

EMMA WILDES



*Servicing Lady
Tremayne*

Servicing Lady Tremayne

A novella of erotic romance by

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Chapter One

The faint, elusive scent of lily of the valley drifted in the air. The effect was intensely feminine, as was the luxurious bedroom, all done in pale shades of rose and cream. Even the huge, carved armoire was an ivory color, with twining vines and roses painted on it, and the fireplace mantle was creamy Italian marble. Underfoot, the carpet was thick and sumptuous, and he made no noise as he walked.

Thomas Blake had been in this room several times before, and it always struck him how it suited the woman now laying in bed in her dressing gown, slightly propped up on the pillows, regarding him with her signature blue eyes. Daphne Tremayne was strikingly beautiful, with flawless ivory skin, shining hair so dark it carried sheen of blue in the light, and perfect features in an oval face. Her body, too, was slender, but full in all the right places if you were an appreciative male. As the young widow of a wealthy earl, Daphne was currently the reigning beauty of the *haute ton*, and by all reports London society was prostrate at her feet.

Thomas said courteously, "Good afternoon, Countess. I am sorry you are not feeling well."

Her lashes, lush and dark, lowered a fraction. "Thank you for coming, Doctor."

"Of course. Now, tell me what can I do for you? Your note was not very specific."

"That is because," she answered with her usual quiet composure, "I was not sure what to say exactly. I just thought perhaps if you could come see me it would help."

"I see." Setting down his case, Thomas sat down on the edge of the bed next to her and reached for her arm, expertly finding the spot in her slim wrist, checking her pulse. It was racing, and he frowned. Letting her arm go, he turned toward her and gave a reassuring smile. "Forgive me, please, but I'd like to feel your heartbeat, my lady."

Without hesitation, she pulled open the neck of her robe, revealing the top part of her chest and the lush upper swells of both creamy breasts. Placing his hand in the correct spot, he tried to ignore the fact that suddenly his own pulse had picked up and that the flesh under his palm was silken and soft. The beat of her heart was strong and steady—which was good, but it was definitely a bit fast.

He gently felt her neck then, his fingers moving, his lovely patient obediently sitting up a little more so he could examine her. As he probed and prodded, he asked, "Have you been having any symptoms that you can share with me? Headaches, pain in your joints, stomach upsets?"

"No, none of those." Her long hair, smooth and glossy, moved across her shoulders as she shook her head.

"And your female cycles, are they regular?"

Though some of the noble ladies he treated disliked discussing that topic with him because they considered it indelicate, she simply said, "Yes. That isn't the trouble."

"You may lay back again, Countess." Sitting beside her, he began to feel a little puzzled by her reticence. Having attended to her husband during his illness several years ago, he knew her to be intelligent, and she had been very frank about her husband's problems. What was more, her robe had opened further when she sat up, and now that she reclined again against the pillows, her left breast was completely exposed and she made no move to adjust her clothing and cover her nudity.

In fact, it occurred to him that she must be completely naked under the thin silk wrapper.

Good God, it was bad enough that he had always been unprofessionally affected by her incredible beauty, but having her practically naked next to him was extremely distracting. He was a physician, yes, but he was also a man.

Making it a point to look into her eyes and not at her tantalizing bare breast, he cleared his throat. "I don't find anything obviously wrong, other than you are a little highly-strung right now. You are not feverish or have any other visible signs of illness. Perhaps you could be a little more specific on the exact trouble?"

Her gaze was direct, her eyes so vividly blue that several young besotted poets had written sonnets to that unique color. She said demurely, "I am afraid it is a little...embarrassing, but I have thought about this for a long time and I hope you can help me."

He lifted one brow encouragingly. "That is why I'm here."

"I am restless," she bit her soft lower lip, but held his gaze, "and cannot sleep. It is getting worse and I feel very...frustrated."

"Ah, well, that is simple enough. I can give you a sleeping draught. You must be careful with it and follow the dosage exactly, but it will help." Relieved it was something so easily dismissed and he could leave, Thomas went to rise from the bed, surprised when she caught his arm, detaining him with the light clasp of her fingers.

"No...that isn't it," she told him with just a shade of urgency in her tone. "Please, stay and hear me out."

He couldn't help it, for just a second, as he sank back down politely, his gaze strayed to her open gown. Her breast was as perfect as the rest of her, full and lush, the nipple a delicate coral, the same shade as her soft mouth. He could feel himself hardening, his erection swelling in his breeches even as he jerked his gaze back to her face.

What he saw there surprised him. A glimmer of something in those very blue eyes, triumph perhaps, or satisfaction, but there seemed little doubt she had noticed that he was unable to ignore her partial nudity and it pleased her. Since her reputation was as flawless as her beauty, he found it hard to understand. She lowered her lashes quickly, the thick fringe a contrast to her alabaster skin and striking eyes.

"I think," he said, hoping his voice sounded perfectly steady, "that I have heard everything there is to hear in my career as a physician, my lady. What seems embarrassing to you is probably very normal. Now then, tell me."

She took a breath, a small rueful smile curving her lips. "I am not exactly sure how to put this except in the most frank manner possible, so...I will tell you that I miss...well, conjugal relations."

A little off-balance and wishing she was telling this to anyone but him, Thomas said nothing for a moment.

Her gaze was still direct as she continued speaking quickly, but her cheeks had taken on color. "I am growing quite preoccupied with this need, it is very distracting. My late husband wasn't a particularly gifted lover, but he did desire me often, and though I never found sex to be anything beyond pleasantly enjoyable, I find now that my body craves that...possession."

If she had used any other word, it could not have been more luridly effective. His cock stiffened further, and if she had been looking at his crotch and not his face she would certainly be able to realize what exactly she was doing to him.

Groping for a professional response, Thomas said, "It is in our nature to want sexual intercourse, man or woman. If you are worried it is unnatural, don't be. Your problem is easy enough to solve, Countess. I do not go out in society often, but even I know you have a host of admirers who would be more than delighted to oblige you."

"Yes, I know," she agreed, her incredible eyes still half-veiled, "but I need someone I am very attracted to, someone who will be discreet and not flaunt the affair, someone who will simply satisfy my body and not press me for anything else. I don't believe I want to marry again, neither do I want everyone whispering about me behind my back."

His mouth went dry.

"You," she added softly, "would be perfect."

* * *

Watching the man sitting beside her through her lashes, Daphne sent a little prayer heavenward, wondering if it was blasphemy to ask for divine help in seduction. She sensed an inner war of duty and desire behind his expression; his dark eyes slightly narrowed as he stared at her in surprise.

If tipping the balance in her favor would help, she was willing to do anything. Ever since she had met Thomas Blake several years ago, she had been unaccountably attracted to his compassion, his intelligence, and the obvious dedication to his profession. Not to mention the fact that he was compellingly good-looking—tall, dark, and muscular. During the time he visited the house almost on a daily basis to tend to her dying husband, she had fantasized about him; flamboyantly sexual fantasies that made her feel both guilty and excited. She had sensed the same thing in him, a hidden desire, a forbidden longing.

She had come this far, Daphne decided, and modesty was no longer a factor. Deliberately opening her robe, she shrugged out of it, displaying her body like an offering, slightly parting her thighs so he could see the feminine cleft between them.

Thomas Blake took a deep, shuddering breath, obviously not unaffected. His face, fine-boned and starkly handsome, lost a little of that stunned expression as he stared at her. His gaze traveled over the curve of breasts and thighs, fastening on that shadowed apex. He said hoarsely, "You want me to make love to you?"

"I want you to service me," she corrected, feeling a sort of languorous arousal already at just lying naked beneath his heated gaze. "Ease this incessant ache, please," she breathed. "Help me. Use my body for your pleasure, and give the same in return. I will ask nothing else from you, I promise."

He glanced at the door then, and she felt a surge of anticipation at that betraying movement, knowing he was concerned over privacy, explaining, "I told my maid I would ring for her once you were gone. She thinks I am under the spell of some mysterious illness. I have been complaining for the last month. We will not be disturbed and it will seem natural if you stay a good while."

"Am I hallucinating?" he muttered, suddenly looking nothing like a calm, comforting physician but instead a darkly attractive man with searing sexual heat in his eyes.

"Is that a yes?" Daphne asked, stretching slightly, realizing as he stood that he was very aroused, the impressive bulge in his trousers sending a twisting thrill deep in her abdomen.

"I doubt any man on this earth could refuse except a saint," he said tersely, as he shrugged out of his jacket, "and even a saint would be tempted. Your allure is incomparable, my lady."

She watched him undress—stripping out of his shirt with impatient hands, sitting down to remove his boots, unfastening his breeches and shoving them down his lean hips, letting his splendid erection spring free. It was very big and her eyes widened as she took in the swollen, surging length of it. "Oh my," she whispered, "you are huge. Jeffery was not so...impressive."

He laughed, a choked sound. "Not all men," he told her, "are created equal in certain anatomical areas." Moving toward the bed, he settled next to her, touching her face, his

dark eyes searching hers, his fingers moving gently over her cheek, brushing her lower lip. "I have dreamed often of touching you," he confessed, "but you knew that already, didn't you?"

