



Charming ARTEMIS

TWO FAMILIES.

TWO SWORN ENEMIES.

ONE LOVE STORY TO
UNITE THEM ALL.

FROM *USA TODAY* BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

SARAH M. EDEN

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Praise for Sarah M. Eden

“Heartfelt, amusing and oh, so romantic, you don’t want to miss a single book of this series!”

—Regina Jennings, National Reader’s Choice Award winner,
author of *The Major’s Daughter*

“Sarah M. Eden’s Jonquil and Lancaster books have provided me with so many favorites in the genre. They are the epitome of what a Regency romance novel should bring to the table: strong, lovable characters; charming historical detail; and, above all, a love story that makes us believe in happily ever after. Seeing the cover of *Charming Artemis* was wish fulfillment for thousands of fans; I join them in the thrill of knowing this story is finally going to be out in the world and in the sadness of realizing this is the final book for both series. *Charming Artemis* is going to take the world by storm.”

—Esther Hatch, Foreword INDIES award-winning author of
the A Proper Scandal series

“Eden does a great job researching her facts, and she really brings Regency England to life in an enjoyable and accessible way. Sometimes Regency romances try too hard to sound Austenesque, but Eden adds just enough authentic language to keep the setting real without detracting from the story.”

—Julie Daines, author of *It Started in Budapest*

“Sarah Eden’s ability to portray real, raw emotions is incredible.”

—Karen Thornell, author of *To Marry an Earl*

“Sarah M. Eden’s characters are so real and so charming they linger in your heart long after her books end. The Jonquil and Lancaster families can be revisited over and over again without ever losing their appeal.”

—Sian Ann Bessey, Foreword INDIES award-winning author of
the Georgian Gentlemen series

“Set in Nottinghamshire, England, 1785, *Forget Me Not* is the debut volume of author Sarah M. Eden’s new The Gents historical romance series, and it effectively showcases her narrative storytelling skills and total mastery of the Georgian romance genre. Fully developed characters, unexpected plot twists, nicely crafted background details, *Forget Me Not* is especially and unreservedly recommended for community library romance fiction collections.”

—Midwest Book Review

“The plot of this book is one that may have been seen before, but the way Sarah M. Eden writes the characters brings it to an entirely new level. The characters are immediately likeable and ones who readers will become attached to and be eager to find out what happens with them. Dialogue and descriptions are spot on for the time in which the book is set. Fans of the genre will love this book and lose themselves in the beautiful setting and romance!”

—*InD'Tale Magazine*, five star review

“*Forget Me Not* is everything I’ve come to eagerly anticipate from Sarah M. Eden! Lucas and Julia’s story kicks off a new series sure to delight fans of Eden’s Jonquil series (if you haven’t read that series, what are you waiting for?) as well as win her brand-new readers. I adored every page of this story. My only complaint? I finished it in a day. Highly recommended!”

—Melissa Tagg, Carol award-winning author of the Walker Family series
and *Now and Then and Always*

“Eden is a talented writer who makes historical, Regencies, Westerns, or whatever genre she tackles exciting and informative. I’ve no doubt readers will fall in love with her new Gents series, of which *Forget Me Not* is only the first volume.”

—*Meridian Magazine*

“A heartfelt and captivating escape into Georgian England, *Forget Me Not* is everything I’ve come to love in Sarah M. Eden’s novels. This first book in a brand new series is charming, immersive, and beautifully written, and readers will fall in love with not just Julia and Lucas, but all The Gents, and be waiting eagerly for all their stories.”

—Joanna Barker, Whitney Award finalist, author of *Secrets & Suitors*

To Katherine, my Artemis

may you always know your own strength, love with all your heart,
and never stop fighting for what you want most in life

