



TUTORING LADY JANE

By

Charlotte Featherstone

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DEDICATION:

Many thanks go out to my critique partners, Monica Burns and Kristina Cook for their unfailing support and enthusiasm. Where would I be without you?

To my husband and daughter, who support my writing and share my goal of being a published author, despite the take out dinners and the messy house, thank you, and I love you.

And lastly, to every woman out there who has ever thought she didn't have what it takes.... I dedicate this book to you.

Chapter One

London, 1780

The cracking of a log in the hearth sounded over the crinkling rustle of French silk. In the distance, the muffled rhythm of the minuet could be heard beyond the paneled door of Lord Lennox's study. Senses attuned to any sound that might lead to someone discovering him and ultimately an inconvenient dawn appointment, Gavin Reynolds, Viscount Grayson, spread his arms wide on the back of the brocade settee, watching as his latest conquest--Lady Lennox--worked to unfasten the jade buttons of his waistcoat.

Surely the languid warmth of the fire and the view of Lady Lennox's breasts, which he'd recently freed from her bodice, were the reasons his senses were slow to process the fact that they had a visitor, and a decidedly female one at that.

From his peripheral vision he saw the door inch open, revealing a sliver of a heavily embroidered eschelle corset, above which sat the creamiest bosom he'd ever seen--and he'd seen plenty.

"Oooh," his conquest purred as she parted the lace ruffle of his shirt. "I've wondered what your dark skin looks like. Sarah was right; it does resemble coffee with cream."

He stiffened, unable to stem or hide the impulse. For

some damnable reason his eyes automatically searched the opening in the door, checking to see if the female ensconced behind it had heard Helena's words. He didn't give a bloody farthing what Lady Lennox thought of him, he knew what all the women of the ton called him. But for some elusive reason, he did not want the voyeur behind the door to hear the comment and thinly veiled reminder that he was nothing but a filthy half-breed.

He knew who watched him, knew and sensed as he always did whenever she strolled into a ballroom or happened to glance his way. His body always reacted to Lady Jane Westbury in such a curious way.

The woman was not the type he normally cavorted with. It was said that she was rather plump and unremarkable. Plain, he'd heard countless men describe her. Yet he, a self-confessed connoisseur of female flesh found her utterly intriguing. He supposed she was plain when compared to some of the beauties of the ton. But there was something about her that captured his attention in a far deeper and more meaningful way than the buxom lovelies he spent his evenings with.

Lady Jane was buxom, of that he was certain. But it wasn't only the sight of full breasts and lushly rounded hips that drew his eye. No, it was a quality he had never experienced in his legions of paramours. Lady Jane was

a true lady. A paragon of womanly virtue. A woman of taste, refinement and kindness.

That she should be here now, watching as Helena Lennox tore open the flap of his silk breeches while he reclined on her husband's settee, was impossible. Impossible and highly arousing. His reputation as the whoring India Rat would be firmly implanted in Jane's mind. He didn't know quite what to make of that.

"My lord," Helena, cooed, her lips a scant inch from his cock. "My work seems to be cut out for me this evening."

Gavin glanced down to see his limp member in Helena's be-ringed hand. She looked up at him imploringly through painted eyes. Her face was powdered white with the exception of two rouged circles on her cheeks. At the corner of her right eye sat a black beauty patch in the shape of a crescent moon. She was the height of fashion. Every man in London thought her beautiful, and yet he couldn't get up the desire--literally--to take her.

He blinked, trying to clear the vision of Helena's head with its gray curling wig covered in pearls and a ridiculously large blue plume lowering to his lap. A fleeting vision of a fresh, country faced countess flashed before him and he groaned. His mind supplied the

visual of firm, large breasts and plump thighs, not to mention his dark hands covering every inch of her milk-white skin. Even now he could imagine the feel of her body, could conceive of the way his fingers would trace the curves of her figure. She would be ripe and full beneath that rose-colored gown and he knew, as sure as he knew his name that she would be possessed of a derriere he could cup and knead while she lay atop him.

"Ah," Helena murmured between flicks of her tongue. "This is what you're in need of."

"Perhaps." His answer was vague and noncommittal as he rested his head back against the settee, letting his body go limp as he tried to push the sound of his uninvited guest's hushed intake of air out of his mind. He'd shocked her, no doubt. She shouldn't be here. She shouldn't be witnessing the extent of his wickedness. And she should damn well not be privy to him allowing a married woman such as Helena to take his cock greedily into her mouth.

"My lord," Sarah Manchester said huskily as she strolled from where her gown and petticoats lay in a heap on the floor. "Are you ready to play?"

That damnable sound of hushed shock again resonated through his brain. He instantly regretted agreeing to

meet with the two friends who apparently enjoyed sharing everything. Thankfully his body was now working on instinct alone and would not disgrace him.

It had never been a trial for him to perform the sex act while thinking a myriad of thoughts--hell, as he'd been tugging Sarah last night he'd pondered what his cook would be making him for breakfast.

But he couldn't seem to get these thoughts--thoughts of Lady Jane out of his mind. He imagined her working his cock with her pink mouth, visualized her naked on her knees before him looking up from a cloud of honey brown hair. On a whim he conjured up the feel of her breasts, full and heavy, the nipples erect and searching as his lips fastened onto them, suckling her, making her moan and pant beneath him.

"Mmmm," Sarah purred, standing behind the settee and lowering her breasts to his mouth. He leaned his head further back to take one erect nipple between his teeth, pretending the husky desire he heard belonged to Lady Jane, not Sarah, the man-eating Duchess of Manchester.

Already tired of Sarah, he pulled away, fixing his gaze on the door. She was still there, watching, her bosom rising and falling rapidly above her tight corset. He could smell her, the scent of sweet country flowers. And he could still see her as she glided into the

ballroom not more than two hours ago and smiled at him. It had not been a smile of invitation for an illicit rut in a study, nor a mocking grin because she had heard the gossip that his mother had been nothing more than a Bombay whore, but a smile of genuine kindness and warmth. A smile that had unexpectedly and confusingly, invaded his dreams.

She was a lady, true as well as bred. He was the son of a scandalous liaison and marriage between a half Indian, half English concubine and her lover. A lover who had, unexpectedly, inherited a viscountcy.

His parents' torrid love affair, and the fact that his proper English father had not only married, but procreated with a courtesan who was at one time in the keeping of a Sultan, was the bane of Gavin's existence. He'd lived his whole life fighting the stigma of his mother's heritage and her illegitimacy, while enduring the cruel taunts of the children at school. The sly comments had not ceased at Eton, but continued on in the form of the callous remarks of men and women who were no more moral or pious than himself.

But she had never looked at him in such a way. He had always fancied that the intelligent and somewhat plain Lady Jane had seen more to him than his legendary sexual propensity and colorful breeding.

"Grayson," Sarah scolded, brushing her nipples against his lips, coaxing him to suckle her. "Your reputation is tarnishing by the second. I enjoyed this much better last night. You were much more exuberant."

Damn her, he thought, suddenly feeling sick. He meant nothing to them; he was just a prick to play with. He would only ever be the half-breed with a large cock, hard body, and strange, dark skin that every woman of breeding fancied a go with. In the light of day he would forever be the dirty half-breed whose only claim to fame was that he'd fucked half of the ladies in the adjacent ballroom.

Clearing his throat, he sat forward, removing Helena's hand from his rigid length, a rigidity caused not by Helena, but by the woman who was hidden behind the door. "I grow bored, ladies. Excuse me."

Ignoring Sarah and Helena's shocked expressions and pleas that he stay, he refastened his breeches and shirt before knotting his cravat. Without a glance, he donned his waistcoat, buttoned the jade closures that everyone said so resembled his eyes and shrugged into his frock coat. With a curt bow he turned and stalked to the door, grinning as the sliver of bodice instantly disappeared. It had been one of his best conquests--to have the very proper Lady Jane Westbury's full attention. Now it was just a matter of finding the enigmatic countess amongst

the guests and discovering just what made her seek him out, as he knew she had. He'd felt those chocolate brown eyes following him throughout the night. Perhaps, he thought, as he reached for the door latch, she wished to experience the delights of his bed. The very idea made him pleurably aroused.

"Filthy Indian," Sarah cried, as he stepped into the shadowed hall. "You'll never be anything more than an oddity to take to bed."

"But not your bed," he quipped without looking back. No, the only bed he envisioned himself falling into in the foreseeable future was Jane Westbury's. A daunting, but thoroughly arousing thought.

* * * *

Jane picked up her skirts and raced through the darkened hall, her heels clicking against the wooden floor. She must have been absolutely depraved, not to mention desperate to follow the viscount. She'd known he was about to meet his latest paramour, but she had never, not in a hundred years guessed it would be Lady Lennox, not to mention the countess' good friend, the Duchess of Manchester. Two women, her mind screamed as she made her way to the ballroom of the Lennox country estate. His debauchery truly was everything she'd heard, and his mastery everything she'd

dreamed of.

Damn her curiosity, she fumed as she stopped running and smoothed her skirt. She should never have accepted the invitation for a genteel country weekend at the Lennox estate, and she most certainly should never have entertained the notion of meeting with, much less propositioning the viscount.

With a flick of her hand, she opened her mother of pearl fan and forcefully beat the air before her. Damn her wastrel husband, too. For if Archie, the Earl of Westbury, had not abandoned her and their wedding vows for the far too young and lovely Arabella, she would not have found herself in such a predicament.

Nodding to a few acquaintances, Jane waded through the ballroom, heading to the terrace and the sanity of the cool night air. The ballroom was filled to overflowing and the evening was at its height. No one would notice if she stepped out for a brief minute. No one ever really noticed her. They hadn't before her marriage, and most certainly not since Archie had cast her aside, except, of course, to whisper behind their fans and cast looks of pity in her direction.

Stepping out into the darkness, she sighed, pondering her circumstances and her foolish plan to follow Lord Grayson. Had he seen her? No, she didn't think so. He'd

been too involved in the beautiful women fawning over his body. A body, Jane had to admit, that she'd always admired.

Archie had been pale and thin, where Grayson was tall and broad and possessed of the most exotic skin she'd ever seen. He looked perpetually tanned, and when he grinned, flashing a set of brilliant white teeth, she felt weak-kneed. Her husband had been nothing like the viscount. Archie always shaved his hair, preferring wigs to his natural blond locks. But the viscount wore shoulder length black hair, tied in a queue with a simple black ribbon. And those eyes.... Jane fanned herself again. When he'd looked toward the door, those infamous green eyes pierced her. She'd sworn he could see her then and she had been unable to move. She'd been hypnotized, bewitched by turquoise eyes that she thought surely must resemble the waters of the Indian Ocean.

Foolish. She was being fanciful. Viscount Grayson would never look at her as she looked at him. She was plain and plump. So unremarkable, in fact, that she faded into the silk cloth that lined the walls of the Lennox's ballroom. She had always been, and forever would be the ton's wallflower.

She was glad she'd run away when she saw him stroll to the door. She had saved herself a cartload of the

humiliation she would have experienced when she presented him with her outrageous idea. Surely he would have narrowed his gaze and grinned at her in mockery.

What would the handsome and notoriously experienced viscount say when the utterly proper and undesirable Lady Jane Westbury asked him to tutor her in the ways of pleasuring a man? Laugh, that's what he would do, then he would look upon her with sympathy. 'Poor, plain Lady Westbury,' he would mock, 'unable to find herself a man after being left by her husband.'

Damn Archie for succumbing to the wiles of a girl less than half his age. Archie had been forty, when he'd left her for the charms of Arabella. Arabella in turn had been only eighteen, and infinitely stupid. Although apparently not half as feeble-minded as herself--Arabella, had, after all, been able to attract and keep Archie's attentions. Something she had never been able to do.

How fitting that Archie should decide to cock up his toes in Arabella's bed. Archie had never exerted enough energy in their bed to even break a sweat, and Jane couldn't help but think that the blackheart had deserved everything he had gotten. Well, it meant nothing now--it did not matter a fig about Archie and Arabella. But Archie's death had left her in a bit of a fix.

She was now a thirty-year-old widowed countess without an admirer, a husband or children. It was all she had really ever wanted growing up--children of her own, a loving husband and a quiet but happy life in the country. What she'd gotten was a philandering spouse whose idea of loving was to come to her room at night, lift her night rail and plunge into her, spending himself in the hopes of siring an heir. Archie had been neither loving nor particularly caring.

He hadn't always been quite so cold, not in the first years of their marriage, but five years ago, all had changed. Archie had become moody and irritable, forever finding fault with a body that had, admittedly, changed in the years since she married him at the tender and impressionable age of seventeen.

She'd been but a girl when she'd wed him. A thin, straight figured girl with a flat stomach and narrow hips. It was only natural that she would one day turn into a woman, and a woman had curves. It was with the blossoming of her figure that she discovered Archie detested voluptuousness in women. Not only was it her body he found abhorrent, but it seemed he found her rather inconvenient as she could not even do her duty and conceive. 'And you're not even pretty,' he'd snapped as he stalked out of their bedchamber leaving her alone in the dark. 'Had it not been for your dowry you

would've been utterly useless to me.'

Archie's taunts and sneers reverberated around her brain and she looked up, into the night sky, trying to erase the pain of her marriage. She no longer loved him, had not really loved him for the past five years. Still, she would not have left him as he had left her. She would not have shamed or humiliated him by dying in her lover's bed.

And that brought her up to her present circumstances. She had narrowly avoided humiliation once again. For degradation would have been her best friend had she the backbone to ask the infamous viscount to show her the way of getting a man's attention and keeping it too.

Fool, she muttered as she turned to walk back into the ballroom. She would leave for Kent tomorrow. She would return to the empty, lonely estate she had purchased with what little money Archie had bequeathed to her.

"Wait."

The voice was dark and sensual and Jane's skin came alive as the word caressed her neck.

"You've been spying on me."

Every nerve ending reared and tightened and she gasped, as she always did when she couldn't string two words together.

"I heard that very sound not more than five minutes ago and do you know what it did to me?" Hot breath caressed her neck, the ribbon securing her diamond choker tickled her skin. "It made me wonder why a lady such as yourself would be observing such a personal moment."

She licked her lips and willed her knees to stop trembling. Why, when she felt the first touch of his finger stroking her spine above her stomach, did she have the impulse to confess all?

"Perhaps you were merely curious, hmmm? Wondering just what the India Rat does with all those women he has at his beck and call."

"N-no," she stammered, hating the name coming from his own lips. It didn't matter that the others called him that. He was not an India Rat. He was not, despite what the ton said. Feeling somewhat brave, she screwed up her courage, preparing to bare her deepest desires to a man who reputedly would do nothing but exploit them.