The sensation of having him loom over her, large and extravagantly male, was exquisitely exciting. "I guessed," she acquiesced, "but then again, I also have always noticed you in the same way."

"I'm your doctor," he said, his mouth lowering to hers. "I should not be doing this. It is a breach of code."

But then he kissed her, increasing the rate of her already racing heart, his mouth firm and heated, his tongue insistently invading her mouth, rubbing across her teeth, tangling with hers, licking the gentle corners time and again. Drowning in sensation, she lay beneath that tender assault, her breasts tightening, dampening between her legs in a rush. The heat of his body, so much larger than hers, was searing, as was the way he tasted and teased her mouth. She was breathless when he lifted his head.

"Could you," she pleaded, spreading her legs, "I mean...this first time at least...do it now?"

His hand found her breast, cupped it, his thumb gently abrading the taut nipple. "Most women prefer to be aroused. You're that impatient?"

"Yes," she agreed.

"You don't want lovemaking, you want...servicing?" he murmured, still stroking her mounded flesh, his voice sounding thick.

He was right. It sounded wanton, it sounded brazen, but she wanted him to take her, to possess her immediately. "Yes."

"As you wish." His hand slid between her legs, his long, gentle fingers shockingly exploring her opening, sliding between the damp folds of her sex. "At least you're very wet, my lady, which means you are ready."

Daphne gasped when he moved swiftly, positioning himself between her legs, his engorged shaft at her entrance. He braced himself above her and began an inexorable penetration of her body, forcing her vaginal passage gloriously wide.

"Oh," she breathed in exaltation, those sensitive inner muscles clenching his hard cock, her breathing erratic. "Deeper," she urged, spreading her legs wider, her hands on his tight buttocks. "I need more...oh, yes."

He pushed in until he was imbedded to the hilt, the tip of his throbbing penis nudging against the entrance to her womb, a low moan caught in the back of her throat. When he began to move, sliding in and out of her body, she felt such a fierce sexual exhilaration that she was shamelessly caught in the blissful spell, arching beneath him, lifting her hips to accept each thrust.

"Yes," she moaned, "just like that...only...oh...harder."

Above her, he watched her as he took her, increasing the rhythm at the frantic grip of her hands. She couldn't have concealed her intense enjoyment if she had tried so she simply embraced it, crying out when he surged so deeply that she thought she would die of the acute pleasure of it.

He invaded her again and again until she trembled with a feeling she wasn't aware existed. She found that suddenly her muscles locked at the onslaught of a bright piercing joy, spasms rocking her body as she let out a small scream and clung to him, tumbling into an unknown paradise.

He went rigid also, and she could feel the flooding heat of his orgasmic surge as he came inside her with a low groan, his hips hard against her open legs, his hands tangled in her hair.

If she had known it would have been like this, she thought hazily, relishing the feeling of him still flexing inside her sated body, she would have seduced the handsome doctor a long time ago.

* * *

Daphne's hair was like thick, black silk, and Thomas let his fingers sift through the fine strands, still almost disbelieving that he was there, softening inside her warm body, her firm breasts against his chest.

"You are remarkably passionate," he said, his hand sliding along the curve of her shoulder, his voice breaking into the silence of the bedchamber. "Tell me, have you never experienced a sexual orgasm before?"

Her lashes fluttered open. "No," she admitted, looking up at him, a shimmer of wonder there in the depths of her lovely eyes. "And it is probably just as well. Had I realized what all I was missing, I would no doubt have broken my wedding vows when Jeffery fell ill."

Since no one knew as well as he did the length of time Jeffery Tremayne had been ailing, her period of abstinence had to be at least three years. The earl, two decades older than Daphne, had a debilitating heart condition, gradually losing the ability to do more than lie there and waste away. Thomas had never observed anything but dutiful affection between the late earl and his glorious young wife, but she had meticulously observed her mourning period and just recently had begun to attend the whirlwind of balls and parties much to the delight of the *ton's* male population.

The youngest son of a viscount, but with little chance of inheriting the title with four older brothers ahead of him in line, Thomas occasionally attended a function here or there, but was generally too busy with his practice. However, when he had heard Lady Tremayne was gradually rejoining society, he had accepted a few invitations, just in hope of seeing her, even if it were from afar. She had been dazzlingly beautiful, serenely aloof, and so besieged by admirers that she hadn't even known he was there.

Easing out from between her thighs, Thomas lay down next to her, propped on one elbow. Daphne reposed quietly on the soft mattress, her eyes half-closed, her chest still lifting quickly and her full breasts quivering. Her nude body was slightly flushed a delicate pink, her slim thighs still parted and damp. Reaching out a finger, he traced one of her perfect ebony brows, the arch graceful and soft under his questing fingertip. "I am honored to be the first man to ever feel you climax. You are even more beautiful in the height of your pleasure, if that is possible."

She blushed at that frank statement, her cheeks coloring. Hesitantly, she said, "Is it always that way for men? So...splendidly enjoyable? I had no idea."

"It requires a bit less finesse for us to achieve sexual release, but yes, I have to think—but will never know for sure—that the sensation is similar."

"I thought there *should* be something more to sex," she said reflectively, a faint frown creasing her smooth forehead. "Jeffery was always so eager and it felt...pleasant enough, but nothing like what I just experienced." Pausing, she went on slowly, "You know, I was a little afraid you would refuse me. I felt a bit guilty bringing you here under false pretenses but I didn't know what else to do. I saw you at the Richardsons' ball the other night, and you looked so handsome," her smile was charmingly demure, "I guess I couldn't wait any longer."

So she *had* seen him. This chemistry between them was undeniable.

But all she wanted was discretion and sexual gratification.

Very well, he could provide both. Thomas stroked her cheek and leaned forward to kiss her soft mouth, molding his lips to hers, his hand sliding to her nape. She sighed as his mouth grazed her jaw, his hand caressing her bare, slim shoulder, going lower to cup one of her gorgeous breasts, the weight soft and pliant in his hand. Stroking and

squeezing lightly, he whispered in her ear, "I'm glad then, that I attended that particular ball if the result is this. Can we go a little slower this time, my lady?"

"Again? This afternoon?" Her surprise was unmistakable.

Thomas smiled darkly, giving a low laugh. "Your husband was older, my sweet. Younger men can recover more quickly and have more...insatiable appetites."

"If you can make me feel that wondrous sensation again, you may do whatever you like, Doctor." Her voice was breathless, her nipple tightening under his ministrations.

"Thomas," he corrected with a low laugh. "I think under the circumstances, with your extremely perfect breast filling my hand, first names are in order, don't you?"

"Whatever you wish."

He liked the sound of that, like she gave him carte blanche with her delectable body. He continued to fondle the silken globe in his hand, taking the nipple of the other in his mouth, sucking gently. Her hands came up to slide through his hair, her sigh audible as she clasped him close. When both crests were tight and straining, he shifted lower, aware she watched him as he trailed his fingers through the small triangle of dark satiny hair at the apex of her thighs. Using his palms, he gently pushed her legs apart, leaning between them. His shaft was indeed hard again, and beginning to throb with need.

Inhaling the fragrance of her arousal, he saw she was as lovely between her legs as she was everywhere else; her pubic hair soft, the lips of her labia pink and a little swollen, the small opening between her folds glistening with her fluids and his sperm. "If you are like most sheltered aristocratic ladies," he murmured, "you know appallingly little about your own body. I'll enlighten you if you like."

"Yes." Her voice sounded muffled. "Anything. Just touch me. Oh, Thomas, please touch me."

"Gladly." Parting her weeping folds, he probed that small female entrance, inserting his finger, sliding it inside her body as far as he could reach. "This," he said, testing the warm tissue, slick with expelled semen, "is your cervix, my sweet. It guards the womb, changing almost day to day as your reproductive cycle progresses. The process is actually quite astonishing. And this," he explored the velvet walls so tight around him, feeling the clench of her tiny inner muscles as he slid in and out, hearing her gasp in pleasure, "is the vagina. It is even more amazing, so flexible that just moments ago it accommodated my erect penis in full arousal, which is considerably bigger than my finger. This particular organ always amazes and delights me...can't you feel this, it is small and tight again. When you are sexually aroused, it becomes lubricated with fluids in anticipation of the penetration of a male and the act of intercourse. It is also the birth canal, allowing a fully formed child to pass through and then returning to its normal size."

"How very...enlightening," Daphne whispered, reclining on the bed, wide-legged and beautifully disheveled as he touched and played with her sex.

"You feel...very lubricated."

Her lashes drifted lower, her hips lifting to the motion of his hand. "I'm not surprised," she whispered.

"Are you enjoying this lesson? Or are you simply anticipating intercourse?" he asked, a husky teasing note to his question, sliding his finger in and out of her passage once again, mimicking the act of sex.

"Both."

"Just wait, it becomes even more fascinating." Removing his finger, he rubbed the sensitized lips between her legs, feeling the seep of moist warmth there. "The labia are soft petals that conceal and protect a part of your body that most women don't even realize exists. Your clitoris is a small, highly responsive nub, very much, in fact, like my male organ. It swells when stimulated, either by the friction of intercourse...or other means. I'll demonstrate."