Acknowledgments

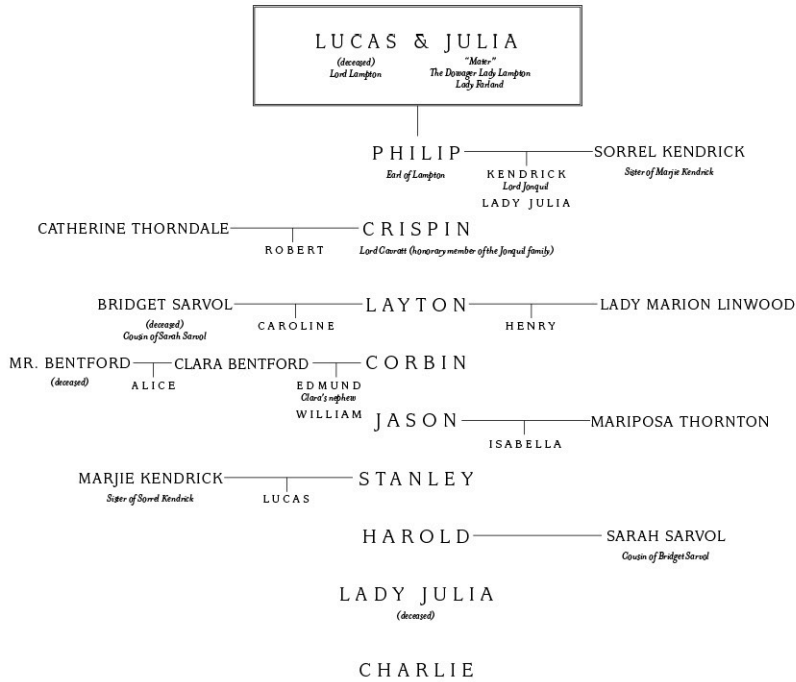
MY HEARTFELT GRATITUDE GOES TO . . .

- My mom, Ginny, who years ago inspired me to start these two series and set all of this in motion.
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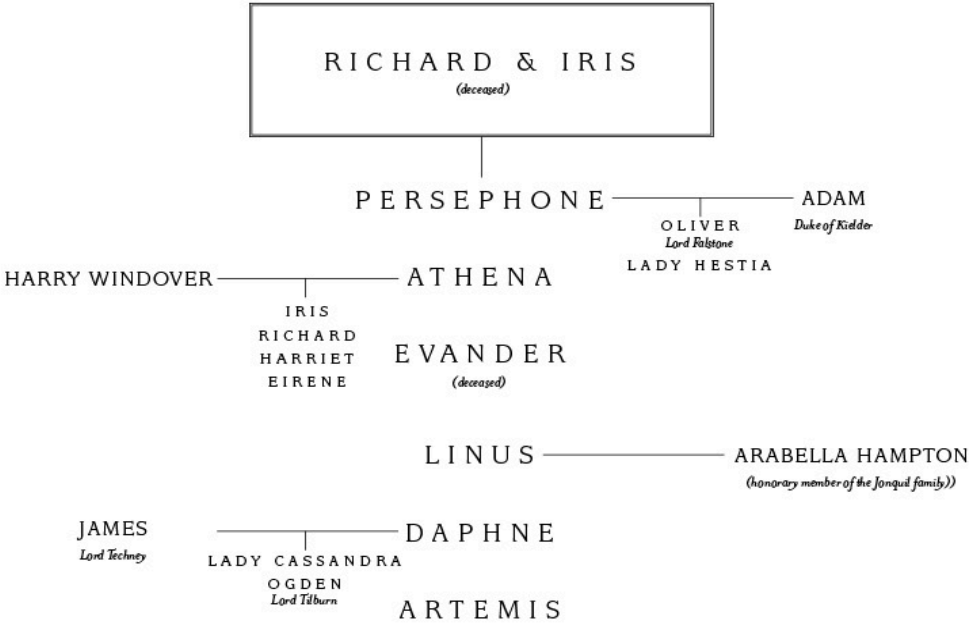
EARLY 1818

SIMPLIFIED FAMILY TREES

Jonquil



Lancaster



Chapter One

Shropshire, 1803

ARTEMIS LANCASTER DIDN'T OFTEN GO to the village with her older sisters. The family took in laundry for pay, requiring that they trek to the market square twice each week, once to retrieve their baskets and bundles and once to return them. But this time, Artemis had finally been allowed to come along.

Father was making the journey as well. He never talked to her. She knew he didn't like her, but she wanted him to. He was forever telling Persephone, her oldest sister, how grateful he was to her for working so hard and being so helpful. Persephone was eighteen years old now. She was quite grown up. Artemis was six, and though she seemed too little to be very helpful, this was her chance to show him *she* was a good girl and a helpful one. She would try. She always tried.

