

ELLORA'S CAVE EXOTIKA

TESNI  
MORGAN

ON THE  
LOOSE

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



[www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)

On the Loose

ISBN # 1-4199-0882-0

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

On the Loose Copyright© 2006 Tesni Morgan

Edited by Briana St. James.

Photography by Les Byerley, cover design by Syneca.

Electronic book Publication: December 2006

This book may not be reproduced or used in whole or in part by any means existing without written permission from the publisher, Ellora's Cave Publishing, Inc.® 1056 Home Avenue, Akron OH 44310-3502.

This book is a work of fiction and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, or places, events or locales is purely coincidental. The characters are productions of the authors' imagination and used fictitiously.

## **Content Advisory:**

**S - ENSUOUS**

**E - ROTIC**

**X - TREME**

Ellora's Cave Publishing offers three levels of Romantica™ reading entertainment: S (S-ensuous), E (E-rotic), and X (X-treme).

The following material contains graphic sexual content meant for mature readers. This story has been rated E-rotic.

*S-ensuous* love scenes are explicit and leave nothing to the imagination.

*E-rotic* love scenes are explicit, leave nothing to the imagination, and are high in volume per the overall word count. E-rated titles might contain material that some readers find objectionable – in other words, almost anything goes, sexually. E-rated titles are the most graphic titles we carry in terms of both sexual language and descriptiveness in these works of literature.

*X-treme* titles differ from E-rated titles only in plot premise and storyline execution. Stories designated with the letter X tend to contain difficult or controversial subject matter not for the faint of heart.

# *ON THE LOOSE*

Tesni Morgan

### *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction:

Doc Martens: Dr. Martens International Trading

Fortnum & Mason: Fortnum & Mason PLC

Harley-Davidson: H-D Michigan, Inc.

Harrods: Harrods Limited Company

Levi's: Levi Strauss & Co.

McDonalds: McDonald's Corportion

Mercedes: DaimlerChrysler AG Corporation

Pimm's: Diageo Brands B.V. Private Limited Liability Company

Selfridges: Selfridges Retail Limited

## Chapter One

Have you ever felt, when meeting a guy for the first time, that you want to leap on him, make mad, passionate love to him, marry him and have his babies? This was exactly what happened to Carenza when she walked into his state-of-the-art office and looked straight into David Farlan's steel-gray eyes.

He was thirty-something, older than other boyfriends she had had, apart from one. She was overawed by his reputation, nervous as a kitten because she needed the job and bowled over by the sheer charisma of the man.

He rose, held out a broad, firm hand and said, "Take a seat, Miss..." He glanced at the monitor on the antique mahogany desk before him adding, "Carenza Hewitt, I believe."

"Yes. Thank you, Mr. Farlan," she replied and lowered herself onto the leather upholstered chair opposite his.

The luxurious calfskin was comfortable, pressing her businesslike skirt against her bottom, making her aware of the silk panties against her. She was sensitive to everything, an awareness brought about by the presence of the tall, wide-shouldered, expensively suited man who was interviewing her. *What a babe! I can't wait to tell the girls about him!*

*Watch it,* cautioned her sensible self.

David steepled his fingers together, touched the tips to his full lips, regarded her steadily and said, his voice deep and cultured, "Of course, I have already interviewed several other applicants. What can you tell me about yourself that may convince me that you are the most suitable?"

*He's an arrogant bastard,* she thought, but her skin tingled as his gaze wandered over her body. She felt he was stripping off her skirt and sensible white blouse, then removing her bra and panties and leaving her naked for his inspection. Vicky and Joanna had warned her this might happen. Her streetwise roommates had heard of him from mutual friends. They guarded her like mother hens, sheltering her from the wicked city.

"Watch your back," they had warned. "He's charm itself and, apparently, when he makes love! Wow! Hang on to your hat! They say he's hung like a mule and has a degree in sex, or so it's rumored. We've not tried him ourselves."

Carenza believed them. They knew the scene. Had lived in London for ages, trawled the smart clubs and worked in prestigious places – Vicky in fashion houses and Joanna in journalism. But their comments added to her nervousness and she was all too aware of his chiseled features and those penetrating eyes.

He was waiting for an answer, one eyebrow raised quizzically and she stammered out, "I'm new to television and radio, though I know the formula, learned it during media studies at college, but have ideas that I'm certain will give me a fresh approach. I have no ties and don't mind unsociable hours."

"You're ambitious?" A smile played around his highly kissable lips.

"Yes." She concentrated on anything, rather than his mouth. "I'd like to get on and want to learn everything. How to conduct interviews and present programs, all the tricks of the trade, in fact."

"And you're fresh from university?" He was listening to her as intently as if she was the only woman in the world and that he had not already heard this tale from other hopefuls.

"That's right." Carenza clasped her hands over the bag on her lap, thinking, *If only he wasn't so attractive!*

"And this will be your first job?"

He swiveled his chair slightly from side to side, but his eyes never left her. Picking up a pen, he rapped a tattoo on the desk. Somewhere a phone trilled, but was answered in the outer office. He had obviously given orders not to be disturbed.

She wished she had more confidence. Her tutor, Kelyn, had taken away what little she had. How was she to know that he was going to marry another lecturer who had gone to America on an exchange? Somehow it slipped his mind to mention it. She thought he loved her. She was a virgin until then, too shy to date boys until after Kelyn, let alone have sex with them.

"I came to London after I'd graduated from Stanchester."

She remembered that ancient gray college in the northern town, set amidst the moors and granite hills where the wind blew from arctic regions. She had never been really warm during the three years spent there. A far cry from mild Kent, the so-called Garden of England, where she was born.

"That's good news. It means you'll be malleable and I shall be able to mold you in the way I want you to go." He smiled at her disarmingly.

The notion of being molded by him was disturbing. She visualized chains and restraints and herself wearing nothing but a thong and thigh-high boots. The chamber would be dusky and lit by candles, and he would stand there facing her with that look in his eyes and his hips, buttocks and crotch outlined by ball-crushingly tight black velvet trousers. Carenza's imagination was getting in the way of reality, fired by photos she'd seen in Vicky's porn magazines.

The office was light and airy, on the top floor with a view over the River Thames. A prestigious and popular location. No doubt David had an apartment nearby, valued at half a million pounds at the very least. A high flyer. A successful businessman. A most desirable person on all counts. *I want this job*, she thought, and her chin lifted in a mulish way that friends would have recognized. She was stubborn, as shy girls often are when they get their teeth into a project.

David appeared to be deep in thought. He drummed his fingers lightly on the desk. He continued to scan her qualifications, then looked at her, and she wondered if he was visualizing her in his bed. She could feel her cheeks reddening and couldn't meet his eyes. The tumult in her loins was increasing, becoming more and more pleasurable. Would it be possible to work close to him or would she be constantly on the verge of orgasm?

Sounds from outside were muted. They might have been alone on a mountaintop. Sunshine poured through the plate-glass windows and it was warm there, despite the air-conditioning. Rather like a hothouse where lush tropical plants flourished, throwing off powerful pheromones.

*Stop it!* she lectured herself. *You're here for a job, not a screw!*

His lips curved in a knowing smile, as if the heat, the silence and the sheer feral jungle feeling in the air was affecting him. Unable to move, fascinated as a rabbit with a snake, she watched as he rose and came around to her side of the desk. He was graceful as a dancer, his loose designer suit emphasizing the breadth of his shoulders, the length of his legs. When he paused beside her, it seemed that her heart fluttered then went racing on.

"Would you like a trial run...say, a month?" His lips were somewhere in the region of her right ear.

"That would be wonderful," she managed to squeak, all too aware of the scent of him, a mixture of expensive aftershave coupled with the personal smell of his hair. She wanted to run her fingers through it, so dark, thick and curling, sweeping back to touch his collar.

"Good. Then that's settled." He straightened up. "Come in around ten tomorrow morning and I'll introduce you to Laurette Upton. She's our chief presenter and you'll act as her researcher."

Carenza struggled to her feet, weak-kneed with relief, shock and excitement. He really was taking her on! She'd seen Laurette on TV and would now be actually working with her for David's company, Beyond Enterprise, helping to bring new and glamorous assignments to the public. And David would be there. She'd probably see him daily. It was almost too much for her to accept and believe.

*I can't wait to discuss it with Vicky and Joanna,* she thought. He shook her hand on the deal and promised to work out salary and hours and all those trivial details that were of little interest compared with the feel of his dry, warm palm pressed to hers. She had the crazy urge to prostrate herself before him and beg him to take her home with him.

*Get a grip! Good heavens, what's wrong with you? Anyone would think you'd never seen a man before!*

\* \* \* \* \*

"And that's what it felt like," she burst out, seated at the kitchen table in the house she shared with her friends. "He's great!"

"Oh, help! She's in love again," exclaimed Vicky, beautiful, up-to-the-minute in every fashion detail and with legs that went on forever. She reached for the brown earthenware teapot and refilled their pottery mugs.

"No, I'm not," Carenza protested indignantly. "But I've got me a job! Just think of that! A job in TV."

"Good for you!" Joanna chimed in, beaming widely.

She was a redhead, and her hair was shagged and jagged by Larry, their mutual friend and coiffeur, who owned a trendy salon in the heart of London's West End. As petite as Vicky was willowy, she was a journalist par excellence, a shrewd, sharp-tongued critic of the lifestyles of the rich and famous, whose misadventures filled the newspapers. She believed in the old adage, "The pen is mightier than the sword".

They sat around the table, as they had done so often before. A meeting place where, at the end of the working day, any and every topic came under discussion, particularly men. It was on the ground floor of a circa nineteen-hundred villa in Kensington and belonged to Carenza's mother, inherited from an aunt. At present-day prices it was worth a fortune, and Carenza had moved in when she left college. She had known Joanna and Vicky for years and they were delighted to join her, sharing the kitchen, conservatory, lounge, dining room and study and having their bedrooms one flight up. Larry rented the upper floor. He was useful for making their hair look fabulous at a moment's notice and had a string of boyfriends moving in or out. None of his relationships lasted long.

"We should celebrate. I feel like partying," Vicky flicked back her streaked honey-blond locks. "It's been a pig of a day, everything going wrong in the atelier. One of the girls was off with flu. The sewing machines were on the blink. The computer was playing up and Carl was throwing a fit."

Carenza smiled. Carl was a temperamental colleague who had shares in Vicky's business and designed and made up his garments in her workshop. They couldn't decide if he was gay or simply rode on both buses. Even Larry found him an enigma.

She wanted to talk more about David, but was too embarrassed. She vowed that one day she would stroll in there with him, showing off her property. It would be hers then, one bonus of being an only child. No sibling rivalry or squabbling about wills. Her mother had promised that she'd give it to her when she was more mature.

Vicky stretched her brown arms. It was early summer but she had already been sprayed with fake tan at the beauty salon. Every inch of her was copper-toned. There was a secluded garden at the back of the house where all three of them sunbathed nude, weather permitting. Then Carenza remembered that there were four, including Larry. He was vainer than any of them when it came to bronzed and beautiful skin.

"Let's go to the Barley Corn Club after we've had something to eat," Joanna suggested.



"Fine." Vicky unwound her legs from the struts of the stool and got up. "Not only food for the stomach, but for the hormones as well. Lots of fit guys there. I'm on the pull tonight."

Carenza nodded and went to her room to shower and get ready. The expression Vicky had used jarred on her. "On the pull." Females were saying it more and more now, behaving in a laddish way. This meant drinking pints of beer and getting drunk, trolling from club to club and picking up partners for one-night stands. Not even that – a quick fuck against a wall with some guy that they wouldn't pass the time of day with when sober. They equipped themselves with condoms for safe sex, but were often too out of it to use them.

*I'm not a prude, but everything in me rebels at this,* she thought.

Vicky and Joanna weren't that bad, though they had been hurt by failed relationships earlier on. Now they drifted from man to man, trying to be as uncaring as their masculine counterparts, presenting a tough exterior, but soft as butter underneath, loyal to a fault as far as their female friends were concerned.

Her bedroom was quaint, still furnished with items chosen by her aunt years ago. Antiques, mostly, and worth money on today's market with its nostalgic obsession for bygones and all things retro. The chest of drawers was oak and the wardrobe spread itself along one wall, its full-length mirrors throwing back Carenza's image.

She leaned closer and examined her face critically. Her contours were soft and her eyes wide and blue. Her mouth was generous and her hair was what she called rich mouse, which meant it needed highlights and an imaginative trim to bring out its full potential. She had not bothered to do much to it, but now wished that she had. She decided to talk to Larry, bunching it up at the back and turning her head this way and that. Neither view pleased her.

She frowned as she stared at her figure. She was of middle height and rounded. This wasn't fashionable. Most women strove to achieve that skinny, straight-from-the-gym look, but with big boobs. Carenza was the proud owner of a fine pair, but the trouble was that the rest of her was in proportion. Her waist was normal and her hips ample. As Kelyn had put it, they were splendid for childbearing.

She hadn't known whether to take this as a compliment or an insult, but had settled on the latter as matters had turned out. She rooted through her wardrobe, displeased with every item there. The educational grant had been a pittance, and though her mother had helped out, her father was nowhere in evidence, having run off with his secretary years before. Without being lucky enough to live rent-free, London would have proved a disaster while she was looking for a job. It had been bad enough at Stanchester, trying to manage on a student loan that now would have to be paid back.

She had become accustomed to exploring thrift shops where clothes and bric-a-brac were donated so that the proceeds of sales could help the needy. Every article was cleaned and pressed and presented to look its best. Carenza had purchased many a bargain in those hallowed halls of goodwill and compassion.

Mostly she stuck to conventional garments, skirts and tops, trousers and T-shirts, though occasionally she couldn't resist weird and wonderful articles, like a genuine Afghan coat from the Seventies. This was made of goatskin, complete with embroidery and the original animal smell. She'd bought jeans too, already washed out and tatty by wear, not deliberately distressed in a factory to suit the new trend.

There were impulse buys that she later regretted wasting her money on, but there was one exception, an outfit she now retrieved from the back of the wardrobe. Shrouded decently in a clear plastic dress bag, she felt again the thrill that had shot through her when she first saw it hanging in an Oxfam shop. Longing to be bolder, she had tried it on in the tiny changing room and it had transformed her. For once she looked like her contemporaries on a night out—feisty, proud of her body, challenging anyone to say different.

She now freed it from its shroud and admired it. Made of purple see-through material with a slip beneath, the bodice was low-cut and sleeveless, decorated with beads and sequins. Carenza laid it across her bed and stripped. It was the kind of dress one had to be near-naked to wear. It wasn't the first time she had tried it on in the privacy of her bedroom, daydreaming of strolling into a trendy club where every eye would turn to her, followed by that second of stunned silence. And in these fantasies she always ignored them, stalking in with her head high, wearing the very latest in makeup and innovative hairstyling. She would be the belle of the ball and leader of fashion.

Dare she wear it tonight? She had already showered, smoothed lotion into her skin and felt incredibly sexy in the dress. The skirt was calf-length and floated around her legs that showed through it, while the bodice was brief to the point of indecency. She was glad her breasts were so firm, for it would be impossible to wear a bra beneath. Her nipples stood out, two sharp points lifting the chiffon suggestively. A frisson of excitement shot down her spine. She took out a new black thong. She had tried the dress on when she got home from buying it and was so excited by the sight of herself that she had masturbated.

The remembrance made her tingle.

It also made her horny. She thought of David and ached with need. Her labia swelled and her ardent little button poked from its fleshy hood. She hurried to clip the matching black garter belt around her waist and rolled on sheer black stockings, careful not to snag them. She worked them up her legs and fastened the lacy welts to the garter clips. It was impossible to resist feathering her fingers across her bare belly, combing through her fair bush and tantalizing her clitoris. She gave a little moan, then exercised control, standing up and twisting around to look in the mirror and make certain the stocking seams were straight. Then she slipped on the thong and slowly lowered her skirt, concealing this naughty underwear.

She felt around at the bottom of the wardrobe for plain black shoes. When she put them on the illusion of sexy glamour was complete. She struck a pose, hand on hip, legs braced so that her calves bunched and gazed at herself through narrowed eyes. More

makeup was needed to enhance the picture and she set to work. Maybe she could wear this outfit if David invited her to a function. Boldly she applied more mascara than usual, along with eye shadow, blusher and lip gloss. It would give him the right signals. She could do it! And studying her newly created image in the mirror, she thought for an instant that she really could.

She would have him not only eating out of her hand, but wanting to eat the rest of her too! She picked up a purple shawl and a clutch bag and went out the door, switching off the light behind her.

## **Chapter Two**

David stared at the view of London from the balcony of his apartment. He had seen it so many times that it hardly registered – Tower Reach, the distant dome of St. Paul's Cathedral and the flourishing Dockland site, once warehouses, but now luxury homes for those who could afford it. David smiled thinly. He was one of them, and he hadn't got there without a measure of wheeling and dealing, stepping on those less ruthless than himself as he steadily climbed the ladder of success.

He hooked a finger under his tie and dragged it off, then opened the collar and the top of his shirt. His chest was hairy and muscular. He worked out regularly. Fencing was one of his hobbies. Tempted to undress and lie on a padded lounger, soaking up the sun's late rays, he was interrupted by a buzzer. He strode across the living room and spoke into the intercom.

"Farlan here." He was impatient at being disturbed when he was about to pour himself a whiskey, carry it outside and ruminate on the day's events. "Who is it?"

"Laurette." An instantly recognizable female voice caressed his ear. It was husky and sensual, fascinating her many fans. She was a popular TV presenter, famous for the way she had of turning even those programs about decorating rooms or rearranging gardens into something incredibly erotic. And she was under contract to Beyond Enterprise.

"Come on up." He pressed a button on the security panel.

While he waited her arrival he allowed himself a smidgen of anticipation, often so much more pleasurable than the reality. Laurette, witch woman of the media. Like him, she had clawed her way to the top, careless of those she hurt on the way. And in her personal life she resembled him, married and divorced twice, but with no children. David couldn't imagine her as a mother or himself taking on the responsibility of fatherhood. They were both far too selfish. Yet he was fond of her in a weird way, though they fought like cats and dogs. Maybe they were simply too alike? He was afraid of being hurt, having been there, done that, got the T-shirt and vowed never to let a woman break his heart again. He kept them at arm's length, except in bed, and even then they had to accept his terms.

Within minutes, the elevator had whisked her up and he opened the hall door. The first thing he noticed was her exquisite perfume, then her classic, film-star face that owed much to nature, but a lot to makeup as well. She had high cheekbones, slanting, feline eyes with thick lashes under finely arched brows, a wide, ox-bow mouth and cascading chestnut-hued curls. He knew this was her natural color since it matched her bush, and his experience of this was varied and exciting, though lately she had been depilated and had rings inserted in her labia. Laurette was nothing if not experimental.

"Darling." She threw her arms around his neck. He bent to kiss her, tasting her breath and letting his tongue dance with hers. Yet even as he did so, he was wondering about Carenza, having found her most desirable.

Laurette was wearing black, and the drama of that somber color enhanced her feisty bearing. She definitely had attitude. No one dared gainsay her. Except David. He ignored her temperamental outbursts and, literally, bent her over his knee and spanked her. She loved it and came back for more.

He hazarded a guess that this was why she was there that evening.

Holding her close to his chest, he slid his hand down until it cupped her bottom. Laurette squirmed and pressed her pussy against his burgeoning erection. He eased up her skirt, her rhinestone-encrusted dress so skimpy that it resembled a slip. Beneath it she was naked. His agile fingers entered the crack between her cheeks and one of them found the slippery wet opening to her vagina. He smiled sardonically. Her reason for visiting him was all too obvious. She moaned into his mouth.

"Bad girl," he murmured, without taking his lips from hers.

She hung there languidly, her hair falling across the arm he positioned under her shoulders. "David, you're naughty." She was almost purring, and her smile in no way resembled the cheesy grin she used for the camera.

"And you love it. Have you come here for a fuck?"

"Whatever you say, master." She settled herself on his finger as he slid it in to the second knuckle.

"And if I don't feel like it?"

"Oh, I doubt that. I'll bet you're all steamed up after interviewing that moppet who was in your office longer than usual this afternoon." She slipped from his grasp, walked to the bar and poured a drink.

Ah, David mused, so this is what it's all about, apart from her desire to be humped. Could she be jealous of Carenza? "You think so?" He gave nothing away.

"I *know* so." She ran her tongue suggestively 'round the rim of her glass. "Nothing gives you a hard-on like an inexperienced girl. Isn't that the truth, sweetie?" She sashayed across and gripped his penis.

"You saw her? I thought you were on an assignment." He resisted the urge to draw back. He didn't trust her an inch and she was quite likely to do him some damage. She released him, but continued to run her fingers up and down the erection distorting his chinos.

She gazed up into his face and he was amused by her mischief-inspired smile. "I was watching you on the closed-circuit screen. She's a honey, and ripe for an introduction to our ways. Have you engaged her?"

"I thought you knew everything,"

"Nearly all, darling." She slipped down her glittering spaghetti straps, exposing breasts that were full and shapely and natural, not silicone implants. Undoing the

remaining buttons of his shirt, she feathered her fingers through his chest hair, particularly the whorls that circled his nipples.

The sensation shot straight to his cock and he gripped her fiercely, inflamed by her touch and the remembrance of Carenza. Laurette knew him all too well, his likes and dislikes and what turned him on.

"You may be right. Why are you worrying about what I do with Carenza?"

"Oh, I'm not in the least worried. But don't be selfish, David. Let me have a share in your new playmate. I can show her things that will make her hair curl."

"I'll think about it. Now you're going to be punished for your insolence. Who the hell do you think you are? Spying on me?"

"Your slave, master, your devoted sub. I only want to help you enjoy the girl. That's all I ever want. I'd do anything for you."

"You'll do as you're told for a start. Bend over the back of the couch." He released his belt and his zipper made a whirring sound as he ran it down. His cock sprang out like a serpent freed from its lair, but he didn't touch her with it—not yet.

Her skirt was up around her waist and her bare bottom was sun-kissed, as firm and luscious as a ripe peach waiting for him to sink his teeth into it. This wasn't his plan—not to begin with. She was impudent, getting way above herself and must be corrected. He stood behind her, raised his right hand and slapped her hard on the ass.

"Ouch! Oh!" she yelped, but didn't attempt to move.

"What are you?" He was fighting for control. His dick was throbbing and almost finding its own way into her, but he wasn't ready to come. This play could go on for a while yet.

"I'm a tramp." She panted and tried to rub her clit against the couch and gain relief.

"What else?" He implemented the interrogation with another blow. Her buttocks were becoming fiery red, marked with the imprints of his palm.

"A deceitful, disgusting hooker, who doesn't deserve your notice, master." She sobbed, and tears ruined her carefully applied mascara and made sooty runnels down her cheeks.

Her words were like music to his ears, and to his rampant penis. He felt powerful, omnipotent, lord of all he surveyed. This woman, this popular woman whose photo appeared on the covers of trendy magazines, was nothing more than his creature, ruled by her own passions and her need to have him degrade her. He had almost reached the point of no return and slipped a hand under her, palpating her clit. Her tears dried and her moans increased.

"I think I'll stop...leave you hanging on the edge." He mocked her grimly, while his finger continued to poke and stroke her hard, pearly button.

"No! You can't! Go on...go on!" She wriggled against it, as if aware of nothing except the driving urge to reach fulfillment. She put her hands on her breasts and pinched the nipples, whimpering, "Oh, please, master...do it. My clit...rub it! Rub it!"

He leaned forward, his chinos chafing her thighs, his bare chest against her back and his dick ready. He remembered in time and pulled away, taking a condom from his pocket. The rubber made a little sound as he smoothed it on from tip of his helm to the base of his cock. He never took chances and there was no knowing where Laurette had been or with whom. She wasn't fussy when in full lust and regaled him with tales of her amatory exploits. He didn't allow himself to be disturbed by this, hardening his heart.

Domination thrilled him, whether in the boardroom or bedroom. In that moment of time, only he could give her relief, bring her to a soaring orgasm that would bind her to him even more. He chose to do so, upping the speed and slickness with which he frigged her eager little organ. She was sweating and straining, her backside against the crispness of his pubic hair and the rigidity of his penis. He didn't pause in that brisk massaging motion until she suddenly jerked and cried out. She went limp, collapsing over the settee back, and he dragged her hips higher and guided the head of his cock into her.

She yelped again, then settled against it until he was buried to the hilt in her darkness. David had waited long enough. He plunged in and out as if he wanted to destroy her. Orgasm burst through him like a magnificent fireworks display. Careless of everything else, though her muscles were squeezing him as if she would rob him of his weapon, he came in a welter of sensation. Just for an instant, he loved the woman impaled on him – this always happened at the point of coming – but it was gone almost as soon as he had finished. Love Laurette? No way! And yet, weren't they alike as two peas in a pod? He could do worse. She knew the business inside out and was a public icon in her own right.

He withdrew and went toward the bathroom. There he removed the rubber, poured water into the floral-patterned basin, spun the taps and washed his hands and then his genitals, careful to remove all traces of her.

When he returned to the lounge, it was to find her equally composed. She was seated on the couch with her shapely legs crossed, and every item of clothing in place, hair tousled, but that was the style, eye makeup repaired and lipstick outlining that luscious mouth. She was smoking a cigarette on a long jade holder, and glanced across at him. He poured himself another drink and took one over to her.

"Well, what's the score?" She raised it to her lips.

"With Carenza or you and me?" He countered her question with another.

"Carenza, of course. We both know how matters stand between *us*, don't we?" There was a curious, almost tender look on her face, and the moment hung between them, with much left unspoken.

He wasn't sure what she meant exactly, but had an inkling, yet had no intention of giving her the satisfaction of showing weakness where she was concerned.

"She's on a trial run, and coming to meet you at ten tomorrow." He went over to sit beside her.

She pulled a face. "It's so early, sweetie! Can't you make it later?"

He shrugged and downed his whiskey in one. "No can do. Take it or leave it, Laurette."

"All right. I'll be there, and it better be good."

He rose and left her, turning toward the spacious bedroom. "So, what are you doing for the rest of the night? I'm off to the club to meet up with Matt."

"Nice one. That Aussie guy, tough, rugged and knowledgeable about surviving in the wilds. He's fit. I would give him breakfast any day."

"Why don't you come with me?" David would have preferred to be alone with Matt, discussing the details of a program he had in mind to produce, but he might use her as bait if Matt decided to be awkward regarding the deal.

"Sorry, pet. No can do. Got a date with Marty Ryder."

"The new rock idol?" Ah, to be young and fresh on the scene, he thought regretfully.

"Yep! I'll see you tomorrow and tell you if the rumors concerning his sexual preferences are true." She gave a sultry smile. David almost pitied this newcomer to the music industry, still wet behind the ears.

"Be gentle with him."

She reached up on tiptoe and kissed his cheek. "Aren't I always?"

He grinned down at her. "A regular Mother Theresa."

He saw her to the door, and let her out. This was one thing in her favor. She was no clinging vine and didn't expect or give commitment. He doubted that Carenza would be so understanding. But he was aware of a thrill of excitement as he visualized meeting her again and probing her heart and mind. There might be nothing there or maybe she would surprise him. It was a challenge, and David loved challenges above all things.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Barley Corn Club was *the* venue for meeting anyone and everyone who was part of London's racy set. It was situated just off Regent Street in the West End, and had once been a wine bar until bought by a farsighted entrepreneur who had caught on to its potential. Now it was definitely the place to see and be seen.

Carenza found it already packed when she arrived. She and the girls had eaten in a bistro not far away. The club's restaurant was so expensive that it could only be enjoyed if a rich person was paying, probably a man hoping to get into one's panties.

"You look gorgeous." Vicky had assured her as they left home and hailed a cab. "If David Farlan inspires such a transformation, then he has my blessing."

"Hear, hear," Joanna had agreed. "You've got it in you, girl. Just needs bringing out."



Nonetheless, Carenza felt almost naked as she stood beside them, fighting to get drinks at the bar. "Here, let me help, ladies." A very tall, tanned man smiled at them. He had long, straight, sun-streaked brown hair caught back in a ponytail.

"Thank you." Vicky simpered and gave him the come-on.

"What are you having? Find seats and I'll bring the drinks," he offered.

Carenza didn't like this takeover bid. "I'm sure we can manage." She astonished herself by speaking up amidst the clamor of the music and club clientele. The stranger subjected her to another wide, winning smile. His bridgework was perfect, his teeth gleaming against the coppery tan.

"No worries." He wedged his wide shoulders into a space and leaned on the bar. "It's my pleasure to help damsels in distress."

"We're not damsels, or distressed. Stop being so damned patronizing."

"Just go and sit down, miss." He seemed in no way offended, and Joanna pulled on Carenza's arm and got her away. Vicky had already found a table.

"What's up with you?" Joanna guided Carenza through the throng.

"Nothing!" She was agitated and couldn't figure out why. "It's just men. They want to boss you around."

"He's dishy." Vicky shifted up to make room for them on the banquette. "A real outdoors type."

"I thought you liked lounge lizards," Joanna observed. "Pretty boys, cover models, the kind who shimmy down the catwalk wearing your designs."

Vicky decided to be huffy. "A change is as good as a rest! I can get the hots for a guy wearing combat pants and a khaki vest, like him."

"Me Tarzan. You Jane," Joanna quoted wickedly.

"Shut it. Here he comes."

"Not literally, I hope."

"Belt up or I'll punch you!"

Carenza was used to their verbal skirmishing, but hoped the stranger hadn't overheard.

"I'm Matt Clayburn." He put the tray down and handed 'round their drinks.

"This is Carenza and Joanna, and my name's Vicky. Where d'you come from? You're not English, are you? What is that accent?"

"Australian." He straddled a stool opposite them. This was a showstopper—solid knees, lean thighs and a bulge between that promised much.

Carenza couldn't help being impressed by his height and build. His muscles rippled, arms coated with a sprinkling of brown fuzz. His chest was well developed, his neck a solid pillar upholding that handsome head. His torso tapered to a narrow waist and supple hips, concealed by the baggy camouflage trousers. He was rugged and weather-beaten and looked as if he had spent much time in the jungle. She feasted on

his macho good looks, his shoulders rendered even more impressive by the leather jacket slung carelessly over them. It added to his swashbuckling image.

"What do you do?" Vicky was never shy when it came to getting information from men.

"I'm one of those survivor course dudes." He waved away the cigarette pack she offered. "I was in the army, an SAS division, but jacked it in after I'd done my term. There's plenty of work for someone like me...as a personal trainer or teaching martial arts or as some wealthy bloke's bodyguard."

"Do you ever have to guard women?" Vicky asked pointedly and Carenza noticed how she touched his foot with hers, though there was little chance of him feeling it through his thick-soled desert boot. For some unexplained reason, her friend's action annoyed her. Did she always have to go for every eligible male in sight?

"Sometimes." He gave a boyish grin.

"Like in the film with Kevin Costner?"

"Maybe." He was cagey and Carenza liked that. He seemed modest, not boastful and full of himself as had been her first impression. "And you, ladies? You seem a bit too classy to be in a joint like this." He cast a skeptical eye around the chattering, flirting crowd, all trying to outdo one another with their star quality.

Vicky took him up on it. "But this joint *is* classy, about as classy as they come. The very latest stomping ground for all those involved in television or radio, movies, the theater, modeling or the creative arts."

He remained unmoved. "They look like a bunch of toss-pots to me."

"You obviously prefer the outback and the company of kangaroos." Carenza was new to the Barley Corn Club and felt that she had advanced in her career by being there. This antipodean caveman wasn't going to spoil it for her.

"Touché." He raised his glass of lager and toasted her over the top of it.

She was disconcerted by the look in his eyes. They were hazel – green, flecked with gold. He reminded her of a tiger, watchful, waiting his opportunity to pounce or maybe just sizing up his prey. He gave the impression on the surface of being a relaxed sort of guy, but he had hidden depths. Of that she was certain.

Suddenly he and everyone else in the place vanished for an instant as she heard a familiar voice. "There you are, Matt. God, what a crush! Have you got a drink? You have? Fine."

Carenza froze. When her heart started beating again, she could feel herself blushing. What was *he* doing there?

"Hi, David." Matt rose to his feet. "I was waiting for you. Long time no see. Come and join us, mate."

"I rather wanted to talk to you privately." David hadn't yet spotted Carenza.

"That's no big deal. I'll have you leave you, ladies. Until next time, eh?"

"Carenza Hewitt, isn't it?" Now David's gaze swept over her. "Mixing with the celebs? Mind they don't corrupt you, and don't drink too much. I want you bright-eyed and bushy-tailed tomorrow."

"Mr. Farlan, these are my friends, Joanna Marsden and Vicky Westlake." She had never been more embarrassed.

He switched on the charm and smiled at them in turn. "Haven't I met you before?"

"Not that I know of. Maybe at my last fashion show." Vicky was cool as a cucumber.

"You may have read one of my articles in *The Courier*." Joanna was not to be left out. Neither of them was in the least bit overawed and Carenza envied them.