Moving between her open thighs and parting her folds to expose the pink, vulnerable tissue underneath, he leaned forward and lightly licked the part of her body he had just described, hearing a delicious moan in response. Pressing his mouth against that acutely sensitive spot, he teased and rubbed it with his tongue, tasting her, feeling the rise of her orgasmic release by the soft sounds she made and the growing tension in her body. When he knew she was on the brink, he gently suckled the engorged bud, rewarded when she shuddered with a small scream, arching wildly. Keeping her there, he continued the stimulation until she went limp with a small sob.

Sliding upward, he sought his own satisfaction, pushing his engorged cock deep into that marvelous passage he had described just moments before, thrusting inside in explicit need. Lifting Daphne's legs for deeper penetration, he took his time, slowing when he felt the rise of imminent release to postpone the pleasure, savoring the exquisite sensation of moving inside her. Breathless and panting beneath him, he could feel her frantically reaching for that peak again, her already highly aroused body finding it and convulsing around him, milking his rampant erection with her tremors. The effect triggered a rush of pure, carnal bliss as he stiffened and ejaculated finally in scalding intensity, the rush holding him immobile, pulsing for what seemed like an eternity until he could regain his breath.

Servicing Lady Tremayne, he thought in hazy amusement, was most certainly his pleasure.

Chapter Two

The carriage rounded a turn, moving slowly through the congestion of the crowded London streets. A gentle rain had begun at midday, misting through the curtains, dampening everything except Daphne's spirits. Arranging her skirts with a seemingly careless hand, she said, "I followed your suggestion, you know. Yesterday, to be exact."

Her Aunt Lillian, almost fifty, still lovely but not perhaps as shapely as she had been when she had infamously caught the eye of a fabulously wealthy duke and made the marriage of the century, looked up. "I beg your pardon? What did you just say?"

Daphne laughed lightly, the memory of Thomas Blake's spectacular *finesse* fresh and delightful. "You told me I should take a lover, that it would cure my melancholy and ease my loneliness."

"So I did, child, so I did." Lillian, sitting across in the swaying vehicle, looked intrigued. "Of course, I gave you that advice two years ago."

"Jeffery was ill, but still alive—"

"He was a nice enough sort, I guess, but not worthy of such devotion," Lillian snorted inelegantly. "He married you because of your beauty and then virtually ignored you for hunting and racing his horses." She lifted a curious brow. "Yesterday, you say? I cannot help but ask...how was it? Tell me everything."

It was simply impossible to not blush. Despite her willing it otherwise, Daphne could feel the heat invading her cheeks. "Aunt Lillian," she protested, "I am sure you do not want the details of my...my indiscretion."

"Not an actual descriptive narrative, child, of course not, I *do* know how it is all done, after all, and the gymnastics of it are relatively the same." Lillian, her dark hair lightly streaked with gray, her blue eyes alight with interest, prodded, "But...tell me, who is he and how *was* it?"

Folding her gloved hands in her lap, Daphne remembered tender hands and the teasing yet tantalizing lesson she'd been given in the responsive nature of her own body. "It was beyond imagining," she admitted truthfully. "I could not believe it."

"Is that so?" Settling back against the upholstery, her aunt chuckled suddenly. "I always hoped after being married off so young to that old, dull stick Tremayne you would find someone to please you."

"Jeffery was younger than you are," Daphne reminded, with a loyalty to her dead husband that she knew Lillian found incomprehensible. It was true, he hadn't been particularly dashing, but then again, he had also been a very nice man who had treated her with respect. Though she was certain now he had felt more lust than love toward her, she still had gotten a better bargain than most young brides. Not to mention, of course, that he had left her a fabulous fortune and her independence at his death.

With a careless wave of her hand, Lillian dismissed that particular fact. "He was still dull, if you ask me." Blue eyes gleamed. "So...who is he?"

It wasn't that her aunt wasn't trustworthy, it was more that she wanted to keep the secret to herself, like hugging a favorite toy. "I asked him to be completely discreet. I should expect the same from myself, shouldn't I?"

"Not with me," Lillian said forcefully. "Out with it or I'll pester you until you can't abide the sight of me."

Since she knew that to be true, Daphne said with evasive resignation, "He isn't titled or wealthy."

"Who cares, you have both already. Dear God, tell me you aren't bedding one of the footmen or stable boys, Daphne."

"No."

"Thank heavens, servants gossip horribly."

"What are we doing now?" Daphne muttered. "No, he isn't someone like that precisely. He comes from a noble family, but he is not in line for the title...and anyway, that doesn't matter to me. He's devastatingly attractive and infinitely...skillful."

"Thomas Blake."

"What?" Sitting bolt upright on her seat, Daphne could not believe her ears. "Why...why," she stammered, "would you think such a thing? Him? He's a doctor, a respected physician, I might add, who has never had a whisper of scandal attached to his name—"

"Because the person in question is the fifth son to a viscount, more handsome than any young man has a right to be, and I have seen how he looks at you; even though, to his credit, he is meticulous in trying to hide it."

Sinking back, Daphne declared in rueful surrender, "You're a witch, Aunt Lil."

A smug smile curved the older woman's mouth. "So it is the delicious young Thomas...with his looks he can hardly be a novice lover, he must be close to thirty anyway, and the best looking in a family of fabulously attractive men. No wonder the experience was so beyond imagining."

"I hope no one else guesses so easily."

"You too carefully guard your reputation as the cool and unattainable Lady Tremayne. I think you are safe, my dear child. If you hadn't have mentioned your liberating encounter, I wouldn't have noticed a thing."

"Wouldn't you?"

"Well," Lillian raised one brow and smiled wickedly, "you might try to not glow, child, when we are at the seamstress. Put the proficient young doctor from your mind, at least for an hour or two."

Unfortunately, Daphne was afraid that wasn't possible.

* * *

Since one shouldn't smile in anticipation when visiting a supposedly ill patient, Thomas had to school his expression as he was ushered inside by the very correct butler; handing over his greatcoat and brushing the droplets of water from his hair. As agreed, he had waited two days to call again on Lady Tremayne, a natural enough period of time if she truly were suffering from some sort of mysterious ailment.

"And how is the Countess?" he asked politely. He had once been a familiar figure in the household when the earl was declining. Since he was of the nobility but not titled, the servants tended to treat him somewhere in between, with friendliness but deference.

"She retired after luncheon, sir." Hodges said, shaking his head.

"I see."

"Perhaps your visit will help her ladyship. We are all concerned. This way, if you please, Dr. Blake."

"Of course."

There was freedom—one he was abusing—in being a physician. No other man would be ushered into a woman's bedroom and left there, with the door shut, without question. When his knock was answered by Daphne's bidding to enter, Thomas nodded at her butler and went inside, shutting the rest of the world away as he smelled her signature fragrance and closed the door. "Countess," he said formally.

"Doctor," she answered, a sort of amused lightness in her voice for their stilted greeting.

"Did the last...treatment help?" he asked smoothly.

Her striking blue eyes widened, then she laughed lightly. Her spectacular raven hair, so long and shining, framed her face, tumbling down her back in disarray. "So much so I think I need another one. Did you bring...everything with you?"

On cue, his body responded to that innuendo. It didn't hurt that she lounged in repose against the pillows again, this time in a white satin nightdress that was probably demure enough, but draped her body in the silky fabric and especially enhanced the contours of her full, high breasts. The contrast of her midnight tresses and the white of her gown was erotic and exciting.

"I brought everything you need," he said, lifting a brow.

"Then perhaps we should get started."

That was certainly no problem. *I'm halfway started already*, he thought wryly, feeling the pressure as his erection swelled against the confining fabric of his breeches. In a very quiet tone, he ordered, "Please disrobe, Madame."

Her delicately arched brows elevated just a scant distance at the proprietary tone of his voice.

"If you want...servicing," he added with emphasis, and grinned.

"Oh, I do." Holding his gaze, she pulled the ribbon at her bodice loose and opened it, letting him see the enticing valley between her breasts. Very deliberately, she pulled the fabric lower, exposing her creamy skin, the rosy nipples of her luscious breasts prominent and tight as if she had been anticipating his arrival, slipping it off her shoulders to her waist. Lying back, she whispered, "Can you help me with the rest?"

The sight of her—the spill of her dark hair against the luxurious coverlet, the pale perfection of her skin, the coral tinted tips of the mounds that begged for his mouth and hands—made him fight a surge of pure animal lust, his entire body responding, his staff stiffening and straining. "No problem, my lady."

He approached the bed and leaned over her, kissing her deeply, her now bared breasts against his jacket, soft and arousing even through layers of material. Then he carefully eased the satin nightdress over the curve of her slender hips and down the long length of her legs.

She let him strip her, watching through heavy-lidded eyes, her pulse visibly beating in her throat. "I hope I have not made my condition worse," she murmured. "I have done nothing but imagine this since you left me the other afternoon."

Nude—alabaster and ebony—sensuously female, infinitely beautiful, the delectable Lady Tremayne fairly exuded blatant awakening sexuality. Thomas drew in his breath sharply as he stood and looked at her. "Did you imagine anything specific?" he asked in a low voice, always conscious of the closed door and who might be behind it, no matter what she said about their privacy.

"I don't know," she replied after a small, telling pause, her blue eyes thoughtful. "I liked...everything. Take off your clothes, Thomas, and surprise me."

