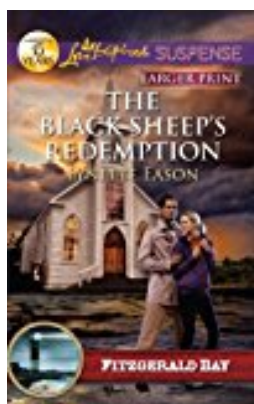


# [PDF] The Black Sheep's Redemption (Love Inspired Large Print Suspense)

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## **Description:**

**About the Author** Lynette Eason grew up in Greenville, SC and now lives in Simpsonville, SC. She is married and has two precious children, Lauryn and Will. Lynette is a full time writer. When she's not writing, Lynette enjoys visits to the mountains, hanging out with family and brainstorming stories with her fellow writers. She gives God the glory for her giving her the talent and desire to spin stories that bring readers to the edge of their seat and to the throne of Christ.

**Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.** Demi Taylor jumped as something scraped against the window behind her. Her book fell to the floor. Heart thumping, she bolted from the couch and spun to look at the window. She'd had it cracked to let in the sound of the ocean crashing on the cliffs just below the house but the blinds were closed and blocked her view. Which was good.

If she couldn't see out, no one could see in. Quickly, she moved the blinds, shut the window and latched it. Heart still racing, she simply stared at it for a moment as she told herself to calm down. Absently, she shoved up her wire-rimmed glasses back on her nose.

What would someone be doing anywhere near that window? Or was she just being silly and it was a tree branch knocking against the pane?

After all, this was her first week on the job as nanny to Charles Fitzgerald's children and she wasn't used to the night sounds of this house. A shiver danced across her skin, raising goose bumps and her blood pressure.

She walked to the front door and checked the lock.

Secured.

Pulling the curtain covering the small window to the left, she parted the blinds and peered out into the dark night. The motion-activated floodlights weren't on which meant no one had moved in front of them.

She breathed a little easier, her heart rate slowed and she could almost laugh at her jumpiness.

It was only eight-thirty. Her new employer should be home any minute. She'd agreed to stay late while he made a house call, but she wasn't sure she liked it.

Ever since waking up in the hospital three weeks ago with no real memory of who she was, or where she belonged, Demi quickly found out she didn't like the dark.

The fact that no one had come forward to identify her even after her face had been all over the news and in the paper was a bitter pill to swallow. Starting over in Fitzgerald Bay, Massachusetts, had seemed like a good idea last week and getting a job almost immediately had seemed like a dream come true.

Now, doubt assailed her.

She peered out again. The inky blackness made her shiver. Charles and his family lived in the Fitzgerald Bay lighthouse keeper's residence, but even the lighthouse beam didn't reach far enough to cut through the dark.

All Demi knew was that darkness brought flashes of pain, screams, angry words and what she thought was a memory of heavy fists. But that was all she could pull from her shuttered mind before the pounding headache drilled into her, forcing her to abandon her efforts to remember.

No, she didn't like the dark. Add in the weird noises and her adrenaline had stayed spiked since Charles had left three hours ago. A fine tremble set in and she clenched her fingers into fists.

She stood still, eyes closed.

And listened.

Maybe it was just her imagination.

At night, in her small apartment above The Reading Nook bookstore in town, she often thought she heard footsteps outside her door. Lurking, hiding.

But every time she checked, no one was ever there.

Maybe

Another scrape against the house made her jerk. Then a muffled pop caused her to gasp. What was going on? This was *not* her imagination.

She made her way into the kitchen and closed the blinds. Standing next to the window with the blinds now shut, she thought she heard a footfall, a rattle.

And another pop.

A muffled curse.

Her breathing quickened once again and her heart picked up speed.

Someone was definitely near the garage. What should she do? Get the kids? Hide? The phone.

She needed to call the police. And Charles.

Trembling, knees almost knocking, she slapped the light switch on the wall and threw the room into total darkness.

A shudder ripped through her as she thought about the children sleeping down the hall. What if the person was trying to get into the house?

She had to protect the children.

Fighting the fear threatening to cripple her, she groped for the handset of the cordless phone on the counter beside the refrigerator.

The cool plastic slid into her palm and she felt for the digits. 9-1-1.

Lifting it to her ear, she waited, heart thudding so hard she wondered if she'd be able to hear the dispatcher. "9-1-1, what's your emergency?"

"Someone's outside the house," she whispered. "Charles Fitzgerald's home. I think he's trying to get in."

"Ma'am, stay on the line. Can you get somewhere to hide?"

"No. I'm responsible for two children sleeping in two different rooms. If I wake them to hide the noise they would make No."

