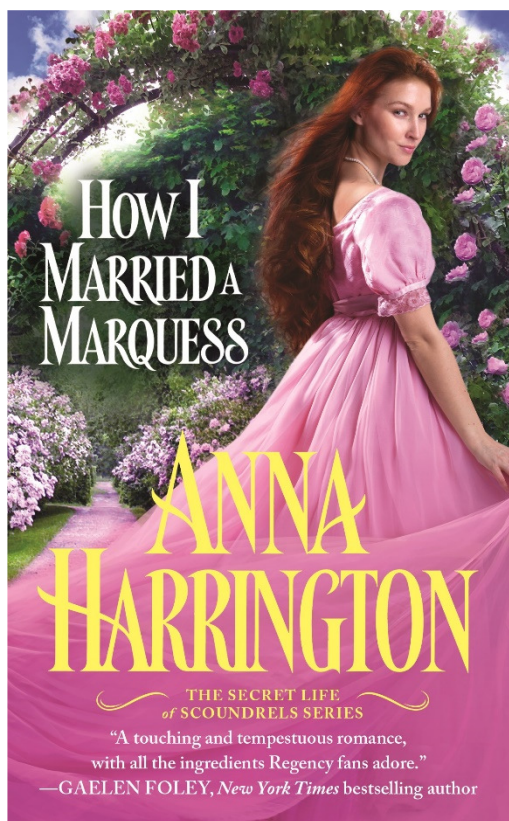


## Bonus Scene:

# HOW I MARRIED A MARQUESS



*SPOILER – We learn along with Thomas in HOW I MARRIED A MARQUESS that Josie is committing highway robbery in order to fund the local orphanage, where she once lived. We also know why she’s doing it. But because of the timeline, we never get to see the moment when she makes the decision to become a highwayman, nor do we learn what event triggers that decision. Here is it. (FYI – When Thomas and Josie look through Bletchley’s book, Josie mentions a potter in Islingham...Mrs. Potter. I named her after the song by Counting Crows.)*

***Islingham Village, Lincolnshire  
April 10, 1815***

Josephine Carlisle stormed into the front parlor of the local orphanage on High Street. She felt an instant rush of fury as she caught the manageress once again sleeping on the sofa in the middle of the afternoon while

the children were left to run wild through the village streets and nearby fields, unschooled and unattended. A loud snore cut through the room.

“Mrs. Potter!”

The plump woman, who appeared to be in her early fifties, although God only knew how old she truly was, startled awake with a gasping jolt that choked the snore mid-gurgle, rolled off the sofa, and landed on the floor with a soft oomph. The woman’s wide eyes looked around disconcertedly, and Josie knew if she were closer she’d be able to smell gin on the woman’s breath.

When her gaze settle on Josie, her unfocused, blood-shot eyes narrowed.

“Why are you in here?” Josie demanded, in a voice far more commanding and mature than her twenty years should have allowed. But then, she’d been through far more in her short life than other ladies her age. “Why are you not minding the children?”

The woman scowled, clearly hung over from her morning’s imbibing. “‘Tweren’t feelin’ good,” she muttered, slowly pulling herself back up to the sofa. The cold dislike between the two women was palpable, each glaring disdainfully at the other. “Ain’t a person ‘lloed t’ rest when she ain’t feelin’ good?”

Josie caught the faint slur in her voice, and her patience snapped. She’d been dealing with this woman’s careless disregard for the orphans long enough. Without asking, she

stomped across the room to the desk beneath the window and grabbed for the home's account book.

"Hey, now!" Potter called out angrily, but unable to find either the steadiness in her legs or the balance in her drunken mind to stand, she could only jab an angry finger at Josie as she ignored the woman and flipped through the ledger. "That ain't none of yer concern, Missy!"

"It's Miss Carlisle," Josie informed her caustically as her eyes scanned through the past few pages of the ledger, "or the Honorable Miss Josephine, if you prefer. But I am not Missy, not to you," her teeth clenched, "not anymore."