And if that wouldn't send any man over the edge, he wasn't sure what would. His garments were off in record time and he was fairly sure he tore his shirt in his haste, but the very fact it was off his body was enough to recompense the loss. Perhaps if she wasn't so carnally available, so absolutely desirable, he wouldn't feel so adolescently aroused, but she was, and there was nothing he could do to curb his heightened lust. Joining her, he had to stop a moment, gathering his control, before he even touched her.

His cock was absolutely rigid, the tip distended and throbbing. It didn't help that his distractingly lovely and openly curious bedmate, obviously heedless of his battle for restraint, sat up next to him and stared at it.

Jesus, he thought, as he watched her gaze examine his blatant and undisguised need, taking in the length of it in slow perusal. With one finger she very gently touched the tip, wiping away a bead of semen. He thought he would die right then and there.

"What about another lesson?" Daphne suggested softly, her very blue gaze still fastened on his stiff male member. "Tell me about men. I confess that even though I was married for several years...I never touched Jeffery. Not his...well, this."

She did it again; just a brush. He couldn't help but react.

And she noticed, her eyes widening. "It's that sensitive?"

"Oh...yes," he confirmed wryly, breathing irregularly.

"What else?" she demanded breathlessly. "I cannot believe how much I don't know. You were right the other day, I was so ignorant about my own body, yet I had been married for two years. I can't help but want to know everything now. How much else am I missing?"

Having to give a lecture on the intricacies of the female sexual process was one thing, but having to expound on male functions while so fully aroused was a little difficult. Swallowing, he attempted to say calmly, "The penis is extremely sensitive, responding almost immediately to stimuli, both physical and visual. Men, I believe, are more prone to react to images, women more inclined to enjoy touch and smell. When a man sees a naked woman, he tends to become aroused quickly, especially if he anticipates sex."

Her smile was slow, a curve of her pink lips, her blue gaze openly seductive. "And as you came here anticipating sex..." Her finger brushed the tip of his erection again, very lightly. "You are like this."

"Yes," he growled, control a near thing.

"What else? Tell me about these."

When her slender fingers lightly cupped his testicles, he thought he would ejaculate despite his quest for control, his eyes closing tightly and his body going rigid. "Those sacs hold my sperm, created to impregnate a female. They are the most vulnerable part of a man's body. If you are ever in a position where you are threatened by a man, hit him between his legs and even a slender woman like yourself will bring him to his knees."

"I see. Thank you, Doctor. As always, you are a font of information. Tell me, does this feel good?" Her fingers slid along his scrotum, then back to lift his straining balls, fondling them in her palm.

"Daphne, please," he breathed, lying back against the pillows, his chest lifting like a bellows.

"Please...stop?"

"Yes," he managed to say. He was sweating now, moisture breaking out across his brow.

"Or?" The word was delicate, teasing, and full of female power.

"You will find yourself flat on your back with me inside you," he warned her frankly.

Her fingers tightened slightly, caressing him. "That actually sounds divine."

Divine. In a flash he moved, pinning her to the bed, pushing her legs apart with his knees. She laughed breathlessly as he forcefully prodded her female opening, her exhale fanning his cheek as he leaned forward and pushed himself inside. Impetuous did not describe his hunger, nor did it do justice to the eager way she accepted him either.

Not sure if it was the fact that he had known for two days he was going to have her again, or if she was simply too alluring for her own good, Thomas fucked her—for there was no other word for it—hard and fast. His rigid pulsing shaft possessed her body, pumping between her legs until she raked his shoulders with her nails, a low keening scream escaping her throat. That the almost primitive aspect of their intercourse excited

her was not in doubt, for she came swiftly, her hips suddenly lifting as she offered her pelvis in acceptance of his mindless need. She rippled and flowed around him, locking her legs around his waist as she shuddered and arched. He lightly bit her neck as he ejaculated in unison to her wild release, his semen pouring into her vaginal passage, coating and filling it. Surging so deep he felt he was a part of her, he held there until the last pulse was gone and she lay lax and pliant underneath him.

When he could actually breathe again, he said hoarsely, "That concludes our lesson on the male anatomy."

* * *

Daphne smiled coolly, her gaze raking the room. "I have to decline the invitation. I am sure you understand, don't you, Lord Marston?"

"What I understand," the man standing next to her said in petulant response, "is that you cultivate your standoffishness as if it were a tropical plant. All I want is a dance, Lady Tremayne."

Perhaps it was her newly liberated sense of womanhood, but Daphne turned and looked at him directly, saying with surprising frankness, "No, that isn't all you want, sir, now is it?"

Young, a little brash, Marston looked slightly taken aback. "I...I suppose not," he admitted uncomfortably. "But dash it all, Madame, you are so beautiful, and I—"

"Have not accepted some ridiculous wager I hope," she finished gently, lightly fanning herself for the ballroom was crowded and very warm. "That would mean you have tossed your money away, for I do not indulge in casual affairs...I do not even indulge in serious affairs, and quite frankly, I am a little tired of hot-blooded young lords gambling over my virtue."

He looked appalled, suddenly tugging at his cravat as if it were too tightly knotted. "You know?" Lord Marston stammered. "The books at White's are inviolate."

"Nothing in this world is inviolate," she responded with jaded cynicism that was hard earned. "The truth is, to be pursued because someone desires me is one thing, but to be some sort of prize, my conquest notched in a bedpost, is insulting. Be sure to share my sentiments with your comrades. Good evening, my lord."

Walking away, Daphne tried to achieve a sort of regal outrage, while inside, she was actually sardonically amused. If the young men in this room, she realized, glancing around, knew how freely and eagerly she gave her body to Dr. Thomas Blake, they would be insufferable. As it was, since her re-entry into society, she felt a little like a doe hunted by a pack of wolves. As a widow—a wealthy and titled widow—she was fair game for the fast, spoiled set of the titled sons of the English nobility. It was wearing, and the only way to combat it was to keep her reputation above reproach.

"Did you give young Marston a stern setting down, Countess?"

Stiffening at the sound of the mocking voice behind her, Daphne slowly turned around. "Your Grace," she said calmly, "I did not realize you had crept up behind me."

The Carlton Judea, Duke of Reiston, smiled blandly at her remark. Dressed in elegant black evening clothes, his pale features looked sallow and lifeless, and his eyes were so dark that they gleamed like ebony. Thin to the point of gauntness, he towered over her, and she took a step back when he moved forward. "I do not creep," he said in a grating tone. "I observe."

To be the subject of discussion among over-sexed young men was one thing, to be hunted by a man as cold and ruthless as the duke was something else altogether. For whatever reason, the man made her blood curdle, and Daphne avoided him as much as possible. "My apologies, then." Inclining her head, she went to move away.

"I will have you."

That flat declaration made her stop dead. "I beg your pardon?"

"I believe you heard me, Lady Tremayne."

His gaze glittered with undefined emotion, and she took in a breath. "Perhaps it was the implication of your comment that confused me, sir."

"Oh...I implied nothing. I will have you. The meaning is clear enough, isn't it?"

Gazing at his pale, intent face, Daphne felt a tremor of actual fear. "You overstep yourself," she said in a reasonably even tone.

"I am a royal duke. A peer of the realm, one of the most wealthy men in England. Never in my life have I been denied something I truly want...and I want you, Countess."

His matter-of-fact statement was more disturbing than if he had shouted.

"Well, this once, you will be thwarted," she said curtly, and turning on her heel, hurried away.

Her hands, she discovered as she approached the buffet table, were shaking.

* * *

Thomas tied off the last suture and smiled reassuringly at his patient. The boy was young, not yet ten years at a guess, and the jagged gash that lacerated his leg had caused him to lose some blood before he had been brought in. A little pale and obviously grateful to see the needle being set aside, the boy clung to the hand of the woman standing next to the bed.

"He's a little bit in shock," Thomas informed the child's mother, wiping his hands on a towel. "Keep him warm and give him plenty to drink. The injury is painful, but not life-threatening."

Pretty and brown-haired, the young woman gave him a wan smile of appreciation. "I was frightened," she said, stroking her son's cheek. "But Jessie said to bring him here and that you would take care of him."

"He'll have quite a scar to show all his friends."

That idea seemed to hold appeal, for the boy grinned suddenly and his mother shook her head. "Men, you are all the same." Glancing over at where Thomas stood, putting his bloody instruments into a basin, she said with a small lilt in her voice, "I could pay you at the house, if you'd prefer that. I'm working tonight. By the way, I'm Lila."

Thomas lifted his brows. Since he occasionally treated the prostitutes who worked for Jessica Landry, this wasn't the first time he'd been offered the pleasures of the flesh in place of coin. This girl was particularly tempting with large brown eyes and a voluptuous figure. He said, "I'm afraid I have to decline, but thank you."

The young woman looked him over with brazen assessment, a small smile touching her full mouth. "A pity," she murmured smoothly, gazing at his crotch with pointed interest. "I have a feeling we would get along very well. Tell me, Doctor, do you have a wife?"

"No." Thomas thought about Daphne, picturing her luscious nude body beneath his, her ebony tresses vivid against the white bed linens as he made love to her. "But I do have a...friend."