She was a woman of thirty. A woman who had experience of men and the marriage bed, although not

nearly enough. Surely she could present her plan in such a way that the viscount would see fit to agree. Surely he would not humiliate her if he found her scheme laughable.

When the silence stretched on, she felt his muscled chest press into her back. "Perhaps you entertained the notion of joining us? Four makes for much more spirited play than three."

She gasped again. The idea was scandalous and the thought of sharing him with those two tarts, revolting. It had been a long time since she harbored secret fantasies of the viscount, and the very thought of sharing him was inconceivable. In her dreams, he had wanted no one other than herself.

"What is it you wish for? For I know you want. I am aware of it coursing through your veins. I can feel it on your skin; I can smell it." And as if to make his point, he leaned into her, his lips teasingly grazing her neck. "Most definitely I can smell it. Tell me, Lady Jane, is it desire I sense? Do you yearn to be seduced by the wicked India Rat, or is your penchant more voyeuristic? Do you want to watch me have sex with those women, then sneak out and rut with a more respectable gentleman, all the while thinking of me?"

"I want you to teach me to be the type of woman a man

desires."

There, she'd said it. The only thing left to do was steel herself against the eerie silence and his ensuing mocking laughter.

But the laughter did not come. Instead, he placed his warm hands on her shoulders and turned her to face him. She was instantly met with his legendary eyes. They were not teasing and sensual, but dark and haunting in the dim candlelight that poured through the French doors.

"The tutoring of Lady Jane," he murmured his voice dark and dangerous. "I vow, I'm astonished."

"Well," she huffed, irked by his words and the reminder that she was unable to capture a man's attention. She didn't need any reminders that her body was not made to fascinate a man. "You needn't be disagreeable, sir."

"I have neither agreed nor disagreed."

"But you--"

"--was already preparing my lessons, I assure you."

She was speechless as she looked up into his

handsome face. A face she had always been drawn to, and lips she had dreamed of kissing.

"I know what it is you want, and I assure you, you could not find yourself a better, or more knowledgeable teacher."

"Well, yes," she said, licking her lips once again, fear and uncertainty suddenly clouding her excitement.

"However, I'm not at all certain that we will suit. Perhaps we should not proceed with this ... with this bargain."

"We will suit very well, never fear. I know what it is women want, but most of all, I know what it is you want, Jane. And believe me, I'm more than capable of instructing you."

"Capable, yes, but willing?"

He looked into her eyes and she swore he was seeing her deepest desires as well as her darkest fears.

"Willing? I'm more than willing to take you to bed and show you everything a man desires."

"And what do you wish for in return for your tutelage?" she asked. "I have some money and jewels."

His eyes darkened and his hands gripped her shoulders. The silence stretched on, and Jane fought the urge to squirm beneath his cold glare. "I don't give a damn about jewels and I have more money than I could waste in a lifetime. What else have you to offer, Jane?"

She felt her face fall. She could grant him nothing more than monetary rewards. She had neither her virginity nor a beautiful face or body to offer him--nothing else to tempt him. "I have nothing, my lord, that you would want."

"You're wrong, Jane. There is something I want. Your corruption--and all at my experienced, debauched hands. I shall tutor you, Lady Jane, in the pleasures of the flesh. And in the end, we will see who is the pupil and who the master."

Chapter Two

The rain streaked down the window in rushing rivulets as Gavin stared out into the black night. Howling wind sent the rain splattering against the glass once again, temporarily blinding him before a brilliant streak of lightning forked down from the heavens, illuminating the inky darkness.

Damn it to hell, what was he doing pining for Lady Jane? How long had it been since he'd taken up his post by the window, searching through the dark for a glimpse of a carriage lamp? Too bloody long.

She obviously was not going to meet him tonight or any other night, for that matter. Why the hell had he accepted her outrageous offer? He was setting himself up. He knew it. He should never have agreed to be her tutor in the sexual arts. And he damn well should not have invited her to Richmond. What the hell had he been thinking? That she was different? That she didn't think of him the way the rest of the ton did? When he'd penned his invitation to her, he'd had the foolish notion that perhaps this bargain of theirs might go beyond what either of them had planned. Bloody fool. It had no doubt been the lingering effects of too much claret and the empty-headed attentions of a notorious Cyprian that

had sparked such a ludicrous thought.

"My lord?"

Gavin glanced over his shoulder, not bothering to lower his arm that rested against the window frame.

"Yes, Prakash?"

"I have brought you your tea."

Nodding, Gavin returned his watchful gaze to the window and the black night beyond. He could see Prakash, his majordomo, in the reflection of the glass. He was a small man, short and narrow shouldered. His long black hair was concealed by a brown turban and he wore the muslin tunic and pants of India.

Prakash set the silver tray down upon the desk and straightened. "The rains are heavy tonight," he said in his Bengali-English accent. "It will not be easy to travel these roads. But your Dharma shall arrive nonetheless."

Gavin shifted from the window and strolled to the desk, helping himself to a steaming cup of tea laced with cinnamon and aniseed--a special brew common to India, and one of his favorites.

"And what do you know of my fate?" he muttered, sipping the spicy tea.

"You wait for a woman, yes?"

Gavin straightened and pierced the servant with a glare. "That is none of your concern. We might have grown up as friends, Prakash, but that does not mean you are entitled to know all of my business."

Prakash chuckled and his brown fingers, so much darker than Gavin's came up to scratch his beard. "Now I know it is important, this business that has you brooding and pacing. You only remind me of my place of servitude in your house when you are trying to play the arrogant viscount. This woman, she must be very important for you to be this unsure."

"I don't know what the devil you're talking about. Unsure of what?"

"Yourself."

"Don't be absurd," Gavin growled, replacing the gilt cup and saucer back on the tray. "I know perfectly well what I'm about."

"Do you?" Prakash asked. "You have been lost for a long time now."

"Because we've known each other since we were in

swaddling clothes does not give you the right to talk to me in such a fashion. I pay your wages, if you will but recall--a very handsome stipend if the gowns on your wife are any indication."

Prakash laughed and bowed before him. "Indeed you do. Maya is kept in the finest silks and embroidered cloths. And you are a very a good employer, but a terrible friend."

Gavin raked his hand through his hair and fought the urge to shift his gaze to the window. "I should not have spoken to you so harshly. You've been my greatest friend and ally." My only true friend, he silently added.

"You are forgiven. I understand what drives you to speak such things. We are of like backgrounds, yet I am accepted much more readily than you. I am but a Bengali. Born of Indian parents and brought to England with my family to serve in your parents' home. I am respectable as long as I stay within my bounds of service. You, on the other hand, are neither English nor Indian. You are lost, bondhu, searching for the place in which you will fit."

Old wounds threatened to reopen. Not wanting to listen to or examine what his friend was telling him, Gavin returned to the window and peered out into the black nothingness. It was rather like opening the door

of his soul--black and empty.

"You walk away from me because I speak the truth."

"Go back to Maya. She is no doubt waiting for you. I shall see to the candles and the locks."

"Maya asked that I see to you. She cares for you, too. She worries."

"She needn't. I have no need of her concern."

"You have only one need," Prakash muttered. "Your need is revenge and humiliation upon those who talk behind your back. You seek vengeance on those who cast aspersions on you and your parents."

"You know nothing of what I seek."

"I know what it is you search for, bondhu. This is the first time a woman other than your mother and sister has set foot inside your home. No woman has ever garnered such an honor. This woman must be very special. It is love like that which your mother and father shared that you truly seek."

"This woman has made a deal with the devil," he snapped before he could stop himself. "And I intend to hold her to it."

"All this pacing for a bargain? You're more foolish than I thought."

"Go to bed, Prakash. I have no need of your predictions or insights. I know perfectly well what I am, and what I want."

"I will not. Not until I see the lady who is making you suffer so. Ah," Prakash murmured, his dark brown eyes widening as he cocked to his head to the right. "A carriage, with at least two teams approaches."

Gavin peered into the darkness, searching for any sight of a carriage. There was nothing there, save for the swaying branches of the large willows that lined the drive.

"She will be approaching any time now. I must leave you, bondhu, and prepare to greet the lady."

He nodded, knowing that his friend's declaration would turn out to be true. Despite what he had told Prakash about his predictions, he knew beyond a doubt, that his friend, or bondhu, as they called each other, had the sight.

As the door closed behind Prakash, a black carriage led by four grays came into view. The full moon magically

appeared between the parting clouds, the white light glinting off the top of the carriage. A carriage lantern swayed with the rhythm of the horse's canter and Gavin followed its yellow light like a beacon. The windows were draped in cloth, and the carriage door was free of a family crest or marker. It was her. He felt it in his bones, in the way his blood quickened in his veins. She had come at last, to be tutored in the art of pleasing a man.

The carriage rolled past the window only to stop before the entrance of the front door. The coachman jumped down from his perch and lowered the step from beneath the carriage frame. The door opened and strangely Gavin felt himself holding his breath. At last she appeared, swathed in black velvet, her face concealed by a long lace veil that billowed out when the wind caught it. The sight was arousing, in a mysterious, forbidden sort of way. A veiled woman, shielding her impeccable reputation in order to tryst with a rake such as himself. The wind caught the lace again, and he was helpless to stop from wondering what her face would look like behind a shimmering red face veil, her chocolate brown eyes outlined lavishly with kohl.

The wind howled louder as the front door flew open and Prakash rushed out, holding an umbrella above her and signaling the coachman to drive around to the stables and carriage house.

What was she thinking? Were thoughts of him running through her mind? Did the idea of sharing a bed and their bodies appeal to her as much as it did him?

Voices, low and hushed echoed in the hall and Gavin had no time to stalk to his desk before Prakash opened his study door. That familiar and arousing hushed breath sounded throughout the room, making his blood run hot. Glancing over his shoulder he met the pale, yet beguiling face of his pupil.

Jane couldn't help but gasp at the sight that greeted her. There, standing before her, arm propped against the window casing stood the Viscount Grayson. He looked dangerously handsome dressed in a black velvet robe with scalloped edges and elaborate gold embroidery around the cuffs and the collar. Beneath the garment he wore a white linen shirt, edged with a minimum of lace. Lace cuffs dangled from the sleeves, and Jane was struck by the beauty of his elegant hands as they rested against the window. He wore no stock and his shirt was opened, revealing a naked throat and a small, but intriguing glimpse of his chest. His black hair, thick and straight was unbound, lying against his shoulders.

Taking a deep breath, she swallowed hard and watched as he lowered his arm and slowly turned to face her. Turquoise eyes scanned her from head to toe, and when

his gaze rested on her veiled face, he raised one inky brow.

"Good evening, Lady Westbury."

For some silly reason her breath left her lungs in a whoosh. Elation swept through her that she had actually found him home waiting for her. She forced her hands not to tremble as she reached for her veil.

"My pleasure," he said silkily as he strode toward her with predator-like grace.

There was something in the way he was looking at her that suddenly made her remember where they were and who was standing behind her. Lowering her head, she darted her eyes to where a turbaned man stood waiting. Grayson's eyes followed hers and he nodded to the servant.

"Thank you, Prakash. You may retire for the night."

"As you wish, my lord," the man said, bowing. "If there is anything you wish, you have only to ring."

Lord Grayson said nothing while the servant, obviously his butler, reached for the door. Before he closed it, the man spoke. The language was foreign, and the sound somewhat harsh to her ears. The viscount answered

him, while never taking his eyes from her. His voice was deep and melodious, and the language, which was obviously Indian, rolled from his tongue with ease. The words sounded evocative, their exoticness intrigued her, and she was left feeling more breathless then when she first entered the room.

"Now then," he said when they were alone, his index finger tracing the lace that rested against her chin. "Where were we?"

A log in the hearth cracked. His eyes narrowed when she jumped, and he tipped her chin up with his finger. "You're no doubt rethinking this bargain of ours."

"No," she said, shaking her head. "I am not." Good heavens, she hadn't thought of anything other than this very night since receiving his summons. Indeed, her every waking thought had been consumed with images of him and what he was going to teach her.

"You do not lie, do you?" he asked, tracing her lips through the lace with the pad of his thumb. "You're not coy and artful like the other women of the ton."

Her belly tightened when his thumb passed over her bottom lip. "I despise deceit."

"A novel attribute in a woman, and one I have never

had the pleasure to encounter. I'm sure you're aware that the women of my acquaintance are the very definition of deceit."

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean, my lord."

"A lie. I can see it reflected in your eyes, Jane, and it displeases me."

Unable to stop the action, her lashes lowered, immediately shading her eyes from his.

"Open your eyes, Jane."

She could feel his finger tracing her brow then sliding down to her closed lids. With a soft brush, he fanned her lashes with his fingertip, the sensation heightened by the lace. When his finger rested on the small indentation at the corner of her eyelid, she opened her eyes and peered into his.

"Don't ever lie to me again, Jane," he whispered as his mouth lowered to hers. "I will not tolerate falsehoods from you. It is beneath you. I want only honesty from you, Jane." His breath caressed her lips through her veil. "Now then, I'll ask once more, does my touch disgust you?"

Her gaze flashed away from his lips only to land on his

eyes, which were veiled by a long fringe of sable lashes. He was staring at her mouth, at his thumb as it pressed into the corner of her lip. "No."

His chest widened as he took a long breath. She could feel the heat from his body penetrating the dampness that had seeped through her silk gown.

"Do you know, Jane, I don't know that I've met with a more powerful aphrodisiac than truth." His eyelashes lifted and she met his gaze through the black lace. His lips curled in an arrogant grin and Jane felt her stomach clench in anticipation of whatever was to come. "I am quite undone, Jane."

With a quick swoop he took her lips, the lace buffering the feel of his mouth against hers. His hands framed her face and he kissed her softly, his lips nipping and tugging at hers.

It was over before she knew it, and as soon he pulled his mouth from hers, he reached for her veil. With slow determination, he raised the lace, inch by inch, his eyes scouring all of her as if he was seeing her for the very first time.

When her face was bared to him, he took his finger and traced the same path as he had when her face was covered. When he was done, he reached for her bonnet,

tugging at the silk ties in a slow, hypnotic fashion. He pulled it from her head, dislodging pins from her hair. One by one, he removed the remaining pins, only to rake his fingers through her thick brown hair.

Twining a curl around his finger, he brought it to his lips. Closing his eyes he inhaled softly, kissed her hair, then lay the curl atop the mound of her left breast. His finger pressed the ringlet into her flesh, and his eyes slowly lifted to meet hers.

"You please me. And that, Jane, is the truth."

Chapter Three

Gavin looked down into Jane's upturned face. Her porcelain skin was flushed a pale peach and her lips, which had been thin before his kiss, were now plump

and glistening. Her eyes had darkened to a richer shade of brown and he could see his reflection staring back at him in their dark depths. He was aroused--painfully so. When was the last time a simple kiss had made him hard as iron? When was the last time he had even enjoyed kissing?