"Someone is on the way, ma'am, just stay on the line."

Demi did as the woman said, while the garage door drew her attention. It was closed, yet she peered

out anyway to find the space empty. But the door.

It moved. Rattled.

Sucking in a deep breath, she said, "He's by the garage."

"Help is coming." A pause. "Is Dr. Fitzgerald there?"

"No, I'm his nanny. I'm staying here with the children while he made a house call."

Another pause that seemed like a lifetime. Then, "I've alerted Detective Owen Fitzgerald, Charles's brother, that there's trouble at your location. He's on his way."

"Thank you." Still the fear churned inside her.

More rattling made her spin. Gasp.

Then silence.

Demi stilled.

Was he gone?

She pulled away the phone from her ear and listened. Nothing.

She crossed the kitchen, the moonlight streaming through the blinds lighting her way.

A sound from the direction of the foyer diverted her attention in that direction, and she padded silently toward it. Was he now trying to get in the front door?

Quivering from head to toe, she gulped. Forced herself to keep it together. She had children to protect. She just prayed she'd made the right decision to let them sleep instead of grabbing them and hiding.

*Please don't let them wake up*, she breathed silently. Where were the police?

"Please God," she whispered. Then wondered why she found herself praying. She didn't know if she even believed in God. But she wanted to. Wanted to believe He would help her, keep her and the children safe.

Another few seconds passed as she stared at the front door.

*Think, Demi, think!*

A weapon. She definitely needed a weapon. All she had to do was keep him away from the children long enough for the police to arrive.

But what could she use?

She looked at the block of knives on the kitchen counter and shuddered. The heavy crystal vase would have to do. She grabbed it, ready to hurl it at the head of whoever dared come through the front door.

Then she heard the faint sound of retreating footsteps, moving as though they were in a hurry. She

rushed on silent feet to the door and pressed her ear against it.

The distant sound of sirens reached her ears.

Help was on the way.

They must have scared him off.

Relief flowed through her and she nearly dropped the vase from suddenly weak fingers.

Then realized she still held the phone in the other hand.

Demi set the vase on the table, lifted the phone to her ear and said to the 9-1-1 operator still on the line, "The police are close. I can hear their sirens."

"Yes, ma'am."

"I think he left. I heard him run away." Her sentences felt choppy, short. Like she was having trouble stringing coherent thoughts together.

"Don't check, just stay where you are until the police get there."

Demi didn't bother telling the woman she had no intention of opening the door.

The first police cruiser with the Fitzgerald Bay logo on the side finally pulled up to the house.

An officer opened the door and climbed out, weapon drawn, gaze darting.

And then Demi spied Charles's truck pulling up beside the officer.

Demi opened the front door and everyone froze as she stepped outside.

Charles saw his new nanny standing in the doorway and thought his heart would stop. When Owen had called to tell him Demi had dialed 9-1-1 because he had an intruder at his house, his only thought had been to get home and make sure everyone was safe. He couldn't help the terrifying thought that he'd find Demi murdered in his house. Just like Olivia, his former nanny who'd been found dead on the rocks at the base of the lighthouse that was on his property. But Demi wasn't dead. She was standing in front of him, safe and sound.

"Are you all right? The children?" He rushed to her, the limp he'd acquired while serving in Iraq not slowing him one bit. He took in every detail of her appearance. She looked scared and couldn't hide the fine tremor he could see in her hands but, at first glance, she didn't appear hurt.

Her frightened green eyes blinked wide behind her lenses. Her honey-blond hair lay in disarray as though she'd run her hands through it several times. His heartbeat didn't slow.

She nodded. "I'm fine. The children are fine, too. They never woke up."

Owen approached, followed by Charles's other brother, Deputy Chief of Police Ryan Fitzgerald. Charles introduced them and Ryan asked, "Did you get a look at him?"

Demi shook her head. "I peeked through the blinds, but never saw anyone. He was mostly near the garage door. I did hear some popping sounds, though, and the motion lights never came on."

Owen spoke to the officer next to him. "The garage is around the side of the house. Check it out, will you?"

"Sure." The man's badge read Mike Hughes.

Officer Hughes took off around the side as another patrol car pulled up. Charles groaned when he realized it was his baby sister, Keira, and her partner. Looks like the entire family had gotten the word. But Keira would be the worst. Even though she was the younger sibling, she'd want to mother him. Since Olivia's death and the suspicion that had shadowed his every move, Keira's mothering had turned to smothering.

She climbed from the vehicle, concern etched on her pretty features. "Charles? I was just getting ready to go off duty when I heard the ..."

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