"Female?"

Sometimes he forgot how jaded these young ladies could become, for Lila asked the question blandly, without censure. He gave a choked laugh. "Yes, indeed. Female."

"Bring her along then. We'll give her a treat, too." Her smile dazzled, openly sensual, and a hint of suggestive laughter colored her voice. "Most of us girls like women just as well as men. When business is slow—which isn't all that often—we play with each other." She stepped closer and touched his coat, playfully gazing up at him. "I promise I'll be very, very nice to her."

A long time ago he had resigned himself to the fact that the male of the human species was a base creature in many ways. Not immune to carnal urges, he found a sudden vision of Daphne and the pretty Lila together in his head and almost immediately

began to get an erection. "Perhaps," he said, clearing his throat, "we'll take you up on your generous offer sometime. In the meanwhile, bring your son back tomorrow so I can look at the sutures."

Lila said with a saucy wink, "It will be my pleasure, Dr. Blake."

Chapter Three

The house was large and well-kept, only the small, discreet sign out front proclaimed it to be a surgery. Daphne alighted from the hired carriage, paid the driver, and ascended the steps. Adjusting her hood to make sure no one on the street could see her face, she tested the door and found it open.

Inside, there was a small sitting area that was thankfully deserted at this late hour. Seeing a bell pull, Daphne tugged on it and chose a chair. A few minutes passed before a woman came into the room. "Yes?"

"I need to see Dr. Blake," Daphne explained, hoping his nurse was at least discreet, since she had removed her hood. "It's...urgent," she said truthfully.

"The surgery is closed unless it is an emergency."

Was intense sexual need an emergency? Daphne smiled thinly. "Please tell him Lady Tremayne is here."

"Yes, Madame."

Moments later, Daphne was ushered into what was obviously the study of a busy physician. Medical texts lined the walls, several lying open on a cluttered desk. A human skull served as paperweight to stacks of documents and a half-empty glass of brandy winked gold in the light from a small lamp. Rising politely from his seat at her entrance, Thomas smiled. "Good evening, my lady." Glancing at his assistant, he said pleasantly, "Hilda, you may go home now, if you wish. I am afraid I have kept you over again. Please lock the door on your way out. I'll let Lady Tremayne out myself once our consultation is over."

"Yes, Doctor." Obediently, the woman left, quietly closing the door behind her.

There was a small silence. Daphne gazed at her lover, seeing the familiar features of his handsome face with an almost wonder, loving the straight line of his nose, the classic arch of his brows, the clean angle of his jaw, and the impressive masculine width of his shoulders under a white linen shirt. Desire surged through her body and she felt the dampness between her legs with a sort of resignation.

"I shouldn't be here," she said, breaking the quiet.

"If discretion is your goal, then the answer is no, you shouldn't," Thomas agreed. "Would you like to sit down? I can offer you brandy, but little else. I think we have some port somewhere, but—"

"I don't want to sit down," she interrupted, still staring at him, wondering how earth she could not have waited until the next afternoon for their scheduled interlude, but knowing she simply couldn't. "I need you, Thomas. Now. Where can we go?"

There was a flicker of heated response in his dark eyes. "Are you feeling impetuous this evening, my lady? If so, my bedroom is upstairs."

"Take me there," Daphne breathed, her need so acute she could feel the throbbing in her sex, so wet from just being in the same room with him that she was a little embarrassed. Slipping out of her cloak and letting it fall to the floor, she added, "Take me anywhere, in fact. Just take me."

Her dress was calculatingly only half-fastened, her breasts visible though the open bodice, spilling forth in carnal offering. He noticed, as she knew he would, taking in those exposed curves with an audible hiss of inhaled breath.

"I am, as always, at your *service*." Thomas came around the desk and lifted her in his arms, striding to the door.

Winding her arms around his neck, Daphne kissed his throat as he carried her down a dark hallway. Rubbing her body against him, shamelessly abrading her breasts against his hard chest to arouse her nipples, she felt the pounding of his heart with inner satisfaction.

He took the stairs two at a time, holding her with what seemed like effortless ease, shouldering his way into a room that was encroached in complete darkness. When he deposited her on softness that had to be the bed, Daphne almost moaned out loud in anticipation.

He lit the lamp, flooding the space with soft light. In the act of turning around, she saw him stop in mid-movement, arrested, as she pulled up her skirts.

Deliberately, she wore nothing underneath her gown. With the abundance of her breasts visible, and the wet, brazen offering of her bare cleft, there was certainly no doubt she had come to be serviced. Daphne smiled wickedly in a haze of delicious expectation.

"I have died, then," Thomas said in a thick whisper, "and somehow made it to heaven. For you are too beautiful for this earth, and your desire for me is the fabric of every male fantasy."

"I need you inside me," she said in sultry demand. "You can dream afterwards, Doctor."

He unfastened his breeches, still looking at the apex of her thighs. "I suppose you want it hard and fast?"

"Your usual will do nicely." Her murmur was almost petulant, her voice husky. "Thomas, just please, let me feel that magnificent cock of yours. Your technique has never drawn any complaints from me. Use your imagination, but get on with it."

He laughed, the glorious length of his aroused manhood jutting up high from the opening in his pants. Fully dressed and booted, he got on the bed at once and adjusted himself between her open legs. With blissful joy, she accepted his penetration, the hard feel of him driving into her vaginal passage, making her gasp. With deliberate, provocative intent, she lightly bit his muscled shoulder through his shirt as he began to move, making him utter a low curse of arousal.

He was tempestuous, she decided deliriously as he thrust hard between her legs, giving Daphne exactly what she wanted. Orgasmic liberation hovered, spurred on by the fact she had thought about being like this—with Thomas—all afternoon. There was nothing of the staid, kindly physician in the way he used her body, it was more like a primal mating of woman and alpha male, a dominant possession designed to show strength and power. Her moans filled the room, along with the harsh sound of his breathing, and when she climaxed it was with such force that she grasped his rigid forearms and held on tight, her body both ravished and triumphant, her womb pulsing, her passage tightening over and over in spasms of erotic bliss.

Her pleasure was enhanced by his reaction, his shaft suddenly still and deep inside her, the eruption of hot fluid accompanied by his groan of release. Daphne wound her fingers into the thickness of his dark hair as he shuddered above and within her, feeling both elation and a wondrous joy that she could give this passionate man such pleasure.

She might be, she realized with a fleeting sort of dismay, falling in love.

* * *

Lazily tracing the fine elegant curve of Daphne's spine with an exploring fingertip, Thomas dipped into the slight utterly female dimples just above her delectable buttocks and smiled darkly. Her bottom was smooth and gorgeous, the white mounds meeting her long legs in an intriguing crease. Cupping her cheeks in both hands, he squeezed lightly.

Nude, on her stomach, Daphne lay supine, her long shining black hair a contrast to her pale, perfect skin. Still fondling her ass, Thomas asked, "Tell me, is there anything you have ever wanted to do...a secret scandalous yearning, if you will, Lady Tremayne?"

Lashes half-lowered over those vivid blue eyes, she didn't answer at once, then said teasingly, "I have always lusted after my doctor, but I think I have ventured a good distance into that fantasy."

"You have made a good start." His fingers dipped into the cleft between her thighs, brushing the dampness of expelled sperm and sexual fluids as he touched her soft inviting sex. "But don't stop now. However, I meant something truly shocking. Like bondage, or being spanked like a naughty child, or perhaps having someone watch while I put my mouth here."

He slid two fingers into her wet, hot vagina and it was somehow more arousing because of her prone position on her stomach. She immediately parted her thighs to allow better penetration, and Thomas gave a secret smile as one hand finger-fucked her and the other smoothed over her delectable bottom.

Daphne sighed in obvious pleasure. "I don't know, Thomas. I don't think I am a very scandalous person."

Inside, she was like warm, lovely silk, the inner tissue moist and slick. He explored her female passage slowly, inch by glorious inch. "Have you ever been with another woman?" He knew the answer before she even responded.

"No, of course not."

"What if someone tied you to a bed, your legs spread apart, and different men came to enjoy you?"

Her inner muscles clenched, just a fraction. "If they were all as talented as yourself, I suppose that would be nice, but the truth is, I am very satisfied with your...your particular size and virtuosity. No, I do not like the idea of more than one man."

His fingers slid out of her almost all the way, and he pushed back in slowly. "I only have one mouth. What if there were, say, three mouths to minister to the parts of your anatomy that made the most sense in a sexual way?"

"Three mouths?"

"One for each breast and a third for this." He cupped her cleft in his palm, two fingers still inside. "Does that idea intrigue you, my lady?"

"I see you are determined to discuss this issue." She lifted her bottom a fraction in evident enjoyment of his deft simulation of intercourse. "What about you? Is there a particular male fantasy I should be aware of, darling?"

"Just a short time ago, I suppose I would have said that I would like to service Lady Tremayne. I cannot imagine anything more enjoyable than that." Increasing the pace just slightly, he pushed so deep between her legs he could feel the elongated mouth of her womb, her cervix soft and creamy with his semen.

Daphne gasped, an audible exhale. "I don't suppose you could replace your fingers with something more...substantial?"