His gaze lowered, past her chin, down the column of her throat where a black velvet ribbon encircled her neck. Below that, a lace fichu was tucked artfully into her bodice, barely concealing the large ivory mounds that edged above her gold brocade gown. He watched the slow rise and fall of her breasts, studied the way a charming freckle inched its way above the fichu as her breathing became deeper and more rapid. Unable to resist touching her, he reached out, trailing his finger down the cleft of flesh to the row of cream-colored bows that lined the front of her bodice.

She was every inch the lady, dressed as she was. The bodice was tight, molding her breasts into perfect peaks, shaping her waist so that he could see the womanly flare of her hips. Her breath caught as he reached out and trailed the back of his finger up along her bodice, directly over her breast to pluck the fichu slowly from her ivory flesh.

The scent of country flowers assailed his senses and he brought the lace to his face, inhaling softly. "Indeed,

Jane," he murmured, tucking the lace into the pocket of his dressing gown, "you please me very much."

She wet her lips and he followed the path of her tongue, imagining the feel of it gliding against his lips and his cock.

"Does that mean you are still willing to go through with our agreement?"

"I have invited you to my home, have I not?" His finger traced the edge of the velvet choker and he swore he heard the faintest of whimpers whisper pass her lips. "I am to be your tutor, and you my pupil. Is that not right?"

She nodded and her lips parted but no words were spoken.

"What do you know of your tutor, Jane?"

"That you are very skilled in the art of love," she whispered, unconsciously tilting her head when his finger skimmed lower on her throat.

"Not the art of love, Jane. Never make that mistake. I'm skilled in the art of pleasure. Sex for sex's sake. There is a difference."

"Is there?"

Her dark eyes challenged him and he felt his blood still at the same time his cock swelled with raging need. "Didn't you learn that lesson during your marriage with Lord Westbury, Jane? Didn't Archie teach you the difference between love and sex?"

She shivered and he felt the faintest hint of regret that he had caused her discomfort, but it was needed. She had to know he would not love her. That sex was the mere melding of bodies--nothing more. Nothing was more dangerous to a man than a woman who confused carnal pleasure with everlasting love and devotion.

Jane looked at him, her big brown eyes wide and curious. He had bedded many women much more beautiful than she, yet he'd never once been dangerously close to drowning in their eyes. Never before had he thought that if he did not take control immediately, he might find himself giving the upper hand to a woman. But Jane made him think these things. Only Jane had compelled him to warn her not to become emotionally involved with him. The others had never needed a warning--they had been merely vessels for his passion and his revenge. But Jane was different. Already she was something more to him, and he didn't like it.

She licked her lips again, then stared steadily into his

eyes. "Are you warning me not to fall in love with you, sir?"

"That is exactly what I am saying, Jane. Do not confuse the delights of the bedroom for that of love. That is your first lesson in my tutelage. A man will look to bedding as a way to slake his needs. A woman looks at it as a way to bind a man to her. They are ever opposing goals, Jane, and I would have you know that what happens between us will be carnal and perhaps passionate, but never anything more meaningful than that."

"I understand perfectly, my lord," she said. "What I want you to provide me with are the skills needed to attract the attentions of men. Men who are not afraid to love."

Every muscle he possessed tightened. Damn the little minx, did she know what she did to him? Could she possibly have any idea that her words were like a sword through the heart? He didn't want to think of Jane with another man after giving herself to him. But damn it, he couldn't love. He didn't know how.

"Our agreement, my lord, was for you to tutor me. Nothing more. There is no need for you to worry."

"But you forget, my shundori, there was one more

stipulation."

"And that was?" she asked over her shoulder as he stepped behind her and trailed his fingertips up her spine to the top of her bodice.

"Your corruption--at my hands. There is a price to pay, you see, for my tutelage. It will cost you a pretty penny, Jane, and will no doubt be more than you're willing to pay."

"And what are you suggesting, sir, that I will not be able to learn your lessons?"

"Oh, you'll learn them well enough," he whispered against her shoulder as his fingers worked to untie the bow that laced her outer corset. "But they shall be lessons of my choosing. Perhaps we should get started with the first one, Lady Westbury."

"By all means."

Her voice was assured, yet he heard the barest hint of huskiness in her words. She was becoming aroused and it made him feel reckless. As the bow came free in his hand, he hooked the tip of his finger at the top of the lacing and pulled the string from each eyhook with one continuous tug.

"Now then," he said as the corset fell to the floor. "The first rule to keep in mind when attempting to attract the attentions of a man, is exuberance. Do you know what I mean by that, Jane?"

"High spirits and liveliness."

"A very nice definition that you could find in Samuel Johnson's dictionary, but I was referring to the context in regards to men."

She shivered when his hands traced the square neckline at the back of her gown. With skill honed from too much experience, he deftly unbuttoned the pearls that held her dress secure and pushed the sleeves of her gown down along her shoulders.

"Exuberance is everything to a man, Jane. It tells him that the woman is more than willing. It tells him that she's participating. There is nothing more potent to a man than being with a woman who throws herself into sex. Are you one of those women, Jane?" he whispered in her ear. "Or are you the sort who lies quietly beneath a man, thinking of things other than who is on top of you, praying that his penetration will not hurt and that his passion will be expedient?"

He felt the pulse at the base of her neck quicken beneath his lips. "Never mind. I know the sort of

woman you are, Jane. It shall only be a matter of time before my suspicions are confirmed." She whirled around and faced him, her eyes wide and perhaps worried. "Ssh," he said, placing a finger over her lips. "I am not through with my first lesson. When I am done, you shall have all the time you wish to ask me questions."

Her eyes narrowed at his tone, and his breeches tightened at the sight of it. None of the women he'd been with had challenged him--not physically, and certainly not mentally, but he could see that Jane would challenge him in both areas. He liked that she would not just bow to his wishes. She would make him work hard to please her and the thought, the very idea that he would have need of every skill in his broad knowledge of sex, aroused him greatly.

When her haughty look passed, he brought his hands around her waist and untied her corset, tossing it onto the floor. He stepped back and looked at her, her bodice hanging about her waist, her chemise, transparent and formfitting around her breasts. He could see the dark outlines of her areolas beneath the linen, and taut nipples that only became more erect the longer he stared at her.

"The second thing to remember in attracting the attentions of a man," he said, circling the shadow of her

nipple with his finger, "is confidence." His eyes met hers and he felt her breast become full against his hand. "Are you confident, Jane?"

Her lashes partially lowered, shielding her eyes from him. "Of course."

She was lying. He saw it in her eyes, but more importantly he felt her self-consciousness flowing from her.

"Just how confident, Jane?"

"Very."

"Well, then," he drawled. "You may show me this confidence by disrobing until you are completely naked. Then, you shall come to me wearing nothing but that pretty black ribbon about your throat."

"But...." she stuttered, suddenly clutching her bodice to her breasts.

"That door, Jane," he motioned to the paneled door across the room. "Open it and come to me--naked, willing, confident. I want to watch you move. I want to see just how eager you are to learn and please. Unless of course, you lied to me, Jane." She stared at him but said nothing. "Did you lie, Jane?"

"No."

"Then the first lesson in the art of pleasing a man will commence in less than a minute. I suggest you ready yourself. It is never wise for a pupil to be tardy for her first lesson."

* * * *

Jane watched as Lord Grayson stalked to the door, his dressing gown swinging out behind him. Opening the paneled door, he stepped into the darkness beyond, leaving her alone in his study without a backward glance.

Damn him! What was he about commanding that she disrobe and walk naked before him? She was way out of her league. He was a master of seduction, and she had very little experience with such things.

Her fingers trembled nervously against her bodice as she paced before the fire. What was she to do? Run? Absolutely not! She would not have him think that he had scared her with his sexual mastery. But to disrobe and walk before him was unthinkable. It made her feel vulnerable and she would not allow the viscount to reduce her to such a state. She had vowed she would not leave herself open to any man. When Archie had

left her, she had promised herself that she would not give any man the power to make her feel exposed and weak.

With a helpless cry, she forced the bodice down her hips, letting the full skirts pool around her knees. Forcing her eyes shut, she tried to block out the memories of the viscount's touch, the way his eyes locked with hers--the way his jade eyes turned to turquoise when he looked deep into her eyes. He was the most beautiful man she had ever met--and the most lethal. He was dangerous to her peace of mind, her body, and her precarious self-confidence. Not only was her heart slowly being lost to him, but her newfound resolve was also in jeopardy. There was no other man within the ton she wanted to please more than the viscount. But she knew she didn't have it in her to please him. How could she with her rounded belly and plump thighs? How could he want her after having nearly every desirable woman of the ton falling at his feet? It was utter madness to think that he would be drawn to her sexually.

And yet she still wanted him, despite the fact that the viscount had probably never looked at her before last week. From the very moment she had glimpsed him across Hyde Park during a ride with Archie, she had been taken with him. At first she was intrigued by his colorful background, enraptured by the tale of his

mother and father--an odalisque in a sultan's keeping and the man who had stolen her from beneath the sultan's nose.

Soon she was watching him during balls, spying on him at the opera. She had even at one time pretended that Archie was the viscount, lying atop her, driving into her. She had waited over a year for this night, and now she was powerless to choose.

If she ran, if she lost what nerve she had, all would be ruined. She would never know what it was like to touch his bronzed skin, to feel his mouth on hers. But if she obeyed him, if she submitted to him and made herself vulnerable, she might never again be able to look herself in the mirror.

As the wire hoop frame that supported her skirts slid down her waist, Jane weighed what she was about to do. Submitting to him was the only way to gain entrée into his world. She might only ever have this one chance. Was she really willing to risk losing this chance at passion, a passion that she had dreamed of--all because she was terrified to bare herself to his all too experienced gaze?

Her hand brushed her breast as she reached for the tie of her chemise, instantly reminding her of his touch. Not even Archie had sent such need spiraling within

her. Her breasts had never tightened and filled the way they had with only the viscount's beautiful eyes for stimulation. She had braved his perusal once; surely she could brave it one more time.

Naked, she glanced about the room hoping to find a blanket in which to cover her body. There was nothing. She had only two choices left: don her clothes and flee from his house or open the door and step into the viscount's world.

She opened the door and was greeted with a third choice. On the threshold, folded neatly, lay the viscount's dressing gown. Without thinking, Jane picked it up and slipped her arm into the sleeve. It was heavy and warm and smelled of sandalwood and soap. His scent, as well his body heat lingered in the garment and she pulled the sides tight around her, burying her face in the velvet, the gold filigree rough against her cheek.

With renewed hope she walked down the darkened hallway to where another door was slightly ajar and the flicker of candlelight shone through the crack. It would work, she thought as she reached for the latch. He would teach her how to attract a man's attention, and then, she would use all his lessons, everything he had taught her--on him. For that was what she wanted most out of their agreement--to capture and hold the attentions of the notoriously unattainable viscount.

Chapter Four

Jane stepped into a garden sanctuary. As soon as she closed the door the scent of jasmine, sweet and exotic, assailed her senses. It was as if she was dreaming, leaving behind a room only to have it replaced by a Garden of Eden. Everywhere she looked palm trees towered above her. To her right were lemon trees with flowering vines growing up their trunks. The wind whispered past her through open arches and she looked up to see a glass dome, the stars twinkling brightly through the glass. It was then that she realized they were in a conservatory of some sort.

Padding barefoot, she walked silently along the fieldstone slabs, listening to the hum of crickets and the wind as it whistled by. The sound of water trickling and

flowing in the distance called to her, and she followed the sound. Guiding her path stood torches, their flames flickering and hissing in the breeze. Braziers of incense burned. The tendrils of smoke, laced with the scent of sandalwood and myrrh, filled her head, and Jane felt herself slipping into a calm that she had never before experienced.

The water now sounded like it was rushing and tumbling over rocks and as she came to a circular clearing, she breathed in awe at the sight before her. There, in the middle of the conservatory sat a large waterfall surrounded by palm trees, their feathery fronds waving softly in the night air. Torches were positioned around the waterfall and Jane could see that the water emptied into a pond with pink and white lotus flowers floating lazily on top of the water.

A flicker of light to her left captured her gaze and her eyes widened when she saw what lay behind the pond. A beaded tent, made of the sheerest silk hung from a frame in the ceiling. The color was dark and sensual, reminding her of a rich claret. Through the curtain she could make out numerous pillows and the flickering of more candles. She took a step closer then gasped as a dark figure emerged from behind the waterfall.

"You are not naked, Jane."

She took a deep breath and prayed she was taking the right path. "I am not all that confident, my lord."

"I know."

Her belly tightened and her pulse leapt. What would he do to her? He was looking at her in a way that made her uneasy. It was so hard to know what thoughts ran through his mind. She had never had to guess what Archie was thinking--he had never failed to tell her. But this man was different. He was secretive and mysterious and Jane didn't know how to proceed with him.

"Come," he commanded, beckoning to her. When she was standing before him, he tipped her face up to meet his eyes. "That is the second lie you've told me, Jane."

"I only wanted to please you." And it was the truth.

"Why did you have to lie, when I already told you that you pleased me?"

She shrugged and hugged the edges of the gown closer to her. "I did not want you to have cause to end our association before it had begun."

He traced her bottom lip with his finger and goose bumps erupted on her flesh. "I shall not be the one to

end it, Jane. Unless of course, you lie to me again."

She nodded, understanding that he meant what he said. From now on he was in complete control and she was at his mercy.

He took her by the hand and guided her to the tent. "Tell me why a woman such as yourself is not confident. You have the world at your feet. You're rich--titled. What is it that makes you think less of yourself?"

"I do not know...." She trailed off as she stepped into the tent and came face to face with what a harem really must look like. She watched as the viscount sat on a thick cushion, then stretched out his long length against the jewel-colored pillows behind him.

Motioning for her to join him, she sat on the cushion next to his thigh. He reached for her hand, drawing her near him and positioning her to lie beside him. Brushing her hair from her face, he peered into her eyes. "You never knew the pleasures of the marriage bed with your husband, did you, Jane? He never caressed you and sung your praises. He never told you that your skin reminded him of fresh cream, or that your eyes are wonderfully large and dark. A man could drown in eyes like yours, my shundori."

"Tell me what that means," she asked, delighting in the exoticness of the word on his lips. There was something so powerfully mesmerizing in his voice. The foreign language combined with the way he said her name was making her melt in a way she had never experienced before.

"It means my beauty. That is what you are in Bengali."

