiah pounded forward as the hack wobbled and the woman wavered backward toward the point. He pushed faster. Shaveless's head snapped toward him just as Josiah side-tackled him.

They thudded to the ground, but Shaveless retained a firm grasp on the knife's handle. He writhed beneath Josiah, and in a wild jab over the shoulder, nicked Josiah's cheek.

Instinctively, Josiah reeled back, saving himself from gaining an extra mouth hole but losing his grip on Shaveless in the process.

Shaveless rolled and thrust an elbow into Josiah's gut. Free of entanglement, Shaveless sprang to his feet and whirled toward Josiah, advancing with wide arcing slashes.

Josiah scrambled to gain his footing, but ducking and dodging kept him on the ground. How did he end up on the wrong side of this fight? If he didn't get to his feet soon, he'd garner enough holes to become a colander.

Robert's call for police assistance brought a wave of relief. He just needed to delay the fight long enough for help to arrive.

All at once Shaveless fell forward. The blade plunged toward Josiah, and he knocked his arm against Shaveless's arm. The knife flew from Shaveless's hand and clattered against the ground as the boy landed on top of him.

“Get off me!” Shaveless’s command accompanied a kicking motion and a feminine yelp of pain.

The sound ripped a tide of righteous anger through Josiah, and he grabbed the boy’s collar with one hand and landed a fist across his face with the other. Shaveless jerked sideways but returned a clobbering punch of his own. Lights flashed and ringing shrilled in Josiah’s ears.

A shadow passed over his face as Shaveless reached for the knife.

Not a chance. They weren’t starting that dance again. Josiah wrapped his arms around Shaveless’s waist and rolled them in the opposite direction until the boy lay pinned beneath him. A fist crashed into Josiah’s throat, and though it lacked deadly force, Josiah gasped for air.

Shaveless shoved Josiah aside and jumped to his feet again. He kicked Josiah’s midsection. Josiah doubled over, and Shaveless followed up with another swift kick.

“Leave him alone!” The woman lunged forward like she planned to grab Shaveless’s swinging leg.

With a well-balanced pivot, Shaveless redirected his kick and smashed his foot into her face. She fell back—dazed or unconscious, Josiah couldn’t tell.

Police whistles pierced the air, and Shaveless dashed away before Josiah could stop him.

One police officer ran past him in pursuit of the boy, while a second stopped by Josiah. “What happened?”

“Call for an ambulance. The lady’s been hurt.”

The officer ran back to headquarters to do as bid while Josiah scrambled to the woman’s side to check for life-threatening injuries. To his knowledge, the knife had never been close enough to harm her once the attack started, but that didn’t mean she’d been without injury before his arrival. He was no doctor, but if he found blood, he knew he needed to put pressure on it until the ambulance arrived.

His ragged breath caught as he focused on her for the first time. He remembered having been gripped by her pale face and fear-stricken eyes, but now the beauty of her visage struck him as worthy of belonging

in a Grecian temple. It was as if Aphrodite had taken on breath and walked off the page Robert had shown him at the Philadelphia Library.

Except this Grecian goddess looked like she'd been kicked down from Mount Olympus by a vengeful Hera. Dirt and debris imprinted Shaveless's shoe across her temple on the right side of her face. Based on her thin-pressed lips and deep furrows between her brows, she probably had one devil of a headache. Long soft curls knocked free from their confines spilled onto the ground like sheaves of wheat during harvest season.

Do your job and stop gawking. The woman could be bleeding.

He inspected the length of her, from the high neck of her worn, black wool coat, down her unfashionable but sturdy brown skirts, to the scuffed toes of her heeled buttoned boots. Thankfully, nothing indicated blood was seeping into the material, and her chest rose and fell in even—albeit shuddered—breaths. Once the ambulance arrived, he'd insist on traveling with her to the hospital to ensure she received proper treatment and an examination for a concussion.

"Miss, can you speak to me?"

Languid eyelids opened to reveal stunning copper orbs. Was there anything not breathtaking about this woman?

She blinked at him and then nearly collided heads with him as she shot up to a sitting position. "You're bleeding!"

He'd forgotten about the slice to his face, but now that she mentioned it, he noticed a dull throbbing.

She fumbled with the pockets of her coat and pulled free a lacy handkerchief. Before he could accept or reject it, she pressed the material against his cheek with as much tenderness as his middle sister, Abigail, would.

"You need a doctor. Hold this in place, and don't let up on the pressure."

Her no-nonsense tone surprised him, considering the shrill, panicked quality he'd heard only moments ago. Within seconds this woman had taken command of herself and the situation—headache or not. Josiah doubted even Theresa Cosgrove or Luella Darlington,

the intrepid wives of his former Secret Service partners, could manage such a feat.

