

The young woman galloped down the road to meet them. Marshall brought the gig to a halt and tipped his hat. "Good afternoon, miss."

Her frown was a puzzled one. "I thought you went off to fetch the crusty old tutor." Her gaze shifted to Alistair. "Who are you?"

"Mr. Harcourt." He doffed his topper. "The crusty old tutor."

Her cheekbones took on a pinkish hue. "Oh." She cleared her throat. "I'd expected an elderly fellow."

Alistair lifted one eyebrow. "And who might you be?"

"Allow me to make the introductions, Mr. Harcourt." Marshall gestured toward the lady. "This is Miss Durham."

"Miss Durham?" Alistair gaped. "My pupil? I'd expected a child."

"It seems we were both mistaken." The young woman's face took on a mulish cast. "You are wasting your time, you know. I don't need a tutor. I'm quite capable of moving in society as I am."

His gaze fell to her breeches. "I beg to differ. If you don't require my tutelage, however, I'll return home."

Her chin lifted. "Excellent."

"First, however, I must explain the situation to Mrs. Shaw."

"Must you, indeed?" Miss Durham's eyes narrowed. "I hope you don't plan on revealing the details of our encounter."

"On that score, I'm afraid I cannot remain silent." Alistair feigned innocence. "It's my duty to tell Mrs. Shaw she has a bigger challenge than any crusty old tutor can address."

"You wouldn't dare!" The color in Miss Durham's cheekbones spread to the rest of her face. "I thought you were a gentleman!"

"I thought you were a lady." Alistair shrugged. "It seems we were both mistaken."

She scowled. "Hmph!" Miss Durham wheeled her horse around and galloped off without a backward glance.

Alistair gave the coachman a beaming smile. "That went quite well."

Marshall snickered and shook his head. "After coming all this way, I'm sorry you'll be leaving so soon."

Alistair lifted an eyebrow. "Who says I'm leaving?"