



Penny
Dawn

The
Carman Chronicles
Book I: The Satin Slippers

THE CARMAN CHRONICLES, BOOK I: THE SATIN SLIPPERS

There she stood, in all her naked glory, smiling slyly.

Sir Beauregard shifted from one foot to the other and wiped away a sudden break of sweat on his brow. While he knew he should have, he didn't look away. Lady Morgana of Carman might have been God's most perfect creation.

Her golden blonde locks hung halfway down her beautifully arched back, and her flesh was a perfect shade of ivory—like a porcelain doll's. A round rear, which seemed to scream, "Squeeze me," balanced her large bosom. He understood why the Duke of Bismalle sought to marry her—good breeding. Generous hips, through which a child would pass without unusual difficulty. Firm breasts, from which the child would suckle.

She wrapped her masses of hair into a bun and secured it with a clip. "Does anyone know you're here?"

And that voice...it was like an entrancing Christmas choir. He cleared his throat and forced his gaze to her eyes. "M'lady?"

"Elsie. The others. Do they know you're here, in my bathing closet?"

Any good knight—especially one aspiring to attain position with the Secret Service—would've been halfway out the door minutes ago. "There's quite ado out there. I'd doubt anyone kept track of my steps."

"Then stay, by command of a Lady of Carman."

"I cannot," he whispered, but his heart wasn't in his denial, and neither was his cock...

ALSO BY PENNY DAWN

Ancient History

Apple Pie

Blue Silver: Making Noise

Go For Miles

Measuring Up

Rolling In Clover

Salute

Sound Off

Wake-Up Call

THE CARMAN CHRONICLES,
BOOK I:
THE SATIN SLIPPERS

BY
PENNY DAWN

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC
<http://www.amberquill.com>

THE SATIN SLIPPERS
AN AMBER HEAT BOOK

This book is a work of fiction. All names, characters, locations, and incidents are products of the author's imagination, or have been used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, locales, or events is entirely coincidental.

Amber Quill Press, LLC
<http://www.amberquill.com>
<http://www.amberheat.com>

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be transmitted or reproduced in any form, or by any means, without permission in writing from the publisher, with the exception of brief excerpts used for the purposes of review.

Copyright © 2007 by Penny Dawn Steffen
ISBN 978-1-60272-001-5
Cover Art © 2007 Trace Edward Zaber

Layout and Formatting provided by: ElementalAlchemy.com

PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

For Lainey

CHAPTER 1

Just as Sir Beauregard suspected, Lady Morgana Carman wasn't a lady at all. As evidenced by her present position—spread eagle on a pink quilt in her quarters, white taffeta skirts rumpled around her corseted torso, and bloomers hanging from one of the four mahogany bedposts—she was a naughty girl. Her fingers were knotted in his hair, and her hips bucked against his mouth without inhibition.

Few things were sweeter than eating her peach, than knowing her thighs tensed and quivered astride his cheeks because he was doing it right. Better than any other man she might've known...although word was she hadn't known any before him. He licked her pussy thoroughly, brushing her insides with the tongue she might have called "viciously pleasing," had her pleased state not stolen her ability to speak.

His lips closed around the hard, blissful nub in the center of it all, and he hummed a delightful melody onto her creamy, wet flesh. Darting his tongue into her hole, swirling it around, claiming her for his

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

own. Her trembling hands slid from his head, only to grip the quilt.

A sheer, white canopy draped around their bodies, providing a sense of privacy in the vast chambers of the Palace of Carman, and Beau felt a sense of wicked pride in driving the passionate woman to the state of frenzy. Soon she'd be another man's wife, but for now, she belonged only to him.

In crescendo, she arched up into him, murmuring in her pleased delirium, "I need it. I want it. Please, Beau. Please."

Coils of her long, golden blonde hair bounced against her shoulders as she lifted her head to look at him. Her dark blue eyes pleaded, and her cheeks, already rosy in their own right, flushed a deeper shade of pink.

He closed his eyes. *Ah, heaven.*

The sound of soft steps scurrying over the marble floors of the Palace of Carman jarred the knight from his recurrent daydream.

He straightened outside Lady Morgana's chamber door and felt his own cheeks flush with heat. Someone was coming, likely one of her sisters, and he had strict orders.

Beauregard, being a soldier of the Olympian, had volunteered to guard her with the grace and gratitude expected of him, despite warnings from his peers. Truthfully, he still didn't know why he'd volunteered for the position. While he attributed the decision to the hopes it would prove his loyalty to the queen, and thus give him a leg up when it came time to appoint knights to the Secret Service, he'd offered only because he'd had an intense dream, in which the late Olivia of Carman, Morgana's mother, had persuaded him to step up to the duty.

Guarding Morgana was a no-win task, one at which three knights had failed before him. Besides, the petite beauty roused wanton yearnings in the pit of his belly—and below—and there were laws against soldiers consorting with the nobility. He'd had few decent

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

thoughts since he'd locked her chamber door.

This had been his first full night on duty. If he were to be granted a stay, upcoming nights would surely be comprised of willpower. Through the door, she'd more than once whispered for reprieve, promised him amnesty, if only he'd enter and talk for a while. How any of his predecessors—lesser soldiers than he—had managed to remain outside her quarters was a mystery of gargantuan intrigue. He, a high-ranking knight, had nearly given into her request.

The sun had yet to brighten the sky. During evening hours, everyone was to be denied entrance to Lady Morgana's bedchamber until the morn of her wedding day, a little more than a week from now. Should she beg for it, food and water would be delivered by dumbwaiter from sunset to sunrise, but the beauty was to see and be seen by no one except by daylight.

Considering her three sisters enjoyed evening tea and games in the parlors, her seclusion seemed a harsh and cruel punishment—especially since her days at the palace were quickly drawing to a close—but the measure was taken for her protection. Every night for the past week, and maybe longer, Morgana had been taken from her chambers in the dark. She'd insisted she'd had no recollection of what had transpired during the moonlight hours, but had returned at dawn of her own volition, cold and tired, yet looking no worse for the wear.

Three of the lord's men had found her, on as many occasions just before dawn, sneaking in bare feet with her satin slippers in hand, through the stone corridors leading to her bed. Upon such occasions, the knights had been stripped of their duties and swords, for they had failed in the simple task of keeping the lady under wraps.

Beauregard was determined to keep her in her chambers. However, while he wore traditional mesh armor—not to be confused with an armor suit—and concealed a sword at his side, he couldn't be an effective bodyguard whilst imagining his subject in the throes of

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

passion. Oh, he'd had such a daydream many times in the years he'd been in Lord Carman's employ, but never while standing guard at Morgana's door. Never while shouldering the sole responsibility of her noble and chaste reputation, not to mention her safety.

His erotic musings had not only compromised his oath as her protector, his impure thoughts stood as an insult to her virginal status as well. Worse, he'd potentially put the lady in danger...and thus, might have cost him his knighthood—had something gone awry while he'd been contemplating ravaging her.

Suddenly, the weight of his armor fatigued him. While he was thankful Lord Carman hadn't required him to don a helmet and full armor dress, the chest protector was much like a sweater made of metal. It moved when he moved, and for the most part, it was comfortable. But after twelve hours, it may as well have been a dead horse strapped to his back. No wonder he'd allowed his mind to embark on a journey as indecent as his fantasized oral copulation with the lady. Exhaustion was to blame.

"Curse you, exhaustion." And, staring in the direction of the endowed member between his legs, he shook his head and hissed, "And curse you, wicked desire."

He sure as hell wasn't going to be awarded a position in the Secret Service this way—with a boner in his drawers and indecent thoughts about a lord's daughter shooting through his head. After seventeen years of by-the-book service, he wasn't about to risk his perfect record for the sake of one delicious-looking maiden.

"Sir Beauregard."

The voice was the same he'd heard during his fantasia, belonging to Lady Morgana. He put an ear to the heavy, wooden door. "M'lady?"

"Please, sir."

A split second before he realized her words weren't coming from behind the door, but from the corridor before him, her cold, dainty

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

hands grasped his. How had she managed to escape in the night? Although he'd allowed his mind to roam, he hadn't fallen asleep or abandoned his post for even a moment.

"Were you stolen out the window, m'lady, and carried down the trellis?" He locked gazes with the sparkling eyes of Lady Morgana and then allowed himself a brief glance at her feet. Had she found such a fate, either her satin slippers or her feet would certainly be marred by garden soil and dirt roads. Yet her feet were clean enough to lick, and the slippers—stunning white satin, open-toed, and high-heeled—appeared as fresh as snow, as if she'd done no more than dance in them.

Dance, indeed. When she moved, her dress swayed, and his heart sashayed with the sight of her. The crimson-and-white gown she wore was fit for a ball, and her golden tresses curled about her diamond-and-garnet tiara as if she'd been to a grand party. This woman had not been maliciously stolen, but had fled of her own free will!

His eyes widened with the realization, and he parted his lips to call her on it.

"Save your title, knight, and don't breathe a word." She pressed a finger to her slyly pursed—and ruby red—lips and turned the key in the lock of her chamber door. "Good morning, Sir Beauregard," she whispered and winked before disappearing into her quarters.

* * *

Morgana carefully placed her shoes on the plush pink bear pelt—faux, of course, as she'd never understood hunting for sport—centered in her chambers. Next, she removed her tiara and placed it in its white satin box.

Another night wasted. As usual, the good Duke of Bismalle had kept to his private quarters, denying her even a glimpse when she'd sneaked around his castle. There'd been talk of his taking his nights at some mysterious gentleman's retreat, but she'd yet to discover its

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

whereabouts.

The retreat was one of many mysteries about the man. In addition, no photographs of him existed. She'd heard he was a large man with skin the color of toasted almonds. A strikingly handsome duke, for whom women all across the Olympian lands pined. If that were true, however, he'd have little reason to arrange a marriage—and he'd likely pose for sculptures, paintings, and photographs.

In disgust, she blew a curl off her forehead. Thanks to ladies of status who'd married young—the princess who used to be a mermaid had married Prince Eric at sixteen!—Lord Carman thought Morgana was far too old to be without husbandly prospects, and thus, had arranged a marriage for her.

As if! At twenty-two, a girl hardly knew who she was, let alone who she could be, but thanks to Daddy's arrangement, she had no choice but to snoop, to find a reason to renege on the promise of her hand. Had her mother, Olivia, survived to see this day, Olivia would've been queen, and no way would Morgana be expected to marry outside the kingdom.

She'd never met Preston of Bismalle, but she'd rather not spend the rest of her life with the most winning archer at the Olympian Hunt Club, given her position as assistant chairperson of the Society for Animal Rights. Besides, she hated the sound of his name. Preston, alone, was all right, but followed by "of Bismalle," it sounded like something she drank when she was queasy.

"Daddy, what were you thinking?" She clucked her tongue and lovingly caressed the white satin tiara box before carrying it across the pink marble floor to the armoire.

Over the past several days, encountered during the day when she wasn't in seclusion, men of all ranks and lots in life had offered to take her to bed, therefore making her less a prize for the duke. But she wasn't looking for a man to take her virginity, as she hadn't had it to give since her eighteenth birthday. It was such an archaic and

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

chauvinistic position to assume she was less worthy, would make less of a wife, because she'd learned to enjoy what her body was capable of. One would think a man would appreciate her knowing how to please him more than he would her chastity, but in this era, like all eras before it, women got the short end of the stick where sex was concerned.

There was no sense complaining about it. Using a stick from time to time was redemption enough. She grinned with the thought of her private, substitute-man collection.

She coerced open the stubborn, bottom drawer of the ornately carved armoire and gently placed the tiara box inside, next to a collection of her favorite toys—fragrant massage oils, vibrators of all shapes and sizes, and a broad, pink feather.

No, she wasn't looking for a lay. She could find that in her drawer of surprises. Rather, humiliating as it was to admit she had to go looking for him, she yearned for a man to steal her...all of her, from her heart to her g-spot...from the disappointing path to dismal Bismalle. All was not lost—would not be lost—until her wedding day, when her own right to choose would be snatched from her like an ear of corn from a peasant field in the dead of night.

With a sigh, she began the cumbersome task of disrobing. Her gown, formal, gorgeous, and one of a kind, was hardly appropriate for breakfast on the veranda with her sisters.

