



Song of the Silent Harp- An Emerald Ballad, **Book 1**

by B.J. Hoff

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County Mayo, Ireland, 1847

Nora stared at him with dismay, awareness gradually dawning. “That is where the food comes from,” she said, watching him. “The supplies you bring into the village—to us—the medicine for Tahg, the money you said would pay our passage to America—” Appalled, she stopped. “Oh, you foolish, foolish man!” she cried. “Don’t you realize the destruction you are bringing down upon your head? They will hang you! Don’t you care at all?”

Morgan’s gaze never wavered as he reached for her. Feeling the warm, unyielding strength of his large, calloused hands closing over her own, Nora stiffened and tried to draw back. But Morgan held her firmly, leaning across the table, thrusting his face close to hers, so close she felt herself trapped by his eyes. “Do you care, asthore?”

My treasure. The old endearment from their youth brought scalding tears to Nora’s eyes.

“Do you care, Nora?” he repeated softly, bringing her hand to his face and laying her palm against his bearded cheek.

Panic seized Nora at his touch, the unexpected softness of his beard against her hand.

“Well, of course, I care,” she said, averting her gaze from his. “I would hardly want to see any man on the gallows.”

“Even a fool like me?” he prompted, a tender touch of amusement in his voice.

“Indeed.” She could not look at him.

“Nora?”

Unable to stop herself, she met his eyes and the enveloping warmth she encountered there—an entire tide of feeling—was achingly familiar. Familiar, and somehow frightening.

Nora’s mouth went dry, her heart rocked, and for one mad moment no years of pain stood between them. She was a girl again, and Morgan her hero-lad. Startled, she squeezed her eyes shut to close him out. But when she opened them again she found him staring at her with a searching look that seemed to hold a myriad of questions. And in that brief, suspended breath in time, a knowing passed between them, an awareness that long-ago hopes had languished, but not died, that young love had paled, but not entirely fled.

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