

# VIGNETTES

## Beginnings

- by Judith Nolan ©

*"And he showed me things not known to kings.  
And secret between him and me;  
Like the colours of the pheasant as he rises in the dawn..."*

- Phil Coulter

**Devin...**

"Won't you even look at him?" Anna Pater held out the small bundle in her arms. "He's only a tiny baby. What harm can he do?"

"What's the use?" Slumped in a chair before the desk in his chamber, Jacob Wells sighed, dragging a tired hand across his reddened eyes. "I failed her and she's gone. And it's my fault. She was too old to become pregnant, but she wanted so much to have a child and I couldn't deny her. I should have known better. We..." he shook his head wretchedly, unable to go on.

"Some things just can't be mended," Anna replied quietly, gathering the sleeping baby against her breast again. "Grace wouldn't have wanted you to suffer like this. She knew you were doing everything you could. We all did. There's no blame."

"But I'm a doctor." Jacob held out his hands before him, palms uppermost. "I save people. It's what I do. But it was she who really saved me. A year ago, she brought me down here, to save my life, for me to begin again." He closed his hands into fists and they fell back into his lap. "And now I feel I have achieved nothing, learned nothing."

"Well, what I know is you can't save everyone. Ask John, if you don't believe me. That's an impossible belief and you know it," Anna reasoned, in the face of his stubbornness to accept the hand cruel fate had dealt him. "I know Grace wanted to live. But I think towards the end she knew she wouldn't make it. Perhaps she chose to give her life for her son. Your son. It was the kind of woman she was; beautiful and selfless."

Jacob's head jerked up at that. "Sometimes I feel I am cursed; first Margaret and now Grace. It's as if I'm never destined to keep anything I love. Perhaps I am being punished for some past transgression."

"It's late and I don't feel like debating philosophy with you right now." Anna sighed, advancing towards him. "But if you need someone to love, your son needs you. For a start, he needs a name, if nothing else." Without ceremony she deposited the small bundle in Jacob's lap before he could evade her.

He looked down helplessly into the baby's tiny face. A shock of dark hair stood out at all angles on his head and as his father drew a deep, sorrowing breath, the boy's eyes opened and looked at him. The dark blue gaze of the new-born considered him solemnly and Jacob felt something move deep in his chest and the tears began to flow unheeded down his cheeks.

"Devin..." The name slipped from him almost unconsciously. "I shall call him Devin. Grace would have liked that."

"A good, strong name," Anna approved. "It will serve him well."

Jacob looked up at her, his face haunted. "I wish I had your certainty."

"If you would only stop being so hard on yourself." Anna shrugged. "But, for now, it's your son that matters. Care for him and everything else will fall into place. You will see. You just need to give it time."

"Devin..." Jacob whispered, looking back at the child who had fallen back asleep.

Slowly, he lifted the baby to gently kiss his soft forehead.

"Together we shall see what the future brings..."

END