A knock sounded on her door. "M'lady."

Ah, the good Sir Beauregard, with his smoldering good looks and come-hither tone. It figured. Now he wanted to talk.

She rolled her eyes and tried to ignore his deep baritone voice, although given the chance, it might soothe her ears like a lullaby. Perhaps he ought to have accepted her invitation for conversation twelve hours ago, when she'd had an uncanny urge to trail her hands over the flexible, steel-knit garment that covered his bulky chest. Knights in traditional dress were sexy. She'd admit that much, but little

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

else.

She wouldn't think about swimming in his deep brown eyes, holding his hard body close, or licking those full lips. His loss, and it served him right. Her fingers traveled to the long line of tiny buttons hidden beneath the lace of her bodice. He'd blown his chance, and now she had her own chest to bare, thank you.

"M'lady, we have business to discuss. You best open the door or I'll breathe word of your dirty, little secret."

Damn you, Sir Beauregard. Thus far, no one had questioned her innocence in regards to her late night disappearances, but this knight seemed sharper than all the rest. Keen, wise, onto her, and she'd known it the moment their eyes had met. The way he'd looked at her when she rounded the corner...very I-know-what-you've done.

He wasn't like the others. His apple red cheeks flamed with what she'd assumed was anger, as if he'd known the goal of her late-night quest and was irked with her risking his position with the Olympian for the prize.

If he valued his title as one of the lord's men, he'd keep his mouth shut. But the thing about knights...well, they were usually valiant types—like her three bodyguards before him—who did things by the book, consequence or none.

"M'lady? I always follow through with my threats, I assure you."

"Oh!" She stomped her way to the door and tore it open. "Only a fool would assume the lord would believe a knight's word over his daughter's."

"Only a fool would assume a knight would forget his duty. I must tell the lord of your—"

"And the lord will have your head, if you do!"

His eyes ignited with her challenge. "My head, or my sword?"

The smile spreading across his face sparked a wildfire in her tongue so hot she'd nearly forgotten her state of undress. Remembering her

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

bosom bulging in a corset offered him a tempting view of her near-nude breasts, she yanked at her bodice. "One and the same. Doesn't a knight usually think with his sword?" She glanced at the armor point covering his package, just in case he'd misunderstood to which sword she referred.

"I think with all parts of me, thank you, m'lady. Now if you'll be good enough to explain—"

"I'll do nothing of the sort! You must excuse me, Sir Beauregard. I'm dressing."

"As you succinctly indicated, this is my head we're talking about, and we have precious little time before the rest of the palace stirs. I deserve—"

"All I have to do is scream, and you—along with your head—will be banished from your post and forced to guard some ridiculous, old hag, who once was a lady of this kingdom but now is nothing more than an annoying—"

"You'll go down with this ship, Morgana. Don't try me."

The stern line of his lips and the subtle cleft in his chin, when compounded with his informal address, lent him an air of command, and she loved a man in control. She'd learned that years ago, when the French Ambassador Vuitton had put to good use a silk scarf and her bedposts.

Entranced with Sir Beauregard's mystifying, steamy eyes, she began to back into her chambers. Perhaps he could be useful to her. Perhaps he might find what she'd been seeking by moonlight. "Can you be trusted?"

He nodded, following her in.

She stumbled over the satin slippers, and regained her footing before he reached to steady her. But his gaze was enough to sustain her. So smoky. Alluring.

"Then, if you must lecture me, be a good knight, and help me with

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

this dreadful corset.” Her voice became a breathy whisper.

“I wouldn’t.”

“Rather, you shouldn’t, but I’m isolated. How am I to do so alone?” Her hands began to tremble as she turned her back to him. “It’s a task, sir, suited for sisters and chambermaids. Don’t think it gains you any favor with my body.”

“I wouldn’t dare to dream.” The looking glass across the room revealed the smirky bow his mouth had become as he swept aside her hair. “How did you manage to get into these garments without the help of a sister or chambermaid?”

She wasn’t about to demonstrate the awkward squirming required to don and cinch a corset by oneself, although he might be impressed by her flexibility. “That’s an indecent question.”

With steady fingers, he made fast work of the buttons and ribbons at her back. “Then tell me this instead, m’lady. How is it you escape every night, with your bodyguard none the wiser? Three guards are now banished from the Palace of Carman because they failed to keep you in.”

His hot breath on her neck sent a bolt of lightning to her private parts. Her nipples tingled with the thought of feeling him sigh against her breasts, and her clit hardened instantly, craving his tongue. For any tongue that sharp with wit would certainly bring pleasure beyond reason between her thighs.

“How do you do it? Without soiling your slippers or your gown?”

She glanced at the slippers, which had inexplicably appeared in her wardrobe several weeks ago. Without them, her nightly sovereignty would not have been possible. However, if curfew were the worm in Cinderella’s apple, the three-inch spikes on those slippers were Morgana’s. One step over Carman property lines, and her toes may as well have been bound with barbed wire.

Just any girl’s luck. Find a pair of sexy shoes—laced with magic, to

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

boot—and they hurt your feet worse than walking on broken glass.

He interrupted her thoughts with a finger-tip caress on her spine once the bones of the corset parted, and met her gaze in the mirror. “Where do you go? What are you looking for, once you arrive? And make it quick. Time is of the essence.”

Her arms crossed in front of her chest, hiding what she could from his view. At the moment, however, her modesty was more a habit than a matter of choice. This raucous knight stirred things in her—things she’d been seeking by moonlight for the better part of the month. His chiseled face, so handsome and gruff, boasted strong features, and she might fall for every one of them.

When he stood this near, blood buzzed in her veins and energy surged beneath her flesh. How convenient that he’d been appointed her bodyguard and would be twenty feet from her bed all through the night! Perhaps he’d like to guard her a bit closer in the future. “Sir Beauregard?”

“Yes, m’lady,” he whispered.

“May I call you Beau?”

Footsteps sounded outside her door, along with the voices of her sisters. “Where is the good Sir Beauregard? Morgana!”

“Oh, no,” Lady Morgana whispered. “You’ll be banished!”

A grin threatened to overtake him, but as the voices grew louder, he wasted no time entertaining her. Before she knew what was happening, he’d whisked layers of clothing off her body and yanked a nightdress over her head. He propped her, standing, atop her mattress. “Scream,” he whispered.

“But—”

“Scream!”

She shrieked as loudly as she could manage.

Moments later, her chamber door swung open, and she was still screaming when in bounded her three sisters, Daddy following not far

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

behind.

“Now, now, m’lady.” From his position near the steps at the foot of her bed, Sir Beauregard offered his hand. “It was only a field mouse and he’s gone now.”

“Only a mouse?” she shrieked, playing along.

“A mouse?” her sisters asked in unison.

She straightened and gave him a discerning look. “Will you be good enough to search the room in its entirety?”

“I will, m’lady.”

At last she took his hand and descended from her bed. The warmth and strength of his fingers sent her mind to the wonderful world of make-believe, where Sir Beauregard’s hands were making fast work of her undergarments. Yet she cleared her throat and continued, “How I’m expected to sleep with creatures making my quarters their own is beyond the realm of my understanding.”

“I’ll set a trap. Your sleep shan’t be disrupted again.”

“Yes, Morgana, your sleep.” Lord Carman’s voice was an intrusive boom, and his gaze zeroed in—hard and accusatory—on her made-up face. Quite a contrast to his ankle-length nightshirt and striped red-and-white nightcap, his tone was a foreboding presence in the room. Scary and threatening, yet motivated by his need to protect her. “You look as well-rested as your bodyguard, and he hasn’t slept a wink since yesterday’s sunrise. Did it happen again? Were you taken against your will?”

“Nonsense. I haven’t felt as rested at daybreak since...since I don’t know when. Ask the good knight. He’ll tell you I remained in my quarters from dusk ’til dawn.”

When called upon, Beauregard puffed his chest out and clenched his fists at his sides. His jaw tensed, and he squinted into the morning rays pouring through the leaded glass window from the east.

Morgana held her breath, while maintaining her painted-on smile.

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

Placing her fate in the hands—however talented—of a knight suddenly seemed a terrible idea. There was no telling what he might admit, in the name of his oath. *Please, let him save me.*

But Beauregard didn't extend the relieving glance for which she prayed. One knowing look from him might have calmed her nerves. Yet, at the same time, it would've excited her, cementing their shared secret. *Come on, Beau.*

At long last, his beautiful lips parted. His right shoulder rose and fell in an understated shrug. "I never saw her leave, Lord, and when she beckoned me this morn, I found her safe within these walls."

Morgana dipped her head and bit her lip to hide her smile. *Atta boy.*

The lord lifted his chin toward the knight. "Visit the kitchen once the mousetrap is set. I'm sure Cook will find something to sate you." With his pivot, the pom-pom at the end of his nightcap bounced in folly. "Come along, Morgana. Your breakfast awaits you and your sisters on the veranda."

CHAPTER 2

Lord Preston of Bismalle stared into the mirror on the ceiling above his bed in his gentleman's retreat, watching his hard, black cock piston in and out of a tight, peach-toned asshole. Sweat beaded at his temples, and when his neck began to ache from looking up, he glanced downward at the real thing. "I love this ass." Watching his caramel-brown flesh meld with pale skin turned him on as much as probing it did.

"Fuck it, duke. Use me."

There was no better way to spend the moments before sunrise than to take the smooth, hot rectum of his favorite servant. First with tongue, then with rod.

Soon, he'd marry a lady of Carman, and while he was certain no lady would perform acts such as this, Preston did not intend to forfeit the pleasure. Most lords kept lovers, as well as separate quarters. He'd marry Lady Morgana, out of obligation to his father, but his marital

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

status wouldn't change this.

Jade had been loyal and generous, and would be rewarded for years of fidelity and allegiance. Until his new bride demanded time to procreate, he'd neglect her, sexually speaking, spilling well-earned loads of semen into Jade's throat and ass in her stead.

He gripped the servant's hips and thrust deeper and deeper into the anal cavity.

"I love you."

He didn't like to hear such an admission. This wasn't conventional love. It was nothing more than shared pleasure. He'd acquired a certain amount of affection for the serf, but the mention of love still made him uncomfortable. He pushed in with more force, as if shoving the word deeper into the most perfect ass on the planet.

Jade grunted and moaned. "Fuck it. You own me."

That was more like it.

Heat pumped through his system, and his vision blurred with sweat dripping into his eyes. Yet still, he drilled. Jade milked his hard-as-steel penis with every thrust. "I own this ass." The gravelly words escaped through gritted teeth.

"You do, my duke. You own it, and all that's attached to it."

He withdrew and slapped his pole against the smooth skin of servant's rear end. He spat into the hole, rubbed the saliva in, dipping his fingers into the hot abyss, stretching it, testing its walls.

"Ohhhh," Jade breathed.

"Later, your mouth."

"Please. I love it in my mouth."

Preston rammed into the tight, wet, waiting gap, feeling the heat surround his shaft. "You want a good load?"

"Oh, yes."

"Ask for it." His pelvis slammed into lean buttocks. "Ask for it, Jadey."

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

“Come in my ass, sir.”

He pinched his eyes shut and tightened his grip, concentrating on the feeling of hot flesh constricting around him.

“Come in my ass, sir.”

“Only yours.” His balls tingled with the surge of release, and his member thickened a moment before he spurted. “Only yours.”

The moment he came, he collapsed in exhaustion, his wet flesh melding with Jade’s.

“I love you, Preston.”

“You must stop saying that.” He rolled onto the mattress next to his taboo lover. “If my father knew of the things we do, he’d surely exile both of us.”

“When you’re ruler of this palace, you may do as you wish.”

Preston fixated on Jade’s delicious red mouth, the first orifice he’d taken. He’d plunged into it twelve years ago, at age fifteen. “I’ll always make room for you.”

“Room isn’t enough anymore. You’re going to be married. Morgana of Carman will take my place in your—”

“Only formally. She’s nothing to me, just a tool for my kingdom. I couldn’t possibly do with her the things I do with you, and I wouldn’t want to.” He stroked Jade’s cheek. “I expect you to know at least that.”