She carried one of the laundry baskets all the way to Heathbrook, though it was nearly too large for her to do so. Over and over, she looked to her father, hoping he would notice she was working without complaint.

He didn't look at her. Not once. He never did.

At the market cross, she gave Persephone her basket to place on the low wall, where they were meant to wait for those retrieving the laundry the sisters had collected earlier in the week.

"I'm for the bookshop," Father said.

Persephone nodded. She didn't look surprised. Did Father often go to the bookshop while the girls waited for the laundry to be claimed?

A large, stern-faced woman came over to them.

Persephone looked over their baskets. "It's that one." She motioned to the basket nearest Athena, the sister just younger than she.

The three of them talked through whatever it was they needed to discuss about the laundry. There was nothing for Artemis to do. Father might have something she could do. He would be ever so grateful if she were helpful and

hardworking.

She hurried off in the direction he'd gone, rushing to catch up with him. The market cross was busy. The press of people on the high street was greater than she'd realized. But a hardworking girl would not give up easily. She wove around them. She picked herself up when the jostling left her sprawled on the ground. The second and third time it happened, she scraped her knees and hands.

The hem of her dress tore. Father would not be pleased. Clothes came dear, and the family had so little money. Of that she was absolutely certain. Few things were spoken of more often.

Artemis made her way to a shop front, away from the pressing crowd. Her heart was beating in her hands, and they were red and sore. One of her knees was bleeding.

Ought she to continue after Father? He might think her too horrible a sight and wish her gone. He'd never say as much. He never said anything to her.

Her shoulders drooped. Perhaps it'd be best to just go back to Persephone and Athena. They didn't need her help though. Father might. And he might be really happy to have her with him. For once.

She would try. She would be very brave and try.

She trekked down the road, ignoring the pain in her hands and knees, determined to show her father she was a good daughter. But she didn't find a bookshop. She turned down a different road. And didn't find it there either.

Long moments passed. The streets blurred together.

She didn't know where she was or how to find her sisters again. Or her father. Or how to get home.

She was lost.

Panic swelled in her throat, making her breaths jump and catch. Tears poured from her eyes with her deep, painful sobs. What if no one found her? What if no one even realized she was gone? Her family might simply go home and forget they had a little sister.

Artemis dropped to the ground, curled into a ball, and wept and wept. She

was so very lost and alone.

“What’s happened?” A man’s voice, soft and gentle. “Why are you crying?”

She lifted her head the smallest bit. A man she didn’t know knelt on the ground in front of her. He was near enough that she’d heard him even though he’d whispered, yet he was also far enough away that she felt calm despite his being unknown to her.

He smiled a bit. His was a very friendly face. “Are you hurt?”

She nodded and held up her scraped palms. “I fell.”

“I am sorry to hear that.” He shifted a little, sitting instead of kneeling. She’d not ever known a grown person who would sit on the ground and in the dirt. They were always so very worried about getting smudges and mud on their clothes. “Did you injure yourself in any other way?” he asked.

She wiped at her nose with the back of her hand. “My knees. And I tore my dress.”

The man pulled a handkerchief from his pocket—a large square of very white fabric with tiny flowers embroidered along one edge—and gave it to her. “You are very young to be here all on your own.” He spoke with a look on his face and a sound in his voice that said he was worried about her. “Is your family nearby?”

“I lost them,” she said with a snuffle. “There were too many people, and I got knocked down, then I couldn’t tell where I was.”

“Dab at your nose and eyes,” he said. “I’ll help you find your family.”

“You will?”

He smiled tenderly. “I’ll not leave you until you’ve found them.”

It was a kind offer, yet it made her cry. She wasn’t sure why.

The man didn’t scold her or walk away in disgust.

“Cry all you need. Holding back tears only makes them fall harder.”

He understood. She knew he did. Oh, how she’d needed someone to see her, to understand the tears that sat on her heart all the time.

