

El Dorado

An original screenplay

by

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This excerpt begins on page 24 of the screenplay. Joe Monkford ("Monk") has already rescued Alicia Elliot and her companions from being robbed. While he tries to resist becoming more entangled in the mysteries surrounding Alicia, he finds himself unable to stay away.

HOTEL DINING ROOM - NEXT NIGHT.

MONK comes in the dining room and goes directly to the bar. He orders a drink and while he waits, he turns and surveys the elegant CROWD around him. He is wearing a clean suit but no tie, and his face is freshly shaved.

An ORCHESTRA plays at the other end of the dining room. Most of the guests are dancing to the upbeat music. The BRIXTON PARTY is again seated at the large table together.

BARRETT is dancing with BARBARA. The song ends and an appreciative round of applause goes up as Barrett gives his daughter a gentle kiss and turns her over to one of the clutch of ADMIRERS.

The MAN and WOMAN sitting next to Monk are talking about the Brixtons, in particular, ALICIA ELLIOT, who is sitting at the Brixton table.

MAN

So that's the Brixton heiress? Who's the other one?

WOMAN

Friend of the family. The old gentleman took her in when her father died destitute and she had nowhere else to go.

MAN

Looks a bit dark.

Monk frowns with disgust at the implication, but he keeps silent.

WOMAN

Her mother was a dancer, they say. The daughter is just like her. Of course, you know what that really means.

The man and woman get up and leave with their drinks. Monk watches as Barrett stops and says something to Alicia, then leaves the room. Monk stares at Alicia while she watches the dancing couples. She is alone at the table, looking somewhat forlorn.

WILL approaches the table and Alicia sits up a bit straighter. Will takes a drink from his glass, and then walks away again without even looking at her. Alicia's face flickers but she strives to hide the embarrassment.

Monk, glancing around the room, realizes from the gossiping and pointing going on that the slight wasn't an accident.

Monk turns back to the bar. He raises the glass to his lips, hesitates, and then puts it down without drinking.

INT. BRIXTON TABLE - CONTINUOUS.

Alicia shifts in her seat, trying to ignore the nasty looks being sent in her direction. She concentrates on Barbara, but her eyes are beginning to fill as the band segues into a WALTZ.

The hand touching her shoulder makes her start in surprise. She turns around to find Monk standing behind her.

MONK

Miss Elliot, would you care to dance?

A great rush of gratitude shows on her face. He holds out his hand, and she takes it and allows him to lead her to the dance floor.

She glances around covertly as they circle the room, taking a small measure of satisfaction in the number of pairs of eyes that are watching them.

For his part, Monk ignores the other people and stares down at Alicia. Finally she looks up at him. For a long moment

they stare at one another wordlessly, caught up in the dance.

ALICIA

(quietly)

Thank you.

The waltz ends. Under cover of the applause he murmurs.

MONK

Take a walk with me.

Alicia nods briefly and takes his arm. They casually walk out to the patio.

They pass Will and Barbara, only one of whom is smiling.

EXT. HOTEL VERANDAH - NIGHT.

The verandah outside the ballroom wraps around the building. Large, flowering bushes grow up against the railing, while the lights of the city twinkle beyond them.

Away from the prying eyes of the other hotel guests, Alicia smiles openly at Monk.

ALICIA

Thank you for coming to my rescue.

MONK

I couldn't sit by and watch while you died of boredom.

Alicia rolls her eyes and leans over to touch one of the bright red flowers on the nearby bushes.

ALICIA

Since my father died and Barrett insisted I live with his family, I spend most of my days looking out for Barbara. Boredom comes with the job.

He grins.

MONK

Protecting the Brixton money and good name from fortune hunters isn't a noble enough calling for you?

ALICIA

Attending an endless stream of parties and picnics and teas and cotillions, where the predominant subject is the weather and the state of hemlines in Paris, all while being suspicious of every man between the ages of 15 and 50 whom I don't know, lacks a certain... excitement.

MONK

Excitement is something you're used to.

She looks at him quizzically. He nods toward the flowers.

MONK (CONT'D.)

You went right past the others, right to the red ones.

ALICIA

(flirtatiously)

And that tells you what?

Monk takes her coquettish smile as permission to come closer.

MONK

Well, red is the color of excitement, and intensity, and passion. It suits you.

ALICIA

Mr. Monkford, I've lived on every habitable continent on this planet. I can speak half a dozen languages fluently. I've crossed oceans, climbed mountains, seen wonders most of the world could never imagine. And yet there's one question I don't know the answer to.