“Have you ever fucked a woman white as snow and richer than Midas?”

Preston shot up and glared at his lover. “Have you forgotten your position?”

“I know I’m beneath you. But you don’t know what you’re getting yourself into.”

“Hold your tongue, Jade.”

The serf matched his tone. “Renounce your position in Bismalle.”

“Arrangements have been made. It’s beyond my control.”

“If you took control of your own life the way you take control in

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

bed, you could rule the world.”

If only it were true.

“What have the people of Carman—what has Lady Morgana—ever done for you? Do you realize the position you’re putting her in by taking her hand?”

The duke nodded. She’d live a lonely existence until the time came for Bismallian officials to strip the Carman Empire of its fortunes, but— “It’s best for Bismalle.”

“You don’t want this. You don’t want her anymore than you want any other woman.”

“I don’t expect you to understand the sacrifices that must be made for the sake of our land. Overtaking Carman’s mines is a necessary step in overthrowing the doctrines of the Olympian. Lady Morgana’s right to personal choice is destined to be part of that sacrifice, whether I approve or not.”

“The doctrines of the Olympian are what keep us apart.”

That and many other standards. Preston brushed his lips against Jade’s. “One step at a time, and this lady of Carman is the first of a long journey.”

“Tell me how you feel about me,” Jade whispered. “Flaunt your feelings. Scream them from the mountaintop. You’re a leader, m’lord. Speak and the world will listen.”

“I’m sorry.” The duke shook his head. “I will never acknowledge you, Jade. Not in this world, not until Bismalle has overthrown the Olympian.”

While Bismalle, and the world beyond, may have been ready for an interracial union—which was what his marriage to Morgana of Carman would accomplish—it was not ready to acknowledge a cross-caste union at the throne. And certainly, no one was ready to be ruled by a man who took his pleasures with another man.

“If you marry her,” Jade whispered, “she’ll know a fate worse than death. I’ll kill her myself.”

CHAPTER 3

Sir Beauregard waited for the last of the five Carmans to exit. When she did, Morgana mouthed a silent thank you, yet this time, in lieu of the flirty wink, she treated him to a grateful smile more filling than anything the cook might scrounge up for him.

Something to sate me. The only something that might sate him now belonged to the blonde firecracker for whom he'd just conceded his badge of honesty.

Fool.

The memory of her skin, softer than a rose petal, would haunt him tonight as he stood guard outside her door. The distracting maiden would surely be his downfall, for no knight had ever been appointed to the Brigade of the Secret Service for lusting after a woman of status.

But he'd already lied for her. Changing his story now could possibly land him with something far more mundane than the less-than-exciting assignment she'd described.

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

He pulled her heavy gown from where he'd tossed it atop the bed's canopy. The taffeta held her scent, and he inhaled a nose full as he carried it to the armoire, where he carefully stowed it. It was a guilty pleasure, smelling her clothing, and one in which he hardly believed he was indulging. Knights didn't do things like that—at least he didn't. But there was something about Lady Morgana of Carman...

When he picked up the satin slippers, he couldn't ignore the urge to stroke them. Glamorous and enthralling, he imagined they'd remain on her feet while he made love to her. Likely, they'd be the shoes she wore on her wedding day. Likely, he'd never know the pleasure of burying an erection in her untainted body, let alone asking her to keep her shoes on while he did so.

And why couldn't he stop thinking about indecent acts with her? He'd guarded her cousins, the future queens, as well as other women of incomparable beauty and breeding. Never had he found himself drawn to a single one.

He placed the slippers on the floor of the armoire. A sparkly dust puffed when they knocked against the wood. At second glance, he saw nothing out of the ordinary, yet when he rubbed his fingers together, silvery glitter sprinkled from his flesh. He dragged a finger along the satin pumps again, scrutinizing. Nothing sparkled, nothing glittered. *Odd.* He clapped the heels against the armoire. Again, nothing strange happened.

With a shrug, he turned to retrieve her corset. Where would a maiden store such a thing? He eyed the bottom drawer of the armoire. Dare he open it? Hadn't he invaded enough of her privacy? Hanging the gown was necessary. Had the lord caught sight of his doing so, he surely would've known of their dishonesty. Hiding the corset beneath the pile of pillows on her bed—the pile atop which he desperately wanted to sink into her body—was a more respectable option than snooping for a place to stow it.

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

Halfway to the bed, while walking around the fake bear pelt in the center of the room, curiosity got the best of him. The sisters were breakfasting on the south veranda, and the rest of the family in nooks and on patios scattered about the estate. No one would catch him snooping about, if he listened carefully for the chambermaids. He chewed his lip in deliberation, all the while caressing the satiny surface of the corset.

He'd already touched her nude back, and stolen glimpses of her nipples. She hadn't known the pretty pink roundels had peeked up at him over the lace at the top of her corset, but they were precisely the reason he'd hesitated when voices had drifted in from the corridor. Had he not taken a moment to adjust the growing stick in his pants, he might've had her in a nightdress in half the time.

Given their already risky history, what harm could come of his opening her private bureaus? If he didn't look now, when he had half an excuse to do so, when would he have the chance to get into the lady's drawers again? He spun back toward the armoire.

A moment later, he yanked open the drawer and, overcome with surprise, dropped the corset to the floor.

Dildos, vibrators, edible panties. Everything a shade of pink.

He fingered a broad feather and wondered if it had ever known the pleasure of stroking Morgana's flesh.

And what of the thick, blunt objects? The biggest had to be ten or eleven inches in length. After a moment of hesitation, he pressed a few fingers to it. It was hard, but with a very lifelike texture. He weighed it in his hand. *Heavy*. Had she ever lubricated it and worked it into the sure-to-be hot valley between her thighs?

Perhaps these sex toys had been given as a pre-wedding gag gifts. As jokes, or something to practice on. Maybe Lady Morgana was nervous about her wedding night.

He pictured her sly smile. There was nothing novice about the way

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

she carried herself—and nothing naïve either. Something told him Lady Morgana held command over those implements.

If he was right, any man would be sure to disappoint her now. How could the average penis compete with girth of that caliber?

A low-toned whistling sounded from the corridor.

The chambermaid!

He dropped the cock and slammed the drawer—right on his left index finger.

* * *

“Daddy thinks someone put a curse on you,” Tiffany, Morgana’s eighteen-year-old—and youngest—sister, said across the round, white wicker breakfast table on the south veranda. “And that’s why you’re disappearing from your room at night.”

“Please.” Morgana leaned back in her rocker and basked in the warmth of the sun soaking into her tired skin. The veranda was a private haven in the Palace of Carman, accessible from the third floor, where the ladies’ bedrooms were located. She and her sisters often relaxed there in pajamas and, in the summertime, in other garments generally considered licentious. But with only lush trees for witnesses, they’d been allowed to choose their comfort over formal dress. “Who’d put a curse on me?”

“Enemies of the Olympian, for one.” Nineteen-year-old Alexis lifted her mimosa toward the apple orchard and giggled. “Or maybe the witch over yonder...even if no one can see her.”

“I’m telling you, she’s real.” Tiffany’s pointed finger did little to stifle Alexis’ laughter.

“Maybe you’re right.” Morgana shrugged and reached for her drink. “Maybe I am cursed.”

“You’d better start fearing that witch, Alexis.” Tiffany’s white-blond curls bounced when she shook her head. “She’s evil.”

“She’s make-believe,” Alexis said.

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

While the youngest sisters bickered, Caroline leaned close, so no one else could hear. "You ought to learn to walk more softly, you know."

Morgana felt her eyes widen, but try as she might, she couldn't stop her mouth from falling open in surprise. "I don't know—"

"What I can't figure out is...well, I hear you, but I never see you. It's as if you're walking behind the mortar of the walls! What are you doing? Where are you going? And why?"

"It's better if you don't know." Morgana shook her head and took a healthy gulp of her champagne concoction. "If you don't know, you can't be held responsible."

"Look, next year, it'll be me." Caroline licked orange froth from her lips. "I know why I'd be afraid to marry a man I don't know. I've never gone all the way. But why are you afraid to marry the Duke of Bismalle? I've heard the duke is quite swimming with the ladies, and I'm sure he'll be kind."

"I don't think I'm afraid." She swallowed hard, reluctant to confess her theory regarding Bismalle's allying with enemies of the Olympian. "But...if he's swimming, why the arranged marriage? He's twenty-seven years old. Surely, he's seen enough women to choose one on his own. Either he isn't done fucking, or he's using me for the greater good of his kingdom."

"Are you done fucking?"

"Well..." Morgana traced the rim of her champagne glass. "I'm curious about men, about what they have to offer."

"Hardly. You told me about Ambassador Vuitton years ago."

After a quick glance across the table, which confirmed Tiffany and Alexis were still debating the existence of the witch of the woods, Morgana explained, "Not curious in the general sense of what a man looks like below the belt, or what he does with what he has there. I know what to do with a man, and I know what he can do with me. It's

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

been a while, but you never forget how to do that sort of thing.” She gazed out into the dew-kissed gardens. “I’m curious about what I’ll do when someone turns me on. Someone other than Preston of Bismalle.”

“You never know. Preston of Bismalle might not give anyone the chance. He may curl your toes so often you won’t have time to look at another man.”

“I don’t think so. He’ll be so busy hunting”—Morgana rolled her eyes—“and defending his title at the Olympian that he won’t look at me twice. Besides, a gal never wants what’s shoved down her throat, and I’m not talking about blowjobs.”

Caroline grinned. “I don’t mind blowjobs either. They’ve kept me a virgin for years.”

“You’re bad!” Alexis spun in her seat toward Caroline and tapped her playfully on the arm.

“What if I marry him, and I fall madly in love with someone else?” Morgana fiddled with her fork and slices of melons, arranged in a spiral pattern on the green glass plate before her.

“The way you say that”—Tiffany narrowed her gaze over her mug of steaming coffee—“I’d guess you’re planning to fall for someone in particular.”

“Don’t be ridiculous.” Morgana sighed when the image of Sir Beauregard overcame her. Damn, but she wanted to lick the cleft in his chin! She imagined unclipping the metal material sheathing his chest and peeling the rest of his clothing from his body. He’d expect her to be shy in the bedroom, but she’d show him she knew a thing or two about pleasuring a man.

Dodging a conventional kiss, she’d plant her mouth on his navel and work up, toward his mouth. She’d devour every inch of his chest, tongue his nipples, and lick slow, languid lines up his neck, bury her tongue in that remarkable line on his chin. He’d call her by her name—not lady—and he’d lace his strong, hot hands into her hair. Next time,

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

he would neither undress her so quickly nor conceal her nakedness in a blink.

She reached to the fruit bowl in the middle of the table and pulled out a plantain, too green to eat. Firm in her palm and straighter than most, she imagined Sir Beauregard would match its seven inches.

“Pray tell, sister,” Caroline said with a smirk. “Do you plan to eat that? Or practice with it?”

“That’s it.” Morgana tossed the fruit back to the bowl as she stood. “I’m going back to bed.”

“But you told Daddy you’d slept well,” Tiffany said.

“I also told Daddy at age six I’d always obey him, but if he thinks I’m going to marry someone with whom I’ve never even spoken, let alone done other things of monumental importance in a relationship, he’s got another think coming!” Her knuckles turned white as she gripped the back of the chair. “A word of wisdom, sisters: lying to Daddy and protecting him from things he doesn’t want to know are often one and the same, to speak nothing of protecting oneself.”

“You shouldn’t lie to Daddy,” Tiffany said. “Talk to him. Tell him how you feel, and he’ll understand.”

“You’re too naïve.” Morgana spun around and headed for the French doors that would lead her inside. “Before I leave this palace—by marriage or banishment, as the case may be—I’ll leave you my book of resources. It’s the only way to get by, and you will all need it.”

“Does the lack of sleep ail you?” Caroline asked. “Or the lack of sex?”

Morgana stopped in her tracks and looked over her shoulder. “Both, if you must know.”

Tiffany shuddered.

Alexis giggled.

Caroline shrugged, as she’d probably known the answer to the question before she’d asked it. “Sleep well.”