Her breath caught, and when she shook her head in protest, he stopped her with the barest touch of his finger. "Exuberance and confidence are the first two things to draw a man's eye, Jane. A woman thinks she must be beautiful in order to attract a man, but that is not so. Beauty is different for every man. What one finds attractive, another finds only pleasing. There are many facets of beauty, Jane, remember that. Now then," he murmured, smoothing her hair back over her shoulder and allowing his finger to graze her chin. "Tell me why you are unable to bare yourself to me." She stiffened as his finger edged the gown away from her throat. "Tell me why you would not allow me to view your nakedness?"

"I am ... fuller in places than I wish to be."

"Is that so?" he asked, slipping his hand inside the velvet so that his warm palm rested on her waist. "I am sorry that you denied me the pleasure of seeing you."

Unlike your husband, I prefer the attentions of women, not girls. I like voluptuousness in women." She squirmed beneath his touch as his hand slid up her side to graze the underside of her breast. "Tell me, Jane, are your breasts full and large?"

She nodded and closed her eyes. Lord, he was wicked and if he didn't soon touch her, she would die of sheer torture waiting for the feel of his hands on her.

"Allow me to judge." Nipping her lips he soothed them with flicks of his tongue. Then he parted the velvet, letting the one side slide over her hip and buttock exposing the left side of her body to his gaze. "They are indeed," he said, gazing up at her from beneath his sable lashes. "From what I can tell, Jane, you are not a bit too full. You are exactly what I wish you to be."

He ran his hand down her side and along her hip to her thigh, his gaze moving with the motion of his hand as it trailed along her pale skin, assessing her like a slave at a bazaar. His lashes flickered, then lifted to meet her face while his hand skated over her rounded belly.

"Very lovely, Jane. Soft and warm all over. You'll curve into me perfectly when you are lying satiated in my arms." And then he slowly lowered his lips to hers, softly, soothingly, enticing her to return his kiss. She opened her mouth to him, allowing him entrance and he pushed her back into the cushions, crushing her with his

weight, reassuring her with his heat.

She moaned when she felt the lace of his cuff tickle her chest, then whimpered as he caressed her breast with his smooth nails, all the while deepening the kiss, making her yearn for more of his lessons.

"You're showing exuberance, Jane." He grinned as he stared down into her eyes. "I can see you'll pass this first lesson with ease."

Unable to help herself, she raked her hands through his long hair as he bent over her, his tongue trailing a line from her navel to the valley of her breasts. Instead of licking her nipples as she expected and hoped he would, he nuzzled them with his lips, moistening them with his breath and then blowing gently against them until they were so tight and erect she moved restlessly against him. It was the most exquisite of tortures waiting for him to suckle her. Her breasts were very sensitive, and she had always wanted Archie to play with them--but he never had.

Her hands continued to slide through his silky hair while he held himself above her, bracing his weight on his forearms. He was still teasing her and Jane opened her eyelids a fraction--just enough to watch his bottom lip toy with the very tip of her nipple. His eyes, now more turquoise than jade, met hers, and with deliberate

intent he nuzzled her nipple, then pursed his lips and blew softly against her.

Entranced by his mysterious eyes, Jane was helpless to do anything but watch as his tongue came out and gently, almost imperceptibly, flicked the very tip of her nipple. She groaned, needing more, yet wanting his torturous ministrations to continue. He continued to hold her gaze while his tongue crept out again. This time though, he circled the erect flesh in a slow, deliberate swirl.

"You have very lovely breasts, Jane," he said against her nipple. "I could play with them for hours. Would you like me to?"

She was panting beneath him, yet he didn't move. He maintained his position above her, caging her with his muscular arms while capturing her nipple between his lips and pulling, before letting it slip out of his mouth.

He shifted his weight to his side in order to cup her breast and Jane watched as he studied it, the flesh more than filling his large hand. He squeezed softly, molding it to his palm, circling the nipple with his thumb. Then he brought it to his mouth, teasing her nipple with his lips until she begged for him to suckle her, and only then, when he heard her pleading whimpers did he take her into his mouth and suckle her. Soft and rhythmic, he

pulled her breast into his mouth while he massaged her with his long fingers.

Sinking further into the silk cushions, Jane let her fingers roam through his hair, clenching when arousal coiled and tightened in her belly. She watched him suck and lave her breasts, and whenever he looked up at her, he held her gaze while wickedly swirling his tongue around her nipple, sending sharp pains of desire deep within her.

After long moments in which Jane thought there could be no greater pleasure than having him pay attention to her breasts, he released her, placing a kiss on her reddened nipple.

"Now then, Jane," he murmured, his voice dark and husky. "Do you want to know the last two things that will keep a man coming back for more?"

She nodded, feeling nervous and needy all at once. She watched as his gaze slowly lowered to where his linen shirt met her bared breasts. Lowered still to her belly. Lower ... until he reached the apex of her thighs and she raised her knee, unconsciously hiding her sex. She had been naked but twice before with a man, and that had been with Archie on their wedding night. Archie had not taken the time to look at her or woo her with words. He'd climbed atop her, spread her thighs and drove into

her. He had released his seed in a matter of seconds and promptly rolled off, snoring within minutes. The second time was when he had cast criticism on her and left in a fit of disgust after seeing that her breasts and thighs, not to mention her bottom, had curved and filled out, replacing her childish figure.

"There are two things a man truly desires, Jane," he said, drawing her out of her memories. His fingers stroked her thigh before they moved to her knee where they continued to graze her sensitized skin. With little encouragement, she let her leg drop so that her mound was exposed to his gaze. "What a man wants, Jane, is a lady to keep his house and converse with. She should be a paragon of devotion to show to his friends at balls and the opera. But his other desire, Jane, is a whore. An accomplished courtesan who will succumb to his every desire. Who will join him in bed and match his enthusiasm for sex. Can you be that, Jane? Can you play the whore as well you play the lady?"

Jane lay beneath him, frozen. Could she do that? Could she pretend she was a lady by day and a Cyprian by night? Could she let loose her tightly held inhibitions and pleasure the viscount in any way he asked? Could she shed her insecurities about her body and pretend she was beautiful and desirable?

"Let us see, shall we, Jane?" he said, lifting himself off

of her and pulling his shirttails from his breeches. He flung his shirt beside them and loosened the flap of his breeches. She met his gaze, then leisurely let her eyes roam the expanse of his chest which was broad and heavily sculpted. The muscles of his belly were taut and chiseled. A silky line of black hair swirled around his navel only to disappear below the waist of his breeches. He was beautiful and handsome, with light brown skin that was shiny in the candlelight. He was everything she had ever dreamed about, and she was very willing to play the part of the whore if only for a chance to make this man see her as more than just a pupil.

"You are very handsome, my lord," she said, noticing how his erection thickened and swelled behind the fabric. "And I can see that the rumors about your size are not exaggerated."

A small grin passed his lips, and he cocked one brow. "Why do you not see for yourself, Lady Westbury? It is always prudent to examine a tutor's credentials before taking him into service."

She had never done anything like this with Archie. Once or twice she had inadvertently brushed against his manhood, but it had been flaccid and lifeless. But Lord Grayson's manhood seemed to be stretching with a life all its own. She reached out and stroked her fingers down the front of his breeches. He was large and thick

and she had the uncontrollable urge to tear open the flap.

"I think all your credentials are in order. I'm ready for my first lesson."

He smiled then and slowly pushed aside the fabric. Grasping his erection in his hand, he stroked it before her. Jane felt her eyes widen at the size of him, but also at the way he intimately and shamelessly stroked himself. Impossible to believe, his shaft actually thickened and widened, and Jane looked up to his face and saw that his gaze was riveted on her.

"Watch me, Jane. Study the way I hold and stroke it. Learn the way to arouse and entice a man's desire with only your hand."

With a deep breath she lowered her eyes, watching as his erection slid between the space between his thumb and index finger. Slowly at first, he stroked, up and down, reaching only as far as the pink tip. His grip was loose and slow, his hips moving in time with his hand. But soon his breathing increased, as did his hold. Soon he was gripping his engorged shaft, working it hard and assuredly, watching her as she studied him.

Suddenly he stopped and stood, removed his breeches and stood naked before her, his shaft thick and

throbbing between his thighs.

"Sit up," he commanded before walking behind her. When he was seated on his knees, he whispered against her hair. "Now, my shundori, you will show me how you like to be touched."

He brought her knees up so that her feet were resting flat on the cushion. With his palms on her knees, he spread her thighs wide and placed their entwined hands on her sex, sliding their joined hands along her flesh. She gasped and pressed her legs together.

"No. You will not hide from me. Show me what I want to see."

"I-I can't," she blurted, squeezing her eyes shut. She didn't want to do this. She didn't want to be exposed before the viscount.

"What are you ashamed of?" he asked, kissing the hollow below her ear. "Are you ashamed because you are here with me? Do I shame you, Jane?"

She was mortified by the very thought and she moved her head on his shoulder so that she could look up into his face. "I would never be ashamed of you."

"Then tell me why you are afraid, Jane. What do wish

to hide from?"

"Myself," she whispered, looking away from his far too knowing gaze.

"I see." He parted her thighs and pressed his fingers into her plump flesh. "That is something we shall have to work very diligently against, Jane, for I do not wish to be denied a glimpse of your delectable body."

She stiffened, feeling more vulnerable than she ever had before. She was naked in his arms, and she could feel his gaze scouring every inch of her. It made her wish to cover up with anything she could find, to hide her imperfections from him, to prevent him from thinking ill of her.

"I will see you, Jane," he commanded, pressing her thighs further apart. "You will not hide when you are with me. I want all of you, Jane, and I will not compromise on that."

With that, he slid his fingers along her sex and parted her. She felt his hot gaze there and she fought the urge to press her thighs together. He must have known what she was thinking for he slid his finger up the length of her and said very softly, "The most beautiful pink silk I've ever touched. Can you feel me growing harder against you as I watch my fingers stroking the honey

from you?"

His words made her squirm for more, but he deprived her of that wickedness when he brought his finger to his mouth and licked it.

"The scent and flavor of a woman, there is no other taste on earth like it. A man craves it during sex, Jane. He wants to run his tongue along her lips, her nipples, the very rim of her body that trembles for his cock." She moved her bottom restlessly against the cushion. He pressed his chest against her back and cupped her breasts, pushing them together then parting them, all the while rubbing her nipples with his thumbs.

"Tell me your secret fantasies, Jane. What is it you crave?"

"To be desired."

"At whose hands, Jane? Any man's?"

"Yours," she couldn't help moaning and arching her back as her body tightened.

"Do you want to know what I desire, Jane?"

"Hmmm?"

"I want to watch you as I make you come. You've never climaxed, have you, Jane?"

"No," she whimpered.

"Then I shall be the first. That is my desire."

Before she knew what he was about, he was lying on his back and urging her on top of him. When he kept pushing her hips higher onto his chest, she protested, confused as to what he wanted her to do.

"Lower yourself onto my mouth, Jane, and let me taste you."

"Oh, I couldn't."

"A man wants to feel his lady's sex against his mouth, Jane. Replace the lady with the wanton. Let yourself go and see what it is like to be sinful."

And then she did. With shaking fingers she clutched onto his shoulders, his hands anchored her hips, tilting them until her mound was angled toward his mouth. Then the sensation of his hot tongue brushing the length of her made her moan long and deep.

"That is it, my shundori, show me that you want this."

And then he stopped whispering to her and instead moved his tongue in enticing, erotic, not to mention almost painfully slow circles around her sex. The light dusting of whiskers on his cheeks and chin abraded and sensitized her skin, making the sensation so much more consuming. Soon her fingers were pressing into his shoulders as she moved atop him, showing him with her hips the direction she wanted his tongue to move. The pressure was building deep within her when suddenly she cried out and pressed her sex to his mouth, trembling as he sucked--drinking in all of the wetness she felt seep out of her body.

"Gavin!" she cried, not caring that she was using his Christian name. She rocked shamelessly against him and moaned a deep, guttural sound from her chest. Good lord, she shouldn't be doing this; it was shameful and wanton to be doing this, but she couldn't stop it--her body had a mind of its own and it would not allow her to curb its pleasure.

When at last she stilled, she pulled away from him, sliding down his body and burying her face in his hard chest.

"Jane," his voice was soft and soothing, much like his fingers as they raked through her tousled hair. "Do not be ashamed, Jane. You were beautiful and passionate, and you have given me a gift that no other shall ever

have."

She looked up at him through a veil of hair and smiled uneasily. "I am afraid I am more wanton than you thought."

"No, Jane. I knew what your response would be. You only needed the encouragement to let yourself experience it. You might have lain still beneath your husband, but you will not do so for me. Now go to sleep, Jane. You will need your rest for the next lesson."

Chapter Five

Looking out the window, Gavin marvelled at the sunrise and wondered why he'd spent so many mornings of his life tucked in bed suffering from the ill effects of

whatever overindulgence had consumed him the night before. How many dawns just as spectacular had passed him by with no thought or care? And why the hell was he musing about it now? Because he'd experienced something earth shattering with Jane? Many women had cried out his name during the peak of their passion. It was only ever his title, but it was his name nonetheless. He'd pleased legions of women, all of them succumbing to his ministrations just as easily as Jane had last night. So what the bloody hell was wrong with him this morning? Why was he up at the crack of dawn, listening to birds chirping and watching the brilliant, orange sun rise above white fluffy clouds? Because, fool, you experienced something like never before--something that has always evaded you. Last night, he had felt more than a physical connection to Jane, and the very idea that he was admitting it to himself scared the hell out of him.

It wasn't that her breasts were the loveliest he had ever seen, or the fact that she responded to the faintest touch of his hands--it was something more, something simpler. When he had looked at her, her dark eyes staring vulnerably up at him, he had felt like giving a piece of himself to her. As his eyes locked with hers, he'd felt the overwhelming need to tell her that he wanted what was going to happen between them to be much more than an empty mating of bodies. In that moment, their eyes locked, their breaths mingling, he'd

wanted to tell her that he needed someone like her in his life.

Bloody ass! Who the devil was he fooling? He was a tutor--nothing more. A means for m'lady to perfect her skills in order to dazzle the more palatable men of the ton. She didn't want the half-breed, not in any permanent sense, she only wanted his skills, and even that would be short-lived. Damn it to hell, he hadn't been thinking straight when he'd agreed to tutor her. No--that wasn't true. He had been thinking--thinking of himself between her ivory thighs. What hadn't occurred to him was the possibility that his way of life, his very heart, might be in jeopardy.

"Good morning, my lord."

Gavin glanced over his shoulder to find Prakash carrying a washbasin and towels as he sauntered into his chamber.

"I trust you slept well?"

"Not a wink," Gavin grunted before returning his gaze back out the window. "I've been up all bloody night." And, he silently added, he didn't even come during the long night. Instead, he had carried Jane to a chamber, tucked her in bed and left her alone. He hadn't trusted himself with her. Not after she had fallen asleep on his

chest and he started thinking of how very nice it was to lie beside a woman and do nothing but feel her breath against his neck and her soft skin beneath his fingers. It was when he decided that Jane had the sweetest face when sleeping that he knew he was treading treacherous waters and thought it far safer to be rid of her.