They are close enough to kiss and he leans even closer.

MONK

And that is?

ALICIA

Why were you in the alley the other day?

He is brought up short by the sudden question and backs off.

MONK

Beg pardon?

ALICIA

When those two men attempted to steal the journal, you appeared in that alley as if by magic.

Alicia crosses her arms, looking at him expectantly.

MONK

It was more good timing.

ALICIA

It was highly convenient timing.

MONK

I saw you cross the square. And I saw the rodent slip into the alley after you.

ALICIA

That still doesn't explain why you followed us. Just because you saw three people walking doesn't seem a terribly good reason to go chasing down alleys. Especially if you had a feeling a crime was being committed.

Monk is getting irritated by her hostility.

MONK

If you're being so careful, what were you doing going down a dark alley away from the crowd, where anything could've happened?

ALICIA

(shrugging)

Barrett insists he knows shortcuts. You still haven't answered my question. Why did you follow us?

MONK

What was I supposed to do? Sit back and have a drink while people were being attacked?

ALICIA

So no matter who it had been you had seen walking into the alley, no matter who you were watching in the square that day, had the same fate befallen any of them, you would've done the same thing? Were you positioning yourself to look out over the plaza in order to save random people from various criminal acts, like some sort of guardian angel?

Agitated by her suspicions and her comments, Monk's suave demeanor vanishes.

MONK

(snapping)

I saw you.

ALICIA

Yes, you said that-

MONK

(interrupting)

No. I saw you.

Alicia's breath catches in her throat as she comprehends what he means. They're standing very close together again.

For a moment his face softens as he looks down at her. Alicia visibly struggles to tear her eyes away from him. Her defensive wall, which crumbled briefly, goes back up, but her voice is shaking slightly.

ALICIA

You see, I'm still finding it a little too coincidental. You rescue us from a robbery, and then you move into our hotel. Barrett feels so guilty over your supposed near-death experience that he decides to tell you why we're here.

Monk now realizes she still doesn't believe him and he steps away, furious.

MONK

You think that I set you up in order to save you?

ALICIA

It makes some sense, you must admit.

MONK

Why would I set you up to be robbed only to prevent it?

ALICIA

To gain our trust.

MONK

If I had wanted to simply take the journal, why would I need your trust?

ALICIA

Because how could you be sure all the information you needed was in it? It may be that there are details that are not contained in the journal. Perhaps the key is here

(tapping her head)

and the only way to find out... is to get inside.

Her tone is accusing and he knows immediately of what.

MONK

Maybe I am. Maybe I'm feeding you a line about being overwhelmed by your beauty from across a crowd in order to seduce you into telling me all your other secrets.

The suggestion of his possible insincerity put into such blunt words causes Alicia to lose her composure entirely.

ALICIA

You said yourself that until recently you were treasure hunting in the mountains. And we're on the trail of the greatest treasure since they found King Tut's tomb!

MONK

Shhhh!

Her voice is raised enough for people to overhear. The slip-up only angers her more.

ALICIA

(fierce whisper)

It's not a great intuitive leap to suspect your motives.

Monk looks exasperated.

MONK

Fine, if you have everything figured out, then explain something to me. Some lowlife holds a knife to your throat, and you don't even blink. But a bunch of overfed, hypocritical snobs look down their noses at you, and you nearly start crying.

Her eyes light up in fury and she slaps him hard. Then she pivots on one heel and walks away.

Monk stands still for a moment, then gingerly reaches up to his face, which is evidently still stinging. He hears a chuckle and looks up to see Barrett walking toward him.

BARRETT

You must truly love mysteries, Mr. Monkford, if you're attempting to understand Miss Alicia.

MONK

I thought I had given up trying to understand women in general, sir.

BARRETT

Ha, yes indeed. We tramp around the globe, search out cities lost for centuries, find relics that reconstruct civilizations long gone, and yet no man has ever solved that particular puzzle.

(pause)

Alicia has learned through hard experience that it is better to be suspicious early, and thereby spare herself and those she cares for heartbreak later. The greater the potential for damage, the more cautious she will get.

He pats Monk on the shoulder and resumes his walk.

BARRETT (CONT'D.)

I must go collect Barbara or she'll be dancing until dawn.

He leaves Monk standing on the veranda. He looks after Barrett for a moment, then up at the hotel. Shaking his head, he walks off in the other direction.