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

"I will!" Even as she stomped away, Morgana knew sleep was at least one orgasm away. Hopefully, she'd have her quarters to herself, so she could employ every one of the companions she'd stashed in the bottom drawer of her armoire.

However, when she reached her chambers, she found them bustling with activity. Three chambermaids dusted and changed linens not yet slept in. A crew of foot soldiers, five in all, checked baseboards for mouse holes, and searched diligently beneath furniture for a rodent they'd never find.

Morgana slipped into her primping room and turned the key in the door just in time.

"Do you wish to bathe, m'lady?" Elsie, the chief chambermaid, knocked on the door. "Lady Morgana?"

Another unfairness in growing up in a noble family was the bathing situation. Chambermaids attended to baths. Always. While young lords were given opportunity to fuck their bathers silly—three at a time, if they so desired—young ladies were forced to cringe while same-sex servants pawed and rubbed them with sponges. "I'm bathing on my own today. Thank you, Elsie."

"But 'tis my duty, m'lady." She knocked again. "Lady Morgana, the room isn't quite ready for you yet. Allow me to draw your bath and warm a towel for you."

Luckily, the primping room was vast in size. The further she walked, the more muffled the maid's voice became. Morgana trod past the fainting couch, where she'd request Elsie's help in cinching her corset, past the vanity, where she'd apply make-up, past the pink marble sink, to the bathing nook. She turned the tub faucets on full blast and poured in a generous amount of bubble bath.

After drawing sheer, pink draperies around the tub, she began to untie the ribbons at the bodice of her barely-worn night dress.

"I beg you, m'lady."

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

She jumped at the sound of Sir Beauregard's voice, and spun to find him emerging from the linen closet.

"Don't loosen another stitch." He was rubbing his strong hands together, and the forefinger of his right hand was wrapped in gauze.

She allowed herself a quick scan of his body, muscled from his broad shoulders to his shiny, black boots. He was quite a welcome sight—a treat, a chance to finish what she'd nearly started that morning. But she narrowed her gaze and challenged his tired eyes. "Why, I never—"

"I slammed my finger in your armoire and came for a bandage. I know I should've gone to the infirmary. Most humble apologies."

She looked to his hands and marveled at the thought of sucking his pain away. "Are you bleeding?"

"Yes, but I'll be all right. I...uh...I didn't expect you. You ought to be breakfasting."

"I'm not hungry for fruit and pastries, but I thank you for your concern."

"I'll be on my way, m'lady. I'm sorry I startled you." He brushed past her on his way out.

She yanked on the ribbons of her gown. "Sir Beauregard?"

"M'lady?"

The moment he turned toward her, she dropped the garment to the floor. "Thank you."

CHAPTER 4

A pool of water steamed in the center of a spacious limestone water closet, and Preston of Bismalle sat on the tub deck with his feet immersed in the water and his rod buried between the lips of a pretty, blonde bather.

She was a talented servant, where oral sex was concerned. She'd taken him all the way in. The head of his cock probed against the back of her throat, and he had little doubt she'd be able to deep-throat him, even if he weren't half-soft. Perhaps, if he'd opted to take her mouth before he'd taken Jade so many years ago, he wouldn't be in this predicament—addicted to the love of a man, obsessed with giving him love in return.

After his unsettling discussion at dawn, he'd requested three female bathers—all with pale skin and blonde hair, characteristics of his future wife—and set to prove to Jade, if not himself, the love between them was strictly physical. It wasn't real.

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

He'd reached orgasm with each of these women in the past, and if he could do so now, he'd be able to get there with the Lady of Carman on their wedding night.

But Jade wouldn't leave his mind. When his cock began to harden, it was because he imagined it was Jade's tongue lapping at him, Jade's lips working the circumference of his pole, Jade's suction pulling him to full mast.

Bather two, standing opposite him, spread her legs and gripped the side of the tub and bent forward, offering him a full-bodied view of her open and waiting cunt. She smiled over her shoulder. Bather three, soaking in the vat, squeezed a sponge over Two's ass, and a stream of water washed over the crevice.

Three's tongue followed the water's path, and soon she poked fingers into the woman's pussy, one at a time. It wasn't until she pressed her thumb at the anal entrance that Preston's penis perked up, as he remembered the heat of Jade's rectum that morning.

Bather one hummed around his rod and worked her tongue against it.

"Oh, you like that, sir?" Three buried the digit in Two's ass.

Two moaned.

He nodded, as he felt himself grow to full endowment in bather one's mouth. With head thrown back, he pumped into her throat and stole glances every third thrust or so at the action across the tub.

Energy swirled in his balls. "Is that asshole hot?"

"Oh, yes," Three said.

"Tight?"

"Yes. Do you want it?"

"I want it."

Two met his gaze over her shoulder. "Take it."

"Get it ready for me."

Three knelt and buried her face in Two's ass, shoving her tongue up

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

the hole.

One went crazy on his cock, sliding her lips up and down like a horse on a carousel.

He pinched his eyes shut and pretended it was Jade working him. "I wanna fuck it," he said.

"Yes, sir," Two's voice strained. "It's all yours, sir."

He bucked into bather one's mouth and fixated on the ass-reaming that continued before him. Jade was remarkable with his tongue. If Preston concentrated hard enough, he imagined the servant's tongue darting into his asshole, and if he refused to look down at her, bather one's mouth might pass for Jade's.

All right. Now we're getting somewhere. Bather two arched into Three, who was moaning with pleasure as she lapped away.

"Take my ass." Two's voice took on a smoky tone, not unlike Jade's pre-orgasm. "It's yours. Fuck it hard and deep."

With his balls cocked to fire, he pulled out, shooting onto One's angelic face.

He didn't have much to give her, as a recent load of his cum was presently dripping out Jade's ass, but he pumped his dick through his palm, aiming for cheeks, lips, breasts. When every last drop had escaped him, he relaxed on the tub deck, out of breath and spent.

His seed hung in a dollop on bather one's eyelashes. She smiled up at him as if he'd given her the most precious gift any man had to offer.

Two looked over her shoulder, her brow knit. "He's come," she whispered.

After a moment, Three withdrew from her position, her expression matching Two's.

They were disappointed—or perhaps surprised—he hadn't lasted long enough to violate them, but his performance was proof enough for him.

He could come with a woman, if he pretended to be with Jade.

CHAPTER 5

There she stood, in all her naked glory, smiling slyly.

Sir Beauregard shifted from one foot to the other and wiped away a sudden break of sweat on his brow. While he knew he should have, he didn't look away. Lady Morgana of Carman might have been God's most perfect creation.

Her golden blonde locks hung halfway down her beautifully arched back, and her flesh was a perfect shade of ivory—like a porcelain doll's. A round rear, which seemed to scream, "Squeeze me," balanced her large bosom. He understood why the Duke of Bismalle sought to marry her—good breeding. Generous hips, through which a child would pass without unusual difficulty. Firm breasts, from which the child would suckle.

She wrapped her masses of hair into a bun and secured it with a clip. "Does anyone know you're here?"

And that voice...it was like an entrancing Christmas choir. He

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

cleared his throat and forced his gaze to her eyes. "M'lady?"

"Elsie. The others. Do they know you're here, in my bathing closet?"

Any good knight—especially one aspiring to attain position with the Secret Service—would've been halfway out the door minutes ago. "There's quite ado out there. I'd doubt anyone kept track of my steps."

"Then stay, by command of a Lady of Carman."

"I cannot," he whispered, but his heart wasn't in his denial, and neither was his cock.

She stepped into the tub. "I don't expect you to sacrifice your position in good standing for nothing."

The member in his pants twitched. "I don't intend to take what you may offer."

"I'm not offering my body." She held up a sponge. "Besides, this, too, is a task suited for chambermaids, and I can honestly tell you, I've never made love with Elsie."

With cautious steps, he approached the tub and turned off the faucets. "What do you offer, m'lady? And why?"

"Have you ever met the Duke of Bismalle, to whom I'm betrothed?"

"No, m'lady."

She rolled her eyes and squashed the sudsy sponge into his hand. "If we're to be partners, I'd much prefer you drop the 'lady' and call me by my Christian name. Now, do you think you can find him?"

"The duke?" He stared at her buoyant breasts, her nipples only half-concealed by bubbles. "Of course I can find him, but in heaven's name, why?"

"Can you imagine marrying someone you've never seen?"

"I suppose I can't imagine marrying at all."

"I'm told he's a ladies' man, that women everywhere are drawn to him. The story, however, doesn't match up. I cannot find him at night,

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

as he keeps to his quarters. Ladies aren't permitted at the Hunt Club, and I'm told that's where he spends most of his days."

"He holds records."

"So I hear."

"He's credited with inventing an arrow coated with a humane serum, which dulls the animals' pain once they're hit."

"Humane and hunting don't belong in the same sentence. Do you hunt, Sir Beauregard?"

"I hunt men, when ordered to do so."

"Then you're well-trained to do as I ask."

"Yes." Her breasts taunted him, dared him to lower his mouth to the voluptuous mounds and suck them until she squirmed. He tightened his grip on the sponge.

"Preston of Bismalle cannot possibly be everything I'm told he is. If he were, he'd spend his evenings gallivanting, enjoying the praise of the women of the Olympian instead of hiding. I suspect if a wife were what he wanted, he'd have found her by now. I'm a pawn in his political game. It's the only explanation."

"M'lady, with all due respect, that's an extreme assumption, considering he's gained the trust of the lord and the queen."

"Find him, find his weakness, and expose him to my father."

He blinked away from her breasts. "Assuming he has a weakness."

"All men have weaknesses. Yours, apparently, involve large breasts."

"I apologize, m'lady, but you're beautiful."

She lifted her chin and continued, as if his compliment hadn't been spoken. "If the duke happens to be Superman, perhaps you might put my mind at ease these last few days before the ceremony. If he has no weakness, find his strength."

"And for this task, I'll receive?"

"You should know this isn't standard practice for me. In fact, it's

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

been nearly a year, but..." She arched her back, and her nipples poked through the bubbles. "Anything you want."

Thoughts of the Secret Service fled his mind. At the moment, all he wanted was Morgana of Carman. "If I take what I want, you'll no longer be chaste."

She crooked a finger.

He leaned in close.

"I know how to use what I've got. My sexual status shan't concern you as much as it will pleasure you, but surely, I'm of no interest to you. You aspire to be a soldier in the Brigade of the Secret Service. Save me from this vast maneuver, and out of sheer gratitude, my father will recommend you to my aunt, the queen."

He swallowed hard. "And in the meantime, I'm to bathe you?"

"You could." She scooped bubbles from the surface and rubbed them over her shoulders. "But I was thinking you might do something a bit more intimate than that."

He snapped his gaze to hers. He'd been right all along. Lady Morgana was far from a lady. She was all woman, and thank heaven and hell for that.

She raised an eyebrow. "Tell me you've never considered it? You've been in my father's employ for months now. I may be many things, Beau, but I'm not blind."

"The Duke of Bismalle expects to lay with a virgin on his wedding night."

Her wet hands traveled to his shoulders, and she unclipped the armor vest. Next, she tended to the button on his muslin shirt. "If you do your job, the duke will have no wedding night."

"And the next man of status your father finds to take your hand?" He shivered when she grazed the hair on his chest. "What will he think of you—"

Her hand dipped down and cupped his ramrod penis. "You're hard."

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

Ready.”

He nodded. “God, yes. Look at y—”

“Then what on earth are you doing, thinking of my next dreaded betrothed? Perhaps you might like what you taste, should you ever acquire the balls to bite into it. For a knight, you’re certainly timid when it comes to—”

He took her mouth with his, and after a gasp of surprise, she whisked off his shirt to bare his chest.

“I’ll tell you all you wish to know,” she whispered between kisses. “How I’ve left each night undetected, where I’ve gone, whom I’ve met. I’ll tell you everything, information which will surely secure a position in the Secret Service, if only you’ll find him.”

“Everything I wish to know?”

“Everything, if you’ll spy on the Duke of Bismalle and pluck me from my role in this diplomatic union.”

He’d much enjoy plucking her all right. He closed his eyes in the heady paradise the bathing closet had become. “Tell me about the collection in the bottom drawer of your armoire.”