"Your mind is troubled."

"I'll thank you to stay out of my mind, Prakash."

"Your lady, she did not please you?"

"That is none of your affair."

"I see. She pleased you too much."

"Bloody hell," he roared, swinging away from the window. "Will you cease your meddling?"

The damnable man had the nerve to grin and bow mockingly to him. "You think you hide what you feel, but I know better. I saw your face when you first saw her last night. Your feelings are engaged."

"Just my usual feelings, Prakash, the ones that involve getting between a pair of plump thighs and having my way." But then he thought of Jane's lovely thighs and the taste of her arousal on his lips and he knew then that

these were not just ordinary feelings of desire. The way he had pleased Jane last night was far more intimate than the way he had pleased any of his other conquests. With them they had pleased him, stroking his cock and fulfilling his yearnings. Last night he had barely thought of his own needs--instead he'd thrust aside the desire to have her mouth around him and instead thought of nothing other than pleasuring Jane as she never had been before.

"Maya is with her now," Prakash muttered as he set the basin onto the commode. "Where do you wish to meet your lady?"

Forcing away the image of Jane naked and atop him, Gavin strolled over to the commode and pulled his shirt over his shoulders, baring his chest. Bending over, he splashed his face, running his hands through his hair. "The terrace, I think," he said at last, drying his face with a towel. "You may serve breakfast there."

Prakash bowed. "I shall tell cook."

Gavin flung the towel aside and soaped his arms. "Inform cook that I shall require a basket be packed for a midday meal."

"A luncheon in the open air." Prakash grinned. "Will wonders never cease?"

Glaring at his friend's retreating back, Gavin continued soaping his body, not wanting to think of the madness that had prompted him to be so impulsive. It was all for the purpose of instruction, he reminded himself--for Jane's edification, nothing more.

* * * *

"Tell me about your parents."

Jane watched as Gavin stiffened and slid his gaze to the blue horizon. "I do not talk about my family," he said at last. "It's something I do not care to share."

"It's not as though I haven't heard the story," she said, meeting his gaze. When his face turned hard and unreadable, she reached for his hand, stroking his knuckles with her finger. "I'd like to hear it from you. I've always thought it the most romantic tale I've ever heard."

Gavin reached for a pear inside the basket and bit off a large chunk, watching her thoughtfully. "You find the story of my concubine mother and the fool who risked certain death to rescue her romantic? I call it foolish and not worthy of the time it would take to tell it."

"Are you ashamed then? Is that why you refuse to

discuss it?"

"I am not."

"Then why won't you tell me?"

"I thought you different, Jane. But I see you're like all the others, you only want to hear the scandalous details of their illicit love affair."

"No." Jane placed her hand on his arm and forced him to look at her. "I ask because I find your culture exotic and romantic. It is so different from English culture and I cannot help but be entranced by the idea of being in the keeping of a very dark and powerful man."

He raised a brow and stared at her. "The tale my mother told of her servitude to the Sultan was neither romantic nor passionate. She was sold, Jane, by her own mother at a bazaar. Mother was sixteen then, and the bastard daughter of an English peer. Her mother's father was an influential Bombay businessman, and when he found out she was carrying a babe without benefit of marriage, he tossed her out into the street. My mother never knew her father, and my grandmother struggled through many hardships to raise her. When she arrived at the Harem, she became the Sultan's favorite and served him as his whim decreed. When my father arrived he was a guest of the English ambassador to

India. My father told me that when he first saw my mother, her wrist was chained to the Sultan's chair. She was wearing a red sari, and her face was partially veiled with gold silk. Father said her green eyes followed him wherever he went, and he was so taken with her that he fell immediately in love with her."

"Do you share the same color eyes with your mother?"

He looked away from her and bit fiercely into the pear. "A trait, bestowed by my English grandfather. Whenever I look in the mirror I am reminded of my tainted, bastard blood. My father had blue eyes. I used to pray when I was a little boy that my eyes would somehow change and be more like his. My prayers were never answered, Jane."

"I've seen the blue in them," she whispered, unable to stop herself from brushing back the hair from his face. "I imagine that the Indian Ocean is turquoise like your eyes."

His gaze flickered to hers and she saw the slow change in his eyes. Yes, there was most definitely blue in his eyes. His lids lowered and he looked away from her, up at the sky where some birds were circling overhead.

"My parents became lovers while my mother was under the protection of the Sultan," he said quietly.

"Under dangerous conditions, my father secured her passage to the outside and together they ran away, into the Bengali region where they lived until I was six."

"That is when your father inherited the title."

"Yes. He never expected to. When his brother died childless, the title fell to him. He packed up my mother and me, and we sailed for England. We were not greeted with open arms, Jane. Indeed, we were despised, my mother most of all. But she suffered through the humiliation and the insults for my father, and for me. My parents were devoted to each other, and my mother still mourns him after all these years."

"And you still feel like that lost little boy, do you not?"

He tossed the pear to the ground and refused to look at her. His shoulders were tense and a muscle in his jaw worked furiously. "I have a title and a fortune and women constantly falling at my feet. What more can a man ask for, Jane?" His gaze swung back to her and she startled at the barely concealed anger she saw in his eyes. "Now then, it is my turn to ask you a question."

"If you'd like."

"Tell me, Jane, do you know how to flirt?"

She picked at the fringe of the wool blanket and searched the tops of the trees. "I'm afraid I have never learned the art."

He reached for her hand and stroked her palm with his fingertip. In the sun, his hands looked so much darker than her pale ones. Jane studied the way his fingers, elegant and long--like an artist's, stroked her skin. Suddenly he replaced her hand on her lap and looked away, plucking a blade of grass and twirling it between his fingers.

"Don't ever try to learn, Jane. It's something a man detests."

He was different today. Aloof, almost cold. When she had greeted him that morning over breakfast he had bowed formally and said very little. She wondered at the change in him and surmised that she had failed miserably in her first lesson of pleasing a man. How could she have pleased him? She'd fallen asleep after indulging her own pleasure. She had most certainly been selfish last night.

"A man despises the coy art that women employ, Jane. They blanket their motives under the guise of flirtation, but it is much more complex than that."

She wondered at the conversation and his obvious lack

of desire to continue where they had left off in the conservatory. But instead of guiding the conversation to what he was attempting to avoid, Jane placated him. "Then why is it women are encouraged to flirt?" she asked, surprised and confused. Every woman of her acquaintance knew how to use her eyes and fan as a weapon in the art of flirtation. She had been a miserable failure, of course, never learning the subtleties, but that had not prevented her from watching the experts in the ton.

Watching flirtations in the ballroom had always fascinated her. Men succumbed to the wiles of the women who could wield their eyes and their bodies with ruthless determination. It was utterly impossible to believe that the viscount wished her to think that men did not fall in with the practice of flirtation.

"It has always amazed me," he sighed, tossing the blade of grass from his fingers, "to see what lengths seemingly intelligent women will go to in order to seduce a man through vanity. Behind their wavering fans and painted eyes lay evil machinations. I for one have never been taken in by their coqueties."

"Are you speaking for all men, then?" she laughed, trying to cajole him from his blackening mood. "For this is the purpose behind your lessons, is it not? To make me understand the mystery behind the male mind."

Tearing his eyes from the horizon, he levelled her with his glare. "You laugh, and that disappoints me, Jane. Somehow I thought you were above batting your eyes and pouting your lips. However, if that is the sort of fool you wish to attract then all by means, Jane, wave your fan and have your maid squeeze your breasts together into a corset that makes you unable to breathe. You'll no doubt have an easy time of it. There are any number of idiots in the ton that would fall for the meaningless wiles of a woman such as that."

"But you're not one of them, I assume?"

His face paled and his eyes narrowed as he continued to glare at her. "I hope that is not your feeble attempt at flirtation, Jane. For I fear if it is, you do indeed lack the talent. I have had experience resisting the flirtations of women who are much more skilled in the art than you, Jane. It will take more than a feminine laugh and the heaving of bosoms to make me blind to a lady's motives. You needn't think that I told you about my parents because you smiled and looked shyly up from your lashes, Jane. No, I told you because you asked me forthrightly and you spoke with honesty of your curiosity. Had you simpered, I would have ignored you and finished my pear. But because you looked me in the eye and asked me, I told you. Never confuse honesty with artful flirtation, Jane--flirtation will get you

nowhere."

He was extremely intelligent, Jane realized. He was seasoned and knew everything about women and their desires and their machinations. She would have to tread carefully where the viscount was concerned. One misstep and he would cast her out of his life. Her precarious situation was even now in jeopardy. She sensed she held his attention by the thinnest thread, and she knew she would have to be just as intelligent and evasive as he if she was to arouse his interest to more than that of the jaded tutor of the sexual arts. She hadn't the looks to capture him, but she did have intellect, and from what she had learned today, intelligence in a woman was something the viscount admired.

"And what have I said that amuses you so?" he asked, his voice deep and laced with a hint of danger.

"I thought it diverting that you sought to warn me about flirting with you," she said, hoping to detract him from discovering her designs on him. "I have made it quite clear, my lord that you are but tutoring me to lure some other unsuspecting member of your sex. You're supplying me with the lessons to keep my future lover enthralled with only me."

He frowned, looking ferocious and hard. "Glad to be of assistance, Lady Westbury. I was certain that I was

going to prove of some use to someone."

"I seem to have hit a nerve, my lord. I did not mean--"

"You have hit nothing, I assure you. I'm quite beyond your reach, madam."

"Quite," she said, looking away and hiding her grin. The viscount might be extremely intelligent, but so too was she. Perhaps she was plain and unassuming, but she more than made up for her appearance with her acute mind. And her intelligence told her that the viscount was being unnecessarily haughty because she had touched him. In what way, she did not fully understand, but something told her that he did not let anyone see his temper. He chose to hide that particular emotion with his rakish behavior, but she had seen beneath the veneer and discovered something new about the viscount.

"We have wasted the afternoon, Jane. We should have started our lessons an hour ago."

"And what is lesson number two?" she asked, wishing he would let her into his heart--even if it were only for a brief minute. How was she, unskilled and plump, ever going to tempt the man who could have whatever woman he wanted?

"The art of patience," he murmured, gazing down at her breasts that edged above her bodice. "A woman must make a man yearn. She must strive to haunt his every thought and consume him with burning need."

"And how is that done, my lord?"

His finger lightly traced the freckle that marked the top of her left breast. "Evasiveness, Jane," he whispered as he lowered his mouth to her breast. "A woman must only give a man a tantalizing taste. It is the chase, you see, that fuels hunger and need." His lips kissed her freckle before he began to nuzzle the valley between her breasts. His warm palm that rested on her belly slowly slid up her bodice to capture her breast.

She understood what he was saying. A woman needed to draw out the tension, bringing the man to his knees before giving in and letting him between her thighs. Had she tantalized him last night? Was he even now burning for her?

Was he hinting that she should leave so that he could think of her and want her? She could be evasive, and God willing, she would have him burning with need by the next time they met for her lessons.

"Show me your breasts, Jane," he said against her skin. "You've tantalized me long enough with glimpses of

your décolletage. I want to see your pale skin in the sunlight. I want to see your pink nipples harden in the afternoon breeze."

"I do so hope we might continue this discussion another day, my lord," she said, removing his hand and shimmying her body away from his searching mouth. "I'm afraid I must be getting back to Town," she said, trying to hide the tremor in her voice as she stood and shook out her skirts. "I had not planned to dally long in Richmond, you see, and unfortunately I have made plans for this evening."

His face pinched and tightened. Anger, immediate and dark, filled his eyes. "Where are you going, Jane? Surely you are not relieving me of my post after only one lesson?"

"Of course not, but I cannot spend all my days on lessons. One must have some recreation outside the school room, is that not right?"

His look of stunned stupefaction made her smile. As she made her way to her mare, Jane had the sudden thought that she might do very well in her dealings with the viscount. Already she was discovering just what triggers to press to make the prickly viscount lower his mask of mystery.

She would use these next few days to make him burn, she thought as she allowed him to help her onto her side-saddle. With any luck, their next meeting would involve the viscount learning a new lesson.

Chapter Six

Saddle leather creaked as Gavin repositioned himself atop his stallion. The black's ear flickered before he snorted and stomped in frustration. With pressure from his thighs and a firm grasp on the reins, Gavin subdued the beast's irritation, but the action did nothing to abate his own.

The beast tossed his head and snorted insolently once again. Leaning forward, he ran his gloved hand through the horse's mane. "I know it has been too long, Rama, but I'm afraid I cannot leave."

Secreted amongst the trees, Gavin focused his attention on the cozy scene before him. He'd been there for an inordinately long time, just staring and watching, waiting to feel his irritation subside. But with each passing moment he felt his irritation turn to something far more unsettling.

As he watched Jane and her friends frolic and laugh on the blanket in the middle of Hyde Park, the Serpentine glistening in the sunlight behind them, he felt the first stirrings of jealousy. He had never before experienced the emotion--certainly not in relation to a woman with another man. He had never given a farthing about the women he had been with and whom they might also be sharing their favors with. But obviously it was not so for the woman in the pink striped gown and wide brimmed straw bonnet.

It had been an hour at least since three gentlemen had joined them. An hour since he'd sat hidden amongst the trees, watching as Jane smiled and glowed under male perusal.

Damn him for coming today. What sort of fool had he been to search her out? And why the bloody hell was he unable to signal his mount to move forward and announce his presence? Why couldn't he take his eyes off the fetching figure in pink and return to the riding

path?

The wind gusted, unravelling Jane's already wildly flapping bonnet strings. With a laugh that was carried on the breeze, he saw her smile as the wind lifted her bonnet from her head and carried it to the grass. He watched with growing unease as one of the gentlemen jumped up to retrieve it. He returned it to her with a flourish, bowing before her, presenting it proudly to her like a faithful spaniel would present a grouse to its master.

His fingers tightened on the reins when the man insisted on helping her retie the bonnet strings and he swore viciously when he saw her lower her eyes and smile shyly. Bloody hell, the rogue was taking his time about securing the damned bonnet. He was probably leering down the front of her bodice. Damn it, but he hadn't ever noticed just how scandalously cut her gowns were. He looked to her friends and saw that they wore the same neckline, but their breasts were not anywhere near as lavishly displayed as Jane's.

Rama snorted and pranced as the bit dug into his mouth. "Sorry, my friend," he muttered, loosening his hold. "You see, I am much like you when you sniff another male around Sita."