"It's very nice talking with you." He was incredibly suave. "But I must steal Matt. Business calls, I'm afraid. Goodnight, and see you tomorrow, Carenza."

"Well, bugger me!" Vicky stared at their retreating backs. "And I thought we'd scored with Tarzan. So that's your new boss?"

"That's him, as you well know." Carenza wanted to say more, but the words simply wouldn't come out.

David had looked even more splendid in casual jeans and a denim shirt. She had seen the way that every woman there was eyeing him. And he had come to meet that survival expert. She wondered why.

She needed a distraction and was glad when their table was surrounded by a group of personable men who knew Vicky and Joanna. She had seen several of them at the house, drinking coffee in the kitchen, sprawled in the most comfortable chairs or coming out of her friends' bedrooms. There were some new faces too. Fresh blood, and if she wanted them she must move fast, but this simply wasn't her style. She liked to be wholeheartedly involved.

David filled her mind, and he had gone off with Matt to talk men's talk or whatever they were doing. She was more irritated by the Australian than she liked to admit, for annoyance meant caring, taking notice of, attending to, and there was no way she ever meant to get involved with him on any of these counts.

"Would you like to dance?"

She was startled out of her reverie and looked 'round at the man who now touched her shoulder. Vicky nodded across the table, giving her the thumbs-up which meant that he was okay. He was one of her workforce, Clive Collingwood, a fresh-faced youth who liaised with the sales departments of big stores willing to take her collections. He wasn't Carenza's type, too much of a chinless wonder, public school-educated and backed by his father's title and money, but beggars can't be choosers.

"I'd love to," she lied as she went into his arms.

The floor was no bigger than a handkerchief and this necessitated a great deal of body contact. The music was raunchy, the DJ inventive, shiny black and wearing dreadlocks, a star in his own right. There was no room for anything but a kind of

sweaty shuffle, and Carenza was pressed close to Clive's body. She didn't enjoy the sensation, but that he did was evident by the long finger of cock pressed to his left thigh under his fashionable pants. He ground it against her at every opportunity and there were many. As they danced past the bar, she saw David there, chatting up a supermodel. He didn't see her, but she found herself staring into Matt's eyes. This made her furious. What right had he to be watching her? She deliberately responded when Clive held his cheek to hers. She turned her face and kissed him, chased by the alarming thought, *Why the hell did I do that?*

"You're quite a girl." Clive made himself heard above the beat and squeezed her closer. "Feel like a snog? Let's go outside."

Damn and blast! She regretted her impetuosity. He was an all-right guy but, as Scarlett O'Hara's black mammy said in *Gone With the Wind*, "He don't make me shiver none." Not like David or, in a different way, Matt.

Suddenly someone tapped Clive's shoulder and said, "My turn to dance with the lady, sport."

Matt was there, tall and hunky, and Clive didn't argue, passing Carenza over to the Australian. It made her feel like a parcel. Neither had bothered to ask her wishes in the matter. Then all sensible thought was banished as she felt Matt's arms around her. The crush allowed no other form of dancing, and was just an excuse for holding one's partner tightly.

"I suppose I have to thank you for rescuing me from that toad." She wasn't sure if he could hear her amidst the noise.

"I wasn't doing that. I just wanted to dance with you."

She was aware of his closeness, the pressure of those hard muscles, that protected feeling of being in the circle of his arms. She liked it and wanted to stay, but wondered if he was telling the truth. It was disappointing if he was, for she rather liked the idea of being rescued. It appealed to the romantic in her. This was foolish, and she knew it, telling herself off sternly. He was one of David's colleagues and no more interested in her than the Man in the Moon. In any case, she would have far rather it had been David seeking her out.

"What a crowd. It's like a rugby scrum," he said, his lips brushing her ear, his breath making chills course down her spine. "Why don't we get some air outside?"

This put her off immediately. He was no better than the rest of them, seeking sex like a rutting stag. "No, thank you."

She had to shout to be heard, and made no attempt to curb her annoyance.

He dropped his arms, setting her free. "Okay, okay. Don't lose your rag! Off you go then, back to your mates. Catch you later." And he left her standing.

She was relieved, but perplexed at the disappointment she felt. What had she expected him to do? Sweep her up in his arms, fling her over his shoulder and carry her off?

The evening didn't improve. Clive was still hovering around. Vicky and Joanna wanted to make a night of it, asking Carenza if it was all right and then inviting the men to the house. She couldn't refuse, for it was their home as well as hers, and they paid rent and split the bills. She was soon crammed in a cab with Clive on one side and an objectionable creep who kept pawing her on the other. They seemed to be under the very false impression that they were God's gift to women, who they referred to as "totty". She found this offensive and sat there like a stone.

On arrival, everyone tumbled out of the cabs and Vicky flung open the front door. "Come in, chaps."

They went into the communal living room. The stereo was switched on full blast. More drinks were poured. Clive was a nuisance, and very persistent. The others were rowdy and already tipsy.

"Upstairs!" Ringleader Vicky showed them the way.

Staggering and shouting, they were soon in her room. It was large and beautifully furnished. The music continued. Someone was in charge of the stereo. Bottles and glasses clinked. Vicky and Joanna threw themselves down on the luxurious quilt covering the six-foot-wide bed. It was tented in shimmering Oriental silk that hung from the beams above, and had the ambience of *The Arabian Nights*. Like concubines in that erotic tale, they coiled their limbs and displayed themselves, gazing at the men through hooded eyes. But, should one approach them, they squirmed away, pretending to be disinterested and this had the effect of making their rock-hard suitors even keener.

Giving no quarter to the randy Clive, Carenza perched on a chair, an untouched glass in one hand, wondering how she could leave without being downright rude. He bent over her and nuzzled her neck. "Can't we go to your room? I'm really hot for you."

Ah, had it only been David, but she was certain he wouldn't have been so crude. Even the Australian might have known that this wasn't the way to woo a girl. Clive's breath was laced with alcohol, and she thought of Matt's perfect teeth. There wouldn't be a hint of halitosis there, whereas Clive could do with a trip to the dentist.

"Not yet, maybe never." She pushed him away. Clive pulled a face, but reached for the wine bottle instead.

She hoped he'd get blind drunk, then he'd have brewers droop and wouldn't be able to get an erection.

The men were laughing, needing no second bidding to play out every fantasy they had ever had. One of them kicked off his loafers and socks and dropped his jeans and boxers. He stood there naked except for his unbuttoned shirt. The girls stared, at least Vicky and Joanna did. Carenza's experience of the male member was limited, but even she could see that his was huge. He continued to fondle it, standing there proudly, while the other men got to work on theirs, attempting to match this massive tool.

Vicky beckoned him closer, reached for a rubber from the bowl of condoms on the nightstand, and worked it over his cock. He grinned happily, pushing it into her hand. She pulled up her skirt and opened her legs. Joanna was propped up on one elbow,

admiring his manhood. The other men clustered around, highly excited and raring to go.

Now his dick stood out like a spear, ready to plunge into Vicky's depths. She was willing him to do it, hips raised to meet the invader. He knelt over her, brushed his helm against her cleft and gave an almighty push. His mates cheered, and rubbed themselves frantically. Vicky gasped and heaved, taking his length into the very heart of her.

Carenza's neck and face were burning. She couldn't believe what she was witnessing. Clive came over to her, exposing his penis, grinning as if expecting her to praise him. She leapt up. "Put it away! I'm not interested!"

"Oh, darling, it's only a bit of fun." Joanna was already pulling her dress off, nipples hard, her mound a triangle of reddish floss. "You've no need to join in if you don't want to. We thought it would take your mind off that awful ex of yours."

"I want love, a sincere relationship, not a quick, drunken shag." Carenza was close to lashing out at someone – anyone.

"Oh, listen to Miss Prim," mocked one of the beefier of the men.

"Just you shut up! Don't dare talk about my friend like that." Joanna was on the warpath, giving him a smack. He seemed to enjoy it, begging for more.

Carenza was certain that her friends would see that she didn't come to harm, but she felt isolated, the only one not possessed by sheer animal lust. The air was thick with it.

No one noticed when she slipped out, finding refuge in her own room and locking the door firmly behind her. She stripped and used the en-suite shower, trying to wash away the memory of what was happening in Vicky's bed. It was essential that she sleep in preparation for her interview with Laurette Upton. Wrapped in a fluffy white towel, she looked with distaste at the purple dress she had put on with such high hopes. She stuffed it into the laundry basket, certain that David hadn't even registered that she was wearing it. She'd have to do better tomorrow.

David! Ah, David! Would he prove to be the man of her dreams, the hero who would sweep her up and carry her off on his white charger? After tonight's session with Vicky's studs she rather doubted that there was really a knight in shining armor waiting to love her. And she crawled under the duvet and pummeled her pillow into a more comfortable shape, but her sleep was fitful and her dreams disturbing. Visions of Matt kept impinging on her mind and she couldn't understand why? He was arrogant, rude and too forthright to appeal to her, wasn't he? But she couldn't free herself from the memory of being held in his arms.

### Chapter Three

When Carenza walked into his office next day, David introduced her to his key presenter. "This is Laurette. Welcome to our team. I promise you that we're all one big happy family here." Laurette didn't get up. She was elegantly clad in a cream silk suit. Carenza felt immediately intimidated. She was sure that what she had selected to wear was all wrong.

"That's good." She was trying to seem confident, but not quite succeeding.

"Carenza. How unusual," Laurette commented.

"An eccentricity on my mother's behalf. I wish she had called me Mary or something simple like that." She tried to make a joke of it. This wasn't the first time her name had been commented on.

"Surely not? One doesn't want to be lumbered with the commonplace. I don't," Laurette replied firmly.

She was cool and lovely and Carenza felt dwarfed. How could anyone be of significance compared to this woman? And how could a person like herself ever hope to catch David's eye when he had access to a goddess?

Her Titian hair was striking, but she didn't seem to be cursed with the freckles that so often plagued those of that coloring. Her skin glowed and cosmetics had been used to highlight her flawless complexion. Carenza wanted to sink into the floor. Then she remembered Vicky's stern instructions about keeping her cool and not taking shit from anyone.

*Right on!* Carenza mentally agreed, and squared her shoulders. David was looking at her in an encouraging way and he dropped an eyelid in a wink. *Up yours, Laurette!* she thought defiantly.

She sat down opposite her, while David occupied his luxurious leather chair. He pushed a couple of sheets of paper across the desk toward her.

"Your contract. Look it over at your leisure, then sign it, if you agree to the terms and let me have it back or hand it to my secretary."

"Thank you, Mr. Farlan."

"Call me David. We use Christian names here."

"Thank you again." She felt tongue-tied and hated it. Just when she wanted to be witty and impress him with her banter.

"Did you enjoy yourself at the club?" A smile quirked his lips.

"I did. We partied after at my place." This sounded suitably sophisticated, and she cut to Laurette, but she looked bored.

"And where might that be?" He appeared to be genuinely interested.

"Kensington, a detached house inherited from an aunt."

"It must be worth a fortune."

"I know. It's my mother's, not mine yet, but it will be one day." Carenza had not realized until then just how impressive the mere mention of such a property would be. She felt a rise in status, almost on their level. It was a pity that people were so mercenary, but it was a fact of life.

"What d'you want me to do with her, David?" Laurette deliberately crossed and uncrossed her slim legs under her short skirt in an action reminiscent of a scene in *Basic Instinct*. Like the actress who caused such an uproar at the time, she wore no panties. Just for a flash, her mound was visible, naked of hair and with the glint of gold.

She was pierced there! Carenza was surprised and intrigued. David ignored this wanton gesture, getting down to business. "You're going to look over that house, aren't you, Laurette? The one the newlyweds have written in about, asking you to redesign. Take her with you. Carenza, I'll supply a laptop. Get going, team. I've work to do. Check in when you get back."

He had assumed the guise of a military leader and even Laurette obeyed, though taking her time, giving Carenza a sidelong glance, then drifting toward the door.

Although the morning was grueling, with Laurette throwing her weight about and bullying the star-struck couple, Carenza made notes on the laptop, punching in the hundred and one details that were fired at her.

Eddie Bartlett, the director, was loose-limbed, amiable and laconic, attractive in his own way. He mostly ignored the dictatorial presenter. This was simply a first run-through, with no camera crew in evidence. Carenza dreaded to think what it would be like when they were actually filming.

"Lunch, I think." Laurette smiled graciously at Gary and Rosie Denton, owners of this rather rundown semidetached home in the suburbs. "Would you like to come with us?"

They were over the moon. Lunch with someone as well known as her! It would give them a talking point for years, never mind actually appearing on television! They were sweet and naïve and very much in love. Carenza prayed that this exposure to fame didn't spoil their relationship. As it was, Gary couldn't keep his eyes off Laurette and she was playing up to him.

The firm's limo swept them off to an eatery frequented by reporters and media people and Laurette let it be known that she was working on another *Playhouse* setup that would be shown next spring on TV. Gary and Rosie sat quiet as church mice and Carenza tried to converse with them. Laurette went into a huddle with the director and the butch editor of *Hi Life* glossy magazine. There was no attempt made to draw either her or the couple into the limelight.



The afternoon was occupied with work and more work as the house was measured, its furnishings discussed, the Dentons' taste in décor hammered into the ground and their small, though pleasant, garden redesigned to incorporate decking and water features. The couple spent their time flapping around making cups of tea or coffee, while Laurette and Eddie made countless sketches, took photos, were completely enmeshed in their own concepts of how Gary and Rosie's love-nest should be.

"One of the upstairs rooms will be the nursery," Rosie put in timidly at one point. "I'm having a baby soon."

"I see. And I thought you were just a little on the plump side. Never mind, dear, it will grow up and be off your hands one day," Laurette answered pithily.

"But we've planned it." Rosie looked distressed. "We want children. Don't we, Gary?"

"You bet. And this is going to be a wonderful place to bring them up by the time you've finished with it, Laurette."

"Indeed." Laurette sounded bored and Carenza was beginning to wonder at the woman's popularity.

Off-screen, she was downright rude. This was only one of a series and they all focused on her and her skills. The viewing public loved these programs with their intimate, fly-on-the-wall intrusion into other people's lives. It was all the rage on TV now. Big Brother is watching you. It made Carenza uncomfortable, hoping that soon she would be able to work on something more worthwhile.

At last, Laurette glanced at her wristwatch. "Time to knock off. We'll be back tomorrow with a garden expert and some of the others. Will that be okay?"

"Yes, that will be fine," the Dentons chorused, flushed and excited and clasping hands. They'd be on the phone to their mums and dads as soon as the TV people had departed.

"We're taking our vacation this week." Gary had an arm around his wife. "So you can come when you like."

Eddie went off in his shabby old car. As he said, it was no use driving anything decent in London, you'd only get it stolen or the tires slashed or the door busted in. Better far to have something that looked scruffy and of no apparent value. The chauffeur-driven limo was waiting to whisk Laurette and Carenza back to the office.

"Jesus God, these plebs are so tedious!" Laurette stormed in to find David. "I must be a saint to put up with such crap. Little people in their dreary little homes."

David cast a cynical look in her direction. "They pay your salary, darling. What did you think of it, Carenza?" He smiled at her in so friendly a way that her heart skipped a beat and then went thundering on.

"Very interesting. I like the Dentons. They seem sincere."

"If they had a brain cell between them, they might be dangerous," Laurette commented nastily and helped herself to a gin and tonic, with lots of ice and a slice of lemon.

"Don't worry. It will be a huge success. You're always pessimistic at the start of a production. See this one through and I promise the next one will be right up your street."

His eyes twinkled as he spoke and Carenza was enchanted. It didn't matter that Laurette was in a snappy mood and had been unpleasant to her most of the day. She had notes on the laptop and was confident that she had made a good job of it. Later, she hoped to be able to show David. If only Laurette wasn't around. There was no chance of getting to know him better with her sticking her oar in all the time.

"Oh?" Laurette sidled close to him and wound her arms 'round his neck, sinuous as a snake. "And what might that be, sweetie?" He didn't attempt to free himself. Carenza couldn't look at them, burning with envy and wishing that Laurette would get on her broomstick and fly away so that she might have him to herself.

"A plan of my own." He smiled mysteriously. "An idea I've been brooding on for some time."

"Don't tease, David," she pouted.

"Impatient!" He scolded her lightly. "By the way, how did you get on with Marty Ryder? Does he like women?"

Carenza's ears pricked up. Marty Ryder was *the* new rock singer and everyone was talking about him. He appeared on chat shows and late-night music spots. Had Laurette really been out with him? But she must be at least ten years older than Boy Wonder.

"He does indeed. Well, darling, he liked me. Couldn't get enough, fucking me legless." Laurette's voice was languid.

"So he's not gay?"

"He's bisexual, into the best of all possible worlds."

At that moment David's secretary, a middle-aged lady who looked as if she considered herself indispensable, poked her head 'round the door. "Matthew Clayburn is here to see you, sir."

"There's a pleasant surprise," Laurette purred, and his secretary glared at her. No love lost there, Carenza concluded.

"Thank you, Ruth. Send him in." David disentangled himself from Laurette's octopus grasp.

Carenza began to panic. What was that character doing here? Was it the result of last night's conversation with David? Or could it have to do with her?

Matt came in almost at once, filling the room with his size and presence, and it wasn't a small room by any means. It was as if he strode into the city from miles away on some high, mountainous plateau. His casual apparel emphasized this. He wore leather pants that clung to his thighs, the fly area concealing a substantial package. His

torso was covered by a white T-shirt and he was wearing motorcycle boots and a studded jacket. He was impressive and she couldn't deny it.

"I left the Harley in your parking bay." He held a crash helmet under one arm. "Hope your goons keep an eye on it. Wouldn't like to find out it has been stolen."

David assured him it would be safe. "My boys are paid to see that nothing gets pinched. It's more than their jobs are worth. If any thieving bastards touched my car, I'd be wearing their guts for garters."

"Or their balls for earrings." Laurette smirked at Matt.

"The security guards or the thieves?" He grinned back.

"Both," David and Laurette chorused.

Matt perched on the corner of the desk, one leg braced to support his weight, the other swinging idly. Carenza couldn't stop looking at him. This was one hell of a man. Trouble was, she suspected that he knew it and this was off-putting. It was bad enough having David overshadowing everyone, without the supremely confident Matt.

"So, have you thought any more about our discussion?" David rang for the secretary and when she appeared like magic, as if hovering just outside the door, he said, "Coffee, Ruth."

"Yes, sir." She almost bobbed a curtsey.

"Yep, I sure have thought about it." Matt answered his question.

"And?"

"Don't see any problem. It should be a walk-over if everyone does as they are told. You can't play around with nature or you'll be in trouble."

"What is all this?" Laurette wanted to know.

"My plan for a super TV show, one that will get the punters steamed up and send the ratings soaring. You know my place in Wales?"

"Tretowyn Manor? Sure, I know it. Terribly remote, but okay if you like the big outdoors, fishing and riding and climbing. Not for me, old chum. It's just too much. The only good part of it is the dungeon. Cool." In a few well-chosen words, Laurette dismissed it as of no interest.

"That's a bit sweeping." David's dark brows curved in a frown. "No way to talk about my country seat."

"Country bollocks! Anyone would think you were born to it, instead of buying it from some poverty-stricken lord down on his luck. Bet you didn't pay full whack either, driving a hard bargain and showing no mercy."

David leaned across and tipped up her chin so that she could not avoid his hard gaze. His fingers tightened as he said in a tone that held underlying menace, "Despite what you think, you don't know everything, my sweet. Keep it buttoned until you're in full possession of the facts."

"What's all this to do with the show?"

"You'll see, my dear."

Matt seemed impatient to be off, but David delayed him. "As I mentioned last night, I shall use Tretowyn as a base, shoot some footage there, then concentrate on the wilds." He spread out a map. "Here we go. The manor and surrounding district, the river, the forests, the mountains. A splendid location for my purpose. I've told the backers about it, and they agree."

"And who are they, may I ask? I wish you'd explain yourself, David," Laurette demanded.

"Cougar Ranger Four-Wheel Drive. They think it will boost sales. You know, on- and off-road vehicles, up to all winds and weather. Reliable, sporty, made for the macho man."

"I can see that it might work, whatever it is. You still haven't told me, what's the score?" Her interest was sharpening.

"A program about bonding and surviving in the open. You'll be the chief attraction, Laurette, and we'll choose several stars and some of our staff to sleep under canvas, bathe in icy streams, shower naked beneath waterfalls. Learn how to live on whatever grows there or can be hunted, maybe appear to fall in love a little. This will excite the audience and keep them watching. Matt will be leader and in charge of the whole operation."

She registered horror. "You expect me to act like some bloody Girl Guide, living rough, eating crap, sleeping in a tent? Think again, baby. This is Laurette Upton you're talking to, not some goddamn rookie presenter."

"I know, darling. That's why it will be such a success. Think of the publicity."

Laurette was obviously thinking about it, especially when he added cunningly, "The audience ratings for *Playhouse* are dropping. BBC2 are running something similar with that good-looking guy, what's his name? Jason Fuller. You know the one. Dresses like a dandy. All the women are in lust for him."

"I know."

David spread his hands wide in an expressive gesture. "There you go, and I bet you wouldn't get him on a survival week. He might break a fingernail." He swung to Carenza, adding, "I want you to be there as Laurette's aide. Are you okay with this?"

"I guess so." She felt that she was being thrown in at the deep end. "I'd like to come. Thank you."

"It won't be all that bad." Matt was looking at Carenza, not David or Laurette. "Wales is a grand place at this time of the year. Cold on the mountains at night, but there are sheltered valleys and wooded areas. Plenty of wildlife to see and we'll be using modern equipment."

Carenza admitted that the idea appealed to her. Because her parents had split when she was young and she had no brothers, she had missed out on fishing trips or

camping. She may not like Matt much, but had to admit that it sounded as if they would be in safe hands. Her hopes soared as she realized that David wanted her along.

"And when are you proposing to embark on this lunacy?" Laurette inquired frostily.

"I'm scheduling it for early September." David checked his file. "Short notice, I know, but you'll be clear then, and so will Matt. I haven't contacted any other celebrities yet. Must do this soon before they go off holidaying abroad."

"Seems I have no choice." Then Laurette's eyes narrowed as she focused on Matt. "You'll be there, looking after me?"

"I'll be keeping tabs on all of you." He was noncommittal. "Don't worry. You may even get to enjoy it." He turned to David. "I've got to be heading out, mate. Catch you later and we'll get down to details. It should be a gas."

"Can I see your hog?" Laurette went over to him.

"You're interested?" He seemed surprised, and Carenza was too. Why was a woman who didn't like camping wanting to examine a motorcycle?

"Believe it or not, one of my lovers was a Hell's Angel, name of Spike, leader of the Westville chapter back home. I was his old lady. Ah, the folly of youth." Laurette smiled mysteriously and Carenza wondered if there was anything on earth that she hadn't done. Either that or she was the world's biggest liar!

"Is that so?" Matt sounded dubious, but said goodbye to David and Carenza and took Laurette down to the parking lot.

"Another conquest?" David gave a wry smile.

"For her or him?" Carenza couldn't help but reply, experiencing a twinge of envy.

"He's a canny operator. She won't get far with him, and she's the one likely to be hurt."

"He's tough on women?"

"Doesn't have much to do with them. Tells me he has to be free. That's what his work demands. If he had a steady girlfriend or a wife he wouldn't be able to roam far and wide. He's a nice guy. Get to know him."

David stood up and came toward her, so close that she could smell the fragrance of his aftershave and was oh-so aware of his rangy body under the Italian tailored summer suit.

"The Wales trip sounds fun," she faltered, unaware that she had retreated back until her shoulders touched the wall.

"It will be. Tretowyn Manor is very old, fifteenth century, and there are remains of the original fort in the grounds, dating from the border wars." He placed both arms either side of her, caging her in, and he was smiling down into her eyes.

"Oh, yes." She didn't know what else to say, too overwhelmed by being alone with him, prey to a flurry of emotions, the chief of which was apprehension.

For a split second, she thought he was going to kiss her, longing for him to do so, yet fearful too. What would happen if he did? Would it be casual or suggestive of a meaningful relationship? She didn't know what to expect of him.

He didn't kiss her. He stood aside so that she could move. "Show me your progress. I want to see what you did this afternoon."

She took a chair and placed the laptop on her knees, opening it, booting it up and getting into the program. Ruth tapped on the door. "I'm leaving now, sir."

"All right. I'll shut shop and lock up." He leaned across Carenza's shoulder.

After Ruth had gone, she punched in data, explaining this and that, taking him on a guided tour of the Dentons' house and garden and surrounding location. She could feel David behind her, smell him, almost taste him and it was difficult to concentrate. Eventually he moved.

"You've done well. That's enough for now. How about a spot of dinner?"

"That would be lovely." She exited the program.

*Careful*, warned an inner voice and it sounded like Vicky.

"I know an Italian restaurant where they serve pasta to die for. You could almost believe you were in Tuscany." As he spoke, he was tidying the desk, checking security then reaching for his jacket.

Being with him in the close proximity of the elevator was an unforgettable experience. He was so relaxed and she was tense, trying to think of something conversational that wouldn't compromise her. His eyes were twinkling and he held her arm at one point when the lift stopped, picking up others on their way home. She was glad they were there, afraid of what she might do if alone with him much longer.

His car was in the basement. The guard in the cubbyhole came out to check his pass. "Goodnight, sir," he said, touching his cap as they got in and David took the wheel. Carenza was glad that she had left her car at home, taking the subway to work.

The sky was darkening, birds circling to find roosts on the ledges of tall buildings or the occasional tree. The river reflected myriad lights, and the traffic was never-ending. People were leaving their working environment or coming into the center for entertainment. London throbbed twenty-four hours a day, a seething metropolis that never slept. It reminded Carenza of an ancient dragon on constant guard over its golden horde.

Eventually they arrived in a car park. The restaurant was brightly lit and had a Mediterranean ambience. The headwaiter welcomed them. He knew David and they conversed in Italian. All smiles and Latin charm, he ushered them to a table. It was secluded and covered in a red-and-white-checked cloth. David ordered wine and consulted the menu. Carenza just sat there and let him take charge. The bottle was carried in and a measure poured. David sniffed its bouquet, then sipped and pronounced it excellent. His glass was filled, followed by hers.

"Here's to a long and profitable association." As he toasted her, she felt herself sliding deeper and deeper into the amazing power and persuasion of his eyes.

He selected the food and she was impressed by his knowledge of the language. "You've lived abroad?" she ventured to ask.

"Spent some time there, yes. Italy is my favorite. I love their manners and way of life, and am a bit of an opera buff. Do you like opera, Carenza?"

"I'm rather an ignoramus," she confessed. "I've never listened to much, but 'One Fine Day' makes me cry."

"From Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. Excellent." He laid one of his hands on her bare knee under the table. "I'll take you to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. I have a box there. Will you come?"

"I'll give it a go." Her skin responded outrageously to his touch. Her pulse was rapid, and she had the urge to lift her pelvis a little so that his long fingers reached deeper. He took his hand away and the disappointment was acute.

The meal arrived and it was faultless. He was right about the pasta. And, though she was subdued, he kept up light, inconsequential conversation. She wanted to ask him why they were there. Did he have a hidden agenda? He soon had the relevant facts about her life and history, yet afterward she wasn't sure how he had got the information out of her. She hadn't intended to give so much away. Later, over brandy and coffee, he leaned back in his chair and subjected her to a probing look.

"So you don't have a boyfriend?"

"No. I told you, I finished with Kelyn, and there hasn't been anyone since."

"But you're lonely? You'd like there to be?"

"Perhaps, though I didn't find the relationship all that satisfactory. I was doing all the giving, it seemed."

"Crossed in love, eh?" He smiled at her winningly and she couldn't help answering his questions. It was as if he was a priest in the confessional box. "I hope I'm not upsetting you."

"Oh, no. It's good to talk." She was flattered that he would find her personal life in any way interesting.

"So, you are inexperienced...have never experimented?"

"In what way?"

He smiled again and took her hand in his, smoothing her fingers lightly. "Well, for example, have you ever been spanked?"

"Are you joking? I was an obedient child of enlightened parents."

"I expect you were, though that isn't exactly what I meant."

This was an odd conversation to be having with one's boss, and it made Carenza scared and embarrassed, even though she wanted to reach out and rest a hand on his thigh under those stylish cream trousers. She took up her glass to give her fingers

something to do. "I think that whatever a man and woman do together is fine, just as long as they are in love."

"A romantic. Very commendable, but maybe you are missing out on some of the fun, for love should be enjoyable on all counts. There's much on offer."

She longed to change the subject, disconcerted by these remarks delivered in such a lighthearted way, but fascinated too. He was older, wiser and could teach her a lot and not only about business. Did she want to learn? She rather thought she did. And that he probably had this figured out.

"I'd better go home soon." She hid behind this excuse.

"Really? Just when we were getting to know one another." He took her hand in his. It was a warm hand and generated peace. She felt safe, yet wanted to get closer, to be absorbed into the silk and cotton fabric of his suit, to reach his body that would be honed and tanned and every maiden's dream of a perfect hero.

He gave her fingers a squeeze and released them. "Okay, princess. Home it is, though I'd rather hoped you'd come to my place for another coffee."

Carenza was in turmoil. She just couldn't make up her mind what to do. Part of her wanted desperately to go with him and let nature take its course. There was no doubt at all as to what would happen. Vivid pictures of them in bed flashed across her brain, with him teaching her and even spanking her and bringing her to mind-blowing orgasms. But the other half of her was scared stiff.

*Go on, you coward!* urged her wanton, curious self.

*Stop right there, lady!* lectured the other, straightlaced part.

*Leave it for tonight,* said a new, sensible, more calculating persona. *If he's keen and an honorable man, then he'll respect you for not fucking him on the first date.*

Despite the desire that was making her tingle, she gave him her address. In the passenger seat, she stayed quiet as the lights flashed past and she watched his capable hands on the steering wheel and wished they were on her body instead. They reached the wide streets of Kensington and he drew up outside her house.

"This is it. Thank you for dinner, David." She prepared to get out.

"Just a moment." He slid an arm 'round her shoulders and drew her toward him. She was overwhelmed by the scent of him, and felt puny and very feminine in the clasp of such a man.

She knew he was going to kiss her and closed her eyes, feeling his lips moving slowly and sensually across hers, first the corners, then the middle. She opened for him and his tongue explored hers, very gently. And Carenza was lost, lost, lost. If he asked, she knew she wouldn't be able to deny him anything.



## Chapter Four

Sometimes David's self-control amazed even himself. Though he was playing with Carenza's emotions and physical need, he had greater things in store, so he finished kissing her, got out of the car, went around to the passenger side and opened the door. He could see that she was surprised and even disappointed as he helped her alight.

"Goodnight." He bowed gallantly from the waist. "We must repeat this. I'll take you to the theater soon."

"That would be lovely." Her voice was low and he was aware that she was mystified and intrigued. He smiled inwardly, saw her to the door and then drove off.

A law unto himself and his own man, he cruised through the West End of London where the shops were emporiums for the wealthy, Harrods, Selfridges, Fortnum & Mason. Theatreland was part of it, centered in Leicester Square, and there were exclusive clubs for those who knew their whereabouts. David was very much in the know.

The Barley Corn Club was not all it appeared. Its discreet frontage was a blind. David used a side door, showed his membership card to a hulking, shaven-headed man in an evening suit and was permitted to go inside. Stone steps wound down into dimness, the reddish glow exciting the senses, accentuated by the throb of dance music. David descended, partly bored by the repetition—there were only so many ways in which sex could be presented—but partly aware of that stirring in his loins heralding the need for release. Carenza's innocence had excited him. He showed his card again when he reached the basement, and made his way to the bar. The place was crowded and some of the male clients were in fancy dress—mostly as schoolboys. It was obviously a theme night.

David recognized Laurette, attired as a stern schoolteacher, in a short black skirt with a tantalizing show of long legs in black stockings, a white blouse and a tie and with a cane clasped in a gloved hand. Her hair was drawn back severely. She strutted and posed with legs astride, high heels adding to their length. David sat on a barstool, waiting to be served, observing her with amusement. Not that this was his bag. Acting the naughty boy yearning to have his backside thrashed didn't turn him on, but she had plenty of takers. Men circled her and he saw that there were several government ministers among them, all agog.

Laurette treated them with the contempt for which they hungered, ready and eager to hand over their power to her for an hour, forgetting their responsible posts, their wives, children and positions of national importance. David admired the way in which she lashed them with her tongue.

"Well, and who has been a bad boy, then? You, Winthrop Minor? Been shagging your secretary, have you? Playing away from home?"

"Yes, mistress, I have. I'm sorry," answered the unfortunate or fortunate, depending on what he wanted.

"Right. Drop your trousers, you miserable little worm. I'm going to use my cane on your bare bum." Her voice was as icy as the winds blowing over the tundra. "You know what they say about sparing the rod and spoiling the child? I think you've been very spoiled, Winthrop."