When she propped her legs in a straddle position on the sides of the tub, bubbles parted, giving him a view. She brought a hand down and traced her opening with delicate fingers. “A lady has needs, just as a gentleman.”

He’d already unfastened the first two buttons on his fly, if only to make room for his erection, but watching her expertly stroke herself, he ripped open the remaining three. “I cannot make love to you. My position as your protector prohibits me.”

“Who said anything about making love?”

“Unless I’m mistaken”—he pulled off his black leather boots and, unable to take his eyes from the sight between her legs, peeled off his socks—“you did, m’lady.”

“I didn’t, Sir Beauregard. Making love involves wooing, and I

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

mentioned nothing of the sort. This is business. Call our intimate pairing a contract of sorts.”

He grew harder still and, once nude, found himself climbing into the tub—against his better judgment.

She inched closer to him. The water gently lifted her pelvis to his, and her soft, blonde pubic hair caressed his rod. Their bodies melted together, her breasts squishing against his chest. “You’ve seen my collection,” she whispered, raking through the hair on the back of his head.

He nodded. With a hand under her rear, he pressed her hot privates to his. Her swollen nub rubbing against him masked the throbbing pain of his smashed finger. “In its entirety.”

“Then you know I can take it all in.”

“Or so your collection suggests.”

Her labia were a soft, welcome cradle, encouraging him to probe against her slit. With his subtle stroking, she gasped a tiny gasp.

“But I don’t know details like that, Morgana. Not yet.”

“You’ll know it soon enough.”

“I shouldn’t know half what I know about you.”

“If you had any idea”—she chewed on his earlobe—“how desperately I need you, you’d—”

“I’ll take care of you.” From behind, he slid two fingers into her pussy. “I swore in front of God and the Lord of this Palace I would, and I take my oaths very seriously.” Slowly, he withdrew, only to sink another finger back into her.

She tensed in his arms and groaned. “Don’t treat me like another drab assignment. Do more than take care of me. Satisfy me.”

The head of his cock rubbed against her clitoris, seemingly of its own volition, but he maintained control and refused to enter her. Making love to a Lady of Carman was a most dangerous activity in itself. Suppose someone heard—or worse, saw them in action!

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

However, his hesitance stemmed from something more crucial than the moral code of a knight, which alone should have given him pause.

For months, he'd admired her from afar—but he'd scrutinized her collection of dildos up close. Given he hadn't slept in nearly forty hours, he feared he didn't have the energy to do anything but disappoint her, and then where would he be? His status as a bodyguard might be tarnished, but his reputation as a lover would forever be marred, and she might never lie with him again.

"If I were a Lord of Carman instead of a lady, you'd—"

He nodded. "It's true. Men are allowed certain liberties a lady is not, but—"

"Are you afraid to take me?"

"I'm a sworn protector of the Olympian. I'm not afraid of anything."

"Do you think you can't possibly live up to the girth of my collection?"

* * *

He plunged fingers deeper into her cunt, and she gasped into his mouth. Judging by the depths his fingers had reached, she assumed his cock would surpass the pleasure of all her toys combined. "If that's the case, sir, allow me to put your worried mind at ease. There's no substitute for the real thing."

"There's nothing like waiting for the right time either." He nipped at her lips. "And the right man."

"Perhaps you're the man who happens to be here at the right time."

"Why, Lady Morgana"—he cupped a breast and circled her nipple with his tongue—"are you using me?"

"Male heirs use female servants all the time. I'm playing my equality card."

"I won't make love to you, Morgana, and I won't fuck you either." His fingers swirled inside her, his lips closed around her nipple, and his

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

prick rubbed against her labia. “Not until you respect me, as well as my position in the Olympian.”

“On my honor, Sir Beauregard, I already do.”

“May I remind you, m’lady, that your honor, at the moment, is questionable. And until you want me as much as I want you, you’ll have to settle for what I’m comfortable giving.” Keeping two fingers nestled inside her cavity, he lifted her by the rear. The water helped carry her hips to the surface, causing her to lean back against the cold porcelain tub.

Her vagina was soon in direct alignment with his mouth, and the whisper of his hot breath against her had her twitching, anticipating a thorough tongue-lashing. He struck her with a smoldering stare, and the way he licked his lips...she may as well have been a hot fudge sundae, and he, a starving peasant.

The moment his tongue darted out to massage her hard nub, she wrapped her legs around his head. He continued to work the two fingers already inside her and lapped at her with abandon.

Indeed, there’s no substitute for a real man.

His tongue, dragging languidly, pressed from the top of her clit to her hole, and zipped inside between his fingers.

“Oh, Beau!” She tensed with pleasure as he sucked and licked, and her insides began to quiver.

His fingers stroked and dug against her walls, and his lips, puckered around her clit, did not relent.

Steam rose from the tub, but the sweat glistening on her flesh had nothing to do with the heat of the water.

Her vision clouded and her toes curled.

He withdrew his tongue, and then his fingers one at a time, only to re-insert them and repeat the process. Damn, the man had patience. With every entrance, he prodded her closer to heaven, but left her just shy of the gate. She bucked against his mouth, forcing his tongue to

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

move more quickly against her.

When he started to hum, his lips vibrated against her. His primal sounds, in combination with the stroking of his gifted tongue, sent her spiraling toward ecstasy. She pinched her eyes shut and lost her sense to breathe, as she reached the titillating height of orgasm.

He sucked and licked, it seemed, every drop of her juices, propelling her even higher. Her insides zinged, and she moaned with the gratification. Over the apex now, and over-sensitized, to boot, she nearly shrieked when he probed again—one last, thorough sweep of his tongue before he withdrew.

She inhaled a short breath, and slowly floated down to earth.

He pulled his mouth off her pussy.

Her legs trembled as they slipped from his shoulders, and she had little doubt they'd later ache from the intense tightening her muscles had just endured. Her chest heaved, and she struggled to catch her breath.

Beau licked his lips. "That certainly takes an edge off, doesn't it?"

"Well." She wiped a wet hand over her forehead. "I'd say it takes the whole sword."

"Not quite, m'lady." He stood, parted the drapes surrounding them, and stepped out of the tub. She could've hung a robe on his erection, hard and thick and upright as it was.

"You're going?" She peered between the curtains and tried not to look at his smooth and well-deserving cock, for when she looked, she wanted to both grip it and suck it dry.

"We have a long night ahead of us, come sundown." He dabbed a fluffy, pink towel against his face. "I'm tired, and you should be, too."

"But you haven't come—"

"You have much to learn about men, if you think I can't take care of that with a fingerful of balm and a few pumps of my hand." He crouched at the tub side, and tucked a flyaway curl behind her ear.

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

“Until tonight, m’lady.”

She gritted her teeth. “Considering what we’ve just done, my name will suffice.”

“I’m off to the kitchen for a breakfast that may actually nourish me.”

“Don’t go.” Disappointment plunged in her gut. “We have much planning to do.”

“Rather, I do. Tonight, hours after sundown, I’ll enter your chambers. You’ll demonstrate how you’ve managed to escape Palace of Carman, and once you’re safely asleep, I’ll lock your door and seek out your betrothed.”

Before she could protest—like it or not, she’d accompany him tonight—he leaned to her lips and gave her a slow, lingering kiss, which tasted of bath salts and orgasm. “Now, you must sleep.”

“What about the others? They’ll see you when you leave.”

“I’ll have to make myself invisible.” He cracked a smile. “Believe it or not, this knight can blend in with a crowd.”

CHAPTER 6

Preston of Bismalle spent the afternoon at the Olympian Hunt Club, aiming at decoys and contemplating Morgana of Carman.

He'd heard she was a feisty woman of sharp wit and tongue. Beautiful, in her own right, and that would help. But if he couldn't get it up on their wedding night, there was no telling what rumors might fly. Perhaps Jade could suck him on bended knee prior to the big event. Get him good and hard and ready to explode. He couldn't soften in Morgana's crevice if he didn't give himself time.

Primed by his lover, he'd blow a load after a few pumps inside the lady. A virgin would appreciate quick sex, and because no lady begged for it—rather, she took it as a wifely duty—he wouldn't have to perform for her again for weeks. By that time, their marriage, as well as the Carman dynasty, would be annulled.

She wouldn't have to know he'd married her only to gain trust of the queen, and she wouldn't have to know he'd be sticking it to Jade at

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

sunrise, while she slept alone.

Just thinking about the man's tight ass caused him to stiffen below the belt. If only this world were ready to accept the love between persons of the same sex, he'd have run off with Jade years ago.

Unfortunately, Preston's father was a traditional man with traditional views. Exposing his homosexuality would never be an option, lest he desire a life of exile.

As for Lady Morgana of Carman, it pained him to imagine her innocence shattered, for the sake of a political agenda. But he was forced to play the hand he'd been dealt. His future wife would have to do the same.

CHAPTER 7

“M’lady?” Beauregard brushed his knuckles against Morgana’s chamber door before turning the key to unlock it. When she didn’t answer, he put his ear to the door. “Lady Morgana?”

Soft whimpering met his ears—or perhaps it was laughter.

The clock in the corridor struck ten. She’d been alone for hours. What was she doing in there?

“Morgana?”

No answer. Horrific thoughts raced through his head—enemies of the Olympian kidnapping her, holding a sword to her beautiful, soft neck—but soon, erotic thoughts replaced the haunting ones. He imagined her employing one of her toys, and maybe, when he opened the door, she’d be fanning herself with the unusually large, pink feather he’d discovered in her armoire.

Terrible or scintillating, he had no choice. It was either his duty or his desire to view the scene behind the door, and he proceeded without

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

her permission.

With a shoulder to the heavy oak, he entered the room. "I'm coming, Lady Morgana!"

"Ouch!"

His heart raced, along with his gaze around the room. She was nowhere to be found. "Morgana!"

"Jesus!"

He followed her panicked voice to the primping room. Not until his eyes settled on her—healthy, alone, and very much alive—did he take a breath.

She squirmed, her chest pressed against the wall opposite the fainting couch, and her arms folded behind her back. Her fingers were tangled in the laces of a pink corset, as she yanked and pulled and cinched.

"What in God's name are you doing?" He grasped her elbow, and, at last, she looked at him.

"The same thing I've been doing every night for the past month!" She awkwardly tugged on the laces of the corset again. "Do you enjoy watching women contort themselves?" She bit her lip.

"I apologize, m'lady." He took the laces from her fingers and loosened them.

She caught the corset as it parted from her skin, just before her bosom leapt from its confines. "I believe, Sir Beauregard, you've already demonstrated your ability to disrobe me. Care to try your gifted hands at the other end of the spectrum? Now, be a sugar plum and do what Elsie undid hours ago."

When he didn't hop to the task, she looked over her shoulder. "Go ahead. Cinch me."

"And why would I do that?"

"Because I'm going with you tonight."

He exhaled an impatient breath. "M'lady, over the past eighteen

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

hours, you have persuaded me to compromise nearly everything in which I've taken pride for the greater part of my career. But this is where I draw the line."

"Are you telling me what I can and cannot do?"

He raised his chin, and her gaze seemed to lock on it. "It is against Olympian law to interfere with a soldier's task, and my task, in the event you've forgotten, is to protect you at any and all costs."

"It is also against Olympian law, Sir Beauregard, for a soldier to take his pleasures with a lady of genteel blood." She dragged her thumb along the vertical dent in his chin. "But you seemed to forget that while you were lapping at me like a hungry dog, didn't you?"

"Last I remember, Morgana"—he grasped her hand when she withdrew from his chin—"the pleasure was all yours."

"Oooh, you!" She pulled her hand from his grip with a staccato snap. "And to think I chose this corset because I thought you might favor it!"

His heart, which had yet to slow to a regular pace, kicked it up another gear when he took a moment to study her. The corset, not yet pulled tight, showcased her curves in a proverbial spotlight, and its deep rosy hue mirrored the passion stirring in his soul. Her breasts, soft and round, protruded from the ruffled top, as if begging for exploration.

A shade as blushing as her corset pigmented her full, pouting lips—damn, how he wanted to feel them around his cock—and her thick eyelashes were painted as black as the night. Pink topaz clips glinted from their position in her golden hair, which although she'd piled atop her head, draped romantically about her ivory face.