The horse's black head turned, considering his master

with his large brown eyes. Despite his foul mood, Gavin grinned, amused that the only word Rama understood from him was Sita--the name of his future breeding mate. He'd had to move Rama to a different stable owing to the fact the stallion was crashing down walls to get to the mare. Bloody hell, he scoffed, he was talking to his horse and drawing analogies between the two of them. What the devil was the matter with him?

Giggling once again drew his attention to the happy party, and he shifted and tensed when he saw the gentleman grasp Jane's hand and raise her from the blanket. Who the bloody hell was this upstart with Jane? And why the devil was she allowing him to guide her to the water's edge? She shouldn't be leaving with the man. It wasn't a damn bit proper, and Lady Jane Westbury was the epitome of everything proper. Wasn't she?

His mouth twisted in disgust as the young man he knew to be Lord Winterbourne raised her gloved hand to his mouth and lowered his lips to her knuckles. Bloody hell, what was this? Was he the reason she hadn't been able to meet with him to continue their lessons? Was he the 'obligation she must see to'?

Grinding his teeth in order to prevent himself from savagely gripping the reins, Gavin watched the interlude with something akin to murderous rage. Damn

her and her beguiling smiles. Damn her for awakening a part of him he never knew existed and didn't particularly care to have.

It was all happening too fast; the butterfly was emerging from her chrysalis much too precipitously. He hadn't wanted it to be this way. He had wanted to draw it out, to spend more than a night with her. He wanted her emergence to be with him. He wanted to be the first to see her wings flutter out of her cocoon.

What did it matter to him if he wasn't the one? It wasn't as though she owed him anything, nor did he owe her a thing. He wasn't going to marry her, wasn't going to give her children. What did it matter that she had set her sights on someone else, someone who would give her what she wanted? After all, she had made her desires perfectly clear. She wanted a lover who would be captivated by her. A lover who would turn into a husband and a father.

He thought of Jane full and heavy with a babe as he watched her standing beside the Serpentine. He envisioned hands, large and dark, stroking her swollen belly. They were not the hands of the young lord smiling wistfully beside her. They were his hands. It was his fingers possessively sliding along her belly. His child in her womb. Bloody hell, he had gone daft. As sure as the sun was in the sky, he was bloody well mad.

He didn't want a wife. He didn't want children. Why would he bring children into the world to suffer the stigma that he had suffered? He wouldn't do it. He would not subject an innocent babe to the taunts of bastardy and savage blood.

He had made the decision and never given it another thought. So why today, when he was watching Jane with another man did he imagine her carrying his babe? How had an image so vivid and clear invaded his waking mind?

He knew the reason. He refused to credit it, but it lingered nevertheless. He wanted to mean something more to Jane than just a tutor in the sexual arts.

A snort sounded from the bridal path, sending Rama's ears flickering. Before anyone could happen upon him, he motioned Rama around and headed back to the path. As he emerged from the trees he was met with a pair of lovely grey eyes.

"Good day," Lady Catriona Hamilton smiled invitingly. "I thought I saw you there. There's no mistaking you, after all, is there?"

Gavin stopped his mount and blinked. Lady Catriona was looking him over like a prize ham at the butchers.

"Good day, Lady Hamilton," he nodded, removing his hat and inclining his head.

"Your mount is extremely beautiful," she said, coyly appraising Rama. "He is a stallion?"

"He is."

"So broad in the shoulders," she murmured, assessing the width of him in his riding coat when she should have been gazing at his mount. "I'll wager there is no end to his stamina, is there?"

"He is very strong," he said with lack of interest.

Catriona smiled and moistened her lips. "Why don't you come closer and introduce your stallion to my mare? I think he's already caught the scent of her, don't you?" She flicked her eyes along him, letting her gaze rest at the juncture of his thighs. When her eyes came up to meet his, they were sparkling with amusement and desire. "Yes, I most definitely think your stallion is eager to meet my mare. I can see," she said, boldly returning her gaze to his breeches, "that you might think it just the thing to join the two of them together."

The double entendre made him grow cold. The lady's intention could not be more blatant. And contrary to

what she might think of the bulge in his breeches, it had nothing to do with her flagrant suggestion or her very lovely person. But it did have everything to do with the woman sequestered behind him, the image of her smiling and naked beneath him still flashed through his mind making him swell uncomfortably beneath his fawn colored breeches.

"I'm afraid I must be going," he muttered, nodding once more. "Enjoy your ride, my lady."

"I'd enjoy it much more if you were sharing it," she said huskily, reaching for Rama's reins as he nudged the horse forward.

"I have an appointment."

"Yes you do," she purred, before leaning forward and whispering to him. "Tonight, Lord Grayson, in my bed. I'm looking forward to finding you there."

And then she cantered off, headed toward the bridle path to join the rest of her party. A husky laugh invaded his shock, and he realized that he only had to think of Jane in order to be aroused. Not even the notion of sleeping with Lady Hamilton, the woman acclaimed to be the most beautiful in the ton, could arouse him as thoroughly as Jane's innocent laughter.

The devil take it, he was in a bad way. Perhaps he should take her ladyship up on her offer. Maybe a night spent between Catriona's thighs would rid him of the niggling anger he felt at seeing Jane with another. But when he closed his eyes and envisioned a night spent in dissipation, the only person he saw was Jane, her plump thighs spread for him, her arms welcoming him, her smile warming him.

Good God, what had the chit done to him?

Chapter Seven

Jane steadied her hand, careful not get a drop of red punch on her gown. Her hand was shaking so severely she thought she might disgrace herself by spilling the entire contents of her glass. It was all because of him, she muttered to herself.

"Look at that," Emily Beaumont, her very good friend whispered to her. "Lady Hamilton has done everything but offer herself on a platter to the man."

Jane took a delicate little sip of her punch and willed her stomach to stop churning. What was the matter with her? It wasn't as though she hadn't seen Gavin cavorting about ballrooms with women before. Good Lord, she'd watched him more times than she cared to admit as he danced and strolled about with his conquests. She had even spied on him with his doxies, for heavens sake. But it had never felt like this. Like having a sword slowly thrusting through her heart.

"He is outrageously handsome, isn't he?" Emily sighed. "That hair, it's so black and shiny. Like silk, don't you think?"

Jane nodded and took another sip. It felt like silk, too. She remembered the feel of it sliding through her hands. Recalled how he had looked with it unbound as he pleased himself. It was unbound tonight. He had defied every polite dictate of dress and wore his hair long and untied.

Her gaze flickered to where he stood in the corner of the room where Catriona Hamilton monopolized his attentions. He looked breathtaking dressed in gold silk

breeches and a black velvet frockcoat with a restrained amount of gold threading around the cuffs and collar. While other men wore coats heavily embroidered with gold and gems in glaring shades of pink and green and lace cuffs as thick as hers, Gavin looked regal and subdued in black and a minimum of lace.

"He really does have the most intriguing eyes, don't you think?" Emily whispered. "His gaze has a queer intensity to it, like he's undressing you and seeing what's beneath all the corsets and petticoats." Emily took a sip of her punch and licked a drop from her lips. "He's looking at you, you know."

Jane promptly choked and began to cough. Gavin was looking at her? He hadn't even glanced her way all evening. Discreetly she tilted her head in order to see him better. Their eyes met over the pink plume perched in Lady Hamilton's white wig. His expression was implacable, unreadable. His green gaze was hooded but she felt the heat from his eyes cutting into her. Was he undressing her? Was he recalling just how unfashionable she was when she was naked in his arms?

And then he very slowly lowered his gaze to his companion's face and smiled. The glass slipped from Jane's hand, shattering into thousands of twinkling shards beneath the candlelight. He had never smiled at her. The thought reminded her of just how undesirable

she truly was.

"Good heavens," Emily gasped, pulling her out of her shocked state. "Jane, are you well? Jane?" she asked again, shaking her arm.

"What have I done?" she whispered, coloring profusely as people began to stare at her. "I don't know what happened," she muttered, lowering herself to her knees.

"For heavens sake, Jane," Emily hissed, grasping her elbow. "Don't pick it up, everyone is watching."

Was he watching? Or was his gaze still firmly fixed on the outrageously beautiful Lady Hamilton?

"Come with me," Emily said, leading her to the refreshment table. "Act as though it slipped from your hand and you're returning for another. Smile, Jane," her friend commanded.

Pasting a false smile on her face, Jane allowed Emily to manoeuvre her to the buffet. She darted her eyes to the corner where Gavin and Catriona had been standing seconds before, but they were no longer there. They had probably left, searching for an empty room to carry out their amorous congress. The thought made her feel ill. She wanted to be the only woman in Gavin's life, but how did she stand a chance against someone as perfect

as Catriona Hamilton?

"Here," Emily commanded, shoving a plate in her hand. "Put something to eat on this and pretend that nothing is wrong."

She reached for a pastry, filled with rich cream and smothered in chocolate. The delightful morsel would do the trick. Food had always comforted her when Archie would not. Surely it would soothe her now. Her gloved fingers reached for the pastry at the same time a pair of dark fingers did. She pulled back and looked up into a pair of familiar jade eyes. They studied each other and Jane felt the beating of her heart in her throat.

"Oh, let her have it," simpered Catriona who stood beside him, batting her lashes and fanning herself. "I don't eat sweets. Look what they do to you."

Jane felt her face flame and she automatically dropped the éclair back onto the silver platter. His lips parted, as if he were about to say something but then he closed them, remaining silent. Jane lowered her lashes and blinked away the tears that were steadily forming behind her lids. She went to snatch her hand away when Gavin reached for it and pressed her fingers in his. He kissed her hand then, a polite, solicitous kiss before slowly raising his gaze to hers. "My apologies, madam."

She watched him closely, wondering who he was apologizing for, himself, or the ignorant doxy who stood beside him heaving her bosom and her fan.

"Accepted, sir," she said, forcing her lips to stop trembling. She really needed to leave the room before she disgraced herself. She didn't want to cry before the ton, and she most especially didn't want to cry in front of Catriona. To let Lady Hamilton know her comment had achieved its mark would be unbearable.

"May I?" Gavin asked, taking her plate and motioning to the platter the éclairs were on.

"Thank you, no," she said, smoothing her hand down her bodice. "I fear I have lost my appetite. Please excuse me," she mumbled, wishing she could run from the room before he noticed her tears. "I believe I require some fresh air."

"Would you like me to join you?" Emily whispered.

"No, I just need a few minutes," she whispered back before heading off for the safety of the terrace.

Once outside, she lifted her skirts and ran for the maze that loomed opposite the terrace. She would have all the privacy she craved amongst the immaculately trimmed cedars.

Nearly blind with tears, Jane rounded the corner and found a bench. She sat on the cold marble and stared impotently up at the moon. Why did she let comments like that from Catriona hurt her? She'd heard thinly veiled insults before and had brushed them aside with ease and the knowledge that the person was an ignorant fool. But she could not brush aside Catriona's insult because it had been said in front of Gavin. And that, Jane admitted, as the tears began to roll down her cheeks was what was so painful. In some wistful part of her heart, she had pretended that Gavin's agreement to tutor her stemmed not from his rogue appetites and his desire to corrupt her as he had so straightforwardly put it, but rather he had agreed because he had desired her. Because he found her beautiful and voluptuous and because he wanted to bring her to his bed. And Catriona's ridicule had dashed away all hope that Gavin would remain ignorant of her shortcomings.

"Jane." The warm hand on her shoulder was his. She turned away from the concern she heard. "Look at me, Jane," he said quietly as he sat down on the bench next to her. She lowered her head, fighting back more of the tears. She didn't want him to see her this way, weak spirited and self-conscious.

"Don't do this, shundori." He hooked his finger beneath her chin and forced her to meet his gaze. His eyes

softened when he saw a tear roll out and trickle down to her lip. "Jane," he said tenderly, wiping the wetness from her mouth. "Let me take the pain away."

Then his lips were soft against hers, his fingers strong as he wrapped them around her nape and brought her closer to him, deepening the kiss. Her mouth parted on a protest, but he took it as an invitation to slide his tongue inside. His kiss was slow, thorough, drugging in its intensity. Slanting his mouth against hers, he deepened the kiss. His tongue became more forceful, and he groaned.

She didn't want him to kiss her out of pity. She was not so lost in passion that she forgot his words seconds before his mouth descended to hers.

"Don't run away from me, shundori," he commanded, bringing her closer so that the tops of her breasts grazed his lace cravat. She tried to pull away again, but he anchored his fingers on her neck and tilted her head so that he could penetrate her mouth deeper.

"Don't," she whispered, wrenching free of his embrace. He held her tighter, refusing to let her move away from him.

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, Jane. Surely you haven't forgotten that."

And what beauty had he beheld tonight? It certainly wasn't hers. No, it all belonged to Catriona Hamilton. How would she ever compete with her stunning beauty? How could she ever rival her for Gavin's attentions?

"You have something she will never have, Jane. You're kind and thoughtful. You bring joy to people's lives."

"Those are qualities that you would attribute to a faithful dog," she spat, rubbing her arms against the sudden chill that hung in the maze. She had never before considered herself vain, but damn him, she wanted to be more to him than kind and loyal. "I don't need your empty attempts at consolation, my lord. Nor do I desire to be kissed out of pity."

"I wasn't kissing you out of pity," he said, rising from the bench and pulling her up against him. "I kissed you because I wanted to."

"You cannot possibly look at me and tell me you desire me over ... her."

"You would not believe me even if I did."

She knew it. She couldn't compare to Lady Hamilton, and he had tried to salvage her ego by turning the tables on her. She was a fool to have entered into this bargain

with him. How could she believe that after evading him for two days that he would come to her on bended knee? That he would be on fire for her. Desire her? All this time she had thought she was being so clever. What a fanciful simpleton she was. He hadn't been yearning for her, because he'd been slaking his desires with Catriona.

"I must leave."

"Why, Jane?"

"I have something to do."

"Is it that irritating obligation again?" he asked mockingly. She ignored him and raised the hem of her skirts before stepping around him. He reached for her arm and held it firmly in his grasp. "Winterbourne is not the sort of man you want, Jane."

She glared at his hand around her arm, then met his gaze. He was right. Winterbourne wasn't the type of man she wanted. There was only one man for her, and he couldn't be further from her reach.

"Winterbourne is an insolent pup. The lad is so green behind the ears that he couldn't organize a piss up at a Public House."

She steeled herself against his mockery. "He is young, but what does that matter, he's still able to give me what I need."

"Oh?" he asked, his voice lethal. "And what would that be, Jane?"

"He gives me something you never could."

His eyes narrowed and his fingers bit into her arm. "Why don't you explain that enigmatic statement, Lady Westbury?"

"Every time I'm with him, he gives a piece of himself. He is not afraid, Lord Grayson. And that is all I desire."

Chapter Eight

He is not afraid. He gives a piece of himself to me and that is all I desire.