He commandeered applying the handkerchief and pulled away from the touch that zinged with unwanted attraction. "It isn't nearly as serious as you suppose."

She ignored his response and strode to the driver. "Sir, we require transportation to Pennsylvania Hospital."

Josiah followed. "I've already sent for an ambulance. We need to file a report with the police while we wait."

She sucked in a breath and stiffened. Though she attempted a relaxed countenance when she faced him, the pinched corners of her mouth and eyes gave away her anxiety. "Nonsense. Your health is of primary concern, and taking this hack will be more expedient than waiting for an ambulance."

Intuition honed over five years in the Secret Service twisted his stomach. Why did she fear going to the police? What did she know that she was afraid to share? "Perhaps, but that would greatly reduce my ability to get to know the damsel in distress I rescued."

A pretty pink blush crept across her cheeks. "I believe the fanciful intrigue of a mysterious woman is better than the reality you have before you."

"I'd like to judge that for myself." He bowed formally as if attending a ball instead of bleeding on the sidewalk. "Josiah Isaacs, at your service, Miss . . ."

Silence.

"Come now, my lady. I think it's only fair that since you know my name, I should be allowed to know yours."

"You'll forgive me if I remain silent on the matter. It isn't proper for a single woman to become acquainted with a stranger met on the street."

"Not even if he's your knight in shining armor?"

After being manipulated into making nine proposals, he knew better than to encourage any woman's fancy, especially as he had no wish to marry again. However, the same instinct that earlier told him to

follow her urged him now to get her name, and charm was his best tool.

“Most knights require a kiss for their heroic acts. I only require a name.”

Her eyes dropped, and that pink deepened to red. “I suppose that can be allowed.” She took a deep breath and looked up with restored confidence. “I’m Gwendolyn—”

“Good heavens, Josiah! What will Abigail say when I bring you home?” Robert reached them, an officer at his side.

Gwendolyn’s eyes rounded, clearly revealing that she now assumed Josiah was a claimed man. Normally he’d welcome the misunderstanding, but this time it chafed. If his charm lost its power over her, he’d be left with no recourse to find the information he sought.

“Abigail’s my—”

“He got away, but I think I recognized him.” The officer who’d pursued Shaveless interrupted Josiah’s explanation. “You’re lucky to have escaped, miss. Devil Quin’s got quite the reputation at the station.”

The clanging bell of the approaching ambulance prevented further conversation. Within the next minute the wagon stopped in front of them, and two men dressed in white uniforms hopped out. The doctor directed Josiah to the back of the wagon to have his gash stitched up. To his chagrin, Gwendolyn remained on the sidewalk, out of view. Though he was glad she couldn’t witness him tearing up and clenching his jaw at the pain the four stitches induced, every minute apart from her strained his patience. As the doctor tied off his stitches, Robert, the other hospital attendant, and an officer rounded the back of the wagon.

“Is the lady still here?” The words pulled painfully at his stitches, and the doctor admonished Josiah for moving.

“I’m afraid not, sir,” the officer said. “She refused an examination and declared she didn’t want to press charges. If you ask me, she was afraid of Devil Quin finding her.”

“Did you get her name at least?”

The doctor muttered under his breath about uncooperative patients.

“No, sir. She gave me the slip the first chance she got. I was hoping you knew her name.”

That sealed it. Nothing weighed on him more than a woman in dire straits. He should know better than to get involved, especially since his attempts usually resulted in a coerced proposal and the need to break it, but this was different. Gwendolyn wasn't just in dire straits; she was in danger. Especially as long as Devil Quin prowled the streets.

“I'd like to be kept informed of your progress on the case.” Josiah handed his business card to the officer, directing all information to be delivered to the Secret Service office. The more official the appearance of his involvement, the better.

Once they were on the streetcar home, Robert scrutinized Josiah's face. “I hope you have a story ready for that stitchwork of yours. Your mother and Abigail will faint dead away if they know the truth.”

“You come up with a story. It hurts too much to talk.” An ice pack and a good dose of medicine would go a long way in helping.

Robert rubbed his hands together. “What do you think of us being pirated away on the Delaware River and having fought our way free? I, of course, escaped unscathed due to my exceptional skills with a sword, but you received a nick due to your *almost* exceptional skills.”

Josiah shook his head and allowed Robert to spin wilder and wilder tales. Eventually, Abigail would root out the truth, just as Josiah had every intention of rooting out the truth about the mysterious Gwendolyn. It shouldn't be too hard to find her. After all, how many Gwendolyns could there be in Philadelphia?