Her shapely legs were clad in white, thigh-high stockings, boasting a pale pink seam up the back. They were secured with garter clips, and only a scrap of pink-and-white silk concealed her private parts. Although she'd laid out a pair of pink satin bloomers on the chaise, he silently prayed she'd forget to don them, for covering those stockings

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

should have been a crime worthy of execution.

"I do." His words sprang forth in a gruff whisper. He cleared his throat. "I do favor it, as I favor you."

Her sharp-as-glass glare softened in an instant, and her shoulders, held high with tension, sagged.

Gently, he took her by the elbow and turned her back to him. "Of course, I'm certain you bring any garment to life." After brushing a kiss on the back of her neck, he cinched the corset in one sharp tug.

She jumped with the garment's constriction and gasped in surprise.

"If you're to tag along, one thing must be made perfectly clear. I call the shots, and you listen."

Across the room, in the reflection of the vanity mirror, he watched her roll her eyes as she muttered, "Yes, sir."

"In the interest of time, leave the ridiculous bloomers where they lie." He patted her firm rear.

"Does someone want immediate access?"

"And you might think about wearing something more appropriate for a spy expedition than an evening gown."

"That, I cannot do. Being a Lady of Carman, I have nothing else to wear." She turned toward him. "It's either a gown, or I accompany you in the buff."

Her mischievous grin sent a shiver up his spine, and when she brushed past him, he mentally lectured his penis to ignore her voluptuous attributes. When the member obeyed, he followed her into her sleeping chambers, where she was already swimming in a pink evening gown.

While she adjusted her bodice, he took it upon himself to begin the arduous task of buttoning the petite, moiré-covered buttons along her back, despite the dull ache in the finger he'd injured earlier.

Once completely dressed in satin, she waltzed to the armoire and pulled from the shelf the pair of satin slippers he'd stowed there.

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

“These, Sir Beauregard, are perhaps the best-kept secret of Carman dynasty.”

“Shoes?”

“Oh, they’re not typical shoes, nor are they altogether comfortable.”

“Forego the fashion statement and choose another pair. We could be in for a long night.”

She dropped the shoes to the bear pelt in the center of the room. “There is more to these slippers than meets the eye. Watch closely.”

When she tucked a toe into the first slipper, the satin shimmered, and pink glitter scattered around its perimeter. By the time she donned the second shoe, the high-heeled pumps had taken on a pink tone, perfectly matching her gown. He blinked, sure he’d imagined the dyeing of the satin before his eyes, but he confirmed the mystic event with a second glance. She clicked her heels together, and simultaneous with the third click, she dissipated into thin air.

“M’lady?”

“I’m here.”

As eerie as it was to hear her, but not see her, he took comfort in her grasp and followed her pull toward the armoire.

“How did that happen?”

“These slippers, when placed on the feet of a Lady of Carman, can do remarkable things. Rest assured, I’ll reappear the moment I remove them, which won’t be long from now, I’m afraid. They’re half a size too small and painfully uncomfortable.”

While he contemplated his earlier fantasy involving Morgana’s leaving the shoes on during lovemaking, the armoire doors creaked open, as if a poltergeist had entered the room.

“There’s a false back in this cabinet.” The racks of clothing parted to reveal a panel, which popped open like a short door. “Watch your head and don’t let go of my hand.”

So much for calling the shots. This twist of events left her in

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

complete control, and he didn't like depending on someone whose care was entrusted to him for safety.

Their surroundings caused him to tremble, as if he were a child at a haunted house. The dark, narrow path sloped downward at a steep angle, and it was no more than thirty inches wide, encapsulated by and smelling of cold stone and mortar. With every step, his vision waned, and he tightened his grip, knowing he wouldn't have seen her, even if the passage had been lit with lanterns. He scarcely heard her footsteps. He'd expected to hear the clicking of high-heels against the stone, yet not more than the brushing and rustling of her skirt met his ears.

"Where are we?" he whispered.

"We're between the walls in a secret passageway to the outdoors. Another ten feet down, there's an aisle to the left. That aisle leads to a door to the north gardens, where we'll exit."

"M'lady—"

She backed him against the wall and kissed away his next question with soft lips and an inquisitive tongue. Her breasts pressed against his chest, and amidst the anonymity of the place, he boldly grazed a hand along a contour. She shivered with his caress. Her reaction evoked a groan.

He squeezed her mound. "I have half a mind to take back control. Right here and right now."

"Sir Beauregard," she breathed into his ear, "this path is hidden, but it's far from soundproof. Do us both a favor and shut up."

He nodded and felt his way along the dank walls. Soon, they hooked a right angle onto an even steeper slope, and before he knew it, they were escaping, undetected, onto the cobblestone trail winding through the north gardens.

Once the secret door clapped closed behind him, he realized why she'd never used it to reenter the castle at dawn. There were neither handle nor hinge visible—it was a one-way door—and propping it

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

would have caused much too much suspicion. He ran his hands over the limestone exterior of the building, and although he'd just emerged from inside, he couldn't for the life of him find where the entry was located.

"It's no use," she whispered, taking his hand. "If you find it, you shan't be able to open it."

He grasped his phantom lady under the elbow and helped her tread safely over the uneven stone path.

"My feet are already killing me," she hissed.

"I can fix that." He pulled her close enough to feel every curve of her body and, when he memorized her position, scooped her into his arms and started toward Carman property lines, where his horse awaited them.

* * *

Sir Beauregard had thought of everything. Morgana wondered if he'd slept at all that day, or if he'd spent it scheming.

As they galloped through the Forest of Gretel toward Bismalle, the night wind blew back her curls and refreshed her exhausted skin like a facial. She tightened her grip around his waist and pressed her breasts into his back. Never had she traveled this way, with the body of a massive beast between her legs and a hunk of testosterone driving her.

The satin slippers were stowed in a saddle bag, and her feet had already recovered from the descent between Palace of Carman's walls. Beau told her she wouldn't be wearing the slippers again until they returned to Carman, and while the possibility comforted her, she didn't trust he was right. The night was a bright one, and even the forest paths were illuminated by the soft, yellow glow of moonlight.

The horse's hooves pummeled the ground and its muscles tensed between Morgana's thighs. A powerful steed, Copper was a productive mode of transportation, for the journey that had taken the better part of Morgana's nights had consumed not more than ten minutes.

Beau drove her directly to a bungalow off the beaten path in

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

Bismalle, where he said the duke kept his quarters. He stopped the horse in the thicket, certainly hidden from the home.

"It can't be more than two-thousand square feet!" Morgana felt her eyes widen as she stared at the bungalow. "I surely hope I'm not expected to dwell there."

"Relax, m'lady." Beau dismounted and rummaged in a saddlebag. "This is rumored to be Preston of Bismalle's gentleman's retreat. Surely, you've heard of it? According to my sources, this is where he begins and ends each day. Alone, accompanied by a single, trusted servant. You shan't be spending any time here at all." He pulled armor headdress from the bag. "Remember what I said about my calling the shots?"

Silent, she nodded.

"Don't move. If something scares you, or if you hear someone coming, put on your slippers"—he shoved them into her hands—"and make yourself scarce." When she didn't respond, he touched her on the chin and forced her to meet his gaze. "Morgana? Promise?"

"Promise."

She watched as he donned the armor hood and pivoted on the gravel lane. What he was about to do was anyone's guess, as his plan was as discreet as their morning rendezvous in her primping room.

He traveled around the bungalow out of Morgana's sight.

For a few minutes, which felt like an eternity, she mindlessly stroked Copper's red mane. Adjusted the pink clips in her hair. Discovered a chip in her French manicure. She yanked up her gown, and marveled at the appearance of her thighs, clad only in nylon, astride the magnificent beast of burden. Bathed in the light of the moon, her thighs looked as risqué as her mood.

Riding side-saddle, she'd never felt as secure atop a horse as she did now. And while she'd done some kinky things in her day, she felt more erotic walking around with only panties between her holy grail and the

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

rest of the world than she'd felt while purchasing dildos via mail order. What a wonderful suggestion it had been to leave the bloomers at home.

Sir Beauregard certainly had some great ideas. Except the one about her staying put. She was more in danger here alone in the moonlight than she'd be at his side...or at least that's what she told herself as she hopped off the horse.

Promise or none, she slipped on her magical shoes, clicked her heels to disappear, and followed Beau's path around the bungalow. She stayed a safe distance behind him, but close enough to watch what he watched, to hear what he heard.

From her position, she glanced through a window to see the profile of a large man with chocolate-toned skin—Preston, she presumed—with arms folded over his bare chest. A gold amulet hung from a choker chain around his neck. At a closer look, she realized he wasn't wearing much of anything else.

Her glance dipped below Preston's waistline, and she covered her mouth when she saw a stiff penis nearly as long as her eleven-incher—nude and waiting. For what, only God knew. "Wow."

The single whispered word drew Sir Beauregard's attention, but because he couldn't see her, he quickly turned back toward the window.

Morgana strained to hear her betrothed's conversation.

"It's foolproof," another man—the devoted servant, she guessed, although he was nowhere in sight—said.

"It isn't foolproof, Jade. It's dangerous." Preston seemed to be talking to his toes. "Lady Morgana of Carman will not be harmed, and that's the end of it."

Fear stirred in the pit of her stomach. Someone wanted to harm her!

"It's far less traceable than arsenic," the servant called Jade said, "and less bloody than a beheading."

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

The world began to spin, and she felt as if she might vomit. She clamped her hand more tightly over her mouth to keep from whimpering.

"I won't have her harmed. It's too risky from a political standpoint."

Political standpoint? What about humanity?

"Why do you care what happens to the Ladies of Carman?" The servant's head popped up from below, appearing in direct alignment with Preston's erection. "I'm sure your father didn't, as evidenced by Queen Olivia's untimely demise."

"Don't believe everything you hear."

Morgana felt her brow furrow and her stomach churn.

"You'll appease your father. You'll marry this Lady of Carman. By next spring, I swear to all that's holy, I'll do away with her, and the ties binding Carman and Bismalle will only be strengthened when you vow to punish her killer." The servant's hand trailed along the length of Preston's rod. "You'll play the part of the mourning widower. No one will expect you to replace your dear Morgana, and we can be together."

"No more." Preston cupped the servant's chin in his hand with what appeared to be a forceful grip. "There'll be no more talk of it."

"Your father has already commissioned me for the task, sir." Jade's tongue darted out and licked Preston's cock from base to tip.

Morgana might've gagged, if not for her disbelief at what she was seeing. She widened her eyes.

Preston, with a set jaw and closed eyes, shook his head. "Suck it."

Whether it was an acquiescence or a surrender, there was only one way to interpret her betrothed's reaction to the servant's admission. A *blowjob for my life!*

His hand traveled to the back of the servant's head, and he rammed his long erection into Jade's open and willing mouth.

Morgana shrieked and, forgetting he couldn't see her, lunged for the

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

comfort of Sir Beauregard's arms. "Worse!" She gasped and wheezed. "Worse than I imagined!" As she tumbled toward her knight, her right foot slipped out of its slipper.

"Hush!" Beau warned with a whisper and worried, if not angry, eyes.

She struggled to slip her foot back into her slipper, when an arrow whisked just shy of her left breast. In surprise, she spun her head toward the open window and caught a glimpse of Preston's trusted servant with bow and arrow cocked.

It was true! The Duke of Bismalle would rather see her dead than at the altar!

Sir Beauregard was hissing something at her, but the world had yet to stop spinning, and she'd yet to regain her balance, and—

"M'lady!" Beau gripped her wrist, and she locked her gaze on his smoky eyes. "Click your heels!"

The whisk of the bow sounded into the air, yet before Morgana had time to curl into a ball, the knight plunged his body in front of her.

The last thing she remembered before the world turned black was a splatter of blood on her hand.

CHAPTER 8

Given his state of undress, Preston couldn't follow the spies at whom Jade had shot, but he knew where to find them. They'd undoubtedly be headed for the Palace of Carman, for there was no mistaking the pink gems in the beauty's hair—seen only due to the glinting of moonlight against them—for anything other than pieces of the Carman fortune. That is, until she faded into thin air.

Had he imaged seeing his future bride hiding in the brush?