She scooted closer to him and rested her head against his chest. He set an arm lightly around her. His gentle touch, the kindness in his eyes reminded her of Persephone—comforting and reassuring—yet he was more of an age

with her father. Her father, who never noticed her the way her sister did. She closed her eyes and cried ever harder. She held the man's handkerchief to her face, too distraught to wipe or dab at the flowing tears.

"I am so sorry you've had a difficult day, Princess," he said quietly.

"Every . . . day is . . . difficult," she said, her cries breaking the sentence up in odd bits. "We have to do wash for people. And I . . . carried the basket, but my father didn't notice. He doesn't ever notice."

"He doesn't notice baskets?"

"He doesn't notice *me*."

The man's voice somehow grew even kinder. "I am sorry."

She took a deep but shaking breath. No matter that her heart and mind were spinning about faster than a top, she felt safe and protected. She never felt that way. Not ever.

"If you would like, Princess," he said, "we can walk about the town and look for your family. Or we can sit here and see if they come down this road looking for you."

"Do you think they are looking for me?" she asked hopefully.

"I am certain they are."

That brought her more comfort than she would have expected. "Do you think we should go look for them or wait here?"

He gave her a light, fleeting squeeze. "I leave that decision entirely to you."

Artemis spun the man's handkerchief around in her hands as she pondered. Walking up and down the roads of Heathbrook would likely be tiring. But if they sat on that spot waiting for her family to come looking and they never came, that, she knew, would utterly break her heart. "I think we should look for them," she said.

"And so we shall." The man got to his feet, then helped her to stand.

She slipped her hand into his, and he didn't pull away, neither did he squeeze hard or yank her about. He allowed Artemis to determine their path, stopping her only once when she suggested they walk down a narrow and dim side alley.

"Best keep to the light, Princess," he said.

They walked up and down the streets. He paused whenever their path crossed with anyone else. She eyed the person or people, but it was never her family. All the while, he asked her fun questions: what her favorite color was, if she had a favorite nursery rhyme, what she would eat if she could have any food in the world, what her favorite game was. Her tears dried as they walked about. The loneliness that usually filled her heart shrank away. She laughed when he was silly, and she held ever faster to his hand.

“That is the sweetshop,” she said, pointing to it. “My brothers would look in the window and imagine having a candy.”

“Could your brothers be inside?” her rescuing knight asked.

“They’re gone now,” she said. “They won’t be home again.”

“Would you like to pick a sweet, Princess?”

She looked up into his kind eyes. “Could I?”

“Of course you could.”

They stepped inside, but she’d never been in a sweetshop. She hadn’t the first idea what to choose. After identifying a dizzying number of candies, the man suggested she try a peppermint. He bought it for her, then they waved farewell to the shop owner.

Artemis licked her precious treat as they resumed their walk through Heathbrook.

“Do you have a house to live in?” she asked him.

“I do. I’ve lived in it nearly all my life.”

“I’ve lived in my house all my life,” she said.

He smiled. “We are like twins.”

“Do you have a horse?” she asked.

He nodded. “I have several. I do like horses.”

“We don’t have a horse,” she said. “But I have seen horses. They are very big.”

“Yes, they are, Princess.”

She liked that he called her that. Father never even called her by her name.

“Do you have children?”

“I do,” he said. “But they are not here with me today.”

“Do you miss them?” she asked.

“I always miss them when we are apart.”

Did her father miss her? Likely not.

“I could be your little girl while you’re here,” she said. “Then you wouldn’t be lonely.”

“I would like that very much.”

“May I—?” She stopped herself before she could finish the question. He’d only say no, and her heart would break forever and ever.

He stopped walking and hunched down in front of her. “Please do not be afraid to ask me anything.”

She buried her head against his shoulder, somehow feeling braver without looking up at him. “May I call you Papa?”

“Of course you may.”

That set her to crying again. She folded her arms around his neck. Something inside her had needed to cry all her life. He made her feel safe and loved and that, for reasons her six-year-old heart could not understand, made her cry.

He kept an arm around her while she wept. “Cry as long as you need to. We’ll keep looking when you’re ready.” He held her and spoke kindly, her papa. A papa who loved her. It was all she’d ever wanted.

“I’m usually a happy girl,” she said. “I don’t cry every day.”

“There is nothing wrong with crying when you need to. Or laughing when your heart is happy. Or being very quiet when your mind is thinking about things.”