"I thought you would never ask." Rising up behind her, Thomas grasped her hips, using his knees to push her legs farther apart. His erection was almost painfully hard and he probed her wet cleft, positioning himself so he could thrust inside her female entrance. Though he usually viewed himself as a civilized human being, he found he liked taking her this way, from behind like most animals mated. Daphne moaned as he penetrated and filled her, face-down and submissive, letting him have his way with her body.

She is too beautiful, he thought as he felt the intense pleasure of sexual contact. Everything he desired and imagined in a woman: cultured and sophisticated in public, yet wanton and eager in the bedroom.

Never once had she given him any indication that she would consider marriage again. In fact, she had made it clear that she was only in the market for a lover.

He was lucky, he reminded himself sharply as he closed his eyes in erotic bliss, his rigid penis sinking between her smooth, long legs, to be able to even touch her. Her glorious bottom against his stomach, Thomas embedded himself to the hilt, holding there for a calculated moment, hearing her panting need with satisfaction. Withdrawing almost completely, he waited and then plunged back inside. Daphne shattered, pushing back up against him, trying to take him deeper as she climaxed in splendid and complete orgasmic release.

He followed, unable to help from suddenly coming with mind-numbing force, the gush of his ejaculation hard inside her, his face pressed to the fragrant tumble of her ebony hair across her smooth back. It seemed he held there in paradise forever, small tremors in his cock liberating the fluids of his pleasure.

I might impregnate her, he thought traitorously.

Then she would have to marry him.

* * *

"The trouble is, of course," Lillian said smoothly, "that he is socially inferior. Being a physician is rather a plebian pursuit, after all."

"I don't know that I wish to make this a permanent arrangement," Daphne murmured, lifting her glass of sherry and taking a small sip. "But I will be frank with you, Thomas could not be a better lover. He is also handsome and intelligent...a woman could not ask for more."

"A title and a vast fortune might come in handy." Aunt Lil chuckled. "But then again, I suppose I would trade both for the rapt look on your face when you speak of him. In any case, you don't need money, nor another title, so you can do as you wish."

It was a sunny afternoon, and Daphne gazed out the window at the blue sky. Wistfully, she said, "I'm not sure what I wish, nor do I have an inkling of his feelings. Lust, yes, well...I counted on that, I suppose. But otherwise, we don't speak of anything serious."

"Daphne, darling," Lillian lifted one perfectly plucked eyebrow, "you completely control the play. I cannot think of a better situation than having a virile, gorgeous young man at your beck and call, ready to satisfy you at your slightest whim. You were married to old Jeffery for years; just enjoy yourself. This doesn't have to be serious."

It is, though, Daphne thought uncomfortably. No man had ever made her feel this way...she thought and dreamt of him constantly. It was true that she and Thomas had wonderful rapport physically—she suspected it was not the normal attraction between a man and woman, but something special—but fantastic sex was certainly was not enough to make her relinquish her freedom.

Was it?

"My lady, the Duke of Reiston to see you."

Glancing up, Daphne saw with a sort of horror that her butler offered a card, the engraved crest chillingly familiar. "Aunt Lillian, don't leave," she said abruptly.

"As you wish," Lillian made a face and added, "but truthfully, I don't care for the duke myself. Please tell me he isn't courting you."

Under her breath, Daphne muttered, "Courtship doesn't seem to be what he has in mind."

The duke proved to be as loathsomely reptilian as ever, entering with a bow, wearing his usual funeral colors. "My dear Lady Tremayne."

"I am a little surprised to see you," she murmured coolly, forced to offer her hand.

His fingers were clammy and the touch of his lips on her knuckles made her shiver in disgust. He knew it, too, it was there in the veiled depths of his obsidian eyes. He *liked*

it, she realized in sudden shocked comprehension, that she found him unattractive and disturbing.

"I could not resist your beauty and grace," he said, but instead of sounding gallant and charming, it came out as thinly disguised menace. "I must confess I think about you constantly, dear lady."

Aunt Lillian valiantly tried to come to the rescue, suddenly babbling something inane about an upcoming event at Vauxhall Gardens. Carlton Judea seemed content to let her chatter, his gaze never leaving Daphne's face, his simple presence in her home a dire warning. It must only have been a few minutes into his unwelcome visit that Thomas saved her, arriving in a very professional manner, bag in hand.

"How is Lady Tremayne feeling?" Daphne heard his deep voice ask Hodges out in the hallway outside the drawing room.

"She looks a little pale, if you ask me, sir," her butler said helpfully.

"I'll see to her right away."

Rising slowly, Daphne ignored Aunt Lillian's mischievous smirk, reluctantly giving her hand again to the duke. "My physician is here. I'm afraid I have been suffering from an unknown malaise lately. You will excuse me, of course."

Carlton rose, his flat black eyes unreadable. "Certainly, my lady. But we will see each other soon. I will call again."

"Perhaps," she murmured, snatching back her fingers as quickly as possible.

Lillian also departed, obviously not able to resist a parting wink. Thomas saw it, his dark brows elevating, but neither of them said a word until they reached her bedroom upstairs. Once inside, Thomas closed the door and said without preamble, "I am not sure you know this, for it isn't something discussed in front of a lady, but the duke has a horrific reputation, Daphne. You must discourage him."

She confessed, sinking down on the bed, "He's threatened me. It was disturbing at the time, but now I feel he might actually be dangerous."

"What did he say?" His jaw hardening, Thomas stared at her.

It was actually a bit of a relief to explain, especially considering the comforting width of her lover's shoulders and the unconcealed fury in his eyes. When he took her protectively in his arms, she felt safe there and his familiar scent was both arousing and very male.

They made love for hours with tenderness, then wild abandon, and after he left Daphne felt a little melancholy. Stretching her sated naked body, she relished the stickiness between her legs, evidence of their mutual pleasure. It was nice to be serviced, there was no doubt about it, she thought in contemplative reflection, the late afternoon sun pouring in her bedroom window.

But wouldn't it be better to be loved?

Chapter Four

The hallway was long, cool, and shrouded. One would never know it was a brothel except for the slight fragrance of expensive perfume that lingered in the air, and the utter and discreet quiet of the place. Jessica Landry prided herself on the beauty of the women she employed, but also insisted they be free of disease and paid for regular examinations herself. Her establishment was visited by the rich men of the *haute ton* who could afford the very best in sexual distraction, and who wished to be able to indulge themselves anonymously.

For all her sophistication, Daphne, Thomas noted with amusement, did not seem to realize where she was, under the impression that it was an expensive hotel. Linking her arm in his, she murmured, "I am dying to see this surprise you say you have arranged. Just the fact that we can spend the whole night together is enough for me, darling Thomas. Nothing else is necessary."

"Surprises are very rarely necessary," he said, looking down at her shining dark head, admiring the alabaster profile of her perfect face. "But often quite fun. Here we are, fourth door on the right. Shall we go in?"

Opening the door, he politely ushered her inside. The room was tastefully done, which pleased him, but everything was almost exorbitantly luxurious; the carpeting lush and thick, the bed huge and hung with velvet, the lamps made of brass with wine colored shades. There was a lively blaze in the marble fireplace and he eased off Daphne's cloak, pleased to see the champagne he'd requested sat in a bucket on a small table holding two glasses. Taking off his own greatcoat and moving to deftly uncork the wine, he poured them each a glass and grinned. "Shall we have a toast?"

Wearing an ivory gown that complimented her flawless skin and contrasted vividly with her glossy dark hair, Daphne obediently lifted her sparkling wine, her lovely blue eyes openly curious.

Thomas said smoothly, "To sex and the pleasure it brings us."

"Thomas." His companion looked deliciously scandalized, laughing out loud. "That is an unusual toast for a respectable physician."

"But perfectly normal for a man who gets to make love to the most beautiful woman in England. Your incredible body is worth drinking to, in my opinion." Thomas took a mouthful of wine, not bothering to hide the admiration in his eyes.

Dear God, he was well beyond falling in love with the delectable Lady Tremayne.

A soft knock interrupted them, and Daphne frowned slightly, glancing at the door. When it opened and three young women strolled in, she looked genuinely startled at not only their presence but also their scanty attire.

Lila tossed back her long brown curls with her saucy smile. Wearing only a lace chemise, her ample bosom thrust upward in extravagant display by the bodice, she grinned and purred, "Good evening, Doctor." Eyeing Daphne with practiced assessment, she murmured playfully, "Look, girls, what he's brought us. Your *friend*, Dr. Blake, is glorious."

Agreeing whole-heartedly with that sentiment, Thomas watched as the three women, one a pale redhead with truly magnificent breasts, a petite blonde, and Lila, surrounded

Daphne, not crowding her, but obviously intent. In confusion, she looked at him, and he said in calm explanation, "Three mouths."

She flushed, vivid color coming up into her cheeks. "Thomas!"

"You'll like it," he said softly, "and so will I, even if it is just to watch. Don't worry, my love, we'll still have the whole night together. This is just a special treat."

Lila reached up and brushed a finger across Daphne's smooth cheek, looking her in the eyes. "A treat for us girls, as well. We don't often get a chance at someone like you, my lady. Now...let's take off your clothes. Lord, you are lovely, aren't you? Relax and we'll take care of you."

