

What Readers Are Saying ...

"An Island Intrigue is the perfect escape for any reader who craves adventure and a love story that truly earns its happily-ever-after. When Georgina Wright discovers that the doctor who will be accompanying her to the Hawaiian Islands is the younger Dr. Joseph Livingston, and not his father, the entire tone of the voyage changes. Still, she wants to establish her independence despite her medical limitations. As Joseph's reserve begins to soften, Georgina's fierce determination to prove herself threatens to become her detriment. The couple must decide if they are brave enough to let down their walls and be open to love in this sweeping, beautifully written historical romance."

— HEATHER B. MOORE, USA
TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

An Island Intrigue is an enchanting Victorian romance set in the breathtaking Hawaiian Islands, sure to delight and entertain readers who crave a slow-build love story between opposite characters. Casey Cline has penned another historical jewel! Highly recommend!

— TERESA WELLS, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR

AN ISLAND INTRIGUE

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW SERIES
2

CASEY CLINE



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*To my parents, for enduring all my Georgina-like tendencies throughout
the years.*

One



January 1873

The wrong doctor stood on the San Francisco wharf before Georgina Wright, threatening to ruin her plans for adventure. She pushed back a strand of hair the wind had teased from her coiffure and craned her head around the tall, silent form of Dr. Joseph Livingston *Junior*. Where was his elderly father, the jovial Dr. Joseph Livingston Sr.? The one who was supposed to escort her to the Hawaiian Islands on the *Nevada* steamship docked and preparing to disembark a few yards away.

A thrill of excitement skittered down her spine at the journey that lay ahead.

Georgina spared a glance over her shoulder. Her older-brother-turned-caregiver, Harrison, and his wife, Victoria, would be along shortly, and she needed to sort out this muddle before they arrived.

She took a steady breath and turned back to Joseph, trying to keep her impatience from revealing itself in her tone. “Will your father arrive soon?”

“No. He’s unable to make the journey.”

The wharf’s din nearly drowned out Joseph’s whispered response. The sounds that had invigorated her only moments

before—moored ships creaking against their lines, dockworkers exchanging shouted commands, waves lapping on wooden hulls—now fueled the panic rising within her.

She peeked again at the younger doctor. He'd accompanied his father on a few of her health treatments, and though they were close in age, he'd always acted uncommonly sedate for a youth. Now his stature matched the character in him that always refused to engage in adolescent games.

Gone was his lankiness, filled in with the muscular build of a grown man. His flaxen mop of hair had muted to tawny, but his constantly averted blue eyes remained unchanged, hidden though they were behind his spectacles. Had he been this striking back then? Or had he grown into his looks in the few years since last she'd seen him?

It seemed his standoffish nature had withstood the intervening time. He followed his singular comment with a small, reserved nod in her direction.

Georgina shook the wayward thoughts from her mind. Now was *not* the time to dwell on the young doctor. She needed to find the older doctor who was her ticket aboard.

These plans had been in place for weeks. It'd taken no small amount of coaxing and persuading on her part for Harrison to agree she could travel to the Hawaiian Islands in the first place. Not to mention the long-time family friend, Isabella Bird, or "Aunt Isabella" as Georgina knew her, was already on her way from Australia to meet Georgina there.

The weeks-long, transcontinental rail journey she'd just endured with Harrison and Victoria from New York City would also be all for naught. So much for it working out perfectly that Dr. Livingston had already planned to be in San Francisco for a medical gathering of sorts right before the departure date so he could travel with her, thereby meeting Harrison's primary prerequisite for this adventure of hers.

Georgina worked the leather handles of her valise beneath her gloved hands, closed her eyes, and slowly exhaled. Once her spiked pulse returned to near normal, she opened her eyes and asked, "Is

your father detained elsewhere?” She tried to connect with Joseph’s eyes to judge for herself what his emotions were over this unfortunate change of events, but he had taken a singular interest in the wooden planks beneath his feet.

He nudged a stray pebble on the boards with the boxed toe of his black boot. “No, injured. A broken ankle.”

Tears pricked behind Georgina’s eyes. A common reaction when she was upset, but a decidedly inconvenient one at the moment. She wouldn’t cry, *couldn’t* cry. Her throat burned with the exertion of keeping her emotions at bay, and her breath rasped out in short gasps as though her corset squeezed the very life out of her.