A thrilled murmur arose from her audience. Even some of the women wearing fantastic outfits that left little to the imagination glanced across at the scene, pausing in their seduction of the lusting males who had relinquished control for the night.

Winthrop couldn't get his pants off quickly enough. "Y...yes, goddess. Anything you say. I deserve to be punished. I'm sinful. Wicked."

"Ass in the air. Get those shirttails out of the way. Clasp your hands around your ankles, and don't you dare move!" Laurette's cane whistled as it sliced through the air.

"Ooh! Ah! Ow!" He wriggled under the pain, but didn't attempt to rise from his ignominious position.

Laurette showed no pity, standing over him like an avenging angel and bringing down the cane with full force, until his fleshy butt was marked with scarlet stripes.

"Beloved mistress, I'll give you anything you want," he gasped, straightening up and leaning against a chair, panting and quivering.

And she'd drive a hard bargain, David reflected, succeeding in getting a double whiskey. Not exactly a prostitute, though those hard-working girls were much more honest. She used her skills to further her career and was exceedingly ambitious. Apart from that, he knew that she enjoyed herself, as much the dominatrix as the submissive, liking to reverse roles.

She looked across at him after finishing her haggle with Winthrop, who was obviously begging for more. David saluted. She smiled and elbowed her way over. He appreciated her beauty, that face with high cheekbones accentuated with blusher, those catlike eyes ringed with kohl, the cloud of hair that she now released from the snood.

"Surprise, surprise." She nudged her breasts against his arm as she stood close. "I thought you'd be busy screwing little Miss Proper. What happened? She didn't say no, did she?"

"What do you think?" He breathed against her lobe, setting the pendant earring swinging.

"What now?" Her voice was sharp, but he could tell that she was surprised at his interest in the girl.

"I'll see you in the office tomorrow." He started to walk away.

"And Carenza?"

"I shall cool it with her. Leave her wondering, until we go on the shoot in Wales."

\* \* \* \* \*

At first, Carenza spent time worrying that she had offended David. She had hoped for something more than a simple boss and employee relationship after the night he had taken her to the Italian bistro and then kissed her. To her plunging disappointment, she found that ever since then he had made no further attempt to date her and hadn't fulfilled his promise to escort her to the opera. In fact, she was practically ignored, any contact between them strictly business.

"Well, damn him!" She angrily discussed the situation with Vicky and Joanna.

"That's the spirit. There will be loads of fit guys on the trip to Wales." Then Vicky added, "By the way, how's the hunt for willing celebs going? D'you think he'd consider including us? We're kind of famous in our own fields."

"I don't know. It would be great if you could come. I could ask him, but don't think I have much influence."

"Don't worry. I'll do it. I fancy appearing on TV, not the first time, of course. I've presented my designs on the catwalk."

Carenza was thrilled at the idea that they might be able to go with her. They were both so positive, and she was rather dreading the ordeal that was coming ever closer. Working with Laurette was bad enough, particularly now that David was keeping his distance. Perhaps this could be fun, after all, if her close mates were there too.

London was hot, bordering on tropical, and September brought little relief. People went on about an Indian summer, but there seemed little advantage in this, for it was getting dark earlier. Carenza was kept fully occupied by Laurette, as the series was practically completed and there were plans for another after the excursion to the country. In vain, Vicky and Joanna attempted to interest her in other men. There was a constant stream of eligible males in and out of the house, but she wasn't interested. Disappointed in her expectations regarding David, though accepting that much of it had been in her imagination, she had withdrawn into her shell.

She spent any free time in the garden, flowers and plants bringing her consolation. The warmth made her purr like a cat on a sun-drenched wall as she stripped off and enjoyed it, dunking herself in the free-standing plastic pool and then relaxing. Of course, she vied with her housemates for the best spots, and they had barbecues on the patio and life drifted by in spite of working in scorching London during the day.

One evening, languid with lazing in the sun, she decided to take a walk. The park wasn't far away, one of those exclusive green squares to which those who lived in the houses around were entitled to a key. A gardener was contracted to keep it tidy. She let herself in and sat on a bench beneath a tree. This always moved her for there was a plaque on it, dedicating it to the memory of someone called "Julia, beloved wife of Frank". It appeared that they had once resided there and enjoyed this corner of the countryside in the middle of the bustling city.

The sunset was glorious and she should have been supremely content, but the loneliness that ever been her bane wouldn't go away. Despite the companionship of

Vicky and Joanna, they had their own agendas and these didn't always include her. She had brought a book with her, a classic tale of a spirited heroine and her discovery of true love, but she couldn't concentrate on it. There were people passing on their way home, taxis and cars pulling up, and then she heard an unusual sound for that select area. It was the roar of a powerful motorcycle.

She saw it, a great black and red monster and Matt was astride it. He pulled up at the gate, kicked down the stand and locked and parked the bike. He took off his helmet, his long hair darkened by sweat. Looking across, he spotted her at once.

"Hi, there!" He let himself in, for she hadn't locked the wrought iron gate behind her.

"This is private property." She couldn't think of anything else to say.

"No matter. I can be your guest."

Such impudence took her by surprise. He strolled down the graveled path between flowerbeds and sat beside her. The bench seemed to shrink. He was much too close for comfort.

"Is this a chance meeting?" She couldn't believe that it was. London was just too big for such a coincidence.

He shook his head, eyes glinting. "No, ma'am. It wasn't hard to find out where you live."

"And why did you want to know? Is it to do with the show?"

He stretched his long, leather-clad limbs before him, and one arm rested on the back of the bench, touching her shoulders. Carenza wanted to vanish, wishing she had the powers of the Cheshire Cat from *Alice in Wonderland*, but there was no escaping him. He was just too big and, she had to confess it, too handsome.

"Fuck all to do with that. I would like it if we could be friends. I could fill you in about some of the difficulties you're going to face."

"How chivalrous. You mean to say there's nothing in it for you?" She was aware of a newfound cynicism that had blossomed of late.

He turned his head and looked at her with a smile that would have melted granite. "I can't deny that I want to get into your panties, but would be happy if you'd come for a drink with me."

"You've got nerve."

"So I'm told, but if I didn't have, I wouldn't be where I am now. You try facing a big old grizzly bear way out in the woods on your own."

"I suppose you use these tales to impress the women." She was wishing desperately that he was sincere, but then she had always found scallywags attractive.

"I'm no ladies' man." He continued to look at her in that disconcerting way. "What about that drink? Yes or no?"

There was absolutely nothing else to do, and she faced an evening alone watching television. "All right. You can park your cycle in my garden."

She walked with him, while he pushed the Harley and, when she opened the rear gate, wheeled it inside. "Where are we going?" She wished she had worn something other than a cotton sundress that had seen several summers.

"There's a Spanish bar not far away. They have great entertainers. Do you enjoy flamenco?"

"I do, as it happens." She watched as he stuffed his helmet and fringed leather jacket into the panniers. "How come you know your way around this area?"

"This isn't my first trip here." He held open the gate so that she exited before him.

"No?"

He went on to tell her about his earlier exploits in television and the movie industry in England, but she wasn't really listening, obsessed by the sight of him, the warmth of his hand on her arm, his height that made her feel all girlish and petite. She remained wary though, not losing hold on common sense entirely, but close to doing so.

She had been to the bar before, liking the atmosphere. It was decorated in Spanish style and served great paella. Sometimes the music was recorded, but that evening there was a troupe of dancers, a guitarist and a singer. The girls wore the flounced dresses of Andalucia, and the males were swarthy and smoldered well, sleek as panthers in high-waisted black trousers, white shirts and fitted waistcoats.

The music warmed her blood and she recalled holidays in Seville, a villa, a pool and sunbathing. The markets, the music, the corridas and fiestas.

"Spain's a great place. Maybe we could go there together." Matt was relaxed, having ordered beer for himself and wine for her. Then his expression altered and he added, "Unless you've already been invited by David."

"Why should he do that? He's my boss. Nothing else."

His attention seemed to be captured by a stunning seductress who was stamping out a gypsy rhythm. She had a proud stance, and graceful arm movements, her tits raised to Jesus, her feet planted on Mother Earth, as every good flamenco dancer's should be.

Then his fierce eyes switched to Carenza and he said, "You fancy him, don't you? And he damn well fancies you."

"And what's it got to do with you?" This attack had almost taken her breath away. She regretted coming with him, feeling that she should have trusted her first impression of him as an unmannerly pig.

"Cool it. You don't know him like I do. He's a predator where women are concerned." His big hands clenched into fists on the table.

To her horror, Carenza wanted to touch them. "I don't know that." This wasn't exactly true, for Vicky and Joanna had warned her. She didn't want to believe any of them.

He shrugged, face moody. "Suit yourself, but don't say I didn't tell you. He's a schmuck."

They sat in silence for a while longer and she tried to concentrate on the dancers, then he said, "D'you want another drink?"

"No. I'm going home."

They walked in silence and when they reached her garden, he took his helmet and was about to put it on, when he suddenly turned to her and said, "This wasn't a good idea."

"No, it wasn't."

"It's just that I don't like to see someone like you taken advantage of. I've heard things. People talk. And Laurette is a vicious bitch."

"I can look after myself. Mind your own business."

The walled garden was moonlit and she ached for David to be there, not this barbarian, who threw down his helmet and dragged her up against him, hard. "You're a stubborn sheila, aren't you?"

"Let me go!"

For answer, he almost lifted her off her feet as his mouth came down on hers, forcing her lips apart and savaging her with his tongue. She was unable to stop him as he untied the halter neck and pushed her dress down to her waist, exposing her breasts. She gasped as those large hands cupped each globe, while his fingers pinched her nipples. His mouth stifled any protests and she was unable to give them anyway, every feeling numb, save that of passion. Matt was like a tropical storm, sweeping all before him. Her efforts were puny compared to the strength of his will and desire.

His knee was between hers, and her skirt wrinkled up, baring her thighs and belly. His hands were everywhere, their rough caresses arousing her, despite herself. His leather trousers were tight, but his penis swelled. She could feel it pressing against her, and her hands seemed to have a mind of their own, reaching for his crotch, her fingers running up and down the impressive length.

He thrust her from him momentarily, his action coming as a shock as he pushed her facedown across the seat of the Harley. He whipped up her skirt and she felt the air on her cleft, her sex protected by no more than the skimpiest of thongs. He was behind her as if about to mount her like an animal, but first he let his fingers run around the edge of the material, lifting it away and finding her pussy.

"You're wet. Quit pretending that you don't want this." And he smoothed her love juice over her clit and began to stroke it.

It was a marvelous feeling. He knew exactly what to do, his touch sometimes soft, sometimes hard, subjecting her little organ to a rough frig, then leaving it and concentrating on her labia. She moaned and managed to forget who was giving her such extreme pleasure, pretending that it was David. Eyes tight shut, she could blot out the garden and imagine that it was her boss who held her. She relaxed, gave herself up to her dream lover, pictured his face, could almost smell him as her climax approached.

Then, with a cruel abruptness, Matt flung her from him. "You bloody little cheat! I know your game and believe me, *Miss Hewitt*, you can't use me as your pawn. No woman thinks about another man while I'm with her. And that's what you're doing, isn't it? Pretending that I'm David Farlan. To hell with it! I'd rather jerk off."

He opened the gate, clapped on his helmet and fired up the Harley. With a roar that mirrored his rage, the machine leapt into the road and away.

"Damn you!" Carenza screamed, rushing out and seeing the rear light disappearing around a corner. "Damn you to hell! I hope you end up under a bus!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Vicky rang David's office and asked if he could see her and Joanna with view to a discussion about his proposed TV program. Carenza had told her that he already had several stars booked but this didn't deter her.

"What did he say?" Joanna asked.

"He's up for it." Vicky had a tall glass in one hand and a cigarette in the other. She was stretched out in a wicker chair on the patio, a gibbous moon appearing above the rooftops, the daytime clamor of Kensington reduced to a distant hum.

"Do we tell Carenza?"

"Later." Vicky gave a throaty chuckle. "Let's test lover boy and see just how sincere he is, or isn't. We don't want our friend getting entangled with a mind fucker, do we?"

"Right on. And how far are we prepared to go?"

"Let's play it by ear or whatever comes to hand. And never forget that we're doing it for her. Don't want her to go to Wales and into the den of the Big Bad Wolf unless we're there to keep an eye on her."

David had arranged to see them at lunchtime the next day. Vicky guessed correctly that the office would be vacated then with the staff off for their break. She smiled to herself as she steered her car into the parking area, nodded to the man detailed to keep an eye out for thieves and entered the tower block. Joanna was at her side and both of them were wearing their most tasty gear, short, diaphanous skirts and revealing tops, high-heeled sandals and bare, tanned legs. They hadn't had to discuss their plan, and would take their cue from one another if and when situations of a personal nature arose.

The elevator carried them smoothly to the top floor, the whole edifice one of super-modern efficiency, light and airy as an elf king's palace. The two women exchanged a glance that said it all. This man had influence and money.

A dour-faced secretary, who eyed them up and down as if they were bits of rough trade, showed them into the holy of holies. "I'm Ruth Norton, Mr. Farlan's secretary. I'll tell him that you're here." Her voice could have cut through steel. "Please don't hold him up and prevent him from having lunch. He really needs to eat regularly."

"Who does she think she is? His nanny?" Vicky said to Joanna.

"She wishes!"

Ruth disappeared through a door, then returned directly and told them they could go in. David was sitting at his massive desk in a room redolent of technological know-how. He must have a brain the size of a planet to cope with it all, Vicky thought, then concluded that they had all grown up with computers, mobiles, digital cameras and the like. It no longer took a genius to understand them.

He was facing the wide windows, gazing out at the dockland below and the river sparkling as it wound its way down to Greenwich and the open sea. He swung around as they entered, rested his elbows on the desktop and stared at them steadily for a moment, then he rose, shook their hands and ushered them into chairs. "I've met you before. Your faces are familiar."

"In the Barley Corn Club, not long ago. Upstairs, not in the bargain basement." Vicky let him know that she was familiar with the scene. She sat down and crossed her legs in a provocative manner that she had perfected.

He smiled, cocking an eyebrow and resuming his place behind the desk. "And even then I felt I had seen you somewhere else. And you too, Miss Marsden."

"Let's not be formal. You can call me Joanna. You've probably read my column. We're all in the entertainment business in some form or other." She ran her fingers provocatively through her spiky auburn hair.

"That's true." He exuded charm in his shirtsleeves and slacks, immaculate and unfazed. "You are Carenza's friends."

"You've got it in one," said Vicky, as blonde and rangy as Joanna was small and pixie-like.

"And you think you are well-known enough for the public to want to watch you coping in the wilds of Wales?"

"Let's face it. The public are out for prurient thrills, and these sorts of programs are disgustingly salacious. All the viewers want is to somehow catch people at it. Give me porn any time. At least it is honest. But I can do whatever is required. I don't mind showing my assets to the cameras."

"Neither do I. It'll be a hoot, and not to be taken seriously." Joanna leaned forward slightly so that her cleavage deepened. Vicky applauded her silently. They could both see what kind of a man he was, used to getting his own way. Not the right boyfriend for Carenza.

He wasn't averse to any display, and Vicky made sure that her skirt rose another couple of inches, giving him a glimpse of white thong. His reaction convinced her even more that he was no suitable beau for Carenza. He'd only let her down.

*He's a dark horse, she thought, so cool he might have been conceived on an iceberg.* She took up the challenge. Here was a worthy opponent, but heaven help anyone who fell in love with him. Did she desire him? Not really. This was simply a matter of business. She could take her pick of a dozen men if she wanted sex, and there was no way she intended to rain on Carenza's parade. She was doing this in her friend's best interests.



"You do realize that I shall ask you to perform...shall we say...unusual tasks?" he said, and she recognized the masterful timbre of his voice. *He's into domination*, she decided. *I can cope with that. But would Carenza?* She doubted it.

"It'll take a lot to shake us." Joanna joined in and Vicky hoped she wasn't falling for his charisma, but knew her friend well and had witnessed her using and then discarding equally strong men.

His lips curved in that enigmatic smile that was part and parcel of his act. She doubted that anyone knew the real person behind the façade. "Brave words. I take it that you did a stint at summer camp when you were kids, learning about self-sufficiency. It's those sorts of skills you'll need. Matt will be your leader."

"Is he the lure? He's a hunk," Vicky retorted. "What about you? Where do you fit in?"

"I shall hole up at Tretowyn Manor. Everyone will spend the first night there. You'll find it more than just interesting, I promise you. That is, if I decide you're right for the job."

"You want to see if we are photogenic? That can be arranged." She stood up, seized the hem of the ragged, distressed and fiercely expensive top that she had designed herself and pulled it over her head, careful not to disarrange her hair extensions.

He stared at her, but only for a fraction, then came toward her, tall, masterful, with an erection lifting the front of his superbly cut Italian-made trousers. His hands were big too, the nails manicured and she didn't move as he cupped her breasts, squeezing them and rolling his thumbs over the prominent nipples.

"Beautiful." He weighed each breast in a palm and hovered over the tips as if about to suck them. "And real. You are fortunate to be so well blessed. Maybe I'll introduce you to the joys of my manor house. You'd get off on my well-equipped play rooms."

Vicky's ears pricked up. "Oh? Do you mean games rooms?" His touch was almost her undoing for, despite her resolve, pleasurable sensations shot straight to her clit. He knew his stuff, all right. His eyes met hers and the mockery in their depths let her know that he knew how she was feeling.

"You could call them that or even dungeons, if you wanted to be dramatic. These are games for adults."

"Sounds more than just interesting, unless I've got it wrong." His erection was fascinating her and she avoided Joanna's stern eyes and added, "You're well endowed, Mr. Farlan. Won't you show us your cock, as a sign of good faith."

He gave an almost boyish grin, admiring her nerve. "Are you ready for this?"

"Ooh! Is it that impressive?" She dared him to take up the gauntlet. "It will have to be a monstrous dick to impress us."

"You asked for it." And he slipped a hand into his fly and lifted his cock from the silk boxer shorts. It was hard and eager and so tempting that Vicky went down on her knees and took it into her mouth until it butted the back of her throat. By now Joanna

had stripped, her small breasts firm, the ginger floss covering her mound proving her to be a natural redhead.

As David stood there, receiving Vicky's blowjob, Joanna got behind him, opened his shirt and caressed his puckered nipples. Between them, the women forced a groan from his lips, the combined pleasure making him lose control.

Vicky choked on his hugeness and rocked her head, pulling on his cock with a light suction, tasting the saltiness of his pre-cum. She tickled the ridge of his foreskin with her tongue, and worked his chinos around his hips so that she could cradle his heavy balls in their wrinkled sac. Joanna was rubbing herself against him, winding her thigh around his and moving her cleft up and down.

Experienced cocksucker that she was, Vicky could tell to a microsecond when he was about to lose it. She lifted her head, staring at the bulbous red helm weeping clear tears, the whole mighty appendage shuddering as she abandoned it in its moment of desperate need. Joanna left his nipples too.

"Ladies, ladies, what are you doing? Don't stop," he groaned, and it was more than just satisfying to hear such a man begging.

Vicky slapped his tool relentlessly, making it jerk and sway, subjecting him to such painful pleasure that he very nearly spurted over her. "You haven't said we can take part in your documentary," she declared, looking up into his face. It was contorted and this gave her almost as much pleasure as if he had been licking her pussy.

"All right, all right. I was going to anyway. Now finish me off, for Christ's sake, you bitches, or I'll see that you never get on TV."

So they did, working together on David's flesh, using their considerable skill to bring him to such a pitch that he yelped as he came, bedewing Vicky's chin, hair and breasts.

"But you girls didn't get off," he said when he had recovered, dried his penis on a tissue and tucked it back behind his zipper.

"Don't worry about this, boy-o." Vicky mopped his tribute from her, while Joanna and Vicky dressed again. "We can pleasure each other. No sweat. Want to watch? No? Then we'll reserve that treat for you when we get to your stately home."

He grinned. "I imagine that you'll be appreciative of what I have on offer and fit into the event very well, on all counts."

She winked at Joanna, pleased with the result. Now Carenza wouldn't be alone, that babe in the woods who didn't know a wolf from a prince. Aloud, she said, "Thanks, we'll look forward to it. Get your secretary to put a contract together and fill us in about details. Is she coming too?"

"Naturally. She's invaluable. Knows the ropes. Keeps it all together."

"Have you fucked her yet?"

"That's an odd question, and none of your damn business, but no, I haven't. She's not exactly my type."

"Don't give me that."

"Ruth has her place in the scheme of things. She will organize us, keep the director, participants and cameramen sweet and stop me from having a nervous breakdown. Now, hop it, girls. You've got what you came for. We'll get contracts ready and later on, Ruth will tell you when we're going and what to bring."

"And that's that." Vicky slipped her arm through Joanna's as they went down in the elevator. "He just needs handling in the right way."

"We certainly did that."

"Don't let on to Carenza that we've been playing with his willy. Not yet anyway, while she's still carrying a torch for him."

"Right, commander. Anything you say." Joanna saluted sardonically as the lift jerked to a halt. "But he's enormously well heeled, isn't he? Bet he's worth a fortune."

"He's a scumbag and certainly not my type." Vicky found her car, put it in gear and left the area with the sense of a job well done. "His cock is huge, bigger even than Rob's. I'm not sure I could take it."

"But you'd like to try?"

"Maybe," Vicky said coolly, a thoughtful smile playing around her lips, those same lips that had done such sterling work on David Farlan.

## Chapter Five

They were nearly ready. FWDs and vans were loaded with equipment, and Eddie Bartlett, the director, vying with makeup, costumes and caterers for space and attention. David's limousine had been replaced with a vehicle supplied by the sponsor. In this business, the perks were considerable.

By nine-thirty, tempers were getting frayed, chiefly David's. He was anxious to be off. Wales was a distance away. He had wanted to miss the early morning traffic, but no chance of that now. They were waiting for Laurette.

"She's always late." Carenza was leaning against Vicky's car, a nippy little red roadster, its trunk brimming with luggage, although they had been warned that only outdoor clothing would be necessary.

Vicky had been scornful. "It won't be all hard slog, surely? What about our first night at the manor? We'll want to dress for dinner." And she had added another pair of spindle-heeled shoes to her already overloaded case.

Carenza admitted to butterflies in her stomach. This was an adventure and she and her friends were up for any challenge. Now, as they waited for Laurette, they eyed up the men, a reasonable crop of technicians who would presumably be around for the duration.

"That one over there looks a right horny bastard." Joanna's neat ass and slim thighs were shown to advantage by a pair of very short, very tight denim cutoffs. Her hair was confined by a bandana, fiery tendrils escaping at her neck and forehead.

Vicky glanced toward the man indicated. "Not *him*, for Christ's sake! He's bald as a coot."

"His follicles may be challenged, but that's all right by me. You know what they say about bald men."

"That's crap...an old wives' tale. Give me a head with hair, long, straight or curling!"

"What are you going on about?" Carenza hadn't been paying too much attention, wrapped up in watching David. He looked awesome in jeans, a sleeveless black vest with the company's logo emblazoned across his chest and designer shades that concealed his eyes, making him look even more sinister and powerful and sexy.

"Men. What else?" Joanna perched invitingly on the car's bonnet, resembling a mischievous elf.

"Look at the boss, for instance. He's really mad." Vicky held a cigarette between her fingers as she added, "Nobody had better try and take *these* away. Every other indulgence is to be slung out, apparently."

"It's time we packed it in." Joanna lit up herself. "Life's a series of compromises. Give up one thing, and you get another. Tell me this, girls. Why is it that you can sue a cigarette company for cancer, McDonald's for getting too fat but you can't sue liquor companies for all the ugly people you've fucked when you're drunk?"

"That's too heavy for me early in the morning." Vicky sidestepped this neatly. "I wish they'd get the circus on the road."

"How did you manage to persuade David to let you come along?" Carenza asked for the umpteenth time. She hadn't been able to understand how they had done this. They could be pretty overbearing at times when they set their minds on a task, but even so.

"He recognized our star quality, and we played it cool." Joanna flashed her legs at the bald man. "Anyhow, it's not difficult. These audience participation shows are the last refuge of the terminally untalented. They give a sick thrill to the sad viewers who watch them."

"But you don't mind taking advantage?" Carenza felt uneasy about this. Such a strong dose of ambition was foreign to her.

"Hell, no! I'm ready for a flesh-fest, but have a feeling it may all go wrong if Laurette has much to do with it. I'm in, whatever."

David was pacing up and down and yelling into his mobile. Ruth, almost unrecognizable in trousers with a white panama hat covering her dun-colored hair, was running along behind him, trying fruitlessly to pour oil on troubled waters.

"God, look at him." Vicky was watching David. "But Nanny is there to soothe his troubled brow."

"And get into his boxer shorts, given half a chance," Joanna added unnecessarily, for it was obvious to all with a modicum of sense.

"Here's Laurette." Carenza nodded toward the presenter who now stalked across the car lot, acting the diva.

*"Fan-bloody-tastic!"* Vicky commented.

David waited until Laurette reached him, the blackest of black scowls on his face. "What time do you call this?"

"Darling, I'm sorry. I overslept, sweetie. Blame Marty. That boy! He's incorrigible. Gave me one hell of a seeing to last night." Laurette looked daisy fresh and not in the least as if she had been shagging for hours.

She wore low-slung jeans so tight that her plump labia and the divide of her cleft and ass were outlined. A short, revealing purple chiffon top accentuated her breasts and her hair was a fiery aura about her head, tempting men to burn their fingers. Thick cork-soled mules made her look even taller and slimmer. It wasn't fair that one woman could be blessed with such stunning looks. Carenza was possessed of the ignoble emotion of jealousy. Although David was furious, at least he was noticing Laurette.

Who could fail to? *The good fairy was there at her christening, she concluded dourly, but only the bad one turned up at mine...*

"Well, get a move on, now you've condescended to put in an appearance." David shot Laurette a cold stare.

"Am I traveling with you?" She was all big eyes and pouting lips.

"That's the plan." He was calming down slightly, but no less put out. "You've got to take this seriously."

"Don't worry, pet. You now have my undivided attention. I'm done with frivolous. Trust me."

"Very well. Ruth will tell you what's happening. See to it, Ruth." And he turned on his heel, hustling the waiting crew into their vehicles.

Ruth, who had acknowledged Laurette's presence by small twitches of her facial muscles, now handed her a file and led her to the FWD. "This is Mr. Farlan's Cougar Ranger. The firm has given it to him, all part of their advertising. Please respect it, for it is brand-new."

"Will you be traveling with us?"

"I have my own car," Ruth said icily.

"Oh, dear, I can see trouble ahead," Carenza predicted.

"What fun! Old Ruthie is showing her claws." Vicky was gleeful. "Come on, girls, let's get going. Mustn't keep the country bumpkins waiting. I love a man of the soil, myself. There's nothing like doing it on a hayrick."

"I'd rather put my head in a blender than bonk one of them." Joanna's lip curled in distaste.

"Don't you like the smell of sweat?" Vicky teased as they climbed into the car.

"No." Joanna was in the passenger seat, a map spread out across her knees.

"Aren't you prompted by the desire for a rural idyll as an antidote to city life?"

"Bog off!"

"I'm kidding. Don't have a fit!"

"Are you two going to argue all the way?" Carenza sighed from the backseat, already dispirited.

"You're pissed off because Laurette is cozying up to David," Vicky said frankly, never one to mince her words.

"I thought at the beginning that he might care for me a little. He seemed genuine," Carenza blurted out, tears masking the view. She had been too ashamed of her behavior to tell them about the episode with Matt, but it had upset her. She had real bad luck with men.

"Honey, he don't do genuine," Vicky reminded, her eyes on the lead truck.

The driver leaned out of his window, pressing thumb and forefinger together to signify the acme of readiness.

"Let the wagons roll," shouted Joanna and they headed out for Tretowyn Manor.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Principality of Wales was on the opposite side of England from London. Compared to America and the rest of Europe, this was no distance at all, just over one hundred and fifty miles along the motorway, but the English weren't used to traveling. The north of Scotland was a trek for them, up the whole length of the country. Wales, due west, seemed foreign. Some of the inhabitants used their own language. It was almost as if one needed a passport to cross the border.

David loved the isolation, taking great satisfaction in his house, situated on the rugged Gower Peninsula. He managed to escape there whenever he could. It had most things he desired, particularly privacy, and there were prominent KEEP OUT and TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED notices around the estate.

He was driving himself, Laurette beside him, though he could have done without that. He liked his own company, for as he handled the powerful vehicle expertly, he could immerse himself in his plans, though the script had been worked out with Eddie and the crew filled in. It was the participants who had been kept in the dark. By so doing, David hoped to get a natural reaction from them.

Brooding on this as the miles sped by, he was jerked out of his reverie by the feel of Laurette's hand on his thigh. He ignored her, though his flesh responded and he wished that it was Carenza. He'd been well aware of her earlier in her sensible outfit—blue dungarees over a thin vest—and had longed to open the zipper that led all the way down to her lower belly, slip a finger inside and comb through her bush.

Laurette, thinking that the thickening of his penis was her doing, moved her hand over to caress it. David shook her off. "Not now. Not here."

"Then at the next motorway café. We'll nip into one of the toilets."

"No." He reached over a hundred on the flat stretch of road.

"Then as soon as we hit Tretowyn. I'll race you to the dungeons." There was a wicked glint in her eyes. "By the way, where's Matt? I have great hopes of him."

"He's already at the site with his gang, setting everything up."

"But he'll be at the manor tonight?"

"I've no idea. I'm not his keeper."

"But you *are* his boss."

"Temporarily."

He decided to stop for refreshments at a service station, following the lead van as it wheeled in and found a parking space. "Are you going to make me wait, David?" Laurette complained. "I'm randy. If you don't come up with the goods, then maybe I'll give that truck driver a go. He looks fit."

"Do what the hell you like." David hit the brakes, killed the ignition and leapt down.

He was cynically amused by his reluctance. Laurette was sexy, beautiful and famous. Many besotted male fans and a few female ones as well, judging by the letters that poured in, would have given their eyeteeth to fuck her. It was too easy, and he needed a challenge. Carenza presented one and he was determined to possess her.

\* \* \* \* \*

Carenza's initial glimpse of Tretowyn Manor was one she would never forget. It was like something out of a fairy tale. Her first ever visit to Wales and she had already been enchanted by the half-timbered houses, orchards, green meadows and flowing rivers. There was much evidence of the coal industry, gray towns built on the slopes, rows of little terraced dwellings that had been originally been constructed for the workers, huge heaps of slag and the gaunt skeletal erections above the pits, many of which were still working. But when they reached the coast, it was a different matter, and David's estate was wooded, with mountains in the background, while his house was beyond her expectations. It was built of stone with a gabled roof and mullioned windows. A cluster of ornamented chimney pots were outlined by the gathering dusk.

Following the others, they drove down the incline to reach the high wall that surrounded it. David got out and hammered on the studded gatehouse door and they were admitted into the courtyard. There was plenty of room with garages and stable blocks at the back. Groaning and stretching, tired by the drive, everyone followed David up wide steps and through an imposing arched door.

The caterers were introduced to the kitchen staff, and the manager-cum-butler welcomed everyone and had them shown to their rooms. There were several servants and each appeared to know his or her duties.

"Have a rest, then come down for dinner." David was acting the expansive host. "Don't forget, ladies and gentlemen, that this will be your last night in civilization for some time. Make the most of it."

The Great Hall was darkly paneled and hung with oil paintings. Antique statues stood in alcoves. There were flags so tattered that they might indeed have once been used in battle, and crossed swords and pikes and even a full suit of armor standing in a corner, with unnerving eye slits in the helmet. The main staircase from the Great Hall was so large that it looked like it needed scaling ladders to climb it.

"It's the Hammer House of Horror!" Vicky exclaimed as they mounted it between wide handrails with newels carved as Titans. "I expect to see Dracula at any moment."

"Perhaps he's David in disguise," Joanna giggled. "And Ruth is the wicked witch of the West!"

"Then Laurette is the vampire bride." Carenza was aware that the presenter had disappeared with David, not upstairs but somewhere below. The torture chamber, perhaps? She speculated on this with wry amusement.



Their rooms were next to one another, along a carpeted corridor, up two steps and down a couple more. A maidservant turned the key in the lock, standing back so that they might enter.

"There are communicating doors between each room," she said in a lilting accent of so musical a cadence that it was easy to see why the Welsh produced such superb singers, from operatic tenors to Tom Jones.

"Wow!" the girls exclaimed in unison, stepping inside the one intended for Carenza.

It resembled the set of an historical movie with a large bed that had a tester supported on four turned posts, crimson velvet drapes and a headboard inlaid with Tudor roses. There was a massive wardrobe and a chest of drawers. Large padded armchairs stood on either side of the stone fireplace. This was ornamented with carvings of mythological beasts and had a central coat of arms.

"David's?" Vicky stood spread-legged before it, balanced on her high heels.