"All high an' mighty now, are ye? The daughter of a baron." Potter scoffed with contempt. "But I know what ye are, ev'n if everybody else 'round this place forgets. I was there th' day they collected ye. You is one of 'em, Missy. A good fer nothin' gel like the rest."

Josie fought back the anger burning in her at the woman's words, the humiliation of the reminder of her past. "I am proud to be one of them," she sniffed haughtily. "And I am proof that a better life awaits them away from this place."

The woman cackled with laughter, one hand pressing into her round stomach as the other went to her head, most likely aching from the effects of the gin. "Fool 'em others all ye ken, Missy, but ye won't be a-foolin' me. I know what ye are."

"What I am," Josie grit her teeth to keep back the cutting curse, "is concerned that there is no food in the kitchen larders, no coal in the basement bin, and not nearly enough blankets and bedding in the dormitories." She angrily flipped through the ledger, slapping open one page at a time and noting immediately that the inventory she'd glimpsed in the basement did not even come close to matching what the ledger said the home should have on hand. "No books in the schoolroom—and no children there, either, in the middle of the afternoon when they should be doing their lessons—no coats, not enough shoes, all the candles in the storage room missing..."

"Maybe we dinna 'ave those things t' begin wit'."

Potter's voice had gone cold and menacing, and Josie knew not to push her. If Josie put her in too bad a mood, the heartless woman would take it out on the children, and Josie knew first hand how painful the lack of a supper could be on a child's stomach, how terrible the beatings, how terrifying to be locked into the blackness of the coal bin and left there for the night.

"You had them," she pressed carefully. "They were all here just last month when the shipment arrived. I oversaw the delivery myself. Where did they go?"

"Perhaps yer mistaken."

Josie slammed the ledger shut. Potter was skimming money from the accounts. Worse, the woman appeared to be selling whatever extra inventory the home possessed in order to pay for her drink. "I am not mistaken."

"Seems t' me as if ye are." She stretched like a cat across the sofa, clearly not caring about her appearance or the reputation of the home and its children. "'Course 'tis just me word 'gainst yers. Who do ye think the marquess will be believin'?"

Josie felt the ache clench viciously at her chest, the same frustrated, helpless ache she remembered so vividly from when she was a child.

Potter closed her eyes, and within seconds, the woman was asleep again, snoring just as loudly as before, while Josie could only stand there. There was nothing she could do. Her parents had already donated generously to the home, her brothers already helped fix up the dilapidated building that seemed to be falling in upon itself, and she'd given every last ha'penny of her pin money, only to have it all come to nothing. The conditions for the orphans were just as wretched as ever.

As she stormed from the orphanage, slamming doors as she went in hopes the noise would at least wake Potter again, she swiped an angry hand fiercely at her eyes, the frustration more than she could bear.

She reached the front door and stopped. One of the girls had dropped a rag doll on the floor, the well-loved material having worn thin and grown filthy from sticky, grimy hands carrying it through the home and holding it close, sleeping with it tucked into the cots where the girls slept at night three abreast because there were never enough blankets, never enough coal to keep the fires going, and Potter certainly would never have risen in the night to stoke the fires to keep the children warm.

“Mary!” a soft voice called out. Gracie, one of the youngest children at the home, ran up the steps and grabbed frantically for the doll. “There she is—my baby!”

Josie released the doll, and the girl clutched it desperately to her chest.

“Thank you, Miss Josie—oh, thank you so much for finding Mary! So much!” Gracie cradled the doll in her arms like a real baby and began to sing softly to her. The same lullaby Josie sang to the girls at the home whenever they were frightened. “She’s all right now. I won’t ever let anything happen to her.”

“I am very glad to hear that, Grace,” Josie told her softly.

“I’m her mama,” the child told her softly, “and a mama has to do everything she can to protect her babies, no matter what. Everything.” The child looked up at her then, with green eyes so clear and bright that they stripped the air from Josie’s lungs. “Isn’t that right, Miss?”

Josie nodded tightly, unable to speak as her chest clenched with a sharp pain so hard she winced. Then Grace skipped away, back down the steps to join the other children playing at the edge of the street.

She stared after the girl, unable to hold back the hot tears spilling down her face.