The permeating reek of fish soured in her stomach, and the black dots pinpricking her vision and the blood whooshing in her ears told her she had to act.

Quickly.

If she were to have one of her fainting spells now, Harrison would whisk her back to New York City before she stepped another foot closer to the ship.

She shoved her valise into Joseph’s arms. “Will you hold this for a moment? Please.” She turned from his startled expression and retrieved the small vial of lavender oil hanging from her chatelaine. Thankfully, the pouch allowed her easy access to the remedy.

After hunching her shoulders so Joseph couldn’t see, she popped open the vial’s top and breathed in its earthy, floral contents. A few deep inhales followed by slow exhales restored her equilibrium and composure, enough so she could recap the vial and face Joseph again.

His eyes met hers for an instant, then once more found the ground, but not before Georgina caught the puzzled expression on his face. Surely, as a doctor he would recognize her medical signs, but she didn’t dare address her health limitations with him, especially when there were far more important topics at hand.

She reached for her valise, and as her gloved hands brushed his, he visibly startled at the contact. *Odd, that.* But they’d only be in each other’s company for a few more minutes, so no use dwelling on his apparent aversion of her. Self-possessed once again, her

manners returned too. “Your father will make a full recovery, I hope?”

“Yes. A common fracture of the lateral malleolus. Now immobilized by a Mathijsen-inspired plaster-of-Paris bandage. A full recovery is expected within eight weeks, and the patient’s spirits are still high despite the incident. I’m going.”

She understood nothing of the many words emanating from him now between his assurance his father would be fine and his curt and unorthodox goodbye. Well, it was a relief the older doctor would eventually heal, but why did it have to come at the cost of her chance to escape Harrison’s strict parental parameters for a few weeks? She sighed. Her brother acted out of love. After all, he’d lost what she’d lost. But her one chance at adventure was slipping from her grasp.

She managed a tight smile and nodded at Joseph. “Glad to hear your father will be returned to good health so soon. And I bid you good day as well. I suppose we might see each other again sometime in New York.”

His eyebrows pinched together. “I’m going.”

“So, you stated already.” Georgina inwardly winced as soon as the words escaped her lips. She’d been in a similar situation before, though not precisely one so full of dashed hopes and a peculiar man to boot. Rather, situations where she didn’t screen her words and tone before speaking. But what did it matter now? The anticipation and optimism of the last few weeks had vanished, as would the *Nevada*.

Without her.

“On the trip.” Joseph’s baritone interrupted her internal wallowing.

“Pardon?”

He looked over his shoulder and motioned to the *Nevada*. “I’m going. With you. In my father’s place. He’s briefed me on your medical history, and I feel qualified to undertake—”

“Oh, wonderful!” The mock enthusiasm in her voice would fool no one. She hadn’t intended to cut him off, but she didn’t need him

recounting every time she'd felt poorly in her twenty-two years of existence.

She wasn't an invalid. Occasionally, her intense feelings caused her to lose consciousness, the least significant consequence of the carriage accident she'd been in when she was still an infant. But she didn't want to dwell on what else the accident had taken from her that night. Her and Harrison's other brother, Alfred. Their mother. Not her father, but then again, he'd all but deserted her a few years later when she was not even four.

Yes, too many maudlin thoughts were tied to her medical condition. She must focus on the positive instead. Like how it'd been ages since she'd had a full fainting spell. This morning's lightheadedness was an aberration, of course, caused by the extraordinary circumstances. And she'd successfully avoided a full incident, so that should merit a point in her favor.

She turned her attention back to Joseph, who swiveled his head left to avoid her notice. Well, he was not the good-humored, aged, and balding escort she'd originally imagined as her traveling companion. However, in a pinch the son would do in the place of his father, no? And since the younger doctor would be serving in the capacity of a trained medical professional under Isabella's watchful eye once in the islands, surely there could be no claims of impropriety.

Now, all she had to do was convince Harrison of that fact. He wouldn't be happy to discover the primary caveat he'd required in exchange for agreeing she could go on the trip—Dr. Joseph Livingston Sr.'s presence—would no longer be possible.

An alternative idea stole into her mind, one far preferable to persuading Harrison. If Harrison didn't *know* the younger Dr. Livingston was going instead of the older doctor, he couldn't object to the change in escort to a man closer to her age. It wasn't outright lying, just omitting an unnecessary worry for her brother. An act of service, really. Though her swirling stomach may disagree. "Board the ship. Immediately."