Joanna came back with, "I doubt it. He may like to think he's descended from a long line of nobility, but I'll be damned if it's true."

"Would you like some tea brought up...or coffee?" The maid was dark-haired, big-breasted and attractive. "My name's Blodwen, and I'm at your service. Just press that bell over there if you want anything."

"Thank you, but I fancy something stronger." Vicky went across and flung open the adjoining door that led into rooms that were much the same, assigned to herself and Joanna.

"Whiskey, wine, gin and tonic, cocktails?" Blodwen suggested.

"A Pimm's, long and cool and fruity. Better bring a jug."

"And I'll have coffee, decaffeinated, but no milk, just grated chocolate," said Joanna.

"A pot of tea for me," Carenza ordered.

"Biscuits? Sandwiches?" The maid's long-lashed eyes were bright and her smile wide.

"We'd better save our appetites for dinner," they all agreed.

"She's a stunner," Vicky remarked when the maid had gone. "All the servants we've seen so far are babes."

"David likes to surround himself with pretty girls," Carenza said, rather disheartened.

"And pretty boys?" added Joanna.

"Does it matter to a guy when he's got a hard-on? Any hole will do. When the balls are full, the brains are empty," Vicky put in.

"You've a depressingly low opinion of men." Carenza shook her head reprovingly.

"Realistic, petal." Vicky hugged her. "Come on, let's case the joint before Blodwen gets back with the drinks."

It was like a five-star hotel with beautiful bedrooms and en-suite bathrooms. Tretowyn Manor might be old, but it didn't lack in modern comforts. Carenza sat on her bed, the tray of tea on the nightstand, and Vicky joined her, ice tinkling in the tall flute in her hand. The smell of freshly roasted coffee spiced the air, reminiscent of Brazil, not Wales.

"This is the life," Vicky pronounced.

"Shall I unpack for you?" Blodwen seemed overawed in the presence of these sophisticated London ladies.

"Blimey, I don't know. Guess so. Hang the things in the wardrobes, though we'll be taking some with us tomorrow. No more than a knapsack full, so the master says." And Vicky pulled a face.

"We've been promised a party when it's over." Carenza was always trying to redeem David and find some good in him, whereas the others were all too eager to put him down.

"So I should hope!" Joanna was tired and irritable. "You think he can walk on water."

"How can you be so horrible?" Carenza wished that they would go to their own rooms. She needed a hot shower and time alone to decide what to wear.

"I don't know."

"Years of practice." Vicky was well into the Pimms.

"I've done what you asked," piped up Blodwen, returning from the other rooms. "Is there anything else?"

"No. I'm going to have a shower," Vicky said.

Blodwen bobbed a curtsy. "Then I'll leave you."

"You don't have to." Vicky had a gleam in her eye that Carenza distrusted. Surely, she wasn't about to introduce this simple Welsh girl to the joys of Lesbos? She'd put nothing past her.

"I must get on my way," Blodwen blurted out.

"Have you a boyfriend?" Vicky sipped her drink.

"Yes, miss, indeed and I have. His name's Geraint, and he has a job here, a gardener, you see. We're going out together."

"Have you slept with him yet?" Vicky refilled her glass and stood there looking like a bacchante. All she need was a vine wreath on her head, symbolizing her worship of the god of wine.

This was too rich for Blodwen's blood. She blushed, and squirmed with embarrassment. "It's n-not the sort of thing I want to talk about. It's kind of private like."

"Okay, we'll leave it for now, but if you want any hints and tips come to me."

Blodwen couldn't get out of the room fast enough.

"Pity." Vicky looked after her regretfully. "I think there's a lot more beneath the surface than she likes to admit." Then she shook herself. "Anyone else want to join me for a shower?"

"I'd rather be alone," Carenza stated firmly.

"Oh God! Saving it for the boss? You're setting yourself up for a letdown. Don't say I didn't warn you. Come on, Joanna. Bet you'd like your pussy shampooed."

Joanna stretched lazily, then got up and followed Vicky into the next room. She winked at Carenza and gave her a grin. "See you later. Get into your finery and knock 'em cold."

Despite her refusal of Vicky's offer, Carenza couldn't get sex out of her mind. It was so long since she'd been with a man, wanting to feel a hard body lying across her and the strength and force of a rampant male. She dropped her jeans, vest, bra and panties and trailed across to the shower stall. The bathroom was decorated in Victorian style, all gilt and cabbage roses, and the tub stood center stage, resting on ball-clawed feet. The floor was carpeted in fuchsia. The towels were pink, thick and luxuriant. There were glass shelves holding jars of foaming lotions and vials of rare oils, herbal soaps and conditioners and unguents from all over the world, each fiercely expensive and all there for her delectation and delight.

She was spoiled for choice. She pinned her hair on the top of her head and entered the tiled shower. The doors were of etched glass. The water was just right, the even warmth spreading over her in high-powered jets, stimulating her skin wherever they landed. She stood there, her head back, eyes narrowed, reveling in the sensation, turning slowly so that the spray cascaded over her shoulders, back, buttocks and flanks. It trickled and tickled, making her aware of every inch of her body. She reached for the scented gel and squeezed some into her right palm, then massaged it over her breasts, waist and stomach, the white, fragrant liquid sliding down past her navel and sending impudent, soapy fingers into her cunt.

She moaned under her breath and parted her legs, washing the insides of her thighs and her sex. The water coursed down, desire thickened in her loins and her fingers lingered on the plump swell of her cunt. She moved slightly so that her feet were farther apart. Her labia parted and her fingers found the pathway that led to the seat of sensation, the hard pleasure kernel that was swollen and red. It was like a tiny penis and very sensitive, attached to nerves that were buried deep inside her. The only organ in the body designed entirely for pleasure. It had no other function. Now it had grown from furred bud to full flower, flaunting its petals.

Carenza allowed David to fill her fantasies. Supposing he was there now? And she pretended that it was so, unhooking the showerhead and directing it on to her clitoris, making believe that he was licking her most intimate place. The feeling was intense. She leaned back against the tiles, her pelvis thrust forward toward the jet.

"David, David." She whispered his name, increasing the rapidity so that the water flicked over her nubbin like a hundred pointed tongues or rather one tongue – his!

She bucked and jerked as she was swept into an orgasm that left her gasping. Then she reached out and rested a hand against the cool tiles while her heart slowed and her knees stopped shaking, the sweet aroma of her juices mingling with the soapy fluid that washed over her.

In a relaxed, dreamy mood she chose her dress, a simple slip in floral-patterned silk, mauve and black. It was transparent, apart from the velvet flowers, but lined so that her modesty was preserved. Though fueling her fantasy by thinking of him, the last thing she wanted was to have David know that she played with herself. She became hot all over at the thought of him finding out, maybe even watching her covertly. This was an old, old house. Could it be that there were secret passages and spyholes where a Peeping Tom could get his kicks? The idea petrified yet thrilled her, and she sat at the dressing table nervously, goose bumps rising as she imagined herself to be the subject of hidden eyes.

Larry had styled her hair before she left, and it was layered, making it look thicker. He had put in gold streaks, ignoring her protestations, and she had to admit that the effect was impressive. Her skin was tanned and he had shown her how to use shimmering foundation, frosted eye shadow and lash-thickening mascara. Her lips were outlined with gloss, making them look fuller and more luscious, inviting heated kisses.

"Let your breasts and shoulders glisten, darling," he had advised, teaching her how to run her fingers through her deliberately tangled locks, lifting them and adding body with a fixing spray. "Thighs as well, if you're going to show them, and you won't be my girl if you don't. Get him going, whoever he is, and I guess there's a he in it somewhere. You want your life to be full-on? Then go for it, darling. Give him what he wants."

Sound advice from an expert, she thought, looking in the mirror at this new image of Carenza Hewitt. It was high time she changed. One never got anywhere by being shy and self-effacing. She had decided on stockings so fine and black that they resembled smoke as she rolled them carefully up her legs. She wasn't used to them, normally one for socks or tights or trousers, but they made her legs look truly amazing, long and slim and molded with inviting hollows. Her little black court shoes finished it off.

"Ready?" Vicky came barreling in, uniquely attired in an almost dress, that didn't quite cover her essentials parts and yet didn't expose them too much – well, only a brief, passing glimpse.

Joanna scintillated in sequins, her dress exotic in design, like a dancer in a sultan's harem. "What a gas!" She pirouetted so that her veils undulated around her. "Baldy won't stand a chance."

"Remember what we learned at that weekend of tantric dancing and fucking and meditation. We were taught to be goddesses, remember?" Vicky was leaning toward a mirror, adding yet another layer of mascara.

"How could I forget?" sighed Joanna. "The guys were something else! What was it they said? 'Celebrate the feminine spirit within yourself. Celebrate the masculine spirit within yourself. Cherish all the elements that make you who you are.'"

"That's it! And we do. So should you, Carenza. Now, come on. Head held high and go get 'em!"

## Chapter Six

*If I were a lady, a real lady, that is, I'd dine in such magnificent surroundings every night of my life,* Carenza mused as she floated down the stairs into the baronial hall. Everyone was gathered there, some in evening dress, others informal, though most of the men had managed to get a suit and tie together. They were almost unrecognizable out of their casual gear, and this gave a sense of occasion.

She glanced around. Ah, there was David, looking every bit the lord of the manor in a midnight blue velvet tuxedo and a white Byronic shirt, the neck open over his darkly furred chest and frilled cuffs falling over his wrists. *Trust him!* she thought, but her bottom clenched at the sight and it was as if she hadn't had an orgasm for months, let alone an hour or so ago.

The fly in the ointment was Laurette, behaving as if she was the lord's lady. Such a formal occasion needed someone like her around to make the crew feel at ease. The waiters kept the drinks coming and the people who worked for David on set—lighting, carpentry, electricians, professionals and general odd-jobbers, were glad enough to down his booze and eat his food. David knew how to play them. He may be pernickety, but they had no complaints concerning their pay.

Heads turned toward the stairs and Carenza straightened her spine, aware of a surge of power as she descended. This was a first for her. Already she could feel a dramatic change. She was like a chrysalis transforming into a butterfly. Laurette shot her a barbed glance, then deliberately turned her back. She wouldn't tolerate rivals.

This was the pre-prandial happy hour, when they stood around, waiting the dinner gong. They talked shop, mostly, and there were more men than girls, though research, continuity and makeup were represented. Carenza nodded to a few of them. Vicky and Joanna soon made their presence felt and she kept close on their heels, aping their nonchalance and chatting vivaciously. The waiters circulated with trays of drinks, and Vicky made impudent asides about their sexy butts.

When the gong boomed, the crowd moved toward the dining room. At that moment, there was a commotion in the vestibule. It was a late arrival. Carenza's heart did a flip as Matt strode in. David greeted him, hand outstretched. A short, stocky, bearded character accompanied Matt. In contrast to the others, they were both scruffy, in none-too-clean jeans, vests and hiking boots.

"You made it."

"Sorry about the gear, but we've just come off site. Anyway, I don't own a monkey jacket." Matt succeeded in making everyone else look overdressed. "This is Clem, my backup. What I don't do, he does."

Clem grunted and flexed his hand before extending it to David. He was swarthy and ugly-handsome, with a broken nose and was the sort that women go for and men suspect. His grin was infectious and he looked as if he didn't give a tinker's cuss for anyone.

Damn, Carenza swore, conscious of the turmoil within her, that melting, desirous sensation that she didn't want to associate with Matt. He wasn't her type. *Definitely not!* So why was it that the room lit up as he stalked toward her, Clem in tow?

"So you're part of this shebang?" He eyed the guests as he towered over her. She was all too conscious of his height. The top of her head barely reached the pit of his throat.

"It's my job. And how is the camp coming along?" She had to talk about something, anything, just so that she didn't lose the plot completely. Her mouth was dry, but her pussy was wet, as if it remembered how he had handled it while she was stretched over the motorcycle.

"No prob. Trouble will commence when you all get there," he commented laconically. "Meet Clem. If I'm not around any time, call on him."

"Do that, baby." Clem beamed, showing even teeth.

"Dinner is served," the butler announced.

The seating had been arranged in the usual order, alternating the genders the length of the mahogany table. David was at the head, with Max Reinhart, the owner of Cougar Ranger on his right and Mrs. Reinhart on his left. Diplomacy had dictated that he invited the influential couple, but it was an inspired guess that had made him place Laurette on Max's other side. She needed no briefing, knowing precisely what to do, her stilt-heeled sandal already rubbing against the older man's foot, concealed by the sparkling white damask cloth.

Carenza was disappointed and yet common sense told her that David couldn't have her sitting by him, even if he wanted. She found herself partnered by Matt, embarrassingly aware of his rangy form lounging beside her, his thigh close to hers under the table. What on earth was she to converse about? She'd never been one for small talk anyway.

"Got sensible walking shoes with you?" He gave her a straight stare, though a smile lifted his lips as if he was remembering the intimacy that had taken place between them.

"Yes." A waiter leaned across her shoulder and, at her nod, filled her glass with Chardonnay.

"That's okay, then." Matt grinned at Clem who was wedged between Ruth and Vicky, amusing himself by chatting up the disconcerted secretary.

This was the sum total of their conversation. Carenza wasn't in a state of mind conducive to savoring the meal. Perfect it must have been, if the comments of the others were anything to go by, but she had so much on her mind that it might have been sawdust. She drank too much, and became obsessed with what David was doing,

shrinking as far away from Matt as possible. He ate steadily and watched the others, with the calm contemplation of someone plugged into a personal headset. It was more than just irritating, and yet she didn't want to talk to him.

Course followed course, finishing with coffee and brandy, then David stood up and tapped on his glass for silence. "You all know why you're here, or if you don't you should," he began, pausing until the laughter faded. Then, "We're honored to have Mr. Reinhart as our guest. He's the power behind Cougar, and we're going to give him an advertising campaign second to none. In a short time, everyone will be talking about the show. It has yet to be named, so if you have any bright ideas, let Ruth know." And he nodded in her direction.

*He's like a god, Carenza thought tipsily. He has everyone eating out of his hand.*

"Gift of the gab," said a voice in her ear, and she turned quickly to find Matt smiling at her.

She was immediately on the defensive. "More than that. He's a very clever man."

"Oops! So he is, to be sure," he quipped, and laid one of his big, calloused hands on the table next to hers. To her horror, she wanted her own small paw to be engulfed in his large one.

She changed the subject from David. "You've been here before?"

"To Tretowyn? Yep! Did a survey of the place when David bought it. It's very interesting. Lots of creepy corners...attics, locked rooms, secret passages and a family graveyard with tombs. Make sure you wear some garlic when you go to bed tonight."

"Now you're being silly." But somehow she wished he would be lying across her doorway like a great mastiff, keeping guard or, better still, sleeping with her. "Are you staying here?"

"Just for the night. We're up at six and off to camp, and that means everyone. Make the most of a soft bed." He accompanied her as they left the table and strolled into the conservatory, an exotic place full of palms and water features and trickle fountains.

Carenza wasn't quite sure how this came about, but was glad of cool air even though it was heavily perfumed by tropical flowers of great size and lurid colors. She leaned against a stone bench near the open patio door, and looked out on the garden, full of the rustle of night-prowling creatures. Bats swooped low, skittering over the ruined tower that was all that was left of the original castle. It was a perfect setting for romance. The trouble was, Matt was the wrong man. It was David she wanted, wasn't it? Although if she'd met Matt first, might it have been a different story?

He had seated himself at one of the wicker tables, booted feet propped up on a spare chair. This position pushed his fly area into prominence. He had a cheroot between his lips, the fragrant smoke coiling upward. This surprised her.

"I imagined you to be a health freak." She was very edgy. "Didn't think you'd smoke."



"Occasionally." His lips curved into a taunting smile. "And then only Havana's finest. Nothing in excess, as the Greeks put it."

His eyes narrowed as he studied her. There were flames, like little jets of amber, in the depths of his pupils. It was a look that drained her of strength and made her clitoris throb. She was racked with embarrassment, desire and a sudden stab of fear.

"Why did you come tonight? I wouldn't have thought it was your thing?" She was trying hard to hide her emotions.

"Rude to presume to know what my thing is, on so short an acquaintance."

"And equally rude of you to stare at me like that."

He took another drag at the cheroot, drawing in the smoke and then blowing it down his nose like a fiery dragon. His eyes were heavy-lidded as he continued to scrutinize her, and it seemed that he had stripped off her dress, baring her to his gaze. Her breasts lifted involuntarily beneath the thin fabric and her nipples crimped.

"If you go out in public like that, then you're asking for it. If you don't want to be looked at, I suggest you wear more clothes."

"It's nothing to do with you." She stood her ground and refused to run, though every instinct was urging flight. He hadn't moved, yet it seemed as if he had come much closer.

"You can thank your lucky stars that it isn't." He sounded calm, but his glare frightened her. "If you were mine, Miss Hewitt, no one would ever see your body but me."

"Just as well I'm not, and never shall be. We're in the twenty-first century, not the dark ages. I suppose you'd be having me wear a chastity belt."

He chuckled wickedly. "I reckon that wouldn't be a bad idea."

This was definitely getting out of hand. *He's got a bloody nerve! And I'm condemned to spend time with him in the Welsh mountains! I wish I hadn't come.*

He swung his feet to the ground and stood up in one agile movement, stub crushed out in the ashtray. He strode over to her, trapping her, pressing her against the bench. She could smell him, the tang of sweat, the scent of his long hair. His face was serious, his eyes brooding. He reached out a finger, and a tingle ran down her spine and landed in her cunt as he gently traced over her face, her neck and then the tip of each breast, moving lightly from one to the other.

Carenza gasped, shuddered and couldn't stop her hips lifting to meet his cock. It was hot and hard, distorting the front of his Levi's. He leaned down and his mouth captured hers. She tried to turn her face to one side, but was prevented – not by him – but by her own wayward curiosity. She wanted to find out if he was as good at kissing as she recalled. He was. His firm lips were closed at first, but then they wooed her into submission and her own parted as he wetted them with his tongue.

She was lost in a world of taste, touch, feel. His hands on her breasts, his beautiful mouth and the hint of tobacco on his saliva. This was a real man, and she wanted more.

He might be crude, outspoken, bossy—in fact, very far from a gentleman—but she yearned to have him possess her, driving into her, taking no refusal, branding her as his. He kept his mouth on hers and his hand descended toward her mound, so thinly covered by the devoré. She parted her thighs and he drew the fabric tight, pressing it into her sex.

He took his lips away, muttering, “I wanted to kiss you the first time I saw you in the club.”

“You didn’t show it. But I’ll tell you this for free...I’ll never be another notch on your bedpost.”

She felt rather than heard his chuckle. “Honey, I wouldn’t do that, but I do want to make love to you.”

“In your dreams.” But her response belied her words. His fingers were stroking the tight fabric drawn over her clit and the sensation was bewitching. David no longer mattered, nothing did. She was blind to all except the longing for Matt to continue that tantalizing touch.

“You like that, don’t you, girl? We nearly fucked the other night, but you weren’t giving me your full attention. It was me who backed off. Now I want to take a shower with you, rub you all over with baby oil and then show you all I know about lovemaking. I wouldn’t disappoint you. I’d attend to your little button, lick it, suck it and bring you to heaven over and over, making you come until you screamed for mercy. You could do the same for me. What d’you say? Are you up for it?”

Before Carenza had time to take in this proposal, someone moved at the conservatory entrance and Vicky appeared, halting as she took in the scene. “David is looking for you, Carenza.”

“Sod it!” Matt’s hand moved from her crotch. “We’re always in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

“But you left me in my garden.”

“And I’ve told you why. You were thinking about him and still are.”

“Okay, Vicky.” Carenza was shaking. “I’m coming.” An unfortunate choice of words, for she very nearly was!

“Are you all right? Is he bothering you?” Vicky stood arms akimbo as she glared at Matt.

“No...no.” Carenza fell to earth with a bang. What was she doing in Matt’s arms? Had she taken leave of her senses? She hadn’t realized she was that drunk.

“Better get going. Mustn’t keep the boss waiting.” His sarcasm was cutting.

She jerked away from him. “You! You’re a pig! I can’t think why David employs you!”

“Because I’m the best around.” He stood with his thumbs hooked in his belt as he regarded the two women. “And you’d better get used to it. I shall be with you day in, day out and you’ll do as I say. I’m in charge. Get it?”

"You may find you've bitten off more than you can chew!" Carenza marched off with her nose in the air.

"What was all that about?" Vicky looked puzzled.

"Nothing."

"It didn't seem like nothing. I'd say he was just about to put it in."

"No chance. Now, where's David?" Carenza abruptly silenced her.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What's up?" Clem strolled out from the French doors, taking a cigarette from behind one ear and lighting it.

"Bloody women!" Matt retorted, resting his hands on the stone balustrade and staring into the darkness that loomed thick behind the fairy lights.

"Is that all?" Clem lowered himself into a chair and drew the smoke back into his lungs. "The Almighty made them so as we'd have a bad time, a kind of punishment, I guess. Look at the Garden of Eden."

Matt couldn't work out what was wrong with him, finding this infuriating, for he was always in control of himself as well as others. When he'd first seen Carenza in the nightclub, he'd recognized her as special. It wasn't simply that she was beautiful. He'd seen many beautiful women in his time and enjoyed a number of them. Finding an outlet for his considerable sex drive had never been a problem, but Carenza was different. It was said that everyone on Earth had a soul mate. Ridiculous though it sounded, he had felt that he'd found this in her.

It had scared him shitless!

As usual he had hidden behind a devil-may-care attitude, playing the hard man. But to see her drooling over David had made him see red. He knew the man's reputation and had seen him in action. Laurette Upton and David Farlan were a couple of shrewd operators, not caring who they hurt in their determined drive to reach the top of their particular tree. He had tried to ignore the feelings he had for Carenza, but had yielded to the temptation to see how matters stood between them and if she felt that bond that drew him to her.

Now he was angry because he'd failed again. It was glaringly obvious that she disliked him and was at David's beck and call.

He swung around to Clem. "Oh, fuck it! Let's go and get drunk."

"And pick up a couple of broads?"

"Why the hell not?"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Ah, there you are." David advanced toward Carenza when she walked into the drawing room. "Having a good time?"

"Yes, thank you." She felt like a little girl at a birthday party. What was it with men? They were either too crude or too patronizing.

"You look gorgeous." He was so smooth after Matt's roughness that she could feel herself turning into a pink blancmange. "A credit to Beyond Enterprise. I know you'll do me proud."

"Thank you." She was lost for words. It was a wonderful feeling to be singled out by this important, distinguished-looking guy. Laurette was hard at it entertaining Max Reinhart, and it seemed as if they stood alone in the splendid room, though there was chatter and laughter and music all around them. She encouraged this sensation to drown out memories of the disturbing Matt, his words, his touch and the whole overwhelming virility of the man.

David's handsome face became watchful. "Would you like to see the rest of my domain?"

"I'd love to." What she really meant was — *I'd love to be alone with you, to revert to how I felt about you until Matt kissed me.*

"Let's go then. I'll take you on a conducted tour."

"What about your guests?"

"They're getting steadily plastered, and Laurette will handle them and the Reinharts will be leaving soon."

Conducted tour it was. What a place! Gothic in the extreme. David led her up the stairs and along passages, his hand touching her shoulder, fingers caressing her bare arm, then going down to the small of her back. He had keys with him and opened locked doors, flicked switches and illuminated his kingdom. It was impressive. Lamps glowed on sumptuous brocades, on treasures purchased with the house or acquired through auction sales or by agents instructed to unearth treasures. He had the money and the knowledge to do it, recognizing precisely what piece complemented what and which period went with which.

Yet the atmosphere was empty, like the Egyptian rooms in the British Museum. They didn't ring with laughter and life like a real home should. A showplace, maybe, but it needed children to enliven it. *Mine and his?* Carenza questioned herself, making allowance for the drinks.

Now they were descending slowly and here the furniture was shrouded in dust covers, the mirrors spotted, the gilt tarnished and the whole area needing a thorough spring cleaning.

"I don't share this part with many visitors." David's voice echoed in the stone corridor. "I like its feeling of antiquity—of old happenings long ago trapped within these walls, murder, maybe, or the imprisonment of disobedient wives, even infanticide. Who knows its secrets?"

Carenza's quick imagination conjured horrific scenes and she shuddered. His arm tightened around her. "You're not afraid, are you, my dear? Not afraid of *me*, by any chance? Do you trust me?"

"Yes," she faltered, but wasn't convinced.

"Good. Then you'll do as I say, won't you?"

"It depends what it is."

"Ah, naughty, naughty." He wagged a finger at her. "A good slave obeys her master in everything, asking no questions."

"Slave! Are you for real?" *This is a dream*, she thought.

His face was shadowed in the dim light that planed his cheekbones and made fans of his lashes against the eye sockets. He looked demonic or maybe angelic, and she didn't know whether to run or submit. But slave? She was a modern, emancipated woman, wasn't she? No one's slave!

Then he intrigued her again. "I'm going to take you to another part. First, I shall blindfold you."

"You bloody well won't!" She forgot to be ladylike.

"Tut! Tut!" He clicked his tongue and looked pained, then giving her no time to protest, seized her wrists, drew them behind her back and snapped on a pair of cuffs.

"What the hell are you doing?" Her protest was in vain.

He wrapped a scarf around her eyes, her hair catching as he knotted it firmly. Fear shot along her nerves, but excitement clenched her pussy. David lifted her and put her over one broad shoulder, his arm under her buttocks, the other across her back as she dangled, head down, unable to see anything. He was carrying her now, and she heard the sliding noise of a panel drawn back and felt a cold, damp draft of air rising from somewhere below. Then he was descending and she was afraid he might drop her, leaving her in some dank hole where she would never be found. Maybe years later archaeologists might stumble across her, puzzled as to how this chained and bound female skeleton came to be there.

His pace changed. They had reached the bottom, wherever that might be. He shifted her into a more comfortable position and moved on. The smell was different, still musty, but spiced with perfume, as if incense smoldering nearby. Matt had mentioned a family vault and her skin crawled. She sensed that they were now in a room, and David set her down on her feet, holding her steady while he took off the blindfold.

She opened her eyes, blinking in the dim, concealed lighting that threw a glow toward the low, vaulted ceiling. A forest of massive pillars upheld it. Gray stone walls. Gray stone flagged floor, slightly sloping. It stretched away into the shadows, but she could see grilled doors of what looked like cells and a massive rack with cogs and pulleys and what she remembered from history books as an iron maiden. It was like an upright coffin, but its lid was fitted with knives by which the unfortunate captive was stabbed to death when it closed. There was a whipping post and a pillory and hooks from which dangled canes, whips, flails and every instrument for flogging that could possibly be imagined.

"What is this horrible place?" She would have fallen if David hadn't put an arm 'round her.

"The dungeon, a part of the old keep." He led her farther inside. "It was where captured enemies were held for interrogation. A torture chamber and prison. I was going to turn it into a wine cellar, but it had so much potential that I decided to restore it."

"Potential for what?" Carenza stared around her fearfully. She caught an echo of the past, hearing screams and groans and pleas for mercy.

"I hold parties down here sometimes, for a few intimates."

"Parties? On Halloween night?"

"Any night when the spirit moves."

"I don't understand."

"Oh, come on. Even you must have heard of the enhancement of pleasure through pain." There was a harsh note in his voice and his face was set in stern lines.

"Of course I have. Vicky talks about it, but I've never taken part." She was ashamed that he might think her naïve. "You have set this up to indulge in these fantasies?"

"I make the fantasies reality. Let me introduce you."

"Don't touch me!" She was shocked but curious. What would it feel like? Why were there so many people who actually enjoyed being dominated? Was it a huge turn-on?

"I give the orders 'round here. Not you, slave-slut." She didn't like him calling her that. One thing she had never been was sluttish and she didn't want to be any man's slave.

She was acutely aware of the smell of incense and his expensive aftershave, and jumped as he reached around, removed her cuffs and unzipped her dress, letting it fall in a foaming puddle at her feet. It was as if he had put a spell on her and she couldn't stop his invasion of her privacy, but she knew that in reality she wanted him to do it. Her panties followed and she kicked them away. Now she was naked except for her garter belt, stockings and high-heeled shoes. Every forbidden dream she had ever indulged in rose to the surface, including the pretence that she was being observed by an audience as she climaxed.

He half dragged, half carried her to the crosspiece. His erection was pressed against her thigh and she thought that at any moment now he was going to enter her. She was wrong. He lifted her high and pulled her arms over her head. There was a sharp, metallic click as he snapped manacles around her wrists and fastened them to a hook. Then he parted her legs and she felt the harsh metal chaffing her ankles as they were tethered to the wood. Spread-eagled, she was absolutely helpless.

"I'll scream if you hurt me." She was excited, her heart banging in her chest and yet she so much regretted coming there, longing for someone to interrupt—Joanna or Vicky and most of all, Matt. Being here with David was proving to be far from her expectations.

"In that case, I'll gag you. No one will hear you anyway, there's too much noise going on and we're far underground." He stood back to admire her. "You look quite perfect, like a vestal virgin ready for sacrifice." He took up a camera and clicked, the flash dazzling her. He clicked again. "These will enhance my collection."

"You can't do that without my permission." Her voice was shaking.

"I can do anything I want. You are my slave and slaves have no say. I order you to call me master."

"You what? Are you mad?"

"This is my rule and you'll follow it."

She tried to control her emotions. "Right. Game's over. You've had your fun. Now let me go."

For answer he slipped a finger between her lower lips. "You're very ready for me," he murmured, and his touch was intrusive but pleasurable. He drew out her moisture and anointed her clitoris, from the root to the tip, repeating the stroke again and again until she was trembling. But it was Matt who had made her wet, out there on the terrace, not David. Matt who had left her unsatisfied.

David withdrew with unexpected suddenness, and she cried out, "Don't stop! Please, don't stop!"

"You want to come?" He sucked her nipples, his tongue rough enough to add to her arousal. "You want to come very badly?"

"You know I do! Give me an orgasm!" She had almost reached the incandescent surge that would carry her to the stars and blessed relief. It didn't much matter who did it.

"You dare demand anything of me?" He snatched a crop from the wall and brought it down across her thighs with resounding force.

The pain was appalling, a white heat that burst throughout her body, searing and tearing. He struck her again, his face dark, his cock stretching the midnight velvet trousers.

"Ah, no more! I'm sorry. Let me go! I'll do whatever you want."

"Haven't you forgotten something? What did I tell you to call me?"

"M-master!"

"That's right. Good slave."

David put down the whip and plunged a hand under her. He moved his finger gently, exploring her swollen parts, then licked them as if enjoying a treat. She was roused to such a pitch that she moaned and writhed, struggling to reach her climax. He was making her wait, drawing out the process almost unbearably. He stroked her clit, then rapped on it. His touch was sometimes rough, sometimes smooth and gentle, and he brought her to the edge again and again, then held off, letting her fire die down and almost driving her crazy.

She forgot that she was chained, forgot everything except the all-consuming need for release. He mastered her, controlled her, took her to the peak then stopped just before she reached it. His hands, his mouth, were all used with consummate art, lifting her up the slippery slope, then letting her slide back down before she reached completion. Her labia and clit felt fiery and swollen—she was almost there—so very nearly there.

“Whip me again, if that’s what you want.” She was mad with frustration. “Use me, abuse me but stop torturing me like this.”

“You are learning, slave. I knew from the very first moment I saw you that you’d beg me to beat you.” He unzipped and rolled on a condom. He brought his engorged penis to her wet, aching vulva, pushing it in an inch or two, while she nearly died with ecstasy, expecting a solid humping. But, no—he slipped it out again.

“Ah...ah.” She moved her head from side to side, and moved her hips in a vain attempt to reach him.

He chuckled, pushed his cock inside her briefly, in and out, a few deep thrusts, and though this felt wonderful, it was her clit that needed attention. He rubbed it, toyed with it and, finally she became cunning, hiding the moment when she was reaching orgasm, never letting him know that she was beyond recall until it happened, a sudden, violent explosion.

“Damn! You sly little bitch!” He unchained her, laid her on the floor and straddled her face, thrusting his cock into her mouth and coming with a violence that betrayed the rigid control he had been exerting.

Carenza turned to one side. She was full of contradictions, wanting him, hating him. David got up, dropped the rubber to the floor and fastened his pants. He held out a hand to her and she stood on shaky legs, her thighs stinging from the whip, bruised and battered.

She struggled silently into her undergarment and dress. There was nothing she could say. She’d had David, but not as she had imagined it would be. Disillusion was setting in, and yet he still fascinated her and she wanted to find out more about his sexual predilections and what made him tick. He had lost interest in her or so it seemed.

“I’m going to my room.” She was now dressed.

He looked at her. “Can you find your way?”

This took the wind right out of her sails. She faced him full-on, anger forming a red mist before her eyes. “No, I can’t. You brought me down here and you can fucking well get me back again. You beat me and put your dick in my mouth and now you’re going to walk away?”

