

An Excerpt From: TURNER'S VISION

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The clock on the mantle chimed two hours later. Micah sat in a large, wingback chair, watching his young, reluctant host. He held his tongue well. Micah gave him credit for that. The lad spent the time alternately peering anxiously out the front parlor window and trying to bore holes through Micah's skull.

The clatter of hooves on the cobblestoned street broke the silence. The boy's eyes followed the carriage down the lane. The ragamuffin darted toward the rear of the house. Micah surged to his feet after him.

Just as the boy exited the back door to sound an alarm to whoever had arrived in the carriage house, Micah grabbed him around the waist with one hand, covering his mouth with the other. Holding the squirming boy firmly, he stepped behind a giant fir on the side. His view of both the porch and the carriage house remained unobstructed in the clear moonlight.

The carriage house door creaked open. Micah increased his hold on his captive. The crone from earlier in the evening hobbled toward the house.

She leaned heavily on her cane, almost bent in half, until she stood on the dark porch.

Slowly, she straightened, transforming from an arthritic, old woman into a tall, younger one. Setting the cane aside, she removed her shawl and dropped it into a basket waiting on the porch. Two more sweaters followed suit. Then she slipped her hands into the waistband of the skirt. One after another, she stepped out of four skirts. As each layer pulled away, the plump old woman before him turned into a slender young woman.

When she stripped off the final skirt, his eyes wandered from the pitch-black boots up the black-stockings-covered legs. He gulped hard. Her dark shirtwaist had to be a man's since it hung down to her mid-thigh. He could make out the gentle swell of her hip and buttocks beneath it. She grasped a robe from a hook by the back door and slipped it on. Micah watched, puzzled, as she wiggled and shook in some sort of odd dance. When another wad of black material landed in the basket, he realized she'd removed the shirtwaist from beneath her robe.

She raised two very supple arms to remove her dark scarf from around her hair. Then she shook it loose. Moonlight flashed on its deep, russet browns and fiery reds.

He nearly moaned.

The boy took advantage of Micah's distraction to sink his teeth into his captor's hand. His resulting grunt sounded in the night.

The woman on the porch spun around to look in their direction. "Who's there?"

Her voice flowed over Micah like warm honey. He let the boy slip out of his hold.

"This crum's been wanting to see you, Miz Claudia!" The boy scrambled up the porch to stand beside her. "He says he has a letter from Miz Laura."

Micah stepped from the shadows to stand at the bottom stair. The scent of spring flowers wafted over him again.

The slip of a woman put a protective hand on the boy's shoulder.

Slowly, Micah smiled at her actions. "Miss Davis, I presume?"

She nodded in response. "May I ask who you are, sir?"

"Micah Turner, ma'am. And your young friend there is correct. I do have a letter for you." He took a step up the porch stairs.

A pistol cocked behind him.
Hand in his breast pocket, Micah froze.