

Anne Adair swept her gaze over the three chattering wallflowers sitting in her grandfather's, The Duke of Rowan's, parlor and grinned. Splendid resolve expanded her chest and heart. She could not recall ever feeling as if she had much of a purpose, but now she did. These ruined ladies—as the coldhearted rakes of the *ton* had ensured the debutantes were considered—were about to engage in tactical warfare to take back their pride and to gain the respect they deserved, and Anne was their general as the newly elected president of the Sisterhood for the Ruination of Rogues.

Currently, the group consisted of five members, but she was certain their numbers would grow. She cleared her throat loudly in an attempt to get the women to cease talking, but no one besides Lady Mary Archbee, who sat beside Anne at the front of the room, took notice.

Mary gave Anne an unnerving smirk and then said, “If *I* had been made president of our sisterhood the meeting would now be started.” Anne barely resisted rolling her eyes at Mary's once again mentioning her grievance over not being voted to lead the group. Mary had been her grandfather's ward until Mary had come of age, and now the woman—unfortunately seen as spinster since she was eight and twenty—was an unpleasant sort.

“My offer for you to lead the sisterhood with me still stands,” Anne said, forcing a pleasant tone.

Mary's lips pressed together in a grim line which made Anne want to sigh, but she refrained, knowing it would likely only worsen Mary's sour mood. She'd had no choice but to ask Mary to join the group since it would have been near impossible to keep the meetings from Mary as they were in Grandfather's parlor and Mary lived in this house as well as Anne. It was doubtful that Mary would be willing to keep the sisterhood a secret unless she was part of it.

“I do not need your pity, Anne,” Mary snipped. “I'm certain that by our next weekly meeting the ladies will have come to realize they made a grievous mistake by not electing me as president.”

Well, that was just simply all Anne was willing to take. “Hear ye, hear ye!” she boomed, enthusiastically breaking one of the *ton*'s tiresome and tedious rules of etiquette that she knew Mary, who often talked in a suffocated whisper, prized.

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