Lady Morgana's shriek proved he hadn't, and it told him Jade's arrow had made contact. *Stupid*. Jade had pulled the arrow from Preston's quiver.

The arrow would be traced back to Bismalle. Everyone in the Olympian knew Preston used only gold-plated arrows with his initials carved into the shafts. Surely, in his quest to silence the spies—and therefore keep their secret passions hidden—Jade had forfeited any chance to unite Carman and Bismalle for the latter's benefit.

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

Preston sank to the mattress in his master suite and pulled blankets over his exposed member. “Which one did you hit?”

“The lady.” Jade stepped into his trousers. “Preston—”

He held up his hand to silence Jade. “I hunt for sport only.”

“I had no choice but to—”

“Search these grounds extensively for the body, remove the quiver, and dump her in the moat. The crocodiles will dispose of her.”

Jade straightened. “Yes, sir.”

“Then you will personally inform the queen we have reason to believe one of her soldiers has kidnapped Lady Morgana—and we fear he’s killed her.”

“Preston—”

“They’ll lynch you, should they learn the truth.”

“Will they believe it?”

“Half of Carman suspects something strange already. The lady has been disappearing from her quarters nightly for the better part of a month.”

Jade closed his mouth and tightened the drawstring on his muslin pants.

“The queen, by noble code, will demand details to relay to the people of Carman. Give her none, but direct her to question me.”

When the servant had finished dressing and exited, Preston rested his head in his hands.

While it was true he’d agreed to marry Lady Morgana for the good of his kingdom, he’d never intended to harm her physically. *But perhaps it was for the best.* The things she must’ve witnessed...Jade’s ridiculous talk of executing her, the shocking truth that the senior duke had already approved her poisoning...not to mention the secret things that happened only at the gentleman’s retreat. Was his privacy worth another’s life? If he were half the man Jade believed he was, he would’ve refused to marry her—and long ago renounced his position in

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

Bismalle.

He pulled himself up from his wallowing and began to dress. While Jade searched for the body of Lady Morgana, he had business to discuss with his father.

* * *

“Father, I request permission to speak.” Preston stood at attention outside the senior duke’s bedchamber.

“You may do so at a decent hour,” came his father’s reply through the door. The sound of giggling women followed.

Preston cleared his throat and raised his voice. “There’s been a terrible accident, and Lady Morgana of Carman has perished.”

“Enter.”

Preston opened the door and viewed his aged father in bed with two entwined whores, who chewed at one another’s lips and cupped each other’s breasts.

“How?” the senior asked.

“The servant Jade, in the name of protecting me, pulled an arrow from my quiver, and—”

“You shall then marry the next in line—Lady Caroline.”

“Father, a woman has died!”

“So be it. It is your duty to make amends with the queen and to marry for the sake of your kingdom. Caroline, then, in Morgana’s absence.”

Preston turned to exit. It was no use talking to his father while he was receiving the weekly purging of his testicles. Yet still, his reply seemed awfully terse, considering the severity of the news. “Do you find women disposable?” he asked over his shoulder.

“You know nothing of women. It is not your desire. Do not judge me for mine.”

Dizziness encompassed him, and Preston hung his head. His father *knew*! He licked his dry lips, and refocused on the matter at hand. “Did

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

you kill Queen Olivia to further your position in Bismalle?"

"There are certain tasks necessary for the good of a kingdom. If you were half as noble as the blood in your veins, I wouldn't have to remind you of such unpleasanties."

A bone-chilling sensation raced up Preston's spine as he realized he'd been as much a pawn in this political chess game as Morgana. He exited the chambers and started toward the main corridor.

"He'll pick them off, one by one," he whispered. "I must warn the queen."

* * *

When Preston called at the Palace of Carman, the place was buzzing with activity. Soldiers roamed about the halls, and he caught glimpses of the Ladies of Carman bustling, in full dress, through the corridors.

"Preston of Bismalle." A foot soldier approached him and extended a hand to his right, directing him to enter the drawing room. "Please wait here."

"It's a matter of urgency," Preston reminded him.

"Every meeting, sir, is urgent to the queen at this hour." He nodded toward the drawing room again. "If you will?"

He entered the empty, two-story room, and seated himself on a pink divan. Everything was pink, as far as the eye could see. Of course, all things masculine were a minority in the Palace of Carman, as the Carman Dynasty was known for its unnaturally high percentage of female births. A male heir hadn't been produced at all this generation.

"The Duke of Bismalle! How lovely to meet you." A young lady waltzed into the drawing room, grasped his hands, and planted a kiss on his cheek.

"Lovely to meet you, too, Ms...?"

"Oh, how silly of me. I apologize for the informality of our introduction, but as you can imagine, there's quite ado in the palace

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

tonight. My father is distraught, and my aunt sent me to talk with you. I'm Lady Caroline of Carman."

So this would be whom his father had chosen in Morgana's stead. It was like looking at a death row inmate. She walked, she talked, she charmed. But it was all for naught. Soon, she, like her sister, would be gone.

She sat next to him on the divan and tightened her grip on his fingers. "Now be a good boy. Tell me what you've done with my sister."

What I've done? His head ached. "I'm sorry?"

"You should be, if you've caused her any harm. Where is she? What do you do with her night after night?"

"I beg your pardon, but I've not done anything with her night after night." He tried to pull his hand away, but she'd grasped it with both her hands and wouldn't let go. "Lady Caroline, my deepest sympathies. There's been a terrible tragedy."

She raised her eyebrows inquisitively.

"The Lady Morgana has been killed by Bismallian officials, and you will be, too."

Her lovely mouth fell open, but her expression did not change to all-out worry, as much as it took on a hint of concern.

"All of you will be, if Bismalle gets her way."

"Hogwash." Her hands slipped from his. "Bismalle and Carman are about to unite."

"Bismalle wishes to overthrow the Olympian. The Carman Dynasty mines...Bismalle needs them to do so. It's a ploy, a plot."

"And why are you telling me this? What kind of a duke are you, betraying your kingdom?" Caroline stood and smoothed her skirts. "Unless you intend to kill me, too."

"Enough have died already."

"My sister." With a trembling finger, she tucked a tightly wound

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

curl behind her ear.

“And your mother.”

“My mother died of cancer of the—”

“Or so you’ve been led to believe.”

“I think I ought to take you to the queen.”

When summoned, two foot soldiers appeared with cuffs and a blindfold.

“I apologize for the drastic measures,” Caroline said. “Nobles aren’t usually treated like common criminals in this palace, but, as of this moment, you are the enemy.”

She walked quickly for a little thing, through winding corridors and up staircases and down. Flanked by soldiers, who led him by the arms, he followed. When at last the blindfold was yanked from his eyes, the queen’s study bled into view.

He was shoved to his knees, alongside his faithful servant, Jade.

The queen sat behind a bejeweled table, elevated half a story. The Lord of Carman sat to her right, and Lady Caroline whispered to her across the table. The remaining two sisters, as well as their cousins—at a quick glance, he counted twelve in all—took positions at a table behind. A regime of knights stood guard in a horseshoe around them.

The queen brought spectacles to her eyes and addressed him. “Preston of Bismalle, you bring to me the third tale of the evening. The servant, Jade, tells me Lady Morgana has been killed by the hand of her protector, yet he knows nothing more. When questioned, he directs me to you for answers, yet you speak only of conspiracy.”

Preston waited silently.

“You may speak,” the queen said.

“I have more information now than when I sent the servant.” He swallowed hard. “I’ve spoken with my father, and what I’m about to tell you will renounce my position in Bismalle. However, I’m willing to exchange the information for refuge in your kingdom.”

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

“How does that benefit you? You’d be granted an invitation to dwell in Carman the moment you married Lady Morgana.”

“It doesn’t benefit me, Your Majesty. It benefits you and your kingdom.”

“I have trouble believing your story.”

“I swear it’s—”

“Why would you tell such atrocities when a telegram has arrived stating Morgana’s whereabouts, and that she’s perfectly alive?”

“A telegram?”

“From Lady Olivia herself.”

“Sent from beyond the grave?”

“As you told Lady Caroline, Olivia’s death by cancer is only what we were led to believe. There is much more to this story than you’ll ever know. Now, to save your head, and that of your lover, I suggest you speak until you can speak no more.”

CHAPTER 9

“M’lady.”

When Morgana came to, her back was bouncing against an armored chest. Her dress flew up at intervals, blocking glimpses of branches, golden leaves, and a dirt path. Her thighs tensed astride a muscular creature, who was pounding, pounding, pounding away. She yelped. How long had she been unconscious? Where was she? And in whose embrace did she presently lie?

“M’lady, my deepest apologies.”

Ah, that voice. Calming, reassuring. Sexy.

After a moment, she realized she was straddling Copper’s back. Every galloped stride reverberated in her chest, as if she were as empty as a drum inside. Beau’s right arm grasped her around the waist and his left hand controlled the reins. But—

Scenes witnessed from the brush outside Preston of Bismalle’s gentleman’s retreat flashed in her mind—a murderous threat, an

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

unconventional scene of oral pleasure... “But you’ve been shot!”

“Yes, m’lady.” His words came slowly. “And forgive me, but I’ve taken you as far as I’m able. I’ve lost a lot of blood and I’m weak with pain. It’s up to you now to save me. Take the reins.”

“I don’t know how to ride a horse!”

“M’lady—”

“And I’ve no idea where we are, or where to take you!”

“We’re just east of Bismalle on the path to safety.”

“How far have we traveled?”

But he spoke no more and, suddenly, he leaned heavy against her back. His grip around her waist lessened and his left arm began to droop, giving her no choice but to take the reins.

“Sir Beauregard!”

His chin dug into her shoulder.

“Don’t die!” Tears stung her eyes along with the wind. “Tell me he’s only passed out from the pain,” she prayed aloud. “He can’t be dead!”

Lost in the forest, and having only recently regained her bearings, how was she to survive, let alone save the man who’d taken an arrow for her?

::Follow::

The word was like a floating thought, but it sounded in another’s voice. As she drove Copper over the path, her gaze darted left and right, searching for someone who might’ve advised her.

::Morgana. Follow::

“Mother?”

Ahead in the distance she saw a cloud-like figure, sparkling with golden glitter and flitting like a winged sprite.

::Follow::

She obeyed.

The sparkling cloud led her to a chateau hidden in the thick of the

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

trees, and when Copper's gallop stopped at a hitching post, Morgana came face-to-face with a sign on the door. It read "Chateau d'Olivia" in red script.

She dismounted, mesmerized with the sign, sure she'd imagined it, but a groan snapped her back.

Delirious, but still alive with an arrow shaft piercing through his left bicep, Sir Beauregard slipped from the saddle. Morgana lunged in front of his large, muscular frame to break his fall.

::Care for him here. I've already sent word to Carman.::

"Care for him? How? I fainted at the mere sight of his blood! I'm not trained to nurse—"

::Remove the arrow, and bandage the wound. The palace is beyond the groves. Wait here until Sir Beauregard can accompany you home.::

With the knight hanging heavy in her arms, Morgana turned to acknowledge the sprite, but the cloud was already gone, flying westward over the treetops.

Morgana sobbed as she struggled to drag Beauregard's heavy body to the safety of the well-kept chateau.

Once inside and exhausted from the physical strain, she positioned Sir Beauregard on his side in the vestibule. His head knocked against a credenza.

She didn't want to look at the arrow or the garment soaking up the blood, let alone remove it, but knowing Beau would do that—and more—for her, she readied herself for the unpleasant task. Through her tears, she inspected the wound, leaking dark red blood around the puncture. With shaking hands, she grasped the shaft and attempted to crack off the arrowhead.

Sir Beauregard cried out in his delirium, and she jumped back. "Sorry, Beau. I'm sorry!"

She scrambled to her feet and, although she didn't know what she expected to find, she opened cabinet doors and drawers, searching

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

frantically for something that could help her cut off the arrowhead. She pulled out a gleaming knife and a crystal decanter full of amber-colored liquid. One sniff told her it would make a powerful antiseptic and numb the pain—her psychological pain, as well as Beau’s physical. She took a swig and hacked at the golden shaft.

Before long, she’d sliced the rod in a clean slant, leaving few splinters.

