

Will blew the layer of dust from an ornate wooden box inlaid with ivory and lifted the lid. Inside were brass workings like the mechanism of a clock. He wound a small gold key in the back until it would wind no more, and released it. The wheels and cogs turned and wonderful music flowed forth, the beautiful strains of a Viennese waltz, *The Blue Danube*.

Julia clapped her hands. "A music box."

He bowed. "May I have this dance, sweet Julia?"

She gazed up into his velvet brown eyes, and he gazed back. She managed a nod and he drew her into his arms.

Around the attic he waltzed with her secure in his lead. Everything fell away except this moment while the haunting melody played on, taking her back to that faintly remembered place. She didn't even stumble, not once. It was as if some inner memory guided her in the steps, even though ballroom dancing hadn't been a part of her lessons.

The music picked up and he swung her around and around. Her dress swirled as he circled. With each turn, he was Will—then Cole, Will—then Cole, both men in rapid succession, separate and yet the same. Her heart pounded from far more than the whirling dance.

The music faded and Will slowly stopped revolving. They stood, his arms circled at her back and waist, eyes locked on each other.

His brow furrowed. "Julia, you look as if you've seen a ghost."

She ran the tip of her tongue over her lips. "You may be the ghost."

He tightened his mouth in an impatient line. "Don't try to make me into Cole again."

"Will, listen to me. I know it sounds crazy, but I think somehow you already are."

He dropped his hands, turning away. "Only because you insist I am."

She grabbed his arm. “No. It’s what I saw while we danced. You must believe me.”

“Believing doesn’t make it any easier,” he said flatly.

“That’s because you think I’m misled.”

He swiveled his head at her. Exasperation flared in his eyes. “There’s a simple reason for my laboring under that assumption. You are.”

“Don’t be angry. I hate that I’ve spoiled such a lovely moment.”

“You’ve a talent for that.” He turned and strode across the floor. His footsteps echoed on the boards with a hollow sound, just as her heart would beat if he left.

She ran behind him and reached out, catching his plush shoulder. “Consider me balmy, if you must, but don’t walk away. Please Will.”

He stayed as he was. “What do you want me to do, Julia?”

“I don’t know.” She wasn’t strong enough to turn him and dashed in front instead, grasping his upper arms and twisting the fabric in her fingers. “Something—anything.”

He smiled faintly. “Never say those words to a man.”

Cupping her face between his hands, he bent his head and closed his lips over hers in an all-consuming kiss...so swiftly she hardly knew what had happened. Even if he hadn’t cupped her cheeks, she wouldn’t have moved. The compelling press of his mouth bound her in place. If possible, Julia’s heart thudded even faster than it had before. The surging pulse drummed through her entire being, reverberating in places she didn’t even know she had. From what she could remember of her dream with Cole, her feelings had

been poignant but tender. The sensations coursing through her now weren't entirely that. An exhilarating passion was sweeping her up in a shocking tide.

"Who am I now?" Will whispered against her mouth.

She loosened her grip on his jacket in speechless surprise, too breathless to tell him she didn't care.~