He gripped her upper arm and pulled her against his hard body, his voice low and menacing. “Slaves ask for nothing. They are grateful for what they get. I’m your master, remember? But, as you’re a stranger here, I’ll be generous this time and show you where to go.”



His arrogance floored her, but within her ran a pulse of excitement. She had had him, after a fashion, and wanted more.

## **Chapter Seven**

It was rather like the condemned prisoner's last meal. The caterers had pulled out all the stops. There was a full English breakfast with crispy bacon, sausages, tomatoes, fried bread and baked beans, hot buttered toast, also cereal and organic everything for the vegetarians and those on a diet. It was accompanied by tea, coffee and fruit juice. There were no complaints, not about that, anyway.

Vicky had a lot to say concerning other matters, however. "I can't take my car," she fumed, fetchingly dressed in jogging pants, a string vest, the last word in trainers and an army jacket with innumerable pockets.

"Why not?" Joanna was attired in a similar high-street fashion version of military gear.

"Matt says no one can. We're to be driven in off-road vehicles because there are mere tracks in some places and so that nobody takes it into his or her head to fuck off halfway through. It'll be like a prisoner of war camp."

"Something upsetting you, babe?" Clem was mouthing an orange stick from side to side between his lips as he ambled across to her.

"Fucking stupid rules and regulations." Vicky heaved one of the several suitcases she had intended to take. "These have to go back to my room, and I'm only allowed one bag. It's a stupid television program, that's all, not Scott's expedition to the North Pole!"

"You're beginning to sound like what's-her-name, Laurette Upton. She's taken troublemaking to a whole new plateau."

This pulled her up short. "Me? I'm not in the least like her."

"I hope not. You seem a tough cookie to me." This was praise indeed, coming from him.

Carenza smiled at his guile. She was accepting her lot, wearing sensible jeans, a denim waist-hugger and thick-soled Doc Martens. Vicky changed immediately, fired by the mention of Laurette. She didn't want to be put in her category. She became cheerful, very nearly helpful and acting the part of all-out Nature Girl. Joanna followed her lead and for the moment anyway they were obedient members of the expedition. Carenza didn't have to put on an act. She was actually looking forward to pitting herself against the elements. Not that there were many of these about. The air was warm and humid, its almost narcotic atmosphere inducing a feeling of lethargy.

At last everyone clambered aboard and the wagons hit the trail. Carenza had been hoping that David would be there to say goodbye to her, but he was in confab with Matt, Clem and the other men in charge, while Eddie monopolized his attention. She was very confused after last night's events with both Matt and David, and needed

reassurance, but this wasn't forthcoming from either of them. On the verge of tears, she sat in the back of the leading truck. It was stuffy in there, but Vicky and Joanna were having a whale of a time, flirting with all.

The countryside was spectacular, woods and hills and the sea sparkling in the far distance. A holiday atmosphere prevailed. It seemed that most of the scenery was a part of the Tretowyn estate. The organizers had been right about the roads or lack of them. The trucks bounced over ruts and the FWDs were put through their paces.

"Jesus! How much further?" Joanna complained after an hour of this. "I need a pee and a coffee, in that order."

"Hang on in there, lady." A wide grin split the rugged face of Fred, the driver. "I've orders not to stop until we get there. You'll just have to cross your legs."

At last they arrived, swinging into a glade surrounded by trees. It was already prepared, with a big campfire in the center and cooking pots on tripods simmering over the embers. In the background were awnings. "These are your sleeping quarters," said Matt while the passengers climbed stiffly out and stared around them.

"Where's the toilet?" Joanna sounded desperate.

"Over that-a-way." He jerked a thumb in the direction of thick bushes.

"Thank God! I'm bursting." She headed for it.

"Me too." Vicky followed her. "Coming, Carenza?" There was a narrow pathway between the undergrowth. "My God!" she shrieked. "It's worse than bloody Glastonbury Pop Festival. Are we really supposed to use this?"

*This* consisted of planks stretched over a latrine dug in the soil. All very well done and sanitary and suitable for males, but females had a job balancing and squatting at the same time. As for relieving the bowels! There were several seats with central holes provided for this function but the whole thing was primitive in the extreme.

"Oh, well, here goes. I can't wait any longer." Joanna pulled down her pants.

"I thought they'd at least provide Portaloos, like they do at rock concerts and other outdoor entertainments." Vicky did the same.

"I expect they wouldn't have been able to get them here." Carenza was trying to make the best of it.

"What about showers?" Vicky was appalled.

"I guess there are streams, and maybe a waterfall."

"It's too bad. I blame David. What a bastard! Putting us through this discomfort." Joanna hoisted up her combats.

"Oh, come on. It could be fun." Carenza adjusted her jeans and tried not to look down into the trench. So far, it hadn't been used much, but later? It didn't bear contemplating. The trouble was that they were all too used to modern plumbing.

By the time they got back to camp, everything was being offloaded, people were arguing over whose awning belonged to who, the cameramen setting up and the participants were viewing the cooking facilities askance. The orders were that those

selected to be filmed should make meals in turn, using tins or whatever they were permitted to have and catching fish and finding fruit or berries to supplement their diet.

"Sod that for a lark!" Vicky commented, well out of Clem's range. "I'd thought the caterers had come."

"Oh, no, ducky." One of the electricians paused from rigging the lights. "They're looking after us at the hunting lodge, a couple of miles away."

"You're not camping?"

"Too right we're not. Only you celebs are staying here full-time. When we've finished filming every night, we're off to the lodge, where there are beds and baths, food and booze and TV and phones. And this applies to makeup, costumes, continuity, everyone except you lot."

"That's not fair. Does Laurette know about this cozy arrangement?"

He grimaced. "She does indeed, and there's all hell let loose. But that's the price of fame, I'm afraid. No pain, no gain." One of his mates had shinnied up a tree, cables dangling. He went over to help him.

"I think David might have been more truthful," grumbled Joanna.

"Oh, sod it, we're here now and better make the best of it. I've done fucked off and come out the other side." Vicky wasn't at all happy.

"I don't mind cooking." Carenza attempted to calm them.

"But we're supposed to take it in turns, and tidy the camp and wash up and do all those boring chores I manage to get out of at home. I'd better bid a fond farewell to my nails." Vicky looked down at her hands ruefully.

Having been unloaded, the trucks were about to leave. "I'll phone in if we need anything more or get into real difficulties." Matt rested his bare brown forearms on the cab window as he talked to Fred. "If all goes according to plan, you'll be here by the end of next week to pick up the pieces. Okay?"

"Okay, governor." And Fred revved up his engine.

"Right, people." Eddie clapped his hands to attract their attention. "Let's get it in the can. You've just arrived and are settling in. You can bitch about conditions as much as you like. We want tension from the start."

"You've got it!" Laurette tossed back her hair, eyes shooting sparks. "I'd never have come if I'd know it was going to be so grim. Not even a respectable shithouse!"

"That's my girl." Eddie grinned and hugged her. "Make the viewers sit up and take notice. We shall bleep out too much bad language, but you let yourself go, honey."

"I'm not your honey." And she pushed him into a thorn bush.

"God, what a drama queen!" Tommy Briggs was a stand-up comedian who had been roped into the expedition. "Steady on, girl, or you'll bust a gut."

"Who asked your opinion?" She swung 'round on him. He was shorter than her and chubby, more the slapstick comic than sophisticated or satirical.

"Don't be like that, Laurette, darling," cooed Darrell Hogarth, cookery proponent who had his own popular program. "Think of the publicity! A teensy bit of discomfort is worth hitting the headlines."

"Why do you think I agreed to take part?" Kieran O'Connor joined them, his black curly hair, sapphire blue eyes and beguiling brogue declaring his Irish origin. He had his own spot on morning television, chat host and housewives' dream lover.

Laurette flashed him a smile, the first seen on her face that day. "We all know why we did it, darling." She moved closer to him and ignored Darrell. "It's up to us to make the most of it, don't you agree?"

"My feelings exactly." He was well aware of the cameras and not certain if they were running, but presenting his best profile, just in case.

"I don't know about you, but I'm going to find the pool and take a swim. Care to join me?"

"Try and stop me." He slipped an arm around her waist, his hand sliding down to cup her bottom.

Carenza wondered just how much of this foreplay the cameras were recording, and if it would be edited before going out on TV. It made her nervous, having that uneasy feeling that she was under surveillance like an animal in a zoo. Laurette didn't seem to care, always the star, ready to expose her most intimate secrets just as long as she gained media attention.

Vicky and Joanna seemed happy, already selecting the men they intended to have sex with. Vicky was making a play for Clem, while Joanna had set her sights on Eddie. There was no one Carenza fancied, apart from David. Matt was there, but she didn't want to go down that road again. He expected the camp to run like clockwork, turning the whole thing into a military exercise, but his kisses were impossible to forget.

Having got her bearings, she entered the awning assigned to her, finding that it was perfectly adequate. The sides were fastened down, giving privacy, and the floor spread with a tarpaulin. There was a mattress, already inflated, a sleeping bag and pillows and somewhere to store her belongings. A lamp swung from a pole and she was pleasantly surprised by the arrangements. Joanna and Vicky were positioned close to her, so that if anyone got night fright, they could bolt into each other's temporary home.

"I can do this," she said to herself, and started to unpack.

Darrell and Tommy were fussing with the fire, the cameramen were busy with their lenses, Eddie was marching up and down examining angles and Matt was issuing orders. Joanna raised a lazy hand in a wave as Carenza came into view. She was relaxing with her back against a tree stump, with Vicky beside her. Laurette had disappeared and so had Kieran.

Carenza found a path heading away from camp, following the sound of water. The woods closed around her, cool and refreshing. Birds fluttered on the boughs, not in the least afraid, and a cheeky gray squirrel was observing her passage, his tail whirling. Accustomed to city life, she found this utterly charming, a reminder of her childhood

before her parents' marriage fell apart. The water grew louder, and she came out on a ledge above a pool into which cascaded a sparkling falls. At first, she thought herself alone. Then she heard voices above the tumult and, looking down, saw Laurette and Kieran.

Carenza stopped dead, hidden by bushes, feeling very much the voyeur, watching the amorous couple. It excited her, nipples hardening, an ache in her clit, memories of David's treatment returning on a wave of lust. Laurette was standing in the shallows, naked as nature intended, her hair plastered close to her head, water streaming all over her. Kieran held her in his arms, lifting her so that her legs were locked around his waist. He was bronzed and bare, moving her up and down on his penis, spearing her to the core while she cried out her passion. They were beautiful, like Adam and Eve before the fall or a pair of water sprites from the Greek legends. Carenza couldn't stop feasting her eyes on them. She had never seen a couple making love like this. Vicky's orgies had been crude by comparison.

What she was watching was incredibly sexy. The water made it impossible to see everything clearly, just fragmented images, shapes, movements and sounds, those ragged, breathless exclamations that proclaimed they were nearing climax. Carenza was wet between the legs, panty crotch dragged tight against her cleft. She wanted to finger herself and slipped a hand down the front of her jeans. Dear God! It was so good! Juicy, delicious, her clit and sex lips swollen. Kieran was speeding up. Laurette was mewling like a kitten, head thrown back, breasts pressed against his chest, one hand between her spread legs, stimulating her little organ.

Carenza was doing the same, rubbing herself frantically. The sensation started to build. It would be impossible to stem it. No matter who came upon her—even someone as embarrassing as Matt—she wouldn't be able to stop. The couple in the water made more noise.

"Ah...ah!" screamed Laurette.

Kieran barked, jerked and came. So did Carenza, without the bark, biting it back. The tingling feeling rose and rose and she shut her eyes and went with it. She stood there afterward, her knees shaking, then turned and fled. The last thing she wanted was Laurette accusing her of spying, not that she wouldn't welcome an audience, of course. Could it be that the cameras had recorded the episode? Carenza prayed that they hadn't noticed her performance in the bushes!

\* \* \* \* \*

*Day Two, Carenza recorded in her journal. She'd been keeping one since her teens. It was useful to look back and see how much her opinions had changed. It's kind of all right here, an exciting new adventure despite the latrine and lack of washing facilities and I slept well on the ground. I was half expecting, even maybe hoping, that Matt might try his luck again, but he didn't. It's strange of me to feel like this after having David, but I can't help wondering about Matt.*

*When I got back from my walk and that's a funny way of describing such a sexy experience, I found that a late arrival had joined our Happy Band of Pilgrims. He couldn't get away before, apparently. He's Phil Delaney, drag queen and confirmed gay, as camp as Christmas. He's popular with the public and great fun. He didn't complain half as much as Laurette and takes the piss out of her something rotten. This makes us even numbers, four men and four women, although Phil is betwixt and between. We ate around the fire and Darrell had prepared baked beans on rye bread. Not too much of a strain on his chef's abilities. I must say, but he was full of his own cleverness, Tommy's much more down to earth. It's his turn to cook today, though Phil's dying to have a go, but after breakfast Matt is taking us on an assault course. Sound horrendous.*

Yet she was looking forward to it in a way, eager to test her endurance—and there was always Matt. Bossy though he might be, his know-how was to be admired and he would be an ideal companion if there were a disaster, natural or man-made. He knew exactly how to light a fire with the minimum of wood and matches, what berries, grasses and leaves to eat and where to find water. Later, he had promised to snare a rabbit, then skin and prepare it for the pot. Up until now, they were using canned food and powdered milk, tea bags and instant coffee and hadn't yet been called upon to do anything arduous.

This altered dramatically when Matt lined them up, inspected their gear and made those who weren't wearing the right footwear change into army boots. "This isn't a Sunday-school picnic. We shall be crossing rough ground and water. I don't want anyone lagging behind. And keep your helmets on. Don't need head injuries. Get it?"

"Yes, sir!" they all shouted.

Matt formed them into a line and set off, taking a couple of his sidekicks and leaving Clem in charge of the camp.

"Where are the cameramen?" Laurette was peeved because makeup had applied cosmetics sparingly, with a "You're supposed to look natural, Miss Upton, as if we haven't been within a mile of you".

Laurette had made a rude comment that involved the legitimacy of their births and the honors of their mothers. Now she sulked, forced to march along with the others. The camera crew were busy. Apparently, the course was already rigged for filming.

"Left, left, I had a good home and I left," sang Tommy, as he swung along, giving "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" as an encore. He was a genial companion on the whole, though sometimes displayed the manic-depressive that lay beneath the exterior of most comedians. He had already crossed swords with Phil.

The path descended sharply through dense woods. It was slippery and Carenza felt her way carefully. It had rained during the night and the leaves dripped, but she felt a frisson of excitement. It was like when she had played pirates as a child, always the tomboy, making up stories in which she was the dashing hero. But the reality was nothing as easy and her calves were beginning to ache.

"Blow this for a lark." Vicky was speaking low. No way was she going to join the ranks of Laurette moaners. "I can feel a blister forming on my heel already. My feet weren't designed for walking boots."

"Come off it! What you mean is *you* weren't designed for walking." Joanna hefted her knapsack that contained essentials.

Matt was in the lead, loping down the incline, surefooted as a mountain goat. His aides hung back, ensuring that their charges weren't in difficulties. The cameramen followed. They had already familiarized themselves with the route. When the group reached the bottom, they found themselves facing a barrier made of rope netting that they were ordered to climb. Matt went first, climbing over with ease. Carenza stood at the bottom, admiring his sheer physicality. Those strong arms, rippling shoulder muscles and powerful legs. Such perfection seemed wasted on this activity. She could think of far better uses. Carenza was stabbed with desire as she remembered his kisses and the way he had fondled her. But it would be so dangerous to her self-esteem if she permitted herself to entertain feelings for him. David had already warned her that he was a free spirit.

Kieran went next, wanting to draw attention to himself, very aware that this would be recorded for posterity. He did well, and the others cheered. Tommy had problems. He was short and overweight, but turned the whole thing into a joke, also keeping an eye on his popularity ratings. Darrell acquitted himself brilliantly. This wasn't his first time and he confessed to working out regularly. Phil camped it up, although perfectly capable of managing it, a tall, agile person. Vicky and Joanna had a struggle to reach the top, and Carenza found it much harder than it looked. Laurette swarmed up it, though not before giving everyone a bad time.

There was a snag, however. They dropped down on a bank, facing a wide stream. Their task was to ford it, swinging across on a rope without falling in.

Matt was first over, showing them how and waiting on the other side to catch those who made it. Kieran, Phil and Darrell managed, and Tommy could have done so, but chose to fall in, drumming up laughs. He was hauled out, soaking. Laurette fell in too, and the water clung to her clothing and outlined her figure. Kieran rescued her and set her on dry ground, where she clung to him prettily and cried and had to take her jacket off to dry it out, displaying her wet vest. Her nipples stood out like organ stops.

How contrived can you get? thought Carenza.

Vicky and Joanna had difficulty in swinging over and had to be helped. Then it was Carenza's turn. She tried to remember how she had managed similar rope work in the gym at school. The way down seemed endless, though it was only a few feet. The water was murky and she could imagine the icy shock if she plunged in. The rope chafed her hands as she took a firm grip on it.

"Ready?" shouted one of Matt's gang.

"As I'll ever be," she said and he shoved her in the back.



She was sailing over the water, arms nearly wrenched out of their sockets as they took her weight. *Sweet Jesus! Help me!* She prayed inwardly as the ground advanced rapidly and she dropped down, narrowly missing the edge.

She was gripped in iron arms. "Let go of the rope! I've got you!" And she collapsed against Matt's rock-hard chest.

"Good girl!" He grinned at her. "I'll make a commando of you yet!"

"I don't want to be a commando." She was angry because he had rescued her. She had so much wanted to prove to everyone, and him in particular, that she could do it on her own. But it was nice to cuddle into him, too nice, in fact. She could feel her antagonism wilting.

He stood her on her feet, made sure she was steady, then gathered them around him and issued his next command. They were ordered to struggle up a steep hill and, after taking a rest at the top, plunge down what was little short of a ravine. Following this escapade, they were allowed to wend their weary way back to camp, but no stragglers, no malingerers, just an orderly troop marching to base.

Everyone was too exhausted to complain, apart from Laurette who wanted out. "Don't give up, girl." Phil was as bedraggled and bone-weary as she, but determined to carry on. "Think of the publicity. It'll go on for ages after we return to civilization. The spin-offs will be great."

"I need a wash before anything else." And she stomped off to the pool.

The rest followed and Carenza couldn't wait to experience refreshing water on her bruised, aching body. She found a quiet corner behind some reeds, screened by a weeping willow tree. The others were not as shy, stripping and plunging in. Matt had assured them that the cameras were off. He stunned the women by appearing naked and unconcerned, swimming and splashing and, though keeping his aura of leadership, becoming much more human without his clothes. Carenza peeped before he immersed himself, wanting to fondle his firm buttocks and impressed by the length and thickness of his cock, even in repose. She recalled how much bigger it became when fully aroused and wanted to see this happen again.

Laurette quickly recovered and Carenza half expected her to repeat her performance with Kieran. Joanna and Eddie were washing one another, seeming to revel in the intimacy. Vicky was being assisted by Clem. Though he had stayed in the camp, he was willing to help those who returned, particularly the women.

Carenza splashed herself all over, enjoying the sensation of cool, cool water, then without warning someone surfaced next to her, half obscured by reeds. Arms came around her, drawing her to a muscular body and Matt was holding her, water spiking his eyelashes and drenching his hair.

"You did real good today," he said, his voice low and she shivered as he held her, his chilly flesh pressed to hers, his cock a solid rod pressing between her thighs.

"Thank you." She didn't know what else to say, hoping that none of the others could see them.

"When are we going to get it together?" His hands were on her breasts, warming them.

"You're nothing if not persistent." His face was so close that she could see the stubble on his jaw, the water running in rivulets to his chest.

"I never give up," he said, and squeezed her closer. "Something tells me that you're not doing too well with David."

"Does it indeed. Then you're wrong. He took me to his secret underground vault."

His grip hardened and he was no longer smiling. "Did you enjoy it?"

"Yes, it was most enlightening."

"I'll bet it was." He let her go and dived under the water.

She thought he had gone, but then felt his touch, and he rose up like a merman, propelling her into the misty green shade of the overhanging willow. There he lifted her legs and positioned them 'round his waist. She made no move to get away, remembering how excited she had been when she watched Laurette and Kieran. Now she was astride a naked man, half in, half out of the water and he was kissing her and preparing her clit and impaling her on his stiff cock.

She clung to him, arms around his neck, receiving his kisses, accepting his penetration, warm within and chilled on the surface. Mythical dryads must have done it like this, their wraithlike bodies impaled on the pricks of satyrs, half man and half goat. The situation was surreal and very arousing. She had never felt like this with anyone before. She seemed to be a part of Matt, as if their souls were joined as well as their bodies.

She wriggled her pubis, but couldn't get enough pressure on her clitoris. Matt sensed this, using a hand on her and bringing on her orgasm. She stifled her cry of pleasure and felt him pumping into her, but pulling out at the last moment as he wasn't wearing a condom. He came, his fluid mingling in the water. Then they rested, still clasped close, the water rippling around them. They didn't speak, but made sure that they left the bower separately, in tacit agreement that no one should know their secret.

The evening was spent pleasantly enough, and the group was only too happy to rest. Matt had told them they were to split into two sections tomorrow and take part in war games, equipped with guns that fired red-staining blanks. Carenza couldn't get the incident in the water out of her mind, trying to avoid looking at him.

"Oh, shit!" Laurette groaned, wrapped in a bath towel that kept slipping, giving tantalizing glimpses of her breasts, her long legs and a flash of shaven pussy.

Matt frowned. It seemed he was the only man there who didn't get excited when looking at this flagrant display of her sexual attributes. "You have a complaint, Miss Upton?"

"No, no." She fluttered her lashes at him. "I just adore being made to walk miles, then dunked in water, dragged up hill and down dale and shot at."

"Talk to David about it," Matt advised. "I'm obeying his instructions."

"Ignore the silly cow." Phil was toasting his toes at the fire and freeing his long curls from the restricting band that held them back.

"You'd better watch it." Laurette's eyes flashed. "You seem to forget that I have influence with the TV bigwigs. I could get you sacked."

"Try it, ducky." He bristled like a scalded cat. "I think you'll find that the public like me better than you."

"We'll see about that in the popularity ratings after this charade is over." She was determined to have the last word.

"I wish I hadn't sent the cameramen home." Eddie was hovering around Joanna. "This is just the kind of conflict we want. Hang on. I'll get out my camcorder. Just you two go on bitching at one another, as vicious as you please."

Carenza could feel her eyelids drooping. She was tired and confused by her conflicting emotions. Matt or David? Which one did she want? She was no longer sure. She crawled off to find her bed. She slept and when she woke the camp was quiet, the glade filled with moonlight and the rustle of night hunters.

Then she came fully awake, aware that she wasn't alone. There was someone under the awning with her, a shape, darker even than the shadows. Before she could move or cry out, she was grabbed and a gloved hand placed over her mouth. This was reality, not a nightmare. There was someone there, very real, very solid, showing no mercy. Her assailant was a man, his strength and the pressure of his erection left her in no doubt as he spread her legs and tried to force it into her.

She beat at him in the dark. Her fingers encountered a hard surface—the texture of leather. This thing, apparition or human, was dressed in it entirely, apart from his naked phallus. He made no sound. His face, his hair, every part of him was obscured, no human feature, no voice to betray his identity. Even his personal body odor was masked by the animal smell of hide that was as exciting as it was foreign. She fought him, but it was useless.

She managed to tear her mouth free. "Who are you? What do you want?"

He made no reply, gagging her again with his hand. Could it be Matt? she wondered as she kicked and thrashed. Would any of the other men be trying it on? She was furious and frightened, yet strangely aroused. The responsibility for her actions had been taken from her entirely. This man, whoever he was, had decided to take the initiative. It was an utterly freeing sensation and she found herself submitting, becoming a primitive female overpowered by a dominant male.

She had a sudden inkling who he might be, almost impossible though it was. He was at Tretowyn Manor, wasn't he? And yet—and yet there was something familiar about him. He thrust a knee between hers and eased himself into position and she thought she recognized the length and girth of his cock. He showed no concern about her satisfaction, intent on seeking his own, her cry stifled by his hand. It was over in a second. He gave a final savage thrust, then withdrew. She was released from his crushing weight and her mouth freed.

She fumbled for the torch by the side of her sleeping bag, wasting time locating it. At last its beam lit up the interior, but she was alone. Whoever it was had vanished.

## Chapter Eight

David chuckled wickedly as he walked back the half mile that separated the camp from his car. At the same time he was infuriated by the lack of security. Any pushy member of the paparazzi could have got in easily. He'd have to take Matt to task.

Earlier in the evening, he had called at the lodge, checking the footage and consulting with Eddie who had come over to meet him, along with the head honcho in charge of the camerawork. It looked good, even pre-editing—quirky and original—a fly-on-the-wall documentary giving away secrets. It was like prying into someone's bedroom and would enthrall the viewers who had Peeping Tom tendencies. He anticipated a runaway success.

After having supper there, he had said he was going back to the manor, but headed in the opposite direction. He had driven quietly and carefully, doused the lights and ignition, then changed into black leather. He had worn gloves and a mask and a close-fitting hood. He had melted into the woods, absorbed in the darkness and the ensuing episode with Carenza had exceeded his wildest dreams.

He didn't think she had guessed who it was and this amused him. Let her be puzzled. Let her try and put two and two together and come up with five. But she had not been able to prevent herself from responding, aroused by the situation and getting off on being scared. A cynical smile curved his lips as he unlocked the car and changed into sweater, jogging pants and sneakers. Weren't all women the same? Thrilling at a modicum of danger and mystery? And Carenza more than most, or so it seemed, too sheltered for her own good. *I'll soon correct that*, he promised himself, and enjoyed the drive through the brooding darkness to his turreted stately home, his brain teeming with plans for the continued sexual education of his latest conquest.

\* \* \* \* \*

Her heart was banging in her chest so loudly that Carenza was sure the enemy would hear. She stood behind a tree, with Phil a step away and Joanna crouching on the ground with Tommy covering her. They were dressed like the cast of *Platoon* and armed with war-game missiles.

Another one of Matt's bright ideas, she thought irritably. After last night's scary episode, she would have liked to put in a complaint in order to relieve her nettled feelings, but it sounded pathetic and silly to say, "There was a man in my tent, at least I think it was a man, could have been a ghost except that his cock was very much alive. Did I scream or raise a ruckus? Well, actually not. You see, in my heart of hearts, I guessed who it was."

She decided that it was best to keep her mouth shut but—by God, she'd make David pay for it! Bloody arrogant swine!

"Watch out." Phil was looking remarkably macho in khaki. His fans would never have believed it. Gone were the brassy blonde wig, the false eyelashes, miniskirt, black stockings and stilettos that they recognized and loved.

"I am." Carenza lifted her rifle. "Can't let Vicky and Kieran and Darrell beat us, can we? To say nothing of Laurette."

"Wouldn't give her the satisfaction. Stuck-up tart! I'd love to smack her in the gob with a big red splotch of ammo!"

Carenza stifled a giggle, feeling cheerful for the first time that day, more annoyed with David than she cared to admit. On the other hand, it was flattering to think that he had gone to all that trouble to screw her. *He's a control freak*, she concluded. *That's what he wants with me—control. Well, he won't get it!* She hadn't told anyone, too humiliated and raw to put it into words.

There was a scuffle in the bushes ahead and a helmet popped up, followed by a bang and Tommy cursing. He was hit. A realistic-looking stain spread out over his jacket. He did a super-dramatic death, flopping down on the grass. Carenza envied him. He was now out of the combat and could go back to base, although this would mean he was on kitchen duty.

"Come on." Phil was really getting into it and bounded from cover, yelling like a maniac and giving chase to Laurette who had shot Tommy.

The others followed and there was a confusion of fire. Carenza was struck on the upper arm, a missile spreading fake blood. She didn't fall, yelling and gaining ground, pursuing the enemy up a slope and trapping them. They threw down their arms, having run out of ammunition.

Matt appeared from nowhere. "That was fine, but you, Phil, walked right into the trap. They could have ambushed you. Be more cunning next time."

"Oh hell! Is there going to be a *next time*?" Phil groaned, then brightened. "Does this mean I shall get a medal?" He was considerably harder than he made out, having started his career in northern workingmen's clubs. If a drag queen could survive that, then he could survive anything. That's where he had developed his waspish tongue, following a deprived childhood in the back streets of Manchester. Now it seemed he had turned into a guerrilla leader overnight.

"I've other treats in store first." Matt gave a crooked smile. Of all the other male celebs, Phil had an understanding with him, both tough as old boots.

They returned to camp exhausted, but Carenza was curiously elated, a thrill warming her blood as she anticipated darkness. Would her mysterious lover return? No mystery really. The more she thought about it, the more convinced she became that it was David. But first she found the pool and washed off the sweat and grime, becoming accustomed to the all-seeing eye of the camera. Into clean jeans and sweater, her wet hair scrunched, a dab of makeup and she was ready to eat.

Laurette was bickering with everyone. She had certainly not taken to the wilds. The camera panned on her as she argued with Tommy concerning the meal he had prepared. "I can't eat this muck. It'll give me diarrhea!"

"Maybe that's what you need, a strong bowel movement. You act like a constipated mare." Phil dived into the tinned steak and kidney pie and mushy peas, well aware that he was being filmed and keeping up this double act.

"You'd know about that, of course," Laurette ground out. "Having to make sure your ass is clear for punters."

"Ooh, listen to her." Phil was all limp wrists and wide eyes. "Sounds like she knows about fucking up the back way, doesn't it, guys?"

"And *you* sound like a nagging old fishwife, and look like one," she returned smartly.

"Right." Matt was impatient with this backbiting. "Time to wash the pots. Don't forget to do it downstream. Keep things tidy. Hook mess tins and cooking utensils on branches. Never leave the fire unattended. Get to it, Joanna."

Joanna jumped to her feet. "Yes, *sir*!"

"I'll lend a hand," Eddie offered.

"You don't have to. You're the director."

"I want to." He started stacking the dirty dishes in a wire container for easy transport.

Laurette was making a show of tidying up, aided by Kieran, and Vicky was deep in a discussion with Clem about first aid. Carenza had never felt more alone. The other girls would not be sleeping by themselves that night. All she could hope for was a nocturnal revenant, treating her rather like one of the brides of Dracula. *If David comes again, I'll tackle him*, she vowed. *He won't get off scot-free next time, playing silly games with me.*

Her friends had wandered off with their respective lovers, and Laurette had disappeared with Kieran. Carenza looked across the glade, beyond the fragrant woodsmoke coiling upward into the dusky blue of evening. Without any urging on her part, her loins contracted. Matt was lounging on the ground, his back against a fallen log, arms folded behind his head, long legs stretched out and crossed at the ankles, his bush hat canted over his eyes. Was he asleep or simply meditating on the next day's events? The responsibility for their safety rested on his shoulders. She had to admit that he was looking remarkably tasty. If only they had met under different circumstances, then maybe they would have had something permanent going between them.

His presence made her restless and she took the pathway that led to the stream. It was darker there and, for a moment, she considered turning back, then caught a sound a little way ahead. Moving as silently as she could, she stepped closer. At first she couldn't make out who it was, thinking that she saw a figure there, then realizing it was two, one with its back to her, the other pressed against a tree. They were so absorbed in what they were doing, that they didn't hear her.

She stood stock-still. It was Kieran and Laurette and she wanted to run away, unwilling to watch them at it again. He had her penned in. Carenza glimpsed her mane of hair, and the pale wedge of her face, eyes closed in ecstasy. Her bare legs flashed in the gloom as she scissored them around his waist. He gripped her under the bottom and her arms clasped him close.

All Carenza felt was distaste, mingled with envy and the longing for real love, not simply desire. Laurette behaved like a randy female cat. The only difference lay in the fact that felines had a season, whereas she was always up for it.

Turning noiselessly, she crept away, back to camp and her own solitary bed.

\* \* \* \* \*

*He didn't appear last night, she scribbled in her journal, seeking a quiet moment before breakfast. I couldn't sleep, tossing and turning and wishing I was home. Why did David have to enter my life? Is there any truth in the law of karma? Is there a debt we have to pay one another, accrued in a past existence or is the Wheel of Rebirth so much hogwash?*

"Are you awake?" Vicky stuck her head through the awning. "It looks as if it might rain, but Matt is planning to teach us all about the flora and fauna, the edible kind, that is. Fancy skinning a rabbit? I think that's one of today's lessons."

Carenza groaned and replaced her diary in her knapsack. She didn't want anyone reading it.

Her body ached from yesterday's warfare. The wearing of heavy boots for hours on end had given her blisters. She wanted this to be over and her life to revert to normal. Vicky had that glow about her of a woman who has recently made love with a man she really likes. Carenza didn't envy her, having the impression that Clem, like Matt, was a maverick. But that probably suited her friend, for she always avoided commitment.