“Okay, okay.” The second healthy swig was a bitter burst on her tongue and a fire burning its way down her throat. She pressed her slipper-clad foot against his chest. “Now to pull it out.”

She grasped the arrow with two hands and yanked. *Shhhhhhtuck.*

Blood spurted, and instinctively, she tossed aside the rest of the arrow and pressed a palm to the wound. Not until the scent of alcohol met her nostrils did she realize she’d poured it over Beau’s bicep. Wow. A good idea. Maybe she was getting the hang of this nursing thing.

* * *

When Sir Beauregard awakened, it was with relieved pressure on his left bicep. Still, pain shot through his arm where he’d taken the arrow. Lady Morgana was clumsily wrapping clean rags around the wound, and with every pass around his arm, she tugged.

“Ah,” he winced.

“Beau!” She wrapped faster, with even less TLC than before.

“Good God,” he muttered.

“Beg your pardon, Sir Beauregard?” She leaned over him, her dark blue eyes were an ocean of relief. She tied the rag around his arm with a sharp pull.

“Oh!”

“Beau? Beau, I can’t hear you!”

“I said, ‘Good God,’ woman!”

“Woman?” Her brow knit. “Well, that’s better than m’lady.”

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

His head was lodged against a table leg. “We must head back to the palace before morning.” He tried to sit up.

“But there isn’t time.” With a hand behind his neck, she helped him sit up. “It’s nearly dawn now.”

He whacked his head on the credenza. “Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and I say that as a prayer!”

“I’m not very good at taking care of others,” she whispered. “I’ve hardly had reason to take care of myself.”

He rubbed at the knot swelling on his scalp. “I told you to stay on the horse.”

“I’m not very good at taking direction either.” She gave him an apologetic smile, accompanied by a charming shrug of one shoulder. “And considering how dangerous this mission turned out to be—guarding me, I mean—why did you volunteer?”

His arm throbbed and his head ached. Now wasn’t the time to tell her of Queen Olivia’s dream-time request. He shook his head and said, “It was my duty.”

“You threw yourself in front of that arrow.”

“Yes.”

“Why would you do such a thing? Are you mad?”

“Mad? I’m a—”

“You must be! You risked your life—”

“I told you to stay on the goddamn horse!”

“I understand you’d lose a few medals if I were to turn up dead, but surely, with your talent, you’d find work in the private sector. Really, Sir Beauregard, is the Brigade of the Secret Service worth your life?”

“No, m’lady, you are!”

A blood-stained hand flew to cover her mouth.

“You are worth my life and the lives of many more.” He swallowed hard and looked away.

“Because of my position in Carman, I assume.”

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

"I wish to God it weren't true, but..." He gritted his teeth. "I'd love you if you were the daughter of a cheese monger."

"A cheese monger?" She giggled. "Does anyone monger cheese anymore?"

"You think I'm joking."

"Of course you're joking! We've shared but a handful of conversations! We've kissed a sad, few times, and you love me?" She dismissed the possibility with the wave of her hand and inspected his wound once again. "I thought it was the heart of the saved that poured for her savior. Not the other way around."

"You have no idea what you stir in me, m'lady."

At last, her giggling stopped, and her hands came to rest on his cheeks. "You love me?"

He nodded. "I do."

She looked him directly in the eye; tears rimmed on her lashes. "Say it again."

"I've said it eighteen times, in eighteen subtle ways. If you don't get the message—"

"Say it again."

"Lady Morgana of Carman, I love you. It is no great coincidence I'm here today, when so many others had failed. I'll die before you leave my sight."

"But you're a soldier of the Olympian, and I'm of noble blood."

"Your mother chose me to protect you."

"You knew my mother?"

"I can't explain."

"I think you'd better."

"That matter doesn't require an explanation because with or without your mother's request"—he engaged her stare—"in your bathing quarters, you chose me to love you."

She pulled a cut crystal bottle out from under the table and brought

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

it to her lips. After a healthy sip, she wiped the back of her hand against her mouth. "That was just...lust, orgasm."

"Was it?"

She licked her pink lips. Golden curls bounced against her shoulders when she shook her head. "I'm sorry, Sir Beauregard, but that's all it can be. I will not marry the Duke of Bismalle, but you said so yourself. Another will take my hand someday."

"And when you're on his arm, I'll still protect you at any costs. Not because of your mother's request, not because it is my noble duty, but because it is my desire."

Her cheeks glistened with tears. "I wish there were another way."

"We must take leave to the Palace of Carman. Now."

"No! Wait!" She reached for his arm as he stood, and by mistake, grasped his puncture wound.

"M'lady," he hissed.

Her mouth landed on his, silencing his swearing. An effective apology, he soon forgot the pain. "If we must go," she whispered gruffly, "make love to me before we leave."

"That would entail a fair amount of wooing, m'lady, and I'm not sure we have time."

"I'll be quick. You won't feel a thing." She smiled and kissed him again.

"Morgana?"

"Yes?"

"There will be plenty of time for that later. Now we must make haste."

"Are you well enough to travel?"

"M'lady, it's a wonder you've never gotten lost during your nighttime adventures. We can't be far from the Palace. I'd brought you to within five hundred yards of it before the numbing agent in the duke of Bismalle's arrow caused me to take temporary leave."

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

“Numbing agent?”

“Do you know nothing about your betrothed? He invented an arrowhead that emits a serum—”

“My betrothed, ha! When my father learns of Bismalle’s plans, he’ll—”

“Yes, which is why we must hurry back. There’s no telling what’s happened in my delirium.”

Together, they exited Chateau d’Olivia and raced on horseback through the grove.

* * *

With Lady Morgana on his arm and in bare feet, Sir Beauregard rushed to the queen’s cabinet. Foot soldiers threw open the doors, and upon first sight of their beloved sister, the younger ladies of Carman darted to her side and showered her with kisses.

He turned toward the duke and the duke’s lover, who stared at him from bended knees. “I trust you’re surprised to see her alive.”

“And grateful,” the duke whispered.

“Thank you for returning our Morgana in one piece,” the queen said.

He bowed his head. “It was my duty, and I’d do so one hundred times.”

“I hereby elect you to the Brigade of the Secret Service, in accordance with Olivia’s wishes.”

“Thank you, Your Majesty.”

“Until further notice, the duke and his servant shall be kept quarantined in the west tower.”

“But you don’t understand!” Morgana piped in. “That’s what they desire! They’re lovers!”

“What a man does in his own quarters is his own business.” The queen removed her spectacles. “As is what a knight does in his.”

Under heavy lids, Morgana met Beauregard’s gaze.

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

The queen addressed Preston and Jade. "The doctrines of the Olympian do not exist within these palace walls. My word is the golden rule. You will be granted a full pardon in exchange for information leading to the indictment of Bismallian officials."

"My most humble thanks, madam," Preston said.

"Morgana"—the lord raised his voice—"accompany Sir Beauregard to the infirmary. Your seclusion is hereby lifted."

* * *

While nurses moved Sir Beauregard to a private room in the infirmary, Morgana returned to her quarters for a hot bath and some rest.

"M'lady, allow me to—"

"Elsie, I beg you to leave me alone!"

"But 'tis my duty, m'lady."

Morgana walked farther into her primping room and the bathwater drowned the chambermaid's ramblings.

::Morgana::

There it was again. A feeling of comfort and warmth encompassed her with the sound. "Mother?"

Before her eyes, the golden sprite appeared before her. ::*Please understand, this was for the good of Carman. It pained me to watch my princesses mourn.*::

"We loved you, Mother."

Slowly, her mother materialized, sitting atop the vanity before her. Satin slippers identical to Morgana's dropped to the floor, and the glittering sprite was nothing more than the bejeweled tip of a scepter.

"Mother!" When Morgana reached for the figure, her mother embraced her with both arms. "You feel so real, so alive!"

"I am."

"But...I watched you die!"

"The illusion of death was necessary to incriminate the senior Duke

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

of Bismalle, and it is necessary for a while longer. You mustn't tell a soul you've spoken to me."

"I watched you fly! In the forest!"

"Merely a potion, darling, for my horse. They don't make satin horseshoes, you know."

"But—"

"Someday, you'll understand, but for now, this is all you may know. When the time is right, I'll return to the Palace of Carman and resume my position as queen. Until then"—she pointed to the slippers—"the slippers will serve their purpose."

Morgana looked to her mother's feet and watched Olivia step into the magical slippers.

"In time, each of your sisters will need a gift such as I've given you. I'm sorry I ordered them half-a-size too small." She embraced and kissed Morgana once more. "Until the time is right, Morgana, follow your heart."

With three clicks of her heels, Olivia disappeared.

CHAPTER 10

No, no. Just as Sir Beauregard had suspected, Lady Morgana wasn't a lady at all. Her mouth worked over the head of his cock with precision, her lips massaging his shaft. Her fingers tickled his balls. As serene as fellatio by the mouth of a Lady of Carman was, his member twitched, begging for cunt.

He wanted to be inside her, deep and intimate, and feel her wet walls constrict around him. He tangled his hands in her hair, and shoved deeper into her mouth.

Slowly, she pulled her mouth off his erection. Her lips puckered at his tip, and he had no doubt her pussy would be as accommodating as her mouth.

"Beau."

Her whisper lured him out of dreamland, but her fingertips at his testicles told him the oral pleasure had been very real.

"Beau, are you awake?"

THE SATIN SLIPPERS

“Yes, m’lady.” When he peeled his eyes open, however, he found he was alone in the infirmary. But his balls continued to feel the pleasure of her touch, and a large, pink feather rested on his chest.

“Morgana? Are you wearing the slippers?”

He felt the decadence of her moist opening at his tip, and slowly she worked her vagina around his shaft, taking him all the way in. “Oh, yes, Sir Beauregard. Yes!”

* * *

Stay tuned for the next book of The Carman Chronicles, when Lady Caroline stumbles across an old mirror that reflects more than her image...

PENNY DAWN

All right, so who among us doesn't have a few demons to exorcise?

Penny Dawn began her writing career at the tender age of seven, before she realized it's impossible to be All Good, All the Time...at least in the religious sense (grinning like a Cheshire.) Romantic stories with passionate twists have since become this Good Girl's forte...and she unleashes her demons on paper, over and over and over again.

Penny Dawn holds a B. A. in history and English from Northern Illinois University and an M. A. in Creative Writing from Seton Hill University, whose alumnae include spicy novelists Jacki King, Shannon Hollis, Suzanne Forster, Dana Marton, and others. When she isn't writing, Penny enjoys tap, ballet, and jazz dance, photography, physical fitness, and renovating her 1906 Victorian Lady with her husband and two daughters.

Drop by her web site www.pennydawn.com to discuss all things decadent.

* * *

***Don't miss Go For Miles, by Penny Dawn,
Available at AmberHeat.com!***

Joanna Robinson and Miles McClintock have a history of mind-bending sex in public places...with no strings attached.

When they both qualify to compete in the annual Illinois Beach Race for Charity, Miles' cocky grin and not-so-discreet leering tempts Joanna more than ever. The heat between them threatens to shatter the thermometer, but each wants the prize as much as they crave another public romp. Unfortunately, only one can win the race, and Joanna is sure her cause is worthier than any Miles might support. After all, one can't expect much from an over-confident stud who carries a gun to work, and she's pretty sure he's competing for personal glory, more than charity.

Dirty tricks and steaming, private moments propel them through obstacle courses and logic puzzles. Somewhere along the way, Joanna discovers there's more to Miles than she assumed. He has passions...ones that don't involve his experienced hands, talented tongue, or the remarkable package between his legs. But will Joanna and Miles survive the competition without losing their passion for one another? And if so, will Miles be man enough to take her to bed, should she defeat him?

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

HOME OF AMBER HEAT!

QUALITY EROTIC FICTION
IN BOTH PRINT AND ELECTRONIC FORMATS

ACTION/ADVENTURE

SUSPENSE/THRILLER

SCIENCE FICTION

PARANORMAL

ALTERNATIVE

MYSTERY

ROMANCE

HORROR

DARK FANTASY

FANTASY

CONTEMPORARY

HISTORICAL

AND MORE...

BUY DIRECT AND SAVE
<http://www.amberheat.com>