"Excuse me?"

Hmmm. Yes, she could have delivered the words with more tact.

"You should go ahead and board, Dr. Livingston," she tried more gently. She waved a hand over her shoulder. "I'll say goodbye to Harrison and Victoria and will be along in two shakes of a lamb's tail. Go save a spot on deck—the other side of the ship will likely have the best view—and I'll meet you there—"

She all but reached out to nudge him along, then stopped herself given how he'd recoiled to her earlier contact with his hand.

"Georgina?"

Her stomach plunged to her toes. She was too late.

She spun to face the source of the familiar voice. Harrison's chest heaved for breath. It was easy to forget he was almost fifty and not as spry anymore. Victoria hung on his arm, and Georgina's heart constricted at the sight of the two people who meant so much to her. They'd essentially raised her, after all.

But right now, Harrison's face was devoid of any brotherly affection. His features creased into a scowl, an expression she'd seen far too often over the years. "You ran so far ahead, we couldn't find you for ages."

"Sorry, I had a quick errand to run," she said, absentmindedly patting the velvet pouch on her chatelaine to make sure her acquisition was still safely inside. It was.

Harrison shook his head. "No matter. We found you. Now, where is Dr. Livingston? Hello, Joseph," he added, as if just now registering the other man's presence before continuing to scan the crowded wharf. Harrison's towering height would no doubt allow him to easily see over the heads of the others in the throng, but he wouldn't find the target of his search amongst the multitude.

Now what was she to do?

She couldn't outright lie to her brother, and the commotion of the past few minutes had addled her brain so, she had no clever excuse for the change in circumstances.

"You see—" she started at the same time Joseph said, "I'm going instead."

It appeared both her and Joseph's minds were having trouble with inventive explanations, but any other justification had to be better than his.

"Dr. Livingston was injured," she clarified. "And he recommended—no, *prescribed*—that his son, another *experienced doctor*, go in his place."

She blinked innocently at Harrison.

"No," he said, his curt tone likely meant to brook no further argument. But she wasn't easily dissuaded.

"Harrison, please."

"No, Georgina. I won't have it. This is another of your headlong campaigns, and we all know how those end."

She almost scoffed but caught herself just in time. Harrison exaggerated. Yes, there were times when she hadn't made it easy for him and Victoria, but such were the antics of all children, right?

The goose in the house when she was seven had not been her fault in the slightest, and any twelve-year-old would have made the same mistake about how quickly rabbits propagated. Arguing such specifics now, however, wouldn't work in her favor. Especially after last month's ant infestation.

She met his amber eyes in challenge. "So, you are changing your mind, then? After agreeing I could go. Harrison, I'm almost twenty-three. I can do this. Please."

"This is quite a different arrangement from what I originally agreed to," he said, crossing his arms. "You must admit, it wouldn't be prudent. I've raised these concerns—and more—before."

The second requirement Harrison had imposed in return for agreeing she could go rose fresh in her mind—that she not fall in love with a man on the journey. It had seemed a silly, insignificant condition when she'd agreed to abide by it weeks ago. A condition likely borne from when he and Victoria had experienced the full brunt of Isabella's matchmaking schemes during a trip together nineteen years ago.

But Georgina's situation was different. Joseph was a medical professional and uninterested in even being near her. She let out an exasperated huff. "I will *not* fall in love with Joseph."

Well, that hadn't come out quite as she had anticipated. She cast a brief glance to the topic of conversation. Wide with surprise, his eyes darted between her and Harrison. Poor thing. He didn't

deserve to be in the crossfire like this, but she must get on that ship.

Joseph's cheeks flamed red. "I—I promise I have zero intentions, Mr. Wright. I—"

"It's all right, Joseph," Harrison cut in. "I'm sorry for this. I don't question your honor." Then to Georgina, he said, "Victoria and I can't join you in the Hawaiian Islands with the important philanthropic meetings we have next week for the opening of The Children's Sanctum. However, we can spend a few leisurely days with you here in San Francisco, taking in the sights, and then journey back to New York together."

Georgina clenched her jaw, blinking away the tears stinging behind her eyes. No, it couldn't end like this. She turned to her sister-in-law, croaking out a "please" around the lump in her throat. After a difficult swallow, she whispered, "Victoria, you of all people must know what this means to me. Please."