She leaned her head against him. “I like to skip when I feel silly.”

“Do you want to know a secret, Princess?”

“Yes, please,” she whispered eagerly.

“Being silly is one of my most favorite things.”

She leaned back a bit and looked at him. “But you aren’t a little boy.”

“One can be quite silly even when one is very grown up.”

She liked that. She liked it very much. “I think I will be silly forever and ever. Even when I’m grown up.”

“That would make me very happy, Princess.”

“Would you be proud of me, Papa?” Her father said that to Persephone sometimes—that he was proud of her.

“Very, very proud,” he said. “And if I mean to be silly forever and ever?”

“I would be very, very proud of you,” she said solemnly.

His eyes danced about as his smile grew. “I would be honored to know you were proud of me.”

She liked talking with him. “We can keep looking.”

They resumed their search. She called him Papa. And he called her Princess. For the first time in her life, she felt truly loved and wanted and important.

He was proud of her. And they were going to be silly together. And he would adore her and teach her about sweetshops and not be upset if she cried. Maybe he would even skip with her.

Papa and Princess. She would never be alone again.

“Ooh. This is the market cross,” she said.

“It is that.” He looked at her. “Do you suspect your family might be here?”

She nodded. Her eyes searched the crowd, much smaller than it had been.

“Tell me if you see them.”

After a moment, she did. “There.” She pointed to Persephone walking through the market. “There. There.”

He nudged her forward. “Catch up quickly, before you lose sight of her.”

Artemis rushed toward Persephone. Persephone would like to meet Papa. He would be kind to her too; she knew he would.

“Artemis.” Persephone whispered her name when she saw her and wrapped her in a tight hug. “Where did you wander off to? We couldn’t find you.”

“I fell, and I hurt my hands and my knees, and then I got lost.”

“Heavens.” Persephone eyed the state of her.

“But the man helped me get back. And he gave me a peppermint. He has a house and horses and children, and he didn’t get mad when I cried, and he told me it’s okay to be silly.”

Persephone looked around. “What man, Artemis?”

She turned back and pointed with his handkerchief to where he was standing—where he’d *been* standing. Papa wasn’t there.

She looked around, frantic. He’d left. He’d held her and loved her. Then he’d left.

Persephone took her hand and walked with her away from the market cross.

Artemis held her papa’s handkerchief to her heart and looked back over and over, hoping to catch sight of him. She didn’t.

Her heart sank to her toes. But the more she thought about it, the less she worried. Papa hadn’t talked like someone who didn’t want to see her again. He would look for her; she knew he would. And she would look for him.

She’d found him once. She could do so again. Here, in Heathbrook. She would see him again. She would. And so long as she knew he was there, somewhere, looking for her, she would know she was loved.

Chapter Two

London, Spring 1818, fifteen years later

CHARLIE JONQUIL DESPISED LONDON. UNFORTUNATELY, one of his closest friends, Newton Hughes, meant to get married there, and Charlie was too good a fellow to disappoint Newton or his soon-to-be bride. So, he found himself in the heart of that pulsing metropolis, wishing he were anywhere else.

“You look as though I’m forcing you to attend your own hanging,” Newton said, eyeing him from across the carriage in which they, along with their friend Thomas Comstock, whom they all called Toss, were riding to Newton’s betrothal ball.

“Might as well be,” Charlie said. “You know I don’t care for social occasions.”

“And you know I know that’s not entirely true.”

“I don’t care for *London*, then.”

“A decidedly odd conclusion for one as logical as you,” Toss said.

“Nothing could be more logical,” Charlie countered. “Gather together every family and individual in the kingdom with ample time and money. Add to that a metropolis teeming with pointless ways to spend both. Multiply that —”

“Lud, not mathematics,” Toss muttered.

“You set him off,” Newton said.

Charlie was undeterred. “Multiply that by an unhealthy societal obsession with appearance and frivolity, and no other sum can be reached but one that speaks of—”

“Shallow insincerity,” his friends finished in unison with him.

They all laughed. Charlie’s tendency to wax long and impassioned on the subject of his exaggerated hatred of London was a well-established jest among them.

“I hope you’ll find some means of being at least a little charming,” Toss