Settling into a chair by the fireplace, his view of the bed unimpeded, Thomas found he held his delicate wine glass so tightly that it was in danger of shattering and he had to force himself to relax. At first he thought Daphne might refuse to participate, but three pairs of deft fingers made short work of disrobing her and soon she was gloriously nude, her silken ebony hair loosened and in a river down her graceful back. The red-haired woman took her hand, tugging her toward the bed as the other two women quickly shed their clothes.

Thomas watched the tableau, his chair perfectly positioned so he could be a silent male voyeur, the lush display in front of him every man's dream. The three naked courtesans were pretty women, rounded in the right places and overtly female, but Daphne was as always beyond compare with her delicate perfect beauty. Together they were like some pornographic fairy tale, where nubile young nymphs seduced and beguiled each other.

His cock swelled predictably, and the breath caught in his throat as he saw the woman he desired more than anything in this world urged into a prone position. Daphne murmured something he didn't quite catch as the redhead and blonde knelt next to her. The blonde moved forward to kiss her lightly on the mouth, one of her hands going to cup her right breast, rubbing her thumb sensuously over the taut coral nipple. The redhead laughed and began to caress the other pale mounded breast, leaning in close to suckle it.

"Jesus," Thomas muttered under his breath, adjusting his erection with an unsteady hand.

Lila glanced over from the bed, her laughter ringing out as she saw the tell-tale bulge in his pants. She said teasingly, "I think the good doctor likes this." Wiggling forward so he got a full view of her bare, tight bottom as she lay on the huge bed on her stomach, she insistently pushed Daphne's legs apart while the other two fondled and sucked her nipples. "How fast," she asked Thomas conversationally, "do you think I can make her come by eating this gorgeous pussy?"

"I don't know," he said hoarsely, his body throbbing.

"I have a pretty talented tongue," she said archly. "You'll watch, won't you?"

Not at all sure how long it would take Daphne, but certain he would lose control soon, Thomas saw with fascination that she smoothed her hands over Daphne's slim thighs in a soft gesture, licking her lips before she lowered her head and pressed her mouth to that hot, succulent juncture. It was erotic to see Lila's brown silky hair spread over Daphne's thighs and perhaps more so to hear the soft sucking sounds now filling the room as she delicately feasted at her cleft. He stifled a groan.

Four naked women, he thought hazily in sexual enjoyment, watching as Daphne began to moan and react to such overt sexual stimulation, her hips lifting against Lila's mouth. Lila, too, had spread her legs to expose her wet crotch, and the two women who lavished attention on Daphne's breasts were obviously aroused, their prominent nipples hard and erect.

She climaxed quickly under such determined carnal assault, her low scream echoing outward. Lila looked pleased when she lifted her face from between Daphne's legs, one brow arched upward. Even as she eased away, one of the other girls took her place, settling between Daphne's thighs to taste her sex, while the other rubbed and fondled her breasts. Gasping moans filled the room.

"You need some help, Dr. Blake?"

Lila's gaze was on the rigid bulge between his legs as she approached him, naked and smiling, her generous breasts bobbing with each step. Thomas wanted to refuse, but couldn't speak as she dropped to her knees and gently unfastened the opening of his trousers. Her fingers closed around his erect manhood as it came free. "You're big," she murmured. "God help me, this is a splendid cock."

"Lila..."

"I want to do this, to do *you*," she said frankly, stroking his throbbing length. "But you only desire your lady, Doctor, and I understand that, so just let me have a nibble. You can fuck her all night, remember?"

Sitting in his chair, Thomas felt her mouth slowly close over him as he watched Daphne though half-open eyes, seeing her climax again for the redhead, her pearly body pink with orgasmic rush as she twisted and cried out.

Expertly swirling her tongue over the crest of his penis, Lila made a sound of appreciation down in her throat. She sucked him hard, unabashedly enjoying his struggle for control, taking his cock deep. He finally accepted the sensation, his balls tightening in preparation for release, needing the relief.

When he did come, Lila swallowed eagerly as he pumped semen into her receptive mouth, licking her lips when she finally relinquished his shaft and stood.

Still amazingly erect, he leaned back, breathing hard. In the background, he could hear Daphne whimper wildly, the two women with her on the bed still touching and licking.

Surprises, he decided with indolent male satisfaction, were divine.

* * *

It was decadent. It was beyond wicked to be touched and caressed by more than one person, like a precious toy for their use alone...and she had to admit she had enjoyed it. Twisted in the sheets, her damp body seemed to hum with sexual excess. Daphne felt a dreamy contentment as Thomas joined her, the room now quiet and empty except for the two of them. His grin was a little cheeky as he settled next her, propped on one elbow, one eyebrow lifted.

"Let me know," he said softly, reaching out to trace the line of her lower lip, "when you are available for more traditional copulation."

"Give me a few minutes," Daphne told him with a weak laugh. "I guess I should probably not ask, but where are we exactly that three women wander the halls in a state of near undress and feel free to enter bedrooms and decadently ravish the occupants?"

His grin widened boyishly, though there was nothing boyish about the surging and raw male size of his erection. Thomas lounged there, his long lean form powerful, his body unselfconsciously nude. "A gentleman's establishment, my dear. But, as you can confirm, the young ladies here do not confine themselves to men alone. I have it on good authority that some of them even prefer sex with females. That's when the notion of bringing you here came to me. I must say I was right, they enjoyed you."

"I am not sure whether to be insulted or grateful for such an outrageous idea."

"You love sex, and a little adventure is good for the soul. I figured your sensuous nature would override your shocked sensibilities."

You love sex. It startled her a little to hear such a frank assessment of her newly awakened libido. Gazing into Thomas' dark eyes, Daphne corrected quietly, "I love sex

with *you*. And while what I just experienced was fun, it was simply physical sensation without any emotional benefit."

Something flickered in his expression, perhaps a flash of hope. "When we began this, Daphne, you told me all you wished from me was a satisfied body. Have you changed your mind?"

Honestly, she admitted, "I do not want the complications of a love affair, Thomas. I am a completely independent woman and that feels wonderful." Then she added with a sigh, "But I suppose I am falling in love with you anyway, like some foolish romantic girl. How a woman could help it, I don't know. You are infuriatingly considerate, intelligent, and terribly handsome."

"Don't forget my generous size and endurance in bed." Arching a brow, he looked a little smug.

"I try to," Daphne muttered, "but it doesn't work. Can't you be a bit less...wonderful?"

He laughed at the open grievance in her tone, and the light in his eyes was tender as he pulled her into his arms. "I'll try to do something selfish and wicked right away, my beautiful Lady Tremayne. In the meanwhile, can I simply give you incredible and pleasurable sexual congress? I am afraid a certain part of my anatomy is feeling ignored."

"Not completely ignored," she said with a hint of unwanted jealousy as she wound her arms around his strong neck. "I saw that young lady on her knees in front of you and can only guess what transpired."

"Physical sensation," he reminded her, using her own words as he nuzzled the side of her neck, "without emotional benefit. I made it clear actually before we came that this visit was for your pleasure. I do not see the girls here unless someone is ill and they all know that."

"Though you have been invited, I imagine. Often. I saw how each one of them looked at you."

"I adore you when you are petulant," he laughed, pulling her closer. "In fact, I adore you all the time. Come now, kiss me, love, and I promise to show you how much."

"With pleasure, Doctor," she said demurely and offered her mouth.

Throughout the night, she offered him much more than that—her body, her passion, her growing realization that making love was a soul-burning commitment between a man and a woman. When he finally slept beside her, Daphne lay there and pondered how exactly to arrange her future.

Her flux was late...she wondered if he noticed that she hadn't had her flow since that first time they'd lain together. He was physician, but whether or not he kept track of the days the way a woman would was in doubt.

If she carried a child; that would certainly settle the matter.

Chapter Five

The club was quiet, smelling of tobacco and claret, and the hum of voices drifted into the air, punctuated now and then by low laughter. Thomas handed over his cloak and nodded at the concierge. "Is my father here already?"

"Yes, sir, he's waiting for you."

"Thank you, Watson."

Following the young man, he spotted his father sitting at a table by the fireplace, his iron-gray hair thick and neatly brushed as always, his clothing immaculately tailored to his still trim body. Viscount Linehan stood and offered his hand in formal greeting. "Thomas, good to see you. Thank you for coming. Can I offer you claret or brandy, son?"

"Brandy, please." Somewhat warily, Thomas sank down into an opposite chair. Being summoned to an impromptu meeting with his father was a bit of a surprise. They met regularly for family gatherings, but the truth was, his father was a busy man, and so was he, so their contact was a little limited the past few years. His father would have preferred he had bought a commission and served in Wellington's Peninsular campaign than choosing a career in medicine, and he particularly disapproved of his clinic and hospital since it was in an unfashionable neighborhood. Nonetheless, they were amiable toward each other and Thomas respected and liked him, realizing early in his life that being born a lord endowed one with a certain arrogance that went with the responsibility of title.

"How's Mother?" he asked, accepting a snifter.

"Fine, worried about you." His father made a great business of setting his glass down, fiddling with the stem. "That's why I asked you here, at her insistence. I suppose there are some things a mother does not feel she can discuss with her grown son."