At the moisture gathering in Victoria's eyes, Georgina batted away the tear trailing her cheek with a gloved hand.

Victoria gave a minuscule nod before turning to her husband and placing her hand on his forearm as Georgina had seen her do countless times over the last nineteen years. "Harrison, propriety can be maintained," she said in her usual calming tone. "There will be others on the ship, and once they arrive in the Hawaiian Islands, Isabella will be there the entire time."

Harrison grumbled something that sounded like "yes, that's what I'm afraid of."

Victoria squeezed his arm. "Isabella might have schemed when we three traveled together all those years ago, but that's not the case here. We can trust Georgina. And Joseph. His father thought it was the best course of action in his absence too."

Harrison closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. Georgina knew better than to interrupt him when he warred with his thoughts like this. She held her breath, sensing the tipping point near.

A few more tense moments ticked by. "Oh, all right," he muttered.

Georgina squealed and threw her arms around him. "Thank you, thank you!"

"I'm not saying I support this, just that I won't forbid it." Though he'd given up the practice of law long ago, Harrison still regularly used legalistic reasoning and terminology, which made it all the harder for Georgina to convince him of her position throughout the years. And all the more victorious when she won, like now.

A giddy laugh escaped her lips, and she enveloped Victoria in a hug, thanking her too.

Harrison motioned Joseph aside, far enough away that the shout of "Final Call. All Aboard" drowned out their whispered exchange.

Joseph stared at a point beyond Harrison's left shoulder, nodding occasionally while fidgeting with his spectacles, then his jacket cuff, then his spectacles again. Georgina narrowed her eyes. This wasn't a ploy by Harrison to scare off Joseph, was it?

At the flicker of a wry, almost-grin from Harrison and a final nod from Joseph, the unease stirring in her gut calmed. She'd finally secured her spot on the *Nevada*. As if in answer, the steamship gave three sharp blasts of her whistle, signaling her departure was imminent.

Georgina's throat clogged. After all the expectancy of the last few weeks, trepidation flitted through her stomach now that she was to leave. She resolutely tamped it down. Though this was the first time she'd left Harrison and Victoria for any length of time, and never before at so great a distance, she'd see them at this same wharf in a few months. And after a brief ocean journey, she'd be with the Aunt Isabella she knew well. In the Hawaiian Islands.

Her enthusiasm restored, she squeezed Harrison and Victoria into one last hug, repeating well wishes and thanks as she lifted her valise from the ground and turned to face the steamship that would be her home for at least the next week.

Joseph murmured what sounded like a goodbye and, with his luggage in hand, reached back toward her. She looped her right arm

into his left, but when he flinched at her touch, she yanked her arm free.

“Oh, I’m sorry, I thought—” she said at the same time he mumbled, “I had intended to take your valise.”

Her cheeks heated at her misinterpretation of his cue. His cheeks pinked too, as did his ears. Still, he didn’t look at her. Well, this was awkward. She proffered her valise, but he shook his head. “N—no, it’s fine. Go—go ahead.”

He was clearly far from fine with his suggestion, but debating the issue further would only make the situation worse. So, she drew in a steeling breath and cautiously took the arm he rigidly held out, ensuring her fingers made as little contact with him as possible. Discomfort radiated from his inflexible, stilted movements as they boarded.

With her eyes resolutely focused ahead, her other senses heightened. He smelled of clean linen with a woodsy, herbal undertone. A scent she recognized but couldn’t put a name to. Most detrimental to the stability of her legs, however, was the heat of his nearness seeping into her fingertips. Mercy, when had the January weather grown so warm?

She’d been on the arms of other men before. Ones who had pledged their interest only to cease their attentions after a short while. It hadn’t bothered her, really. She’d been too busy helping Victoria with the orphans and rescuing all the animal foundlings that’d crossed her path. But she’d never had a man so apparently repelled by her. It was puzzling. And disconcerting.

Doubt niggled into her mind. She’d achieved her aim. She was on the *Nevada* bound for the Hawaiian Islands. But she’d pictured this journey with the cheerful and grandfatherly Dr. Joseph Livingston Sr. she knew so well, not his silent, sullen son.

No. She shook her head clear of the misgivings. She would *not* let Joseph’s presence hamper her ability to enjoy her first—and perhaps only—chance for adventure.