Jane would never know how her words had haunted him. He had spent the last week in agony, pondering her statement and chastising himself for not being what Jane had needed the night Catriona Hamilton slighted her.

Bloody hell, he was an ass. Why couldn't he have comforted her and told her what she needed to hear? Why was it so bloody hard for him to let her glimpse his desire for her?

Bloody right it was difficult. She might discover what truly lay in his heart, and that he could never allow. She could never learn that in his cold, unfeeling heart she had warmed and softened a corner and made it just her own.

As he stalked along Oxford Street without any thought of where he was going or what he was about, Gavin allowed himself to remember the night he had held a crushed and weeping Jane in his arms. She could have no way of knowing that his kiss had been heartfelt and the only time he had ever pressed his lips to a woman's mouth without expecting anything in return. In his own awkward and inexperienced way, he had tried to comfort her. How was he to know that Jane was beyond

his miniscule skill? Why hadn't he seen that kissing Jane had only ignited the rampant insecurities that coursed within her?

If there was one thing he was an expert at, it was women and their emotions. He had learned to read the signs and retreat when he didn't like what he saw. There was not a woman out there who made him unsure of his skill. But Jane had. He had missed the fact that what she had needed was more than his kiss, or his hand against her breast. She had needed words and words were admittedly something he didn't do well.

She was right, he was afraid.

If he told her how he felt about her, she would hold too much power over him. While he knew Jane was kind and for the most part not conniving, the fact still remained she was a woman, and women were the masters of emotional manipulation. He had never been in danger of succumbing to their wiles, but he had come damn close when he had seen tears spill from Jane's lovely eyes.

He stopped and looked around at his surroundings, taking stock of where he was and just how far he had wandered from his home in Portman Square. He looked up and saw the black and gold sign of Thompson jewellers. He'd travelled a great distance with only his

thoughts of Jane for company.

He looked at the sparkling gems shining in the window and then he saw her, a more brilliant diamond than any displayed in the glass cases. His body tightened and his eyes hungrily scoured her from head to foot. He could not stop himself from stepping into the shop.

"Good day, Jane."

Jane hid the tremor that lanced through her when she heard the viscount's deep and melodious voice address her. Replacing the lapis lazuli bracelet she had been admiring back into its nest of white silk, Jane turned and smiled politely. "Good day to you, Lord Grayson. Out for a stroll?"

"Indeed." He grinned, but it was not warm, it was rather forced and tight on his beautifully sculpted lips. "And you?"

"Oh, just waiting for Lord Winterbourne and his sister," she said, motioning to where they stood talking with the shopkeeper. "It's their mother's birthday and they are buying her a pair of ruby earrings."

She watched as he turned his head to study the pair, noticing how his eyes turned a frostier shade of green when his gaze raked Lord Winterbourne. "And you

prefer lapis?" he said turning his gaze back to her, then picking up the bracelet and watching as the gold streak in the stones flashed in the sunlight.

"Why yes. I think lapis is a most startling gem. The blue is like nothing I've ever seen before."

"Lapis is the gem of the Sultan, did you know that, Jane?"

"I did not. Another lesson, perhaps? I vow, you are a most knowledgeable tutor."

He reached for her hand, and his finger traced her skin below the cuff of her glove and slowly, with his back concealing his actions from Winterbourne and the shopkeeper, he slipped the bracelet around her wrist. "Lapis, Jane, was the most prized jewel in the harem. It represented passion and lust, and when the Sultan gave it to one of his odalisques, it was assumed that she had become his favored concubine."

"How very interesting," she breathed, watching as his fingers closed the clasp of the bracelet.

"The Sultan only gave lapis to the women who pleased him, who fulfilled every one of his whims. The symbol became one of ownership and desirability. Every time the woman wore it, everyone in the harem knew she

had pleased as well as pleased the Sultan."

"This is really very interesting," she said, attempting to slide the bracelet from her wrist. "But I'm afraid that I shall have to defer this lesson until another time. I have promised to attend Lady Carstairs' salon with Lord Winterbourne and his sister, and I see that they are preparing to leave."

He ignored her and slid the bracelet further down her wrist. "Lapis from the Sultan meant the slave belonged to him and only him. He did not share her with any man, Jane."

"Really, sir, this is most inappropriate--"

"The woman wore the lapis because she was proud to have caught the attentions of the Sultan, and she was not ashamed to have everyone know she had shared her body with him. The lapis was his mark and she wore it as a reminder to herself that she belonged to him. When he saw his stones draped on her, the Sultan knew that his slave belonged to him in all ways a woman can belong to a man."

Jane watched as he motioned to the young clerk that was busy dusting the shelves. When the man stood before him, Gavin reached into his waistcoat pocket and passed him his calling card. "Make an account for me

and put this on it." He pointed at the bracelet and the clerk nodded, taking his leave. Then he returned his gaze to her. "The Sultan was extremely discriminating in who received his special gift, Jane. Not every woman was deserving."

"Really, it--"

"I have never given a woman a gift of lapis, Jane. In fact, I've never purchased a gift for a female who was not my mother or sister."

"Really, sir, I cannot accept such a gift."

His expression turned harder and his eyes raked coldly over her. "A simple thank you is all I require, Jane."

She looked down at the bracelet and then back up into his eyes. "Thank you does not seem like enough, my lord, for such an extravagant gift."

"It is enough, shundori."

She wanted to tell him how much she missed him, but she could not. To do so would be to make herself vulnerable, and Gavin was the last man she should let see her insecurities.

"When can I see you again?" he asked, stepping closer

to her so that she was forced to tilt her face up to look at him.

"You are seeing me right now, my lord."

He cleared his throat and pretended to be civil, but she could see a muscle tensing and tightening in his jaw. "I meant, when will you be ready to continue your lessons?"

She looked nervously about the shop, trying to will herself not give in to temptation. "I'm not certain. I have quite a few obligations to see to."

"I see," he said, straightening away from her.

"Ah, there you are," Lord Winterbourne's voice called to her. "Still staring at those ugly stones, I see. You should be looking at diamonds and rubies, my dear. They would become you. Grayson," he started, stopping mid-sentence as if he couldn't quite believe the sight before him.

"Winterbourne."

"I didn't know you were acquainted with the viscount," he asked her, his blue eyes raking over her face, the wheels of his mind calculating and wondering just how intimately she knew Gavin.

"His lordship was telling me the fascinating tale behind the lapis."

"Was he?" Winterbourne said archly before reaching for her hand and placing it in the crook of his arm.

"Well, I'm certain it was a rather fascinating tale. His people always put such a colorful bent to everything, but shall we, my dear? My sister is positively chomping at the bit--you know how impatient young girls can be."

"Indeed," she said, sweeping her gaze once more along Gavin's hard, unyielding face. "A very interesting lesson, my lord," she said, motioning to the bracelet. "I'm certain I won't forget it."

He looked at Winterbourne and then back to her, arching one black brow. "See that you don't."

* * * *

Raising his crystal goblet to his mouth, Gavin gulped at the port, watching with growing anger as the crowd of hot-blooded bucks surrounded Jane. Bloody hell, how had they discovered her so soon? A week ago she had blended into the background, barely garnering any notice--and now she had some of the most notorious men of the ton flocking about her. How had the caterpillar transformed so quickly into the sparkling

butterfly?

Dammit could they see it also? Did they see that Jane's beauty was ethereal and fresh? Did their jaded eyes covet her refreshing innocence like he coveted it? Damn her, she shouldn't look at men that way. He slammed his glass down on the tray of a passing footman. Ignoring the servant's scowl, he helped himself to another glass of champagne and drank it in one long swallow, watching as Jane smiled sweetly. She might not flirt like the experienced women of the ton, but she damn well knew what she was about. She had her admirers eating from the palm of her hand with only a shy smile and the blush of pale skin.

How he wished he could stroll over to where she stood surrounded by these men and take her by the hand, showing everyone in the room that he was her lover and that she belonged to him. The pain of watching her amass admirers--that might one day become her lover--was akin to a drowning man watching the shore slip further and further away. He was drowning, he finally admitted. Drowning in the allure of Lady Jane Westbury.

Out of champagne, he searched the room for another footman, when he felt the coolness of crystal and the smoothness of silk glide along his hand.

"You look like you could use something."

Catriona Hamilton. Gavin stifled a groan. The last thing he needed or wanted was her.

"Such tedious company," she purred next to him. "I'm certain you can come up with ways to make the night more enjoyable."

She smiled behind her flickering fan and batted her eyelashes outrageously. Her flirting had no effect on him, and he unconsciously sought out Jane, noticing how his body reacted when she smiled shyly at Lord Winterbourne. No, Jane was a miserable failure in the art of flirting, but a veritable expert at wielding her innocence. How could any man resist her charm and openness? Indeed, no man could, not even him, a rake who was corrupt and jaded and immune to the charms of women.

Even now his cock was stirring to life in his breeches. She looked much too beautiful tonight in an ice blue gown that dipped far too low along her ample bosom. Every man was staring after her, intrigued by innocent smiles and blushes juxtaposed with a lush body that was made for sinning.

"Why don't we go out into the gardens?" Catriona whispered behind her fan.

"I don't think so," Gavin mumbled before downing the entire glass of champagne. He really must control himself or else he'd be nothing but a stumbling drunkard. He had no desire for Jane to see in him such a state. To be drunk was weak, and he damn well would not let Lady Jane Westbury know that she could reduce to him to such lowness. Besides, he didn't want his senses dulled by imbibing too much. No, he could not have that. Tonight when he was fully sheathed in Jane's tight, welcoming body, he wanted to be fully aware of every tremor, every quake that rippled through her.

"Searching out other conquests?" Catriona's eyes narrowed and turned cold before she searched the room and found Jane. "Don't tell me you've fixed your roving eye on that one," she laughed. "The unbearably proper Lady Jane? Really, Grayson, she would run in fear from you. Why would she want a man who would ruin her the same way her husband did? Can you really imagine Jane Westbury enjoying lying beneath you? Good God," she chuckled, "the chit would swoon the minute she saw the size of you. And more importantly, she would never sully her reputation by having her name linked with yours. Everyone in the ton knows what sort of woman Lady Jane is. She's the maddening sort that wishes to be a wife and mother--she's certainly not about to become your whore."

Any thought Gavin had about giving Catriona the cut direct and heading for Jane vanished the second he heard her words. Any connection with him would surely ruin Jane's chances of making an advantageous match. No man would want her after discovering that she had been with him.

Normally, he would have rejoiced in such an epiphany--but not in regards to Jane. With her he could not be the revenge-seeking viscount. She wasn't like the others--the ones who whispered behind his back and cut his mother and sister leaving them weeping and broken. Jane had never expressed anything more than curiosity and interest in his upbringing. She hadn't treated him like the India Rat; she hadn't looked at him like he was nothing better than a servant set to please her. Jane was good and kind, and he owed her some measure of decency. He owed it to her to stay away.

"She seems to be finally coming into her own after Westbury left her," Catriona muttered as her eyes contemptuously raked Jane. "I'm certain that discovering her insufferable husband's untimely demise in his mistress' bed no doubt vanquished any lingering regrets she might have felt about the man." She took a deep breath, making certain her large bosom brushed the arm of his jacket. "She's not very pretty, but that doesn't seem to detract Winterbourne and his friends from admiring her. Perhaps they like plump women."

She shrugged. "Winterbourne has been by her side all week. I wonder if the two have become lovers?"

Gavin snapped his head from Catriona to Jane, who was being led out on to the floor by Winterbourne. His insides clenched when the music started and Jane curtsied to Winterbourne, her cheeks pink. Her smile was almost intimate, and he swore that he'd kill him if he'd taken Jane as his lover. When he had seen them together that morning in the shop he had been irked, but thought it impossible that Jane would find the pompous Winterbourne worthy of her time or affections. That night in the maze, her retort about the pup had been said in the heat of anger, he was certain. Now, when he looked at them, as Winterbourne bowed slowly before her, he wondered if the bastard had already gotten between her thighs.

Was it possible Jane had found herself a suitor? Was that the reason she had rebuffed him all week, ignoring his presence in the ballrooms and his missives requesting that they continue their 'lessons'? Had she already learned all she could from him? Was Winterbourne tutoring her?

He saw Jane smile again as Winterbourne led her down the line, and Gavin realized he'd give his fortune to have her smile at him in such a way. Bloody hell, he'd give up what was left of his soul if only to have her in

his life. But he was not like Winterbourne. He didn't come from impeccable bloodlines. He wasn't fair and blond and lithe. He was dark like the devil and tainted with the blood of a half-breed. He shouldn't covet Jane for himself, and he most certainly hadn't the right to be angry with her for attracting the attentions of such a man. After all, she had employed his skills for that purpose. He was to tutor her in the art of seduction, and it was obvious she was a master pupil.

"You've become rather dour," Catriona said, reminding him of her presence beside him. "I thought you were always game for sport in the bedroom."

"My tastes these days seem to settle on harder won quarry."

"I see," she said, fanning herself and looking away from him. "I suppose you're pining for Plain Jane. Well, let me tell you something, Grayson. After you've attempted to lure her into your bed, do not make the mistake of coming crawling back to me when she refuses you. For refuse you she will. You're not what she wants. You're the sort of gigolo that is exciting for a night, perhaps two, but nothing more."

"And you," he growled, "are not even the sort one remembers."

She snapped her fan shut and walked with swan-like grace through the crowd. Angry, Gavin stalked from the room, prepared to find something--anything that might take his mind off the way Jane looked in Winterbourne's company.

She looked right for the young lord and the thought that Winterbourne might have discovered the treasure he had already unearthed goaded him into a black fit of temper that he hadn't experienced since his youth.

Aye, he needed something to take his mind off Lady Jane Westbury.

Chapter Nine

Jane smiled up at Lord Winterbourne and over his lordship's shoulder watched Gavin's retreating form. Perhaps she had made a giant miscalculation when she set out to teach him his own lesson. Mayhap he would

never yearn and burn, or be lured by her evasiveness. Obviously she was not the sort of woman to inspire such feeling in him. He had hardly looked at her since entering the ballroom, and Jane felt her heart constrict tightly in her chest when she thought of how Catriona had come sidling up beside him, her fan artfully swaying before her lovely face.

For some damnable reason their meeting that afternoon had filled her with hope that he might feel something for her. Obviously she had been a victim once more of her overly hopeful heart.

She watched as the countess stood by his side for some time, then left with Gavin following in her path not long after her departure. Was he going to her? Was he meeting her like he had the Duchess of Manchester and Lady Lennox that night a few short weeks ago?

Jealousy and fear consumed her and she lost concentration, stepping on Lord Winterbourne's foot. "I beg your pardon, my lord," she gasped, humiliated by her blunder.