A small glimmer of misgiving clenched in Thomas' stomach. "What on earth are we discussing?"

"I dislike interfering, you know that. At almost thirty, your life is your own. However, you do tend to be absorbed with your patients and that clinic, so I agreed to speak with you. With your disassociation with society in general, perhaps you don't even realize what everyone is saying."

"If you continue to equivocate, I still won't. Saying about what?"

His father's gaze was suddenly quite direct. "Are you having a torrid love affair with Lady Daphne Tremayne, Thomas?"

"What?" It felt a little like tripping over the edge of the rug and going sprawling, he was so surprised. "Where did you hear that?"

"There are rumors apparently. Enough rumors that your mother is growing concerned it might be true."

"Hell," Thomas said involuntarily. Not for himself. If there was one thing that Daphne valued, it was her reputation for virtuous seclusion.

"Is it true?" His father leaned back a fraction and elevated his brows. "She's very beautiful, but one does question your judgment. I doubt the husbands of the women you now have as patients will be thrilled to know you sometimes pose as a doctor to gain access to their bedrooms, when in truth your intentions are less than noble."

He was only too well-aware of the possible catastrophe to his career, not to mention that he might immediately lose Daphne if she thought they were being watched and censured. "I did not seduce her under any guise," he said with conviction. "I love her deeply, and if I thought she might consider marrying me, I would be the most honored man on earth."

"So, it is fact, not fiction." His father sighed, but his lips twitched in a slight smile. "I don't know whether to congratulate you on your new passion, or scold you for risking everything for what might prove a transient relationship. I am sure you realize the lady in question could have any eligible man she fancied."

"Only too well. As a fifth son, without title and only what a woman like her would consider a modest living, I am well-aware of how little I offer her." Thomas took a convulsive gulp from his glass. "We have been very discreet. How on earth does anyone even know?"

"I am not sure. All I know is that the whispers are rising."

Thomas didn't like the sound of that, it felt wrong. "My activities are beneath the notice of the ton," he said slowly. "But she has many, many admirers, including the Duke of Reiston."

His father immediately shook his head. "An unsavory man if ever one breathed. Proof, I suppose, that good blood lines breed bad men. If he feels vindictive at being rejected, she could suffer. It could easily be his poison that is spreading."

Shoving himself to his feet, Thomas said tersely, "Excuse me, but I think I need to talk to her immediately. Thank you for telling me this. You were right, I needed to know."

"Good luck, son." His father added with resigned amusement, "With women, a man always needs it."

* * *

She felt his presence first, like a waft of cold, sickly wind. The hair rising on the back of her neck, Daphne glanced up from surveying her correspondence. Carlton Judea stood in the doorway of her husband's study. As she fought a gasp of surprise and open dismay, he turned and shut the door, the key clicking the latch shut under his long, pale fingers.

"I let myself in," he said coolly. "You see, I can be even more discreet than Thomas Blake. Tell me, Countess, how does it feel to fuck the common folk?"

Since she considered Thomas anything but common, Daphne said sharply, "Get out, your Grace, or I will scream the house down, I swear it."

"Good," he said in silky menace. "I want an audience to the fact I had you. The door looks rather solid. It will take them time to break it down, if your elderly butler can find the strength and help to do it at all. You don't employ a large staff, my dear. By the time they get in, I'll be *in*."

It was a nasty innuendo and she felt a glimmer of panic.

Jeffery's rather sharp letter opener was still in her hand and she let it drift to her lap. "I cannot understand, sir, why with your title and wealth, you feel you must pursue a woman who is simply not interested."

"Your interest or lack thereof is irrelevant to me." He didn't so much smile as bare his teeth. "Did you realize just how easy it was to bribe your little French maid into giving me the details of your personal activities with your attentive physician? She isn't a fool, Lady Tremayne, and sexual intercourse leaves a certain distinct odor in the air, not to mention suspicious stains on the sheets. He even took you to a brothel where you cavorted with whores. I have ferreted out your secrets and rest assured, now all of fashionable London realizes you are a harlot."

Dear God, Daphne thought in alarm, *is this man truly obsessed?* Her fingers tightened on the small sharp instrument in her hand. "I am not ashamed of loving Thomas Blake," she said coolly. "In fact, I am confident I carry his child. Our affair is not unusual. Most fashionable women amuse themselves with men other than their husbands, and widows have particular freedoms. Go away, Reiston, and lavish your sick attentions on someone else."

"Ah, but I want only you." His black eyes looked feral as he took a few steps forward and she could see the alarming evidence of his arousal through his tightly-fitted pants. "And I always get my way."

Getting to her feet, Daphne felt incipient fear tickle her throat. She opened her mouth to scream, letting out one piercing cry as he lunged after her, coming around the bulk of Jeffery's desk. She slashed once with the letter opener, a frantic stab that barely missed, and dodged backwards, keeping the desk between them. She ran toward the door, realizing he had taken the key. Whirling, she faced her attacker, her arm low at her side.

"Get back," she said, her back pressed against the door, more than ready to stab him if he dared advance. Outside, she thought she could hear voices suddenly, a small prayer that Hodges would be able to at least raise an alarm spinning out in a silent plea. "You won't have me," she vowed vehemently to the man stalking her.

A sudden hammering on the door behind her was most welcome. "Daphne!" Thomas' voice sounded both alarmed and furious. "Are you all right? Unlock this door."

"The Duke of Reiston has the key and he's in here," she shouted, holding out the letter opener in self-defense.

"Stand free of the door."

"Thomas, hurry!" Edging away, she slid along the wall.

"Shut up, slut." Carlton avoided another slashing attempt, circling slightly. His face was manically glazed, as if he had no control over his actions any longer. Suddenly remembering the lesson Thomas had taught her about the male anatomy, Daphne kicked out in deliberate defensive aim, catching the duke between his legs as he tried to force her back against an angled bookcase.

The man wailed and stumbled, clutching his genitals.

Hodges might be elderly, but her young lover certainly was not. Dr. Blake burst through the door in seconds, sending it slamming into the wall with a sound that made her wince for the wood paneling. He didn't hesitate, moving past her to hit her assailant with a solid blow to the chin that sounded unnaturally loud and vicious. Reiston went down in a heap without even a counter defense, his head glancing off the wall in a sharp crack. His gaunt body went limp, his pallid face smooth as Thomas stood over him, his fists still half-lifted.

"That did it, I believe. Between the two of us, he is unmanned and unconscious." It was a jest, light-hearted with relief until she started to shake, and gasping, Daphne stumbled to the desk and braced herself. "Oh, my love, he was going to...he intended...Oh, God."

Moving quickly, Thomas caught her. "I know what he intended, that bastard. Don't think about it." Lifting her in his arms, he whispered into her hair, "God, I love you, Daphne, more than my life. For a moment there, I was petrified."

She snuggled there against his chest, selfishly enjoying the moment, contentment replacing terror. "I think I am going to have a baby," she blurted out suddenly, not at all in the way she'd intended to break the news, not with some madman bleeding on her floor.

"I think so, too," he said in an amused echo of her own words. "I'm a doctor."

"You do?" Her head seemed to fit perfectly right under his chin and she wanted to stay there, in his strong embrace, forever. "And here I thought to shock you. Are you happy?"

"With you? Always."

She sighed, the unconscious evil duke an issue she would leave Thomas to worry over. "I will be fat, I suppose," she declared, trying to focus on anything except her near brush with disaster. "Will that matter?"

"Not at all. You will nurture our child inside the most perfect body in the world."

"You make it sound so nice."

"Not all of it will be nice. There's going to be a scandal. At least one over our affair, my dear Countess, maybe another over this piece of refuse on the carpet. We will have to alert the authorities about the duke, though I think there are others out there who will support your accusation of attempted assault. My father hinted as much today when he told me there were rumors circulating about us. He will help, and he is not without influence, but it will be public that he tried to rape you."

"I can deal with that." The idea of prosecuting the duke held an undeniable appeal. She was also of the titled nobility, and Carlton Judea had openly attacked her in her own home. Not only could Thomas be a witness, but also Hodges still stood aghast in the doorway, with two maids hovering behind.

With complete lack of inflection, Thomas said, "If you carry my child, we will have to make some other decisions. I realize I am not wealthy nor carry a title, but I do love you and this is my child inside you. Can you consider marrying me? It might not be what most women in your position would do, but—"

"What woman would not want to marry you?" she demanded, tears springing to her eyes at his selfless criticism of his circumstances. "Thomas, don't be a fool."

"Don't weep, and I won't be," he said fondly, touching her cheek in the lightest caress. "I take it we have an agreement."

"Yes," she couldn't help it; tears ran down her cheeks in warm, full rivulets.

"I promise," Thomas leaned closer and whispered in her ear, "to service you often."

"Just love me," she responded, looking into his eyes, "that what I truly want."

His smile was wickedly tender. "Your servant as always, Lady Tremayne."

About the Author

The author of thirteen novels and numerous sexy short stories, Emma Wildes loves the infinite variations of romance in all its forms. She believes that passion makes the world go around .and delights in being able to write about it. Stop by and say hello at www.emmawildes.com. If you also like traditional romance or mystery, please visit her at www.katherinesmith.net.