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To introduce readers to Kendrew and Isobel, I'm offering a sneak peek from *Temptation of a Highland Scoundrel*. In the following scene, Kendrew takes Isobel to one of the most rugged spots in his beloved Nought territory. They're on a rocky ledge, near a waterfall high above the Dreagans' Bath, a sparkling pool at the base of the falls.

Kendrew hopes that showing Isobel the fierceness of his home will frighten her away, sending her back to her own Castle Haven, a part of the Glen of Many Legends that is much less savage than Nought.

A clever lady, Isobel turns the encounter to her own advantage...

From TEMPTATION OF A HIGHLAND SCOUNDREL:

Above the Dreagans' Bath...

"I know why you brought me here." She glanced down into the rock-walled ravine, even thrust out a hand, wriggling her fingers in the shimmering clouds of spray.

When she looked back at him, challenge sparked in her eyes.

"You thought to frighten me with Nought's boulders and fissures, the rough and rocky heights." Her words proved it, shaming him.

He had hoped to scare her away.

But with good, sound reason.

Dangers lurked in wind and mist. Rocks could crush a man if he had the misfortune to stand in their hurtling, downward path. In winter, Nought held snow-shadows that no fire could warm. Autumn brought more than bright, golden leaves. Cold wind and rains swept the land then, hinting at the deeper chill to come. The long, dark nights that never ended. And in spring, rather than flowers blooming, gales blew and the spates turned torrential.

Summer passed too swiftly to bear mention.

Knowing he was about to treat her in a way that would reinforce every slur folk hurled at him, Kendrew gave her a look he hoped was feral. A piercing glance sharp enough to chase the wonder off her face.

"See here, lass." He lifted her hand, turning her fingers so that her plain silver ring caught the sunlight. "You should be wearing a fine ruby or sapphire ring. A grand lady's jewel set in purest gold."

He released her hand, gripping her shoulders. "Your husband-to-be should be escorting you through glittering halls

thronged with nobles and other ladies of gentle birth." He held her gaze, each word ripping his heart. "You belong in an elegant place where the greatest danger is having a musician's inept string-plucking offend your delicate ears. Nought is no place for..."

He couldn't finish, sure that the rock-face behind them heard and was scowling.

The truth was Nought needed Isobel.

He certainly did.

"Did you never think, Kendrew" - she spoke his name for the first time, breaking his gaze to look thoughtfully at the falls' leaping spray - "that greater jewels are to found here than in any courtier's sparkling hall?"

Kendrew stopped breathing, her words wrapping round his heart, squeezing.

He didn't speak.

The last thing he wanted was to splutter like a fool. Or worse, let her guess that the sudden sheen in his eye was caused by something other than the wind.

"I see you haven't considered the matter." She didn't look at him, her gaze still on the clouds of shimmering spume from the waterfall.

"So-o-o..." Now she did turn back to him. And he knew that her perceptive dark eyes could see straight into his soul. "I ask you this: are there not rubies in autumn-red bracken? Or in

the bright scarlet berries of the rowans growing out of cracks in this very bluff?

"And you speak of sapphires..." She tipped back her head, peering up at the sky. "What of the clear deep blue above us, not marred by a single cloud? And gold?" She turned back to him again, shaking her head slowly. "Can it be you have never gazed on a Highland sunset?"

Kendrew swallowed before the thickness in his throat could worsen. "Lady Isobel..."

"Isobel, please." She smiled, a dimple flashing in her cheek, melting him. "Do you not see? I love this place and I would rather be here, with you, than anywhere else in the whole of the world."

"You say that now." He couldn't believe her. He did reach to touch her face, briefly. "When winter comes and the nights are long and dark, wind howling--"

"We will have good reason to stay abed and breed sons." She looked at him, beaming.

Kendrew almost choked. "You are beginning to convince me, lady."

"I can do more than that." She tilted her head, her smile turning seductive. "I can prove it to you."