Porridge for breakfast was the order of the day and the cameras were busy. There was a lot of dissention, the participants growing weary of the boring rations and hard slog and there were days to go before it was over.

"I want you to imagine that you are really lost. You have no food or water. I am going to demonstrate how you can obtain both," Matt began, as they gathered for instructions. "You need a knife, a bag and a container, preferably polythene with a screw cap."

"This is going to be a bunch of laughs. Not," Laurette muttered.

"It's a question of survival." Matt picked up on this. "You might be glad for it one day."

"I don't think so." She gave a haughty toss of her head.

"Oh, come on, Laurette, don't be a dweeb," Darrell chimed in. "One never knows what's going to happen. A terrorist attack is the worse-case scenario. Anything."

"What is it the Chinese say?" Carenza cut in. "'If the gods want to punish you, they condemn you to interesting times.'"



They walked ahead of the cameras, though there were others trigged up in the trees lining their route. Matt paused every now and again, pointing out plants that could or couldn't be eaten in an emergency. He crushed one leaf in his fingers. "Smell before you feed. If, like this, it has an odor of bitter almonds or peaches, then chuck it. There are many that are okay. You'll have to study the leaflets I've passed around."

As they pushed through the undergrowth, he explained how they could obtain water from unusual sources and Carenza's respect deepened. He certainly knew his stuff! Clem took over, equally conversant, and Carenza found herself meandering along a path behind Matt, while the rest took another direction.

"I wanted to show you this." He dug around beneath a plant with yellow flowers. "You can cook tubers. Wild parsnip, Jerusalem artichoke, to name but a few. All roots should be thoroughly scrubbed, boiled until soft, then roasted on hot stones in embers."

"Why tell me especially?" She was trying to forget that she had been watching him all morning, all too aware of his lean hips and broad shoulders.

"Because you seem to have more sense than the rest of them put together." The sunlight was dimming now, filtering down through the leaves on to his strong features and those keen eyes. He glanced upward. "It's going to rain. The forecast is bad."

At that moment a clap of thunder sent her shrieking and bumping into him. His arms came around her as lightning rent the sky. She had always been terrified of storms and her knees gave way. She clung to him, shaking. Rods of rain fell straight, as if a cistern had burst. Matt moved swiftly, dragging her along behind him and leaving the trees. They came to a meadow and a dilapidated hut. She was inside with him—dankness, dimness, but no longer the fear of a lightning strike or cameras spying on them.

"Thank God for shelter." She could hardly make herself heard over the tumult of the storm.

He didn't reply, simply fixed her with his eyes and she couldn't look away, locked in their depths, helpless as he reached toward her. "You're a mystery, Carenza." There was a thread of bitter mockery in his voice.

"What do you mean?"

"You are intelligent, brave, willing to have a go at anything, yet you've got yourself mixed up with David Farlan."

"And what's wrong with him?"

He gave a harsh burst of laughter. "What's *right* with him? He's ruthless, someone who likes to control everyone within his range, especially women. I'm surprised that you can't see through him. And you've been shafting him."

This angered her, but made her ashamed. "How dare you talk that way to me? It's nothing to do with you. You don't know anything about me. Back off!"

"You keep a fence around you, lady. Won't let anyone in."

"Not someone like you!" she cried above the roar of the heavens.

"I don't believe that. You know damn fine that there's chemistry between us. Always has been from the off, when we met in the Barley Corn Club. And what about in the water? Was that nothing?"

She wanted to deny it so very badly, but couldn't. It was flowing now, that tide drawing them closer and closer together. Sexual, all-consuming, but containing another element—one that she dreaded. If she fell in love with him, then he would possess her, body, mind and soul. If she wasn't very careful, he would hurt her more than Kelyn had ever done. Her lecturer boyfriend was a mouse compared to this man—or rather, a rat.

"I want to go back to camp."

"Liar." He reached down and unbuttoned his trousers. His erection sprang free.

He pushed her back against a supporting beam, grabbed her wrists and held her arms above her head, his eyes raking over her breasts outlined by her wet top. She watched him, desire flaming in her, watched the progress of his mouth coming ever closer to hers.

When his lips touched hers, every other consideration flew out of the window. As on those the other occasions, it was as if she had never been kissed before. Matt's mouth was warm, his firm lips becoming soft and gentle as they prized hers apart. His tongue was wet, familiarizing itself with hers. His body, toned by physical use, not workouts, felt hot and overpowering. He freed one wrist and her hand dived down to hold his cock, closing her fist around it, sliding the foreskin back from the slippery helm.

He gasped and muttered, "Over there." And led her to where a heap of straw made a makeshift bed. Carenza hesitated, her conventional upbringing coming to the fore, but she couldn't help it, allowing her newfound promiscuity to take over.

Once she had dreamed of love and romance and still did, in her heart of hearts, but Matt was just too persuasive. He shucked off his weatherproof jacket and spread it for her to lie on. Then he stretched out beside her and took her in his arms. It seemed right, somehow, and she yielded as he pushed up her top and found her breasts, cupping and fondling them, his thumbs rolling over her stiff nipples. Her lace brassiere added to the friction. He eased her jeans down and found his way into her thong. Heaviness invaded her loins and she waited breathlessly, wanting him to touch her clitoris. He was as eager as she, his naked penis thrusting against her body as he masturbated her, silent as she dropped into the deep pool of sensation, deaf and blind to all else.

Then he urged, "Do it for me, girl. Let me feel you come."

This was all she needed to topple her over the edge into a whirling vortex of passion. He brought her back to reality carefully, holding her wet mound in his palm, no longer touching her oversensitive nubbin. She pulled him closer, wanting to give him the same pleasure that he had just lavished on her.

He stopped long enough to unlace his boots, tug off his socks and wriggle out of his pants. She loved the sight of his flat belly and flanks and that handsome cock rearing toward her from its nest of brown curls. He slipped on a condom, knelt over her, took it

in his hand and ran the head over her swollen labia then he lowered himself. She watched it being absorbed into her, feeling the thickness of it stretching her and her vagina clenching around it. He held her hips up toward him, thrusting deeply so that she could no longer see their joining. She shut her eyes and held on to him while they surfed the crashing waves of ecstasy.

She relished the feel of his skin stretched so smoothly over his sinews. Here was a man indeed. She ran her hands up and down his back, holding him tightly, rejoicing in the way his body surged against hers, his prick plunging deeply, filling her completely until she felt as if they were one person. She was still rocked with spasms from her climax and what he was doing to her made it feel complete.

He was on his knees now, his hands under her buttocks, lifting her toward him. His face was distorted, his eyes half shut and she knew he was about to reach the zenith. To be held like that by such a powerful male was everything she had ever wanted. It made her feel puny, of no consequence against such passion, yet all powerful, for it was her beauty, her body and her sexuality that was rousing him to such a pitch.

"Jesus God!" The oath was forced from him by the violence of their coupling.

He was racing toward completion. Nothing would have stopped him at that vital moment. She hung on in there, riding the storm, and she had never been happier, hearing his gasps, feeling his penis jerk deep within her as he yielded up his tribute. She felt like the goddess of love, receiving libation from her worshipper.

It was over. He slumped down, his face buried in her hair, his heart beating rapidly and his arms clasp her tightly. She could have stayed like that forever. But soon the hut returned to normality. The rain beat steadily on the leaky roof. Matt's breathing became regular and he left her, removed the condom and pulled on his pants while Carenza retrieved her jeans. The magic was gone. It was as if nothing untoward had taken place between them. The thunder rolled away and the sky was getting lighter.

"We'll make it back to camp soon." He was very matter-of-fact. Then he gave a lopsided grin that said it all, their intimacy and their shared lust. It made her ashamed and angry. That was all it had been—opportunity and lust—nothing more. No choir singing, no orange blossom or "until death-us-do-part". Just for a while there it had seemed that heaven had been within her grasp, but she must have been mistaken.

"Okay." She struggled with her laces, wondering, did he always carry condoms? Had she been nothing but a diversion, the same as many another girl that he'd made casual love to?

"Are you all right?"

"Fine." She said it without thinking, then recalled that this spelled fucked-up, insecure, neurotic and egocentric. And, by all that was holy, this was very true.

She looked around the hut, the scales stripped from her eyes or was it the rose-tinted spectacles? It was sordid, not the surroundings she would have chosen for sex, but then those things couldn't be organized or they'd lose their spontaneity. Did she

want it to happen again with Matt? Definitely not, she decided firmly, squashing that silly part of her that was silently weeping.

The rain had stopped and the sun came out, bathing the meadow in sparkling green. Matt heaved up his pack and pushed open the rickety door. He smiled down at her from his impressive height. "We must do this again some time."

"We won't. It was a one-off, a moment's madness, an aberration, like the shag in the pool."

"Aberration? That's the first time I've been called that." His face darkened.

Carenza was suddenly uneasy. He was a big man, a tough mercenary, practically a stranger, despite their intimacy. She was alone with him and the hut was isolated. He could snap her spine like a stick, if he had a mind to.

"Let's go," she said and walked out.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We've not had a girly chat for ages." Vicky entered Carenza's space without so much as a by-your-leave. Joanna followed and they settled themselves down on the inflatable mattress.

"Neither have we." Carenza hoped they weren't about to probe. A false hope, as it turned out.

"Spill the beans." Vicky pulled out her cigarettes. "I haven't been coy about screwing Clem, neither has Joanna tried to hide her dabblings with Eddie, so dish the dirt. What were you doing with Matt this afternoon? Sheltering from the rain? I don't think so."

Here it came, the interrogation she had been expecting. Carenza didn't even blush. "What else?"

"Oh, give me a break!" Vicky raised her eyes to heaven. "Alone for at least an hour with the fittest piece of meat this side of Christendom and you're making out that you didn't fuck him? Pull the other leg, it's got bells on it."

"We're not all as cock-obsessed as you." Carenza was feeling guilty as hell.

"You're winding me up, aren't you?"

"Leave her alone," Joanna interrupted. "It's her business who's been plugging her, isn't it?"

"That's right. It's not carved in stone that we share everything. I've not asked you who you're sleeping with and I don't want to know about Joanna's love life." Carenza was putting up smoke screens all over the place, though unsure just why she was so reluctant to discuss Matt with them, or David for that matter.

She was saved by Eddie poking his head in at the flap. "Cookery classes, girls. Everyone to attend. Chop, chop!" And he grinned at Joanna in a certain way that spoke volumes about their relationship.

Despite all her inward protestations to the contrary, excitement prickled like nettles when Carenza saw Matt holding court around the campfire. He had the limp form of a rabbit in his hand, the very same hand that had fondled her. Another carcass lay on a stump. Her stomach heaved.

"Now then." He was as unconcerned as if this was a perfectly normal turn of events. "You saw how I set snares earlier. These are the results, two reasonably plump rabbits. Don't worry, they died instantaneously. Unlike deer and larger kills, it isn't necessary to bleed them and we shall be cooking them immediately anyway, ensuring that the meat is fresh. Everyone okay with that?"

*I'm not, Carenza thought. It's enough to turn me into a vegan. Poor little animals.*

"D'you know what you get if you pour boiling water down a rabbit hole?" asked Tommy, always the comedian.

Matt looked him straight in the eye. "No. What do you get?"

"A hot cross bunny. Boom! Boom!"

Everyone groaned. Matt continued his lecture, laying the kill on the rough trestle table. "First of all, skinning. While the flesh is warm, remove any scent glands, and the testicles if it is male."

"Ooh, makes your eyes water, doesn't?" shrilled Phil.

"Shouldn't think it would worry *you*," Laurette commented nastily.

"Why ever not? I'm very fond of my balls."

"Am I wasting my time or are you going to listen?" Matt's eyes flashed sternly. They became quiet and he continued, "Turn the carcass on its back, cut through the chest and belly, and the inner legs. Don't slice into the stomach or digestive organs. Lift the skin as you go, like this."

Though disliking what he was doing, Carenza had to admire his skill. The rabbit's overcoat came off neatly, the legs, the body, up over the head and, with a quick twist, he removed it.

"Ugh!" said Laurette. "That's disgusting!"

"You wouldn't think so if you hadn't eaten for days." Matt was concentrating on opening the belly, removing the stomach and intestines then inserting his fingers into the chest and pulling out the heart. Darrell leaned closer, his culinary self intrigued.

"I don't want to look." Vicky turned pale.

"It's up to you." Matt shrugged as if he didn't much care. "I'm just showing you as part of your training."

The cameras were drinking in this scene, capturing the horrified looks of the women as they saw Matt jointing the animal ready for the pot. He was as unconcerned as Darrell, the cookery expert, demonstrating on TV. Carenza had to admire his cool, and she moved nearer. Though sickened by the thought of actually killing and gutting an animal, she realized that it might be a useful lesson to learn.

The table looked amazingly clean, rather like a counter in a butcher's shop. Matt had already washed it down and the pieces of meat were lying there with a heap of organic vegetables gathered from the forest. He scooped them up and went to the fire, where they were popped into bubbling water in the deep stew pan.

"Supper will soon be ready." He turned and scrubbed his hands. "Who is going to prepare the other rabbit?"

"I'll have a go." Carenza couldn't believe it. Had she really said that?

"Fine." A smile lit up his face. "Here is the knife. It's sharp. Don't cut yourself."

She concentrated hard, squashing any queasy feelings, trying to pretend that she really was a survivor preparing food for her hungry children. This made it less sickening. It wasn't too bad. The carcass was warm and pliable and, following Matt's instructions, she managed well, quite proud of the result when he lifted the joints and added them to those already stewing.

"Was that all right?" she asked him, while Darrell looked on approvingly.

"I'll make a pioneer of you yet." Matt used a husky tone that penetrated deeply, just as if he had entered her physically again.

*You've got to stop this before it is too late*, she lectured herself and moved away.

They sat around waiting for the food to cook. It struck Carenza just how much they were all accustomed to being entertained—the radio, CDs, television and mobile phones. People seemed to have lost the art of conversation. They could argue, disagree, try to score points, but debate like adults? Forget it! It was a selfish, greedy, opinionated era, certainly among the media people with whom she mixed. Matt had been like a breath of fresh air, but he had his faults. *And so have I*, she sighed, not sparing herself.

The stew was ready, served up on tin plates along with hunks of German bread renowned for its keeping qualities, hard and grainy. It was dusk now, the moon rising between the trees and birds going to roost. The cameramen were packing up and heading for the lodge and there was really little to do once they had all eaten and tidied the camp.

"How bored our ancestors must have been." Laurette slid down to sit by Kieran. "Sod all to do, once they'd finished hunting and gathering?"

"Bet they had big families, though." He put an arm 'round her. "Look how the birth rate soared when England was in the grip of a power cut, a few years back."

"Are you suggesting that we only have sex because there's nothing else to do?" Joanna was sitting close to Eddie, who had declined the crew's invitation to ride back with them. Everyone knew he was married, but in the middle of an acrimonious divorce.

"We should be recording this," he said regretfully. "Could have a phone-in. You know...give us your views, Mr. and Mrs. General Public...is sex simply a way to pass the time?"

"Oh God, not that too," moaned Laurette. "The switchboard will be jammed with calls when this reality show goes on the air, let alone other issues."

Carenza was only half listening, piqued because Matt was ignoring her. After that closeness when he had encouraged her to skin the rabbit earlier, he had since acted as if she wasn't there. She looked at him while pretending not to, but he seemed absorbed in scribbling notes, making diagrams and discussing future activities with Clem.

She stood up at last. "I'm going to bed. Goodnight, all."

He didn't acknowledge her, though the rest did, and she stalked off to her awning after visiting the latrine. *God, I shall be thankful for a proper lavatory! she sighed, and a washing machine. I'm sick of rinsing out my panties and bras in the stream and hanging them up to drip-dry. One bonus about this kind of thing is that it makes you appreciate modern technology.*

It was nearly midnight and sleep evaded her. She relived the scene in the hut, getting wet between the thighs, putting her hand down there and caressing herself, pretending it was Matt. But even this brought little comfort. Eventually, she switched off the battery-operated lamp, hoping complete darkness would help her find oblivion.

She slipped away, dreams clouding her mind, weird situations and events, a world of strange happenings. She was in a forest, pine needles forming a rough carpet beneath her bare feet, and she was draped in a transparent garment, her body gleaming through it. She was floating, suddenly lifted above the treetops, held in great arms. A powerful entity was carrying her away. She heard the rush of mighty wings and surrendered to this creature, half man, half god. She dared to look at him, for there was no doubt it was male, and his face shone golden, exquisite features, slanting eyes that almost blinded her with their radiance, blue-black curls that fell down around his muscular shoulders. He was naked. She felt the surge of his huge phallus before he raised her to his lips, her body lying across his arms, his fleshy tongue parting her delta and sucking her clit.

She was plunged into darkness, coming awake, but the lips were still on her cleft, human this time, not godlike. Someone was in bed with her. More than that, he was now possessing her with a cock as huge as the entity's. Leather under her hands again, but now she recognized his personal body odor.

"David! It's you, isn't it?" She was unable to move for the weight pressing down on her.

He laughed, deep in his chest, and increased his pumping motion, taking her forcefully, robbing her of breath or speech or any sensation. He dug his fingers into her buttocks, no gloves tonight, and she could tell by his frenzy that he was reaching the peak. He gave a sharp cry, his cock jerking inside her, once, twice, thrice, then he groaned and lay prone across her.

At that moment, light filled the awning and Matt was standing there flashing his torch. He took in the scene at a glance and his face was furious. "What the hell are you doing here?" He loomed over the couple on the ground.

David recovered his breath and with it his aplomb. He removed himself from Carenza, discarded the condom and straightened his trousers. "Why shouldn't I be, old boy?" He was maddeningly unconcerned. "It's my project. I have every right to drop in at any time and see how it's getting on."

"I'm not saying you don't." Matt glared at him as he got to his feet.

Carenza struggled into a sitting position, pulling down her nightshirt with its incongruous print of Winnie the Pooh on the front. "David was just going," she stammered foolishly.

"More like just coming." Matt's expression of disgust seared right through her.

"I'm on my way." David was perfectly cool and highly amused. "The security needs stepping up. Anyone could get in. See to it, will you?"

"Right, but this is the last time I work for you, and the last order I take." Matt's rage impressed Carenza, but not, apparently, David.

"Suit yourself. Survivor guys are a dime a dozen, all clamoring to be on the tube. I can replace you easily, but not until this is in the bag. You signed a contract. Remember?"

"Don't worry. I shan't let you down."

David left without a backward glance at Carenza, but Matt hadn't finished with her yet. "I was right about you. You're no better than Laurette or any of those bitches who hang around him wanting to become stars. And I thought you were worth more. How wrong I was."

And he stormed out, the flap falling into place behind him.



## Chapter Nine

Carenza sat there as if turned to stone. She felt like stone too, her emotions suspended. Both the men who had fucked her had left in a most rude and uncaring manner. How dare they? Her anger began to boil and she was disgusted, almost leaping to her feet and finding the stream, even though it was pitch-black out there.

Why had Matt been so angry? Did he care who shagged her? Or was it because his boss was taking the mickey? Whatever this was all about, it was plain that she was a mere pawn in the game, her feelings of no consequence.

Sleep was impossible. She'd probably be awake all night. She got up, tucked her nightshirt into her jeans, put on her boots and a jacket and went outside. She wasn't sure where she was heading, but just had to escape her own thoughts that were buzzing in her brain like a swarm of demented hornets.

A lamp swung in the breeze, lighting the way between the awnings and embers glowed in the banked-up fire. The silence was absolute. There was no sign of Matt, but one could never be sure where he was, for he was as light-footed as an Indian brave. But she had the instinctive feeling that she was alone. She wanted company, most desperately, but guessed that Joanna and Vicky would be sleeping in their lovers' arms. Maybe Phil was awake? Larry had taught her that a gay man was often a girl's best friend.

Light shone through the sides of his awning and she was about to enter when a sound drew her to a standstill. She heard voices murmuring, low masculine voices. The entrance flap was part open and Carenza was transfixed.

Phil stood in the center of the floor, his arms stretched above him, while Darrell slowly eased up his white T-shirt. Phil's sun-browned chest came into view, bare of hair. Darrell cupped his pectorals as if they were a woman's breasts and pinched the erect nipples. Phil took a pace back, then reached out and caressed Darrell's cock. It strained upward under his jeans, growing stiffer as Phil massaged it. Now they were close together, lips meeting in a hungry kiss, open mouth to open mouth.

Carenza couldn't tear herself away, fascinated by the beauty of their bodies as they undressed, powerful, handsome men worshipping each other. She wanted to worship them, entranced by their grace. Two cocks jutted from nests of hair, one circumcised, one uncut, each impressive, upright as lances, with fiery helms and tightening balls. They broke apart, smiled and kissed again then Darrell led Phil to the bed. He lowered himself on top, rotating his hips, his cock wet as it rubbed against Phil's belly. Darrell shifted down and slurped at the eager organ.

He didn't take the other man to completion. He eased him over onto his stomach and massaged his back, going all the way down until his fingers disappeared between

his bottom cheeks. Phil moaned as he hugged the pillow. "Don't stop. Rim me, rim me, please!"

Darrell's tongue replaced his fingers and he ran the tip around Phil's asshole, repeating the action and Phil cried, "Suck my cock again."

He turned agilely and Darrell went down on him, taking the long, thick penis between his lips and mouthing it vigorously until Phil spurted, his semen creaming his partner's face. Darrell put on a condom, then eased himself between Phil's buttocks, finding the narrow entrance. Phil lifted his legs and embraced Darrell's body, welcoming him in. He pumped slowly at first, and Carenza watched breathlessly. She was enthralled. It was a new experience, totally different to when she had seen Kieran entering Laurette. This was a ritual, a manifestation of the "faith", and she found nothing repulsive about it. She was rapidly learning that there were no rules between consenting adults. Each to his or her own.

Darrell was gaining speed now, clawing at Phil, and they were both grunting as the dominant male chased his orgasm. Then Darrell cried out his ecstasy and slumped on Phil, kissing his neck and murmuring love words. Feeling that she was intruding in something very private and intimate, Carenza crept softly away into the darkness and loneliness of the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Everyone was expected to rise early, just as soon as the camera crew arrived to start another day's filming. It was Vicky's turn to make breakfast and she was there when Carenza joined her, moaning, "Look at me slaving away over a hot cooking pot! Who'd have thought it, eh? My nails are ruined. They'll never be the same again. And it's porridge again, gray and gooey and made by my own fair hand."

The others were groaning and stretching, emerging from their sleeping places, and Carenza didn't dare look at Darrell and Phil, though they seemed as normal as could be. It was chilly at that hour, an orange sun rising to spread its tepid warmth over the vegetation, a light mist forming as the verdure began to dry out.

Matt stomped into the glade and one glance at his face told Carenza that his black mood hadn't dissipated. He barked orders to this one and that, but ignored her. It was as if she had become part of the background, a thing of no value or consequence. This riled her and she had the urge to do something outrageous that would really annoy him. She sat by the fire and spooned hot porridge into her mouth. It was surprisingly tasty, making her suspect that Vicky knew more about cooking than she let on. Hardly the sort of thing a high-flying fashion designer would admit to, hinting at humble beginnings and a struggle to get where she was now.

"Good morning, campers!" Tommy could be a pain in the butt with his everlasting cheerfulness, a skill learned at the start of his career, when he was a working in burlesque. But it was infinitely preferable to Kieran's arrogance and Laurette's sulks. He

came over to where Carenza sat and helped himself to a mug of tea from the billycan. A sturdy little man with a round, smiling face that hid a darker side.

Matt paced around, running a critical eye over the state of the site. It was supposed to be kept spick-and-span and he was in the mood to find fault with everything. The cameras rolled discreetly in the background and it was easy to forget they were there.

"I'm splitting you into two teams today," he barked. "Tommy, Darrell, Kieran and Phil will be digging a new trench for the latrine. Vicky, Joanna and Laurette are to set traps and clear away debris. The place is a disgrace!"

"What about me?" Carenza hated to be ignored by him.

"I have something special for you." He looked at her levelly under frowning brows. "You're coming climbing. With me."

"You've got to be joking."

"It is necessary to prepare the way for a trek up Bryn's Folly. It's easy when you know how, and the rest of you can do it tomorrow."

"Why me?" Carenza's chin lifted stubbornly.

"Because I say so. But if you insist on a reason, then it's because you pride yourself on being more capable than the rest, Miss Know-it-All."

"That's bullshit!"

He slanted her a mocking glance. "Exactly what I think about your comments. We'll see. Today will make or break you. Go and get ready."

"Like I have a choice?"

"You've got it in one."

"Lucky old you. He fancies you rotten," hissed Joanna, rounding up the dirty dishes.

"Don't be daft!" Carenza glared at her.

"Catch you later. Have a nice day."

Carenza was furious. There had been absolutely no call for Matt's nasty comments. She didn't doubt her ability to keep up with him, but disliked the idea of spending hours in his objectionable company. Why couldn't he have taken one of the men?

"Are you fit?" he shouted when she emerged from her tent, a haversack over her shoulder.

"As I'll ever be. Where are the cameras?"

"No cameras. I have a camcorder and will keep a record of our progress myself. The rest are staying here, filming us as we leave and when we come back."

"Jesus! So that means we're alone?"

He gave a wolfish grin in which there was no humor or light. "That's about it, Miss Hewitt. Now then, quick march. We've wasted enough time already." He set off through the woods and she had no option but to follow.

At first, the way was no more difficult than other expeditions Carenza had been on during that eventful week. Matt went on ahead and they didn't speak. Within an hour the camp was way below them, a thin coil of smoke marking its existence. She had been aware that they were rising steadily. The view, glimpsed between pine trees, was breathtaking. David had been right. Wales was beautiful. A valley stretched toward the distance, its slopes dotted with woolly sheep, matching the fluffy clouds that floated in the pale blue sky. The sea was far away, but glimpsed as a sparkling line on the horizon. Matt recorded most of the time.

The hill they climbed became steeper, the terrain rough and stony. Perspiration dewed Carenza's face and trickled under her arms and between her breasts. She took off her anorak and slung it over the pack on her shoulder. Matt seemed unaffected, but stopped when they came to a grassy plateau. "Time for a break before we tackle old Bryn himself."

"Why does everything have to be masculine?"

"It doesn't." He shrugged, then fixed the camera on its tripod and left it running. He unpacked the food bag. "What the hell anyway? Male, female, neuter, it's only a figure of speech. You're too wired, prickly as a porcupine. Chill out, Miss Hewitt."

"Why d'you call me that?" It really riled her, a term of mockery, not respect.

"That's your moniker, isn't it?" He unwrapped sandwiches from their foil shroud and handed them across to her.

Carenza took one, all too aware that there was no living soul for miles, only the nosy cinematic eye. She and Matt were isolated, here on the mountainside. *It must have been like this in Eden, she thought. Did Eve lust after Adam as I am now doing? I know it's wrong, foolhardy, even insane. But I long to have him touch me and for last night never to have happened. Trust David to mess things up for me, good and proper.*

*But you enjoyed it, didn't you?* mocked the demon perched on her shoulder. *You can't help yourself when it comes to being mastered by him, no matter what.*

David wasn't there now. Only she and this craggily handsome man, with his large frame and long legs, sleek hips and tight-muscled ass, his bravery and know-how and confident attitude. She despised herself for experiencing these schoolgirl feelings of admiration, remembering his careless behavior toward her, but couldn't help quivering inside every time he looked at her. Like many another woman who prided herself on being emancipated, she responded, willy-nilly, to the alpha male.

She sat there glumly, tucking into food prepared by Vicky. Matt produced a water bottle and handed it to her. "Not too much, although we can fill it again at the next stream."

"Will it be pure?" She disliked the idea of water that didn't come out of taps or bottles bought in the supermarket.

"As the driven snow," he returned with that superior curl of the lip that annoyed her intensely, but made her yearn to kiss him. "How can you ask that when you're used

to drinking recycled London crap? This comes from the mountaintop, baby. It couldn't be fresher."

"Don't 'baby' me!" she snarled. "And stop being so bloody right all the time."

"Right? *Moi*?" he exclaimed, and rested his shoulders against a boulder, booted feet crossed, pelvic area thrown into prominence. His eyes were slits beneath the broad brim of his hat.

She decided not to mince matters any further, sitting bolt upright and demanding, "What's your purpose in bringing me here? Is it to punish me for having David last night? I can assure you that I didn't know it was him...not to begin with. He's done it once before, disguised in leather, like he was then. I don't know why he came. I didn't invite him."

"So you let who you thought was a complete stranger shaft you? I don't know which is worse, but I'll tell you this for free...I don't give a fuck who you screw." His tone was belligerent, every word razor-sharp. Carenza was surprised how much it hurt.

"I don't know. I thought...imagined...that maybe you felt something for me after we'd made love in the hut."

"Is that what it was...making love? I was under the impression that it was just a fuck." His voice was as chilly as one of those mountain streams.

"You're impossible!" She leapt up. "Let's get this damned walk over and go back to the others. I don't want to be here with you a minute more than necessary. Is that camera still on? I hope you'll have the decency to edit out this conversation."

"I call the shots. And I fully intend to give myself another half-hour break. Like it or lump it. As for the film? That's for David and the editor to decide."

Fuming, Carenza sat down again, staring at the view, arms clasped around her raised knees. Matt tipped his hat over his eyes and appeared to be asleep, his hands linked across his chest. *If I had a knife, she thought bitterly, I could cut his throat. That would stop the bugger talking and pissing me right off.*

Thoroughly bored and at the end of her tether, she decided that she'd had enough. She got to her feet and picked up her bag. At once his lids flew open. "Where the hell d'you think you're going?"

"Anywhere. I'm out of here."

He propped himself on his elbows. "Did I say you could go?"

"Oh, shut the fuck up!" She blazed with anger. "How dare you police my conscience?"

In one fluid movement he was on her like a striking panther. "Your conscience? Do you have one?" He seized her by the shoulders and shook her. "I don't give a shit about your dirty little affairs, but out here I'm in charge and you'd better not forget it. Now, let's get on while the light lasts."

"It's not me that's holding us up...it's you." She was furious with herself more than him, and for the mayhem his touch caused in her. "Give me a minute. I need to wee."

"I'll come with you."

"You certainly will *not*." She was rigid with indignation.

"Don't worry. I won't look. I'm not into water sports. I just want to be sure you don't run off."

"Bloody hell, you'd better not peek!"

She turned on her heel and made for the bushes. The lack of toilets was what she missed most about civilization. She lowered her pants and squatted, thinking that this was where men had the advantage. They could stand and urinate, retaining some kind of dignity, but women had to adopt an almost subservient posture, unless they were naked, of course, when they were able to spread their legs and do it standing. Carenza was always worried about nettles and insects and nasty creepy-crawlies stinging her privates, and hurried over the job, missing toilet paper wipes, and dragging up her jeans, cursing Matt and David and the whole uncomfortable situation.

Matt was the other side of a tree and she passed him huffily. "Ready when you are."

Now they came to difficult parts, with the hill becoming a mountain, the path slippery with loose gravel and handholds a part of the climb. It was exhilarating, even exciting, the vast vista below them, fields becoming no more than patchwork quilts, the valleys deep hollows, the air refined and crisp. They paused when they reached another plateau, wider this time, falling away steeply on either side.

"That's it, then." Matt's hand was steady as he filmed. "I'll bring them up by this route tomorrow."

"I hope you don't expect me to come." She flung herself on the short, springy turf.

"No, sir! I've had a bellyful of you moaning and complaining. Call yourself a hardened campaigner? I don't think so!"

"Well, thank you very much! You ungrateful sod! *And I love you too!*"

He wasn't listening to her, his eyes scanning the rocks above that formed the very tip of Bryn's Folly. He unfolded the tripod again and angled the camcorder, then he started to climb. Even through her anger Carenza was sensitive to the heroic spectacle he presented—man against nature, lithe and surefooted, his big hands finding crevices, his muscles working overtime as he pitted his strength against the mountain. He seemed invincible and she couldn't believe it when he suddenly stumbled and fell. She heard him cry out amidst a mini-avalanche of small stones.

She was on her feet in an instant, running toward the cliff face, shouting up at him, "Are you all right?"

"No, I'm bloody not. I slipped on a boulder and twisted my ankle...dammit!" His voice was hoarse with pain, and Carenza began to climb toward him. But, "Stay put!" he ordered. "Don't want you crippled as well." And groaning and swearing, he slithered down.

When he reached the bottom, Carenza supported him, for he couldn't take any weight on his right leg. She managed to get him to a grassy knoll, sat him down and waited for instructions. She'd heard the expression "he or she turned green" but had never seen it in action before. Matt's face was covered in sweat and definitely that color.

"Does it hurt?" She felt like a dumb fool as soon as the words were out.

"Of course, it bloody hurts!" He was as touchy as a wounded bear. "I might have broken my ankle. Even these boots don't stop injury if you tangle with a bloody loose rock that gives way under you!"

"I'm sorry. What can I do?" She had never felt more helpless.

"Listen up and listen good," he instructed. "Get my boot off." She undid it with fumbling fingers and opened the laces wide. She could see the swelling as soon as the leather parted and, as gently as she could, pulled it away. "Now my sock. Oh Christ! That's fucking murder!" He winced in agony. "Get a cold compress on it. There's a spring over there and cotton wool in my bag, a bandage as well. Damn! It's a bad sprain. I can see it puffing up. It'll be black and blue soon, but I don't think it's a fracture."

She had never imagined that she'd ever see him struck low—the indestructible Matt. It made him more accessible and she wanted to do all she could for him. She soaked the dressing and wrapped it 'round his ankle then bandaged it, but not too tightly. She sat back on her heels and looked into his pallid face. "What now?"

"I can't make it back without help. I'll get in touch with Clem." He fumbled in the pocket of his jacket for his mobile and soon there was dialogue. "Clem? Right. I've had an accident. Twisted my ankle. I can't make it home. We're at the base of the final stretch of Byn's Folly. No, don't try to come on foot. You won't get here until after dark and it's not that easy to find. Ring mountain rescue and see if they can get a helicopter. Yes, yes, I've got my boot off and a compress on, but I can't walk. I'll get Carenza to light a fire to guide the copter in. Okay?"

He replaced the phone. "They'll send a rescue team by air. Get as much brushwood together as you can and keep a fire going."

She didn't need telling twice, already off and scouring the place for timber. There wasn't much on that remote ridge and she scrambled farther down in her search, dragging back heavy branches. He sat there, impotent and raging at his own helplessness. It didn't improve his temper one iota.

"Will this do?" She heaved the awkward wood.

"We need smaller stuff for kindling...twigs, dried grass. Here, give that to me." He got out his knife and started to shave one of the branches, making shallow cuts to feather it. "You must make a circle of stones so that the fire doesn't spread. I've taught you this already. Haven't you been listening? Looks like I've been wasting my time. You've brought pine and this sparks like fuck. Not as good as hickory, beech and oak. This lasts longer and gives out the most heat. But we need smoke, so you'll have to pile on green branches once we've got it going."

She did as instructed, biting back angry retorts. He really was the most ungracious of individuals. To think that she had allowed him to penetrate her body, and even enjoyed the sensation! "And how are you going to do this? Rub two Boy Scouts together?" she asked sarcastically, even as she worked like a galley slave, obeying his orders.

He dragged himself near to the stones that she had arranged as a base, then heaped the kindling over a wad of dried grass and fished a lighter out of a pocket.

"Modern methods?" she reproved.

He scowled. "I keep this for an emergency. It's quicker that the Boy Scout rubbing method. But this doesn't mean that my trainees can slacken off." And he ignited the base, adding tiny bits of kindling to the flames and then larger and larger ones.

Soon it was blazing away and Carenza spread green branches over it. Smoke billowed upward. With any luck it would be spotted by their rescuers. She sat back exhausted and he lay on the turf by the fire, injured foot raised high. "All we can do is wait. Thank God for mobiles. Most of the time they're a damn nuisance, but they do have their uses." As if evoked by his words, it came to life, with Clem on the other end of the line. "Hello. Yes, we've a fire. They're on their way? That's good news. We'll just stay put until the copter arrives. Okay? You'd better ring me as my phone needs charging. Bye. See you soon."

"You mean to say you didn't put it on charge?" Carenza was glad to catch him out. Mr. Perfect wasn't so perfect after all.

"Not so easy to do in camp, and I was otherwise distracted, if you remember? Anyway, you may like to know that Clem has been in touch with the rescue team and they're coming just as soon as the helicopter is free. There's only one in this area, apparently, used by the police as well as the medical service. We'll have to wait our turn as it isn't exactly a matter of life or death. Look in the kit for painkillers. This is aching like buggery."

She pressed two tablets from the strip and handed them to him with the water bottle. He swallowed eagerly, his Adam's apple bobbing. She raised his foot higher, using their packs as props, and covered him with his jacket and hers, remembering that the patient should be kept warm. The fire was doing that, but she needed to be active, worried deep inside. The sun was sinking rapidly, bathing the mountain in crimson and she didn't much fancy spending the night there with an incapacitated man.

"Are you scared?" His voice broke the stillness.

"I guess I am, a bit," she admitted.

"Don't be. Clem will make sure they come for us. Why don't you sit by me and cuddle up? Don't look so alarmed! You've no need, even though it's my ankle that's bugged, not my dick, but I've no intention of raping you, Miss Hewitt. Though I will if you want me to."

There he was again – making fun of her.

"I'm okay over here."



"Aw, come on! We may have a long wait and might as well make the best of it." His wide grin was unrepentant. "Get out the emergency chocolate bars and we'll have a feast."

She couldn't resist him, much as she wanted to. It was cozy sitting beside him in the firelight with the sky darkening to a deep blue and the birds circling overhead, seeking nighttime roosts. A triangular fly-past of geese made a spectacular show, on their way south to warmer climes. There was a bite in the air and autumn was fast approaching.

Matt put his arm 'round her and she nestled against his chest. It was so natural a thing to do that she forgot her prejudice against him. They were comrades in arms experiencing difficulties, but even so her blood warmed when he slipped a hand inside her sweater and fondled her breasts. Her nipples peaked and lightning struck her clit. *Dear God! What is the matter with me?* she thought while it was possible to think at all. *I don't like the guy, do I? Heaven help me! I'm not falling for him, am I?!*

"Kiss me." He drew her ever closer.

"No." She pulled back.

His face was red as a demon's in the firelight. "You wouldn't be so cruel as to deny an injured man, would you?"

His voice was her undoing, deep, coaxing, with that Australian accent. His lips were closer still and she was powerless to resist. It was a deep kiss, an all-embracing, impossible to refuse kiss. He certainly was a skilled kisser. Carenza could feel herself melting into lubricity, weak in the limbs. *Weak in the head*, she thought, despairing of her frailty. He shifted a little and she was lying next to him. Still kissing her, he undid her jeans and slid them down. Far from preventing him, she raised herself to make this easier. His fingers were inside now, playing with her, all wet from her response. She couldn't think of anything but the pleasure.

"I'm going to bring you to orgasm," he said, lifting his lips from hers for a second.

"What about you?"

"I'd like one. Just to make sure I haven't damaged my cock, you understand." He never could stop joking, even in the most serious moments. "Maybe I'm not up to full penetration, but you can give me a wank, when I've seen to you. Come on, get it out for me. I'm an invalid, don't forget."

"Invalid, my ass."

"That as well, if you like."

She opened his fly and took out his engorged penis. It stood up, straight as a poker, the foreskin rolled back from the glistening helm. She stroked it, found lube in the medical bag and anointed it, making it shiny red. Matt groaned, and thrust his fingers deep inside her and the pressure from his hand against her clit robbed her of breath. He started to kiss her again, his tongue echoing what his fingers were doing. The pleasure mounted and mounted to an irresistible peak and she rubbed herself against that knowing frottage, swept away by a climax so intense that she blacked out for a second.

He looked into her face and smiled contentedly, kissing her on the nose and letting her rest against his chest.

Then, "My turn," he said.

She squeezed out another puddle of lube and smeared it over his cock. He groaned and lay back against the log that supported them. Carenza admired his manhood. It really was impressive, long and thick, filling her palm. She closed her hand 'round it and rubbed up and down, working the foreskin over his dome and then stretching it back again. It was a game she loved to play and had never been able to make up her mind which she liked best. Her lecturer lover had been circumcised, but David wasn't. Neither was Matt. There seemed to be an added sensitivity to a dick that hadn't been operated on in childhood. Its hood was like that of her clit, protecting the delicate organ.

She smoothed the lubricant over it, hearing him groan. He jerked against her fingers and it thrilled her to pleasure him so much. He was very slippery and it turned her on. She twisted her wrist on each downward stroke, hearing his sharp intake of breath.

"Oh God, I hope the copter doesn't come before I do."

"No chance of that." She held his cock still while she breathed on its tip.

Then she started to masturbate him steadily and he shut his eyes and went with it. Teasingly, she slowed a little, and he grabbed her hand. "Don't mess about. I want it *now!*"

"Calm down." But she couldn't stop, longing to feel him lose control.

She speeded up and he arched his back and came violently, long jets of cum shooting from him. Then he slumped, sighing his satisfaction. She found tissues and cleaned him, then tucked his cock away, while he lay there like a well-fed baby who has been at the breast.

It was then that she heard the sound of rotary blades, far away but coming ever nearer. She rearranged her clothing, then stood in the clearing and waved frantically. The helicopter hovered above them. "There's nowhere for them to land." Matt recovered quickly. "One of the crewmen will be lowered on a winch, and do a double lift. You go first."

"But you're the one who is injured."

"Don't argue. Do as you're told."

And so it happened. Down came the rescuer and, during the lift, she was told to keep her arms by her sides and not to raise them. A strap was put in place and tightened and the rescuer supported her with his arms and legs as he gave a thumbs-up sign and they were hoisted toward the machine. It was a dizzying sensation, with Matt and the clearing growing rapidly smaller as they rose. They reached the cabin doorway and she did exactly as the winchman directed, soon safely inside.

She waited anxiously as the crewman disappeared again, soon to return with Matt, the camera and their packs. In the midst of her relief, she paused to wonder how much of their recent intimacy had been recorded on film.

## Chapter Ten

Clem and a cameraman were waiting at the nearest hospital. He had driven there in one of the FWDs. They had to hang around until Matt was seen. It appeared to be nothing worse than a bad sprain and torn ligaments, and they drove back toward camp with his leg bound and a pair of crutches in hand. He was more than just angry, deeply frustrated at being incapacitated.

"Oh, stop grouching!" Clem said briskly from behind the wheel. "Pity it wasn't your head, you bad-tempered cuss! Just shut up and listen. I'm taking you to the lodge."

"You bloody aren't!"

"I am so. I've spoken to David and it's all arranged. You'll be fuck-all use at the camp, so may as well direct operations long distance. Have you any idea what a bonus rating-wise this accident is? It'll add spice to the whole thing. There's nothing the viewers like better than hospital drama, and we've got it in the can. Good job you took a camcorder."

"Fuck that for a game of soldiers!" Matt had the rear seat to himself, Carenza and the cameraman in the front with Clem.

She was upset, wondering how she was going to get to see him, but apparently this wasn't part of the equation. He didn't seem to be bothered about that aspect of his absence. All that was worrying him was how the rest would manage without him.

"I'll cope, with the help of the lads," Clem assured him. "You've left instructions and we're pretty well clued up. It's only a few more days anyway. Should be wrapped by next weekend. Farlan's giving an end of shoot party. That will be a laugh."

They stopped off at the lodge, and Matt was helped inside. Carenza was so glad to be back to civilization again – electric light – a loo that flushed – a bar with drinks and a television with a forty-two-inch screen. Jungle living wasn't for her, but she didn't want to leave Matt, though he was now treating her with a certain amount of reserve as he had done before. It was as if the episode by the fire had never happened.

He was assigned a room and was on the landline to David straight away. Clem left another cameraman in charge of filming Matt during his recuperation. He was lying on the bed, and waved abstractedly as Clem went out. Then he covered the mouthpiece, looked at Carenza and said, "Thanks."

"For what?" She was disconcerted by this.

"For everything." His wicked grin said it all.

She could feel herself blushing, muttered "Goodbye", and hurriedly followed Clem.

\* \* \* \* \*

David replaced the receiver in its cradle, a satisfied smirk on his handsome face. He wasn't alone in the ornate master bedroom at the manor. Against all his own edicts, he had sneaked Laurette there for the night. Even if she was missed, no one would question his right to do what he liked.

"What's happening? Have they saved the big brute?" She slithered against his naked body, wearing nothing but the flimsiest of silk wraps, open all the way down. Her hand rested on his engorged cock and she trailed her fingers along its length, exerting pressure.

"Oh, yes. Operation Rescue went well and it's all been filmed. Couldn't have worked out better. What a scoop. Pity you weren't there instead of Carenza, being the star and all."

"Even that wouldn't have compensated. All that climbing and spending time with *him*. I don't even fancy the guy."

"No? I thought you did. Carenza does, apparently."

"She says not, but who can tell what goes on in her mind. She's kind of secretive." Laurette wriggled her shoulders out of the wrap, and shifted so that she sat astride him, her wet pussy leaving a silvery trail down his body.

Sometimes he wondered why he bothered with other woman when he had her at his beck and call. But then a picture of Carenza flashed across his mind, with her challenging independence. He wanted to break her, to have her fall in love with him so that she became biddable—another of his slaves. At least Matt was out of the running now, that annoying macho man who had interrupted him last time he was screwing Carenza. This left the field clear for him to complete his intention of owning her.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What happened? Tell all...we won't be fobbed off!" insisted Vicky when the Cougar Ranger wheeled into the clearing about two in the morning.

"Don't keep her up any later, chattering." Clem was really stern. "I'm in charge now."

"Where's Matt?" Joanna was tousled-headed and in her nightshirt and shorts.

Clem explained and, though everyone had gathered to hear the news, they soon trailed off to bed. Apart from Vicky and Joanna, who dragged Carenza into Vicky's tent and demanded details.

"Are you okay, honey? Did he fuck you?"

Carenza was feeling wrung out and exhausted, the day's events catching up on her. "I'm all right, but I don't want to talk about it."

"Spoilsport! Aw, come on!"

"I need to sleep." She stuck to her guns. "I'll see you guys in the morning." And she went back to her own place, needing peace and quiet in which to sort out her jumbled emotions. She confided her inmost feelings to her diary.

*I'm very confused and not too happy. Is there no sincerity left among the men of today? Have the feminists robbed them of their certainty about their own role in life? If so, then those earnest sisters have done females a disservice. I know all about the lack of equality in the bad old times, but this has been carried too far. Gone is chivalry, politeness, caring, or so it seems to me. I thought, even hoped, that Matt and I had formed some sort of bond when he was injured. That there was more under his casual treatment of me. I think I could have fallen in love with him wholeheartedly, given a little encouragement. But once back at the lodge, he doesn't seem to give a damn about me. As for David? Who knows what he really thinks or feels?*

The next few days sped by and she played her part as directed. Clem organized the teams' routine and it carried on much as before, but for Carenza it had lost its spark. Matt wasn't there to bully, cajole and give of his wide and varied experience. She had succeeded in fobbing off the girls, unwilling to discuss that momentous day spent with him. Now she was schooling herself to blank it from memory, for he had made no effort to contact her. Clem heard from him. Clem visited him at the lodge, but there was never any message for her. She settled unhappily for the painful fact that it had been a fleeting moment of insanity and that she should forget it, as he obviously had.

So she did as she was told, carried out her duties and learned a lot about survival. The last morning dawned and there was an air of excitement and relief. There were more cameramen than ever and the team was given orders to pack and leave the camp clean and tidy.

David drove in unannounced, bringing Ruth with him. She had her secretary head on, rounding up paperwork and generally being officious. He was looking as suave and sophisticated as ever, in corduroy jeans, green Wellington boots and a rugged jacket, in country squire mode.

"I'm surprised he didn't arrive here on horseback," Carenza whispered to Vicky.

"I know what you mean. Very Mr. Rochester. He's some stud, but dynamite. I wouldn't want to get involved with him and I strongly advise you to steer clear. I've a theory that Laurette is keener on him than she admits."

"Really? What about Kieran?"

"He's nothing but a screw. I'd never be surprised if David and Laurette got it together, running the business, even going so far as to marry."

"So you think I don't stand a chance?" Carenza's heart seemed to drop into her boots.

"Darling, I should be upset if you did. He's a bad boy and you deserve better." Then Vicky changed her serious tone. "Jeez! I shall be glad to get out of here. I'm going to spend hours in the shower and get the makeup people to do my nails, face and hair. I'll feel like myself again."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was with a twinge of regret that Carenza said goodbye to the place where she had lived for two weeks. She'd learned a lot, been upset, come out of it, recognized things in herself that she hadn't known existed. She longed for Matt to put in an appearance, but there was no sign of him. They didn't call at the lodge either, but drove straight to the manor house. A festive mood prevailed. The show folk knew they'd done a good job and were now going to enjoy themselves. All Carenza wanted to do was get the party over and return to her London house, there to go to ground for a while. She'd had enough of them, even Vicky and Joanna, but mostly David and Matt. There was a crude expression that labeled flirtatious women "prick-teasers". She dubbed those two arrogant men "cunt-teasers". Same difference. Other gender.

It was late afternoon before they arrived, to be welcomed in with drinks and snacks, and shown to bedrooms and made to feel thoroughly at home. Tommy left for a gig in Newcastle. Some of those involved in the shoot elected to return to their wives, husbands or families, but the majority stayed. It was going to be a night to remember. Some had arrived from the hunting lodge, but Matt wasn't among them.

"Boring fart!" Vicky gave a toss of her hair extensions. "Clem's here."

"So is Eddie."

Carenza wanted to wipe the smug expression from Joanna's face. "I thought he was married and would be going back to his wife?"

"He's divorced. You know I don't do married men."

"Who cares?" Carenza gave a dismissive shrug, walking to the door that linked their rooms. "I'm heading for the shower."

The water was glorious, and she stood under the warm power jets, letting them pour all over her, flooding from her shoulders and trickling across her breasts, droplets hanging on her crimped nipples. She was bone-weary, and decided that this was her first, last and only venture into the wilds. From now on it would be the sophisticated city life for her – posh frocks, posh restaurants and posh escorts. And she was finished with Tarzan.

*Don't you mean he's finished with you?* inquired that mocking little demon that sat on her shoulder.

*Get lost, before I wash you down the plughole.*

But her body ached with more than just tiredness. There was a deep need within that only sex could assuage. Still standing in the shower stall, she angled the jets so that they continued to play over her, and then cupped her breasts in both hands, her thumbs caressing the upright nipples. Desire shot through her, straight to her pussy and she closed her eyes and sighed deeply.

Breasts were not enough, and one hand trailed over her flat belly, circled her navel and combed through her bush. She could see herself in the tile mirrors, a dozen hands fondling a dozen clits. She wondered how it would be if she depilated, imagining the

pink bare flesh of her mound, the darker blush of her slit and the outrageous flaunting of her swollen organ with no hair to conceal it. The thought excited her and she wanted to reach for a razor, but didn't have one handy. Her legs were practically hairless and she never shaved them, only her underarms received this treatment. She decided to leave her bikini line until later when she had more time and her clit wasn't throbbing and demanding satisfaction.

She spread her legs a little, opened her cleft wide so that her labia parted like flower petals and then massaged her clit. Keeping it in torment, avoiding touching the ultra-sensitive head, she rubbed each side of it until it swelled near to bursting. Then she took pity on it and her middle digit flew over its crest smoothly, all wet from the shower gel and her own juices.

The feeling was exquisite, much more enjoyable even than with a man, and she remembered reading somewhere that a famous person, probably Oscar Wilde or Quentin Crisp, had once said, "Sexual intercourse is a poor substitute for masturbation."

She couldn't stop now. No matter who had walked in just then, she would have been unable to desist, on that wondrous rise to bliss where a brilliant fireworks display dazzled her senses and she exploded into pleasure. It was only on her descent from heaven that she had the uneasy feeling that she was being watched.

Switching off the water, she stepped from the stall and wrapped herself in a large towel. On reaching the bedroom, she began to dry her body, intending to smooth on moisturizing lotion and prepare to dress. She was looking forward to wearing something feminine, tired of being an urbanite turned guerrilla.

Suddenly a voice sounded from hidden speakers. A man's voice. David's voice.

"Stop right there," he commanded in a soft though piercing tone that seemed to come from every corner.

"Where are you?" She held the towel in front of her.

"It doesn't matter where I am. Suffice to say that I have eyes and ears all over. No room is safe from me. I watched you showering and pleasuring yourself. That gave me pleasure as well and I came into my hand when you climaxed."

"You're disgusting! Spying on everyone! How can you do such a despicable thing?"

"It amuses me. I like to be in control."

"That's obvious! Am I to have no privacy? If that's the case, I'll leave right away."

"Not until I say you can." His tone was severe. It sent prickles down her spine. "Now then, go to the wardrobe and put on the gear I've left you."

"And if I don't want to?"

"Tough! Just do it!"

Curiosity was getting the better of her and, still clutching the towel like a shield, she went across and opened the door of the wall-length armoire. She gasped at the variety and splendor it contained. There were female outfits for every occasion. How many



women did he entertain there in any given year? Transvestites, too, by the size and length of some of the dresses. This man was kinky, to say the least, and it aroused her even more.

"Okay. Now take out a leopard skin fur coat, along with a red corset. You'll find stilettos in the bottom and stockings in a drawer."

Her fingers encountered the fur. On removing it, she saw that the coat had a swing-back and huge collar, the fashion that of the Thirties, as might have been worn by a movie star. It was seductively luxurious. So was the red satin corset, trimmed with black lace and having crisscross ribbon down the front.

Carenza laid the articles on the bed, hoping David had tired of the game and gone away. Yet she experienced disappointment at the thought. She wanted to carry on with this charade, wherever it led her and no matter the consequences. To hell with Matt and everything she had hoped of him.

"Drop the towel." David's disembodied voice made her jump. She obeyed, the covering tumbling to the floor. She wanted to hide her breasts and pussy, but he was watching. "No, let me look at you." His breathing was ragged and it pleased her to know she was getting to him. "Touch your nipples and then finger your clit."

It was as if he was a magician and she under his spell, given no choice but to obey him. It was a relief to surrender her will to another, removing all responsibility for her own actions. Her pleasure was doubled by the knowledge that he was watching her touching her tits and genitals. She wanted to have him as an audience when she came again, but he had other ideas.

"Get into the basque." She couldn't do other than obey him and though finding it awkward without help, she strapped the boned garment around her upper torso and pulled it together tightly.

It was strapless and her breasts bulged over the top. The long black garters, clipped to the tops of the stockings she had found, formed a frame for her lower belly and curly mound. The high heels made her taller, her legs long and slim in those wickedly alluring stockings. She posed for him, striding this way and that, hoping he was catching sight of her from all angles. She had never felt more wanton and would have gladly walked out onto a stage before a crowd of randy men, pole dancing, lap dancing, stripping and performing every lewd act they demanded. It was tremendously freeing.

"Makeup," David insisted. "I want you to put it on thick and strong, like a regular hooker, then back-brush your hair, spike it and use plenty of gel."

Her hands trembled as she followed his instructions, seated at the dressing table, the stool brushing against her bare pussy. She wondered if it would stain the upholstery, but had no control over her love juice. She used a darker foundation than usual, blusher, black mascara, eye pencil and green shadow. Her lips were outlined in frosted crimson, lustrously gleaming.

She sprayed herself with potent French perfume, then stood up and slung the coat over her shoulders. Well aware that even her walk was different, she sashayed around on her mile-high heels, hands on her hips, waiting for his comments.

He didn't make any, simply said, "Meet me at the garage now. Don't hang about and don't talk to anyone."

"We're going out in the car?"

"Yes."

"But I thought that we were partying here?"

"So we are, but we're taking a drive first."

"Why?" She was mystified. One never knew what to expect from David.

"I'm taking you dogging, my dear."

"Dogging? What's that?" Visions of walking a poodle crossed her mind.

"You'll find out. Now get going. Don't keep me waiting."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was chilly outside and getting dark. Carenza wrapped the fur coat 'round her, a draft whistling up from below and playing over her ass. No one commented or took any notice as she went to the back of the building where the coach house and stables had been turned into spacious garages and outbuildings. Feeling as guilty as if she was embarking on an illicit assignation, she hung around, wondering which of the several cars parked there David would use. And what the hell was "dogging"? It rang a bell faintly somewhere, but she couldn't remember.

David arrived ten minutes late. He liked keeping people waiting. It spoke of his inner angst and determination to manipulate those who challenged him. He walked straight up a magnificent red Mercedes and said, "Get in the back."

The machine purred smoothly into action and he swung down the drive and out through the gates that parted electronically.

"Where are we going?" She watched the sweep of headlights as they reached the main road.

"Closer to the town" was all he would say, and they drove in silence, eventually arriving at a public car lot on the outskirts, large, dimly lit and surrounded by trees. Several vehicles were there, abandoned by their owners while they shopped, dined or went to places of entertainment. There was no parking fee at that time of day.

David pulled in and braked under an oak. There were a couple of other cars not too far away, and they were lit from within and seemed to be occupied. "What now?" Carenza assumed that she would get out.

To her surprise, he left the driving seat and let himself in the rear door, switching on the interior light. He slipped in beside her and took her in his arms under the coat, his hands caressing her bare skin. Carenza relaxed, slightly amused because he wanted

to make love to her in these circumstances, maybe reliving his teens when he fucked girls on the backseat of his car. It made him less remote or so she thought until he eased her arms out of her coat, undid the corset and bared her breasts then unzipped his pants. He rolled her over so that her bottom was in the air and introduced his sheathed cock head to her vagina. It was then that she realized they were being watched.

Faces were pressed against every window, drooling with lust, mostly men but a few women also. Middle-aged, old and young were there. One man banged on the glass, pleading, "Let me in. I want to do it to her. She's got a lovely ass."

Now Carenza could see that several of them had their cocks out, rubbing them to full stand. "Shall I let him in?" David teased. "Wouldn't you like to be fucked by such a dirty old tramp?"

"No! Where did they spring from?"

"People wait here every night, hidden in the bushes, emerging when they see a car stop and its lights go on. They know they're in for a show. Some couples invite them to take part. Now shut up and let me get on with it. I'm going to fuck you brainless."

He lubricated the condom and made sure she was equally slippery. All she could see were leering faces, all she could feel was pain and humiliation, but her sex tingled and her bottom ached and that dark part of her was glad that he was mastering her. His fingers were beneath her, playing with her clit while his virile penis plunged into her depths and the watchers murmured and grunted and some of them ejaculated, spattering the sides of the car.

"Turn her over. Give us a good look at her." One of the men was younger and smartly dressed. He formed the first finger and thumb of his left hand into an O and used the forefinger of his right as an imitation penis, working it in and out suggestively.

David made Carenza sprawl on her back, legs in the air, displaying her cunt for all to see. The man who had spoken licked his lips and made obscene gestures. David wearied of the sport after he had reached his climax.

"Cover yourself. We're leaving," he said to her abruptly, and they drove back through the night, reaching Tretowyn Manor within a short while. As on the journey out, he didn't speak to her, his eyes on the road ahead. She knew him no better than she had at their very first meeting.

She was shivering within the fur coat, appalled by what she had allowed to be done to her. *I'll never be able to look Matt in the eyes*, she mourned, but hot on this came the thought—*He doesn't give a hoot anyway! I may never see him again.*

The sleek car drew up outside Tretowyn Manor's main entrance and before they left it, David turned to her. "We shall go in as if nothing untoward has taken place. I expect you to behave impeccably. And you will obey me throughout the evening, doing exactly as I tell you. Do you understand?"

"Yes," she muttered ungraciously.

His hand tightened painfully on her arm. "Yes what?"

"Yes, *master*." She was unable to hide the sarcasm in her tone.

"Keep on the coat until I tell you to remove it. We shall carry on with the party in the dungeons and I want your full cooperation."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Love the gear, Carenza." Vicky was arm in arm with Clem. "What is it they say? 'Fur coat, no knickers?'"

She was wearing a shiny pink latex bodice that jacked her breasts high, her nipples poking above it, and a pair of matching slinky trousers, with a zip going all the way down, between her thighs and up through her bottom crack. It would be desperately easy for anyone so inclined to open it and have access to her. Added to this was a pair of bright blue ankle boots that accentuated the length of her legs, while her blonde hair was wild, wanton and exotic. Clem had a possessive air about him, proud to have this piece of eye candy on his arm.

Carenza was distinctly uneasy, brooding on what part David expected her to play. She feared that the game he had organized in the park was as nothing compared to what was planned for later. She felt isolated. Vicky had Clem. Joanna was with Eddie. She wore a backless bodice and tulle tutu that brushed the tops of her glittering golden mesh stockings, dipping and lifting to give glimpses of her foxy bush. Laurette, apparent queen of the event, was almost naked, apart from a see-through top and fragile handkerchief pointed skirt. She had never looked more ravishing, encouraging homage from all the men and women and flirting with Kieran. Phil was in full drag, escorted by Darrell in a tuxedo.

*Everyone is sorted except me, Carenza thought sadly. David doesn't really care. I'm just a diversion. And there hasn't been a sign of Matt. It's as if he's dropped off the edge of the world.*

There were strangers wandering about. David was entertaining his friends along with his working colleagues. Adventurous friends, wearing remarkable costumes—monks, sultans, harlequins, pirates, full military uniforms complete with rows of glittering medals, even formal evening suits. All had one thing in common—they were gravid with desire, David's party promising fulfillment of every fantasy. There were women there and plenty of them. Upper-class tarts from polite society, downgraded whores, actresses, chorus girls, singers, stars of stage and screen. They were drawn by the expectation of a leg up the ladder of success or money or both, though perhaps the very nature of the occasion had lured them with the likelihood of unlimited sex.

The anticipation rose as the drinks went down and inhibitions were banished. In one reception room a huge screen showed a video film featuring two leading lights in the porn business. Carenza tried to look away, but was fascinated by the muscular, handsome man with his black hair, bronzed body and twelve-inch cock. The actress, a voluptuous brunette with huge breasts that were surely implants, was lying with her legs raised, stilt heels digging into his firm haunches as he worked his thick weapon in and out of her.

Carenza's tongue passed over her lips as she saw its length appear and disappear, the camera angle emphasizing its solid shaft and mighty, circumcised dome. The actress whimpered and moaned. He grunted and pistoned his hips. David's guests lounged on couches, totally blasé at first, though soon heat enveloped the room, along with a feral odor as their excitement mounted. Several couples were aping the action on the screen. Blatant fornication was taking place everywhere, on the floor, on the stairs, wherever it was possible for two or maybe three people to get it together. It was not entirely heterosexual either. Young men were busy with their male lovers, naked rears upraised to provide pleasure and a gaggle of girls lay on a divan, legs entwined, pussy to pussy, breast to breast, gaining their enjoyment through female caresses and kisses.

The staff, especially hired by David for this unusual party, didn't bat an eyelid. They were obviously used to these goings-on, in fact, they were dressed accordingly. The waiters, handsome and virile, were attired in white shirts, bow ties and black trousers cut so tight that their flanks and neat rears were emphasized. They made no objection if ladies or gentlemen made a beeline for these assets. The waitresses were dressed in French maids' outfits, with short taffeta shirts that swirled out, displaying bare asses, hairy or shaven mounds and fishnet-stockinged thighs. Their bodices were tight and low-cut and they accepted being handled in a familiar way.

The orgy on- and off-screen was getting wilder, and it was then that David stood before the television screen and made an announcement. "Further entertainment is on offer below. My dungeons await!"

He grabbed Carenza and hauled her with him and the crowd, some already wearied of their participation to date, followed him down the stone stairs that led into the bowels of Tretowyn Manor.

## **Chapter Eleven**

It was a different part of the vault. Larger, longer, with an upward slope at the far end that connected with the outside world. Carenza tugged, but David frog-marched her into the large central area where a young woman hung on a crosspiece, her wrists tightly roped, her legs forced open by a wooden strut between her knees and her ankles bound. She was completely nude; her fair skin blotched by marks left by the whip or paddle on thighs, belly and breasts.

David paused, smiled up into the girl's face and turned the contraption. Her shoulders, back and buttocks came into view, embroidered with a lattice of livid stripes. The guests who had followed him to this strange theater of pain-pleasure, cried out admiringly. He turned her to face him once more and trailed a whip up her cleft and she whimpered her need. He touched her nipples, squeezed and nibbled them, then slid a finger between her open labia and palpated her clit. She wailed like a cat in heat and he laughed and withdrew the beneficence of his clever fingers, leaving her hanging there, frustrated and tormented. He jerked his head at his followers and they homed in on her like busy honeybees, bringing her relief and satisfying themselves at the same time.

"How can you be so heartless?" Carenza was furious, recalling her own submission to the whip. "She's a human being, not a sex object!"

"You're so innocent, darling. She's having a great time and will be back again for more, mark my words."

"I hope you don't intend to do that to me." Her emotions were on a seesaw. She was disgusted, yet part of her longed to be his victim.

"Perhaps, but not now. There's another treat in store."

At a given signal, double doors swung back at the top of the ramp and two chariots appeared, small, compact, ornate and pulled by women wearing harness and little else. They had helmets that crowned the flowing manes on their heads, and equally fine tails lodged in their assholes. They trotted along, flicked by their drivers' whips, legs rising smartly in unison, a fine pair of trained steeds.

The spectators cheered and the chariots raced 'round the ring twice, in competition to see who would reach David first. When the winner reined in before him, Carenza was astonished to see that the pony girl pulling the chariot was Ruth. That prissy, competent secretary was bowing her head and David was patting it, just as if she was a favorite mare, while she pawed the ground and neighed. Had she known about this feature of his life? Carenza wondered. Or had she been initiated since staying there? Whatever it was, the role suited her admirably—David's pack animal, his obedient

creature. Her driver, a lean, lithe young man wearing form-hugging jodhpurs, jumped down.

"Well done, Bobby." David shook hands with him and then turned to Ruth. "And well done, you." She whinnied with joy. "Now I order you to teach Carenza how an obedient pony behaves."

He slipped the bridle and bit from Ruth's mouth while Bobby unbuckled her harness and flung a blanket around her for she shone with a patina of sweat, just like a real horse. Then, lingeringly, David withdrew the tail from her anus. She sighed and shuddered and leaned into him. He freed himself and she glared at Carenza resentfully and led her through a door under the ramp. It proved to be a stable, complete with every accessory required to equip several chariots and ponies. *This is well weird*, Carenza thought to herself, though at the back of her mind stirred recollections of reading about the alternative pony clubs that existed worldwide. Trust David to be cashing in and enjoying such a strange phenomena. Women yearning to be horses and men getting their kicks by competing against others in lightweight carts with girls in harness. *I don't want to take part. No one can make me*, Carenza fumed, but it seemed she was to be given no option.

She turned to leave, but Ruth barred her way. "Mr. Farlan has given his orders." Her voice was brittle with dislike and jealousy.

Carenza faced her, legs astride, knuckles on her hips. "God has spoken, has He? Get real, Ruth. David's a literal pain in the ass. One hell of a hemorrhoid."

Ruth struck out at her, taking her off guard, but Bobby intervened. "That's enough. Help me get her into her gear."

Carenza was about to give him a mouthful when she saw that he carried a crop and looked ready to use it. She backed down. More "horses" now filed into the ring behind her, women no doubt fulfilling their childhood dreams of actually becoming the ponies they loved so much. The crowd was betting on the outcome of races and excitement ran high, exaggerated by drink and the sexual freedom on offer. It left a bad taste in Carenza's mouth for what was a comparatively harmless frolic amongst consenting adults was now tainted by gambling.

Ruth cooled down a little, following Bobby's instructions and saying to Carenza, "Like you, I didn't want to take part, but now I love it, particularly if Mr. Farlan is at the reins. Then the chaffing of the harness between my legs makes me come. He handles me so well. I never thought...never dreamed that he would choose me as his slave."

"You're wacky, Ruth. D'you know that?"

"But you feel his spell. I know it." There was a fanatical look in Ruth's eyes that shone beneath the mock forelock. "But he's mine, I tell you. He relies on me."

"Don't fret your bowls to fiddle strings. If you're worried about him fucking me, he already has. And we went dogging earlier this evening. So put that in your pipe and smoke it, bitch!"

Ruth's mouth set in a tense line, but Bobby was her handler and she had to do as he said. Carenza wondered if David had actually had sex with her. She was skinny and unattractive, but maybe he had done so to pass an idle half-hour with no thought of the woman's feelings and her desperate love for him. This would be typical of his attitude and Carenza decided to have nothing more to do with such a callous brute. Almost, but not quite. She needed answers concerning him to put her mind at rest. How far would he go? And did he have feelings for her? Also she was trying to squash memories of Matt.

Bobby reached for items that hung over a stall and said to Carenza, "Strip!"

"You're joking. Aren't you?!"

He shrugged. "It's down to you. Either you take your clothes off yourself or I'll do it for you. Your shout."

"Sod you!" She flung off the fur coat and started to unhook the basque.

It fell to her waist and she unclipped the stockings that now wrinkled down. She removed her shoes and then dragged off the hose. She knew that she had nothing to be ashamed of, her body honed by the exercise and slog of camp life, but even so it was embarrassing to feel so vulnerable. Civilized humans were accustomed to being covered and it took practice to feel at ease nude. Carenza still had a long way to go.

The cool air gave her goose pimples, her nipples hardening. Bobby fastened a leather girth around her. It was wide and uncomfortably tight, drawing in her waist from ribs to pubis and lacing at the back like a corset. She squirmed as he placed a crupper between her thighs, clipping it in place. It dug into her cleft, its central strap darkening with the juice seeping from her for she was aroused, despite everything. This was so new, so novel a situation. Bobby smiled knowingly, as if he could smell her excitement.

He took up a spiked collar and buckled it firmly around her neck. Her breasts were lifted by straps passing over and under them. Ruth, with evident relish, advanced toward her and, while Bobby restrained Carenza, pinched her nipples and snapped on a pair of nipple clamps, hung with little silver bells. The pain was excruciating and Ruth added to it by slapping her breasts hard so that the bells jingled.

Next Carenza was forced to sit on a bench while Bobby fastened on high boots with thick soles, lacing them firmly around her calves. Cuffs were clamped on her wrists and a jeweled cap placed on her head from which a mane flowed, augmenting her own tousled locks. He dragged her to her feet, and she stumbled on the awkward wedges as, with a hand in the small of her back, he made her bend over. She could hardly believe what he did next. She braced herself as he selected a penis-shaped object with a horsetail fixed to the end from among several hanging from a rack. He smeared it with gel, kicked her legs apart and inserted it into her ass. Her rectum tried to reject it, but he pushed harder and the dildo penetrated deeply. She felt the tail tickling the backs of her thighs and knew that she was now transformed into the pony girl that David wanted.



Bobby paced 'round her, delighted with the effect. "That's just what the master ordered." And he stroked her tail and nodded to a couple of sturdy stable lads wearing nothing but leather aprons, their taut buttocks inviting attention.

They went to a side bay and wheeled out a robust though elegant two-wheeled chariot, varnished bottle green picked out in gilt. Bobby backed Carenza between the curved shafts and chained them to her wrist cuffs, her hands grasping the polished beech.

"Open wide." Ruth shoved an icy cold metal bit between her teeth, connected to bridle and reins.

The bit was hard and unrelenting, forcing her lips apart, her tongue tangling with it, making her want to gag. The probe in her bottom hurt, stretching her passage, but the crupper around her sex stimulated her clit, making it throb. The little cart was light, and she stepped high in the thick-soled boots, tossing her head, nipple bells jangling, suddenly getting into the role of a proud, pedigree filly.

"Right. Try it out, and then we'll go into the ring and strut our stuff." Bobby was pleased with her cooperation.

Hesitatingly, she tested the balance of the chariot and Bobby sprang onto it and took the seat, his weight making it heavier, the bit dragging at Carenza's mouth. He jerked the reins, guiding her, and his whip stung as it flicked at her flanks. She had no alternative but to trot, pain a quick teacher. When he considered her ready, he clicked his tongue and the doors were opened. Carenza trotted out into the ring amidst a burst of applause, the pull on the reins guiding her.

She realized how a horse might feel at an equestrian event, its flight instinct tempered by its driver's mastery. She held her head high, stuck out her breasts and, though her back was aching from the pull of the harness and her feet felt clumsy in the heavy shoes, she nonetheless acted the part. She tightened her sphincter and her tail swished, and the applause turned to an electrifying roar of praise. It was exciting and her whole body tingled. Bobby made her trot around the ring and at last reined in by David.

He had changed into a red hunting jacket, white breeches and shiny black boots, a froth of lace at his throat, a low-crowned black topper on his head and a crop in his right hand. Bobby swung down and David stood by her head.

"Why are you doing this to me?" Carenza managed to say between the obstructions in her mouth. "All I wanted was to be a TV presenter."

"Ah, my dear, there're more ways than one of skinning a cat." He climbed into the cart.

"I'll bloody skin *you*, bastard, starting with your cock!" She raged furiously, was helpless to do other than follow where the reins led.

There were cameramen about, and she was horrified to think that she might appear on film—not regular television but for a movie that could be sold to the porn industry.

It was unreal. A nightmare painting by Hieronymus Bosch. The drunken, licentious crowd, the pony girls, the charioteers, the flickering lamps and the fan-vaulted ring.

Around and around they went, and now the cart felt heavier and heavier. She was panting and sweat trickled down between her breasts, her spine and inner thighs and her hair was soaking. The whip landed painfully every time she slowed her pace, just the tip but enough to keep her moving. Back to where they had first started and David pulled her to a stop. She stood there trembling with fatigue, saliva dribbling from her mouth.

“Go to it, David!” His cronies gathered around. “Give her one!”

There was no one to help her. She looked for Vicky and Joanna, but they were engrossed with their own lovers and hadn’t yet joined the crowd in the arena.

The cart jerked as David climbed down and the relief made her lightheaded. Surely he had had enough and her ordeal was now over? He smiled as he came around and lifted the bit from her sore mouth. “You make a great filly. I shall use you again, and now it’s reward time.”

She had hoped this meant the unchaining of her hands and release from the shafts, but this didn’t happen. Instead he stood in the space between her and the front of the vehicle, and she moaned as the false tail was taken out of her ass to be replaced by his erect cock. He was already rubbered up and smeared with lube and she opened easily for him.

His supporters were as close as they could get, watching him in awed admiration, as he moved faster within her. He reached around and pushed aside the straps, finding her engorged clitoris. She didn’t know whether to be furious or aroused, but the latter sensation was uppermost. For nearly an hour the chafing of leather on her parts had stimulated her. Now the sensation of David plunging into her most private recess and his touch on her clit was bringing her to climax. Even the nipple clamps on her tits were both painful and exhilarating. As David reached his zenith, so her orgasm swept her and she screamed aloud in wild abandon.

It was then, amidst the tumult of her own climax and David’s final spasms that she heard a voice shouting, “What’s going on here?” And Matt appeared in her field of vision.

\* \* \* \* \*

Matt didn’t know what had prompted him to change his mind, order a vehicle and turn up at Tretowyn Manor unannounced. Or rather, he didn’t *want* to believe he had to go there because of Carenza. He was done with her, wasn’t he? The two-timing, scheming little slag! But if he was honest with himself, and it was a rare thing for him to practice self-deceit, he cared what happened to her, worried about how David might be treating her and was furious to think of her being used sexually.

On arrival, he hobbled to the front door, his knock answered by a tall, androgynous-looking creature dressed entirely in black—black pants, black bodice,

long black gloves. As if his arrival was no surprise and with the air of one who was never ruffled, the person conducted Matt solemnly to the basement. They met no one on the way. Every person who had been invited to the party seemed to be gathered below. He recognized Vicky and Johanna among them, wondering briefly why they had allowed Carenza to be used and concluding that she was enjoying it and didn't want to be interrupted. But the noise, cheers and catcalls rising up made Matt all the more anxious.

He hadn't relished the last week spent incapacitated. A man of action was a very bad patient. Books, TV, magazines, even playing poker with some of the other men didn't entertain him for long. It was only his leg that was damaged, not the rest of him, the strong muscles, the keen brain and the sex drive were all intact. The latter gave him restless nights during which he sometimes wanked and thought about Carenza. He wanted her to phone, but guessed at her stubborn pride. Maybe he should have rung her first, but couldn't bring himself to do so through his friend's mobile.

What would happen to her now? The shoot was in the can. Laurette would be off on other assignments. Taking Carenza with her? The idea of losing touch with her disturbed him more than he liked to admit. After all, she was just a girl and he could take his pick. His frank approach, fearless reputation and feats of derring-do made him an attractive proposition. But, for some strange reason, he couldn't get her out of his mind. Was it love? He brushed this aside as nonsense. He wasn't the type to go all soppy over a girl or so he firmly asserted.

He had had too much time on his hands in which to brood and, on the party night, had come to a decision. He must see her. Find out what was going on. He expected to be shocked by what he found. David Farlan's parties were notorious, but he was determined to see Carenza, talk to her, gauge his own feelings—and hers. Come hell or high water, he was *going* to the bash.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a bombshell. The last person Carenza had expected to see was Matt. But it was him, right enough, supported on hospital-issue crutches, his injured foot resting on tiptoe, unable to take his weight. And he was wearing the blackest scowl she had ever seen.

David, in no way fazed, disentangled himself from Carenza and the chariot. "I didn't think you could make it, old boy."

"You underestimated me," Matt growled.

"What's your problem?" David's silky tones deceived no one, least of all Matt.

"That's just what I was going to ask you," he retaliated, and David's heavy brigade gathered from all directions, evening-suited bruisers with broken noses and cauliflower ears. David didn't go far without them. Matt eyed them scornfully. "Come on, can't you meet me man-to-man or do you have to have your apes do the job for you?"

"I wouldn't hit an injured adversary."

"No? I would have thought that just your style." Matt's sarcasm coiled snakelike around the now silent vault. Everyone was watching and waiting and Carenza's heart was in her mouth.

"I'll slug it out with you any time you want. Or we can use swords if you want." David was in no way alarmed. "If you're familiar with such a thing. I'm a champion with a blade – épée, foil, what you will. Choose your weapon."

"You think I couldn't beat you, cobber? I've been a stunt man and learned to fence."

David gave a flick of his cuffs and looked down his nose. "I wouldn't waste my time. She isn't worth it."

"Couldn't be that you're afraid of losing?"

"Oh, forget it!"

Carenza had never felt so humiliated. She was mortified that Matt should find her being fucked while dressed as a pony! And now they were huffing and puffing and threatening one another. Telling herself that she didn't care what Matt thought of her, she put on a bold front. "Would one of you jerks get these chains off my wrists and me out of the shafts?"

"Oh, listen to her, Miss High and Mighty. Just because she's had David's prick up her." Laurette was annoyed. Carenza was getting much more attention than she was. "Jump to it, Bobby. You'll be her slave before you know it, darling, and I've always wanted you to be mine." And she untangled herself from Kieran and lunged for Bobby's balls.

"Where's the key?" Matt shouted and Bobby, fielding Laurette's attack, threw it over to him.

What a relief to be free, to step away from the cart and turn into a woman again. Carenza stood there rubbing her bruised wrists, wanting to get dressed or at least hide in the fur coat, which was somewhere upstairs. What madness had possessed her to allow herself to be used and abused by David? It was true that the man had influence and she was determined on a career. But surely Matt couldn't believe her to be so ambitious that she would forego every principle?

Matt ignored David and hobbled closer, looking down at her. "Let's get out of here."

He wasn't condemning her! Carenza was relieved yet at the same time disappointed because he didn't seem to be jealous. His feelings toward her were still undefined, whereas she had never been more thankful to see anyone in her life. She wanted to sink into his arms and bury her face in his chest and be hugged as never before.

"Wait a minute. You weren't expected and have no right to interfere." David was lordly in his hunting outfit.

"Don't come the aristocrat with me." Matt was no way intimidated. "You're nothing but a barrow boy who made good by cheating and using other people. There's

not a drop of blue blood in your veins. You're a con artist, pulling the wool over everyone's eyes. Oh, you're cunning okay...got your foot nicely in the door of TV, but I think you're a sham. Wouldn't touch you with a barge pole."

"Get out of my house and out of Wales!" David fumed. "You won't work for me again."

"Too right I won't! My agent will bill you and that will be that!"

"I'll make sure that no other TV company employs you."

"Oh, boohoo! Can you see me crying? Go fly a kite! I've plenty of offers and wouldn't work for you if yours was the only show on earth. I'd rather play wet-nurse to a camel!"

"And you, Carenza? Are you going to listen to this loud-mouthed, muscle-bound oaf?" David stared her hard in the face.

She passed her hand over her forehead, the scene shifting and changing. "I want to go home."

"With him?" David was enraged.

"Alone. I'm tired and need space."

"And what if I forbid it?"

"Then I'll say goodbye, Mr. Farlan. Knowing you has been an eye-opener." Carenza couldn't believe she was saying this. Matt gave her the courage.

David colored up, scowling angrily. "I won't tolerate insubordination."

Laurette wound her arms around his neck, her luscious body undulating and snakelike. "Oh, darling, let her go. She doesn't deserve you."

"That's right" For once Ruth agreed with her, delighted to see her rival in trouble.

His guests had drifted off, seeking further diversions and this quarter of the vault was deserted apart from the leading protagonists. Someone had freed the girl on the crosspiece and the human fillies were being groomed by admirers. Carenza longed to leave this place where anything was possible and no one's feelings were regarded as important.

Clem had spotted Matt as soon as he came in and now put his trousers back on and hauled a naked Vicky over. "Trouble, chum?" There was a belligerent expression on his craggy face as he glared at David.

"Nothing I can't handle." Matt flexed his fists suggestively.

"Are you all right?" Vicky eyed Carenza anxiously, and she threw herself into her friend's arms, so thankful to see her and Joanna who now joined in with Eddie in tow.

"I want to go home." This was the only clear thought in Carenza's head.

"Sorry, babe. We thought you were enjoying being a pony. That's why we didn't interfere," Vicky explained.

"That's okay," Carenza said. "I guess I was enjoying it, to begin with, but now all I want is to leave."

"We'll come with you." Joanna gathered her troops. "Come on, lads. Upstairs and fetch our bags."

David twitched his crop and glared. "How rude to leave my party!"

"Chill. We've had a ball." Vicky had her eye on the future and her designs. He was too important to offend. "Thanks, David. We must do it again some time soon. But now the clock has struck midnight and Cinderella must go before she loses her glass slipper."

"I'll catch you later, David." Eddie was mindful of his director's duties. "The footage needs careful editing. Will you be in the office next week?"

"Of course." David regained his composure, though this slipped a little as he drew Carenza to one side. "Do you really want to leave with Matt? I thought we had a good thing going."

"You did. I'm not so sure about me. It was all to do with power."

He smiled wryly. "When did I have the power? You stripped me of it."

This surprised her. "Oh, come off it, David! That's crap!"

"I don't want to lose you."

It was impossible to tell whether or not he was serious. It could be that he didn't know himself, but she no longer cared. Matt filled her whole horizon. He seized her arm and propelled her to the entrance. She looked back at David, but he was already consoling himself with Laurette. She and Ruth had pulled him onto a divan and he was sandwiched between them. They were unfastening his breeches and diving inside.

Kieran stood looking down at the trio, massaging his appendage as he watched. Laurette spied him and held out an arm. He sank down and joined them, soon lost in a sea of flesh – male, female, it didn't much matter.

\* \* \* \* \*

The FWD was parked on the gravel. Bags were heaved into the trunk, Matt's already there for he had come prepared. He struggled into the driver's seat. "Don't be a bloody fool!" said Clem. "I'll take the wheel."

"You won't." Matt switched on the ignition.

"You can't drive, man!"

"That's what the doctor said." Matt smiled grimly. "But I got here okay. This is an automatic, don't forget. My own bus."

Clem gave in, sitting on the far side of the bench with Carenza between them. "Let me know when you get tired. I don't want to end up a roadside statistic."

It was a long journey, far into the night. Carenza dozed, her head on Clem's shoulder. She had changed into jeans and a sweater, leaving the fur coat in the wardrobe. David could get some other sucker to wear it. She was afraid she'd never be able to pass a public car lot again without recalling the experience of dogging.

Vicky and Joanna slumped in the back, using Eddie as a pillow. The roads were clear and they made good time. Clem took over when, at halfway point, they had a break at a motorway stop-off. Dawn was sending pink and orange fans of light streaking up from the horizon when they arrived in London and, finally, Kensington.

Carenza woke with a jolt, finding Matt's arm around her and her head buried in his chest. There was her house! In a row of others, steps leading up to the front door with its panels of stained glass. A villa, once owned by her great-grandparents, it was a solid place where they had reared six children and there had still been room for live-in staff. *I'm so lucky*, she thought sleepily, well aware of Matt's warm body close to hers.

"Home, sweet home!" Vicky sang out, and they piled from the vehicle and tumbled in at the door, luggage and all. Matt followed slowly and he looked tired and strained.

"Letters!" Joanna, swooped them up from the hall table where the cleaner had left them. Then her face dropped. "Oh Lord, looks like a load of bills."

"Leave them. I want a cup of tea." Vicky headed for the kitchen. "David owes us a fistful of money anyway."

"This is kind of nice." Matt was soon seated on one of the high stools, his injured leg resting on another.

"It is, isn't it?" Carenza was thinking, *I never want to leave it again and this is totally wimpy. I can't stay cooped up here forever. What am I afraid of? Experience? I enjoyed it with David in a perverse sort of way, but I don't want to dip a toe in those turbulent waters again.*

"Oh God, I need my bed." Vicky picked up her cup and headed for the door. "Coming, Clem?"

"Try and stop me, babe."

They sauntered off together, carrying their cups, reminding Carenza of a long-married couple and this was weird. Surely Vicky wasn't calming down, was she? And it was the same with Joanna, going upstairs with Eddie. It seemed as if they had both found their mates in the wild, wild woods. *And as for me?* she pondered. *Am I ready to settle down?* The answer was a firm yes.

There was something sweet about Matt hauling himself up by the banister rail and her following with a tray of snacks and tea. They could have been together for years and yet he was excitingly unknown. It suddenly struck her that this was what she really, truly wanted. A future with him, stretching into eternity. She realized that she had been a fool to deny it, kidding herself that she was falling in love with David, when it was Matt she wanted all along. Thank God, it wasn't too late!

Her bedroom was beautiful and so familiar. "Would you like a shower?" she asked, but his face was serious as he turned to her.

"We need to talk."

She sat with him on the side of the bed, teacup in her hand, feeling that sudden warm, happy feeling evaporating. "What is it you want to say?"

"I must have answers from you before we take this any further." He looked her straight in the eyes. "What is it with you and David? Why did you let him treat you like a pony? Do you love him?"

"No." Now she could truthfully say it.

He spread his hands wide in an exasperated gesture. "Then why?"

"It's hard to explain. I was curious, I suppose and yes, at first I did imagine I was in love with him. He was exciting and what he did was kind of forbidden, at least to a girl like me, and I wanted to find out about it."

"He's into kinky."

"I know that now."

"And you?" His eyes were bright and intent.

"I've always wanted true love and I still do. I hoped that he might feel the same, but he's obviously not about to be serious with me. I think he may end up with Laurette."

"And if he was serious?" His grip on her hand was so tight that it hurt.

"It's different now. I've met you, Matt, and, God help me, it's you I want to be with."

"If you're lying, I'll probably kill you." His words were harsh, but there was hurt in his expression.

"No lie." She dared reach out and smooth the side of his face. It was stubbly, but she didn't mind.

"I'm not promising anything, but we can give it a go if you like." He was ungracious and she sympathized with his reluctance to drop his guard.

"That's a pity, for I'd really like a promise, Matt. I'm tired of being let down."

"You ask a lot from a guy." He clasped his hands between his knees, as awkward as a schoolboy.

"I'm worth it." She said this firmly, and knew that it was true. No man was going to take away her self-assurance ever again.

A smile warmed his face and he took her into his arms. "What was it you said about a shower?"

She helped him to undress and found him a towel, then assisted him into the bathroom. So powerful a body. So lovely a man. Her heart was beating like a drum as she left him and slipped on a kimono, sitting on the side of the bed and sipping tea.

She heard the shower stop and then him brushing his teeth. After that he limped in, the white towel knotted 'round his waist, in sharp contrast to his sun-browned skin. She feasted her eyes on him, remembering oh-so much—his courage and knowledge of the wilds, his patience with those who were slow to understand, the fact that he was totally reliable in a crisis situation. Her heart seemed to swell with emotion and she knew this to be true love. What had gone before in her life had merely been a rehearsal for the real thing.



His long hair was wet and straggled around his neck and he shrugged his shoulders into the toweling robe she had provided, fastening it 'round the waist with a girdle. *I like this*, she thought. *I like a man in my room. It would be like this if Matt was my husband. A comforting feeling of familiarity spiced with sexual desire.*

She left him then, showering herself, washing away the taint of David and soothing her body that ached in many places. Being a pony hadn't been painless. The gel was perfumed and the water hot and there was a most personable man waiting for her in the bedroom. What more could a girl need? *Be careful*, she warned herself, *you don't want to get hurt again. Remember how Kelyn had almost destroyed you.*

No, not Kelyn. She had allowed herself to be destroyed. She saw now that she couldn't really blame him for letting herself wallow in the false dream of an obsessional love.

*I'm growing up at last*, she concluded and dried her dripping hair, anointed her body with scented moisturizer and went back to Matt.

Their lovemaking was a revelation. Not the first time. There had been the episode in the pool and in the hut, but that had been shagging. When he'd been injured? Friendly and affectionate. But this was romantic and meaningful. He lay on the bed and she disrobed him, careful not to knock his leg.

He laughed. "Don't worry. You don't have to treat me like china. The rest of me is working all right. Here, cop a feel of this." He took her hand and wrapped the palm around his cock.

She knelt over him and he paddled his hands over her nipples and reached down to palpate her clitoris until she was on the point of coming, but she wanted to savor every moment and make it last. With an agile twist she stretched beside him and lipped his chest and down, down to where the line of hair circled his navel and thickened over his lower belly. His cock stood up like a flagpole and she used all her skill to pleasure him, stretching back the foreskin so that his helm was bare, shiny red with need. She licked up his shaft, all the way to the top then lightly used the tip of her tongue to enter the tiny slit that oozed pre-cum.

Matt drew her face to his by her hair, his lips feeding on hers greedily, tasting his own salty emission. He was so thorough at kissing, exploring her mouth and teeth and the insides of her cheeks. She couldn't get enough, willing to lie there forever locked in his embrace while he fed on her. Now it was her turn to be nibbled and he pushed her over onto her back and slid down the length of her. He parted her thighs, and buried his face in her perfumed mound, one hand reaching up to roll her nipples in his fingers. The other opened her wide and his tongue found her clit, settling into a steady rhythm.

Carenza whimpered and thrashed but he continued, twin points of joy radiating one to the other, her nipples and her bud. Matt knew how to treat it gently or forcefully, taking her to the very top of the rainbow and tumbling her down in a welter of sensation.

When she convulsed in orgasm, he entered her, his cock penetrating to give her inner muscles something to spasm around. It was a perfect meeting of bodies and souls and she clung to him, rejoicing as he came, never wanting to part from him. Afterward they lay and talked and planned, as couples will, and slept in each other's arms.

\* \* \* \* \*

Carenza was dreaming, running along a sandy shore with the waves pounding against high cliffs and seagulls crying. Their noise became something else. The Toreador's aria from *Carmen*. Her mobile phone's ring tone.

She slid from the bed without disturbing Matt. He looked younger asleep, boyish even, any lines smoothed away. Where was the damn phone? Not by the bedside or in her handbag. She followed the song into the bathroom. God only knew what it was doing there. She pressed the call button and heard an instantly recognizable voice.

"Have you any clothes on?" David asked.

"No."

"Excellent. That's how I like you."

"What do you want?"

"That's a silly question. You, of course."

"You can't have me. I'm with someone else now."

"Ditch him."

"I don't want to."

"Is it Matt?"

"Yes."

"You're wasted on such a clot. Give him the elbow."

"No. He's taking me to America on his next job."

He sighed, and began advising her as if she was a lovesick teenager. "Oh well, try it, darling, but you'll be coming back to me. I give it three months and will keep your job open."

"You're wrong, David. We're an item now."

"Bollocks! I've so much more to teach you. Don't you want to learn? You're a great pupil, Carenza. I've never known anyone so eager. And that show is going to be a hit. I've been watching the rushes tonight. Laurette is over the moon, but you are a natural. We should talk about it."

"I've got to go now." She was eager to cut him off.

"I'll see you next week. Come into the office."

"I'm resigning."

"You haven't worked out your contract. Never mind, that can be sorted later."

"I told you. I'm going away with Matt."

"It can all be put on hold until you return. See you later, Carenza."

"I don't think so. Goodbye, David." She switched off the phone.

Matt slumbered on and she sat on the side of the bed, admiring him. She was supremely happy, the future stretching ahead like a bright carpet. But would she ever be able to truly banish David from her mind? He was a strange man, a masterful, cruel man, but one who had appealed to all that was wild within her. This was in the past. Speaking with him again had helped her come to a firm decision. She was taking the plunge, leaping into the unknown and throwing in her lot with Matt, if he would have her.

She would keep the conversation with David to herself and stick to her resolve to resign. As she slipped under the duvet beside Matt, her thoughts were whirling. She was independent, a woman in her own right and would always be so. She loved Matt sincerely and hoped that before long they would be a couple. There was nothing she wanted more than to be his wife, to go adventuring with him and later when they were both ready, to start a family.

He was aware of her, even in his sleep, rolling toward her, throwing one long leg over her thighs and an arm across her breasts. She cuddled up to him, supremely happy, maybe for the first time in her life. It was odd that one person could make such a difference. The right person who one's soul recognized even while the mind rebelled, afraid to let go and risk everything in one reckless throw.

Matt half woke, smiling into her eyes and saying, "You're really here? I was afraid that you might have thought better of it and gone away."

"That's not going to happen." And as he began to make love to her, slowly and sensually, Carenza meant every word she said.

## Epilogue

*Two years later*

"Come on, Mrs. Clayburn. Another big push and we're almost there."

The voice seemed to come from a great distance. Carenza was so very tired. It was as if she had been climbing a mountain for hours, striving to reach the peak. Matt had come in halfway through. He'd rushed back from shooting a film in Spain. This had been the story of their life, sometimes together, at others separated by the demands of their careers, but no matter what, coming closer and closer all the time. And this was the event that would be the jewel in their crown, if she could do it!

England was in the middle of a heat wave, with never before recorded temperatures. The air-conditioning made her task possible. Without it, she felt she might have simply given up the ghost! She had been looking forward to this so much, but, despite reading books and watching videos and talking to experienced friends, had not realized the trauma of the experience.

"No one told me it would be like this!" she complained, almost bitterly.

"It's impossible to describe exactly, but you're doing fine," said the nurse.

"Are you okay, honey?" Matt leaned across and took her hand in his, the concern on his face almost comical.

Pain snatched her in its iron jaws and gave her a savage shake. "Of course I'm not all right, you bloody idiot! Does it look as if I'm all right?" she managed to gasp, the force of her grip turning his hand white.

Matt rounded on the midwife. "Can't you do something? She's been like this for hours."

"Everything is perfectly normal. It won't be long now." The woman was large, genial and reassuring. "The doctor is on his way."

Carenza rested for a second, the pain receding. She could hear traffic passing this major London hospital and wished she was at home in Kensington. Love Matt to distraction though she might, his wandering lifestyle meant that she did not spend as much time as she would have liked there.

This will change now, she thought, trying to distract herself from the storm that was gathering momentum again within her. *We didn't exactly plan this to happen yet. We've only been married a year and it is bound to make a difference to our lives, but not to our love.*

She had seen nothing of David since leaving Beyond Enterprise, but knew that he had married Laurette. There had been a great song and dance about it, with the happy

couple's faces plastered all over the glossy magazines. She had been surprised at how little any of it meant to her, her world centered on Matt.

Pain descended again, wiping out all other thought, digging in its claws, possessing her entirely, but its quality had changed. It was no longer an aching, dragging pain. Now it was a powerful pain, a fighting pain, a victorious pain and she went with it.

Matt was there, wiping the sweat from her face, her companion in all things, and the doctor had arrived, a calm young man who might have been an actor in a TV hospital drama. She wondered if he was having an affair with one of the nurses or even a consultant or administrator. This seemed to be the form in these soaps. Someone thrust a knotted towel into her fist. Its far end was fastened to the foot rail of the narrow bed. "Now drag on that and push when I tell you," ordered the doctor. His voice was authoritative and she couldn't do other than obey. She had no choice anyway, her body taking over.

A deep puff at the painkiller. Matt holding on to her. Her body beyond her control, reacting to the dictates of nature. "Jesus! It's like the worse kind of constipation," she grunted between gritted teeth.

*I want to die!* she complained inside herself. *Oh Lord, let me die!*

But no. Suddenly there was a warm gush of fluid and a slithering sensation between her thighs and the pain vanished as if by magic. Its place was taken by the shrill cries of a baby and someone saying, she thought it was the doctor, "You've got a little stuntman, Mrs. Clayburn."

Carenza struggled into a sitting position, her legs weak and shaky, the relief making her feel lightheaded. "Let me see him!" she demanded fiercely.

The baby was swaddled in a blanket and given to Matt. He brought him over and placed him in Carenza's arms. She had never seen anything more perfect. Red-faced and wrinkled, obviously annoyed at being turned out of his snug nest, he gazed up at her with Matt's eyes, his wet, shaggy hair Matt-colored. A tiny replica of his father.

"Isn't he great?" Matt sat on the side of the bed, his arms around Carenza and his son.

"Oh, yes." There was nothing more to add. This infant had completed her world that she had already thought perfect because she shared it with Matt. "Let Vicky and Joanna know."

"Don't worry. They've been waiting for hours to hear the news. But just for a moment, I want to be alone with you and him."

He knew her so well, this soul mate who had become everything to her. There was nothing he did not understand, no emotion too deep for him to share. At last she had met the man with whom she intended to spend her life, her happiness doubled by the appearance of this little miracle.

## **About the Author**

Tesni welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).



Discover for yourself why readers can't get enough of the multiple award-winning publisher Ellora's Cave. Whether you prefer e-books or paperbacks, be sure to visit EC on the web at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com) for an erotic reading experience that will leave you breathless.

[www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)