"Don't be a goose, Lady Westbury, it was an accident I'm sure."

Jane tried to grin, but her lips froze in a grimace as she saw Lady Hamilton leave the room. Obviously she was

meeting with the viscount.

"What is it?" Lord Winterbourne asked, pulling her by the arm to the fringes of the floor. "You've gone frighteningly pale, my dear. Are you ill? Can I bring you a refreshment?"

"Just some fresh air," she asked, as numerous eyes looked their way. "And perhaps some privacy."

"Of course," he said, placing her gloved hand on his arm and navigating them to one of the doors. "Let us find a quiet room in which to sit and refresh yourself. In truth you've gone quite white. Are you certain you're not ill?"

"Merely warm," she said as Lord Winterbourne guided her down the candlelit hall and opened a door. They were in a small salon, and Lord Winterbourne strolled over to a window and opened it, letting in a breeze that immediately cooled her heated skin.

"Why do you not sit and make yourself comfortable?"

Jane looked to the settee and then to Winterbourne. "I'm not certain that Lady Wessex would approve of us in her salon."

Winterbourne waved her comment aside and reached

for her hand, pulling her to the settee. "We shan't dawdle here. Surely you could sit for a minute or two to revive your constitution."

Jane gulped uneasily as his lordship helped her to sit. He plopped himself beside her and grazed his finger along her cheek. "Might I kiss you, dearest Jane?" he began. "I've wondered all week what your rosebud lips would feel like against mine."

Her heart lurched, and Jane was powerless to move. She didn't want to be kissed by Winterbourne. She wanted Lord Grayson--Gavin. Gavin would never have asked her if he could kiss her. No, he would have just done so, not allowing her an opportunity to refuse. Gavin never asked, he took and controlled, and Jane always felt herself breathless at his mastery. She didn't want a weak man. Archie had been weak. Winterbourne was only a boy given to romantic poetry. Gavin was a man. She would give anything to have Gavin desire her.

"Lady Jane," Winterbourne murmured as he pressed closer, taking her hand in his. "I have thought of no one but you. You have enchanted me, my lady and I will stop at nothing to possess you."

"Lord Winterbourne!" Jane gasped when she felt his weight atop her.

Gavin heard the startled shriek as he was helping himself to Lord Wessex's brandy. Replacing the decanter, he strolled to the door that separated the study from another room. Cracking it open he saw Lord Winterbourne atop Jane.

His first instinct was to hurtle himself into the room and tear Winterbourne to shreds, but something stopped him. The desire to find out just how Jane would respond to Winterbourne's cumbersome attempt at seduction froze him in his spot.

"Jane," Winterbourne grunted as he reached for her mouth and missed, hitting her chin. "My lovely Jane. How I want you."

"Lord Winterbourne," Jane panted, pinned beneath his weight. "I'm certain that this is not the place for such behavior. We shall be discovered."

"Then tell me, dearest Jane, where is the place? Where can we indulge this desire that is growing steadily between us?"

Gavin's hand squeezed the latch until his fingers went numb and white. Damn Winterbourne, he was saying all the right things. It would only be a matter of minutes before the bastard had his hand up her skirt. And that, Gavin could not watch.

"I would do anything for you, Jane," Winterbourne pleaded, hugging Jane in his arms while he nuzzled his face between her décolletage. "I want to spend forever with you. If I've learned nothing else from our time spent together this past week, it's that I want to spend the rest of my life with you."

Gavin felt like he'd been punched, unsuspecting, in the gut. He fought through the pain and realized that Jane and Winterbourne had been spending time together. While he had been brooding and lonely, she had been lifting her skirts for the young pup, implementing every lesson she'd learned at his hands.

"I really must be going," she said, straightening her bodice before raising her hands to her hair. "Perhaps tomorrow we might continue this discussion."

"I shall be there, dearest Jane," Winterbourne vowed. "I will be there tonight if only you would allow me."

"Lord Winterbourne," Jane said, smiling that damnable smile that made him lose his train of thought. "I'm afraid I cannot. Not tonight."

"Then I shall lie awake all night praying for a quick end to the darkness and for the sunlight to carry me to your doorstep."

Bloody fool, Gavin thought as he watched the young pup go on bended knee and kiss Jane's hand. He was making an ass of himself. Gavin would have felt some measure of pity for the young man had he not set his sights on the woman that he wanted.

The door closed behind Jane, and Gavin let himself into the salon.

"Get up, Winterbourne."

The young man stood, shock registering in his face.
"Grayson."

"A touching scene and one that will never be repeated, do you understand?"

"I'm afraid you have me at a disadvantage, for I have no idea of what you are speaking of."

"Jane Westbury," Gavin said through clenched teeth.
"You're not to see her again, do you understand me?"

The insolent pup at the audacity to laugh. "And who are you to issue orders to me? What is Jane Westbury to you? You are beneath her, sir."

"You've been warned, Winterbourne," he growled,

thinking it prudent to leave the young lordling before he beat him to a bloody pulp.

"And what if I choose not to heed your warning?"

"Then you and I shall meet at dawn and I will take great delight in slicing you open from your throat to your ballocks."

Winterbourne blanched but refused to back down. "I'm not certain why you've chosen to interfere in my affairs, Grayson, but I will tell you now, that Jane is mine."

"You've been warned."

"I will not give her up to some half-breed son of a whore who thinks he can strong-arm me."

Blinding anger seized him, and Gavin found himself tossing Winterbourne against the wall, his forearm pressing against Winterbourne's lace covered throat.

"Do not tempt me, Winterbourne. My half-breed blood is boiling and I'll have no compunction about killing you here without benefit of the niceties. Now," he said in his most threatening voice, "you will not throw yourself on Lady Westbury again. If I find that you've been bothering her, I'll see to emasculating you."

"What the bloody hell do you know, Grayson? We

spent the afternoon together. She didn't even mention your name."

Fearing that he'd kill him right then and there, Gavin thrust Winterbourne against the wall and left the room. Bloody hell, he was out of control. He couldn't think, couldn't even see straight as he stalked down the hall and into the foyer where a footman opened the door for him.

Where the hell was Jane? Probably off with more of her suitors. Well, there was one sure way to meet up with the Lady.

Barking out orders to the coachman, Gavin waved away the assistance of a footman and let himself into the carriage. Slumping onto the leather squabs he flung his frock coat into the corner and loosened his waistcoat and cravat. His blood swam hot and angry in his veins and with a vicious jerk he pulled the cravat from his neck and tossed it atop the coat.

Voices came from the house and Gavin recognized Jane's melodic laughter followed by Winterbourne's baritone rumble. Bloody hell, he was going to have to do something about him.

The carriage door opened and a woman climbed in and closed the door. "Good evening, Jane."

With a gasp, she covered her mouth, her dark eyes luminous and sparkling in the lantern light.

"Lord Grayson. Whatever are you doing in my carriage, sir?"

"Tutoring you, madam," he said, reaching for the straining buttons of his breeches. "Your education resumes with lesson number three, and that is--what a lady can expect when she plays games with a man. And you, Jane have been playing games with me."

Chapter Ten

"No ... I'm ... that is I'm not playing games...." Jane trailed off as the carriage lurched forward. Eyes wide, she moved the curtains aside to watch the enormous

façade of the Wessex's townhouse disappear behind them.

A large hand reached out and captured her chin, forcing her to meet his hard gaze. "Think well before you lie to me, madam, for I am in no mood to indulge you."

Jane looked around the carriage and then to the window. Gray mist was rolling into the city and she felt as though she was being engulfed by a shroud as the carriage was lost in a thick patch of fog, blinding her. Gavin's fingers suddenly left her chin, only to land atop her hand. Uncurling her fingers from the velvet curtain, he grasped her hand in his and brought her wrist up to the lantern light. His fingers, dark against the ivory lace, pulled the cuff of her sleeve back, revealing the lapis bracelet he had purchased for her.

His gaze slid to hers and he arched a brow in smug satisfaction before he started to tug her toward him. "Now, Jane, you may arouse me with your hand."

"Surely you don't mean to do that sort of thing here?" He did not release his hold and instead increased the pressure of his hand on her fingers, pulling her from her seat until she was kneeling between his parted thighs.

"I can think of no better place to sit back and watch a lady pleasure me." He bent his leg, propping his boot on

the bench, allowing her full access to the huge bulge in his breeches. His thighs were hard, the muscles pulling the delicate seams of his silk breeches taut, outlining the sheer strength in his legs. The negligent way he was sprawled on the bench contrasted with the commanding power Jane heard in his words, and the way his fingers, firm and assured, forced her with the barest touch to sink lower to the carriage floor.

"You've succeeded, Jane," he said as he reached once more for the gold buttons of his breeches, opening them one by one. "You've made me burn for you. Now is the time to wield your power, Jane. Seduce me." He reached for her hand and slid it up the length of his thigh to his groin, where she felt his erection lift and thicken beneath the silk. His eyes were riveted on her face. She could feel the heat of his stare, but her gaze was fixed firmly on her pale hand covered with his dark one as he slowly folded back the opening of his breeches and forced her fingers around the thick width of him.

"I am at your mercy, Jane," he sighed as she slid her hand up the silky length of him, the gold streaks in her lapis bracelet twinkling in the yellow lantern light. "But do not take too much comfort in that fact, Jane. I am quite certain our positions shall be reversed, for I shall have you at my mercy before the night is through."

"Would you like that?" she asked boldly as she watched the way her fingers traced the tip of his erection.

"The question is," he said, pushing the sleeves of her gown down over shoulders, "would you like it?" She gasped when the cool air met her skin, and her nipples tightened as her breasts swelled over the edge of her corset. Before she could react, he reached inside her corset and lifted her breasts, baring them to his burning eyes. Then he sat forward and grasped her about the waist, bringing her to the juncture of his thighs. Pulling her hand from his erection, he licked two of her fingers then brought them to the valley of her breasts, wetting her skin. Jane watched as he slowly stroked his erection, then brought its glistening tip to the firm mounds of her breasts before he circled her nipple with the wet tip.

"What shall I do with my cock, Jane?"

Her eyes flew to his face, searching for some sign of his intentions. Archie had never talked during their encounters and Jane was unaware that words between lovers could also arouse.

"You have beautiful breasts, Jane," he said as he brushed her nipple again with the wet tip of his erection. "I'd like to slide my cock between them. Part

them for me, so that I may watch you with your hands on your breasts and my cock sliding between your flesh."

Her heart was beating maddeningly fast, and Jane was certain she had never been quite so wicked as she was when she was in the company of the viscount. He was so dark and commanding that Jane couldn't help but imagine him as a Sultan, and she, his dutiful slave, catering to his every whim and desire.

"That's it," he said, sliding the pink tip between her breasts. His hands covered hers on the sides, crushing her breasts together so that only the wet tip of his phallus could be seen. Jane watched in fascination as her breasts engulfed his erection, the deep breaths coming from him told her that he was watching too.

His fingers moved along her breasts until they reached her nipples. Taking each one between his fingers, he traced, pinched, then soothed them with the pad of his thumb. He thrust a few more times, watching as her breasts took his erection in.

"Have you ever had a cock in your mouth, Jane?"

Her eyes flew first to his shaft between her breasts then to his face. He was watching her carefully, and Jane thought she saw uncertainty flash in his eyes.

"I have not, my lord." Needing to please him, wanting to pleasure him, she lowered her head and touched the tip of her tongue to his penis. She heard him suck in a breath, and Jane, feeling emboldened, swirled her tongue around the tip.

"Take off your dress, Jane," he said, pulling his erection free. "I want you naked while you're on your knees. I want to see every inch of you before me. You've denied me, Jane, but not for much longer."

He wanted her. He had longed for her during the past week. The knowledge made her feel powerful, and maybe just a bit secure in the fact that the viscount sought her out this night, not because he was her tutor, but because he was thinking of himself as her lover.

Slowly she shed her gown, the silk puddled around her thighs like a blue cloud. Leaning forward, he placed his lips below her ear and kissed the sensitive flesh while his fingers stole around her back, loosening the ties of her corset.

"You're going to look stunning in nothing but ivory flesh and my cock in your mouth, do you know that, Jane?" She whimpered at the words and the feel of his tongue on her skin. "I have waited for more than a week to see you thus, and I will not wait an instant longer."

This is what waiting does to a man, Jane." He tossed her corset to the floor and ripped her chemise down the center until her sex and thighs were bared to him. "It makes a man eager and rough. Does my crudeness offend you, Jane?" He removed the tattered chemise and smoothed his hand down her softly rounded belly. "Is your whimper out of fear or desire?"

She looked shyly away from him and attempted, almost unconsciously, to cover herself with her arms. Her bravado left her the instant she was naked. All of Archie's taunts came rushing back, and she squeezed her arms tightly around her middle as if to ward off Archie and Catriona's insults.

"Jane," he whispered, raking his hands through her hair and disturbing her coiffure. "This isn't what I desire. I do not want to see your arms shielding your beauty. I have not waited a week in order to have you hide from me." He raised her face to his mouth and kissed the corner of her lips. "Move your arms to your sides and let me look at you."

She shook her head, refusing to meet his gaze. She couldn't bear to see disappointment in his magnificent green eyes. She only wanted to see desire there. But he refused to listen to her pleas, and instead, took her hands and wrapped her arms around her waist. He secured her wrists against her bottom, holding her still

with one of his hands. His other hand traced her skin from the hollow of her throat to the thatch of hair that shielded her sex. He let out a sigh and said something in Indian before resting his gaze on her face.

"Now then," he murmured. "Was your whimper out of fear or desire?"

"Desire," she said quietly.

"Then show me your desire, Jane." His fingers traced her face to her hair where he brushed her curls over shoulders until her hair trailed down her back. "Take me into your lovely mouth, my shundori, and show me your desire for me."

His fingers curled about her neck and slowly he lowered her head until her lips met the pink tip. His hand fisted around the shaft as he circled her mouth with his erection. Jane let her tongue come out in small, delicate flicks, first testing the feel and taste of him, then purposely drawing short, sucking breaths from him.

"Long licks, Jane. Trail your tongue along my cock. Let me see the pinkness of it against my skin."

Jane leaned forward and angled her head so that she slid her tongue from the base of his phallus to the very

tip where a pearl-white drop rested. Unable to tear her gaze from his, she reached out and captured the drop with her tongue.

His lids lowered and Jane watched as he rested his head against the back of the squabs. He did not close his eyes, instead, he traced her cheeks, then her lips as she pleased him with her tongue. When he began to squirm on the bench and his hand fisted tightly in her hair, she looked up and met his beautiful gaze, rendered turquoise in his desire. "Swallow my cock, Jane." Then with his hand in her hair, he lowered her mouth to his swollen tip, forcing it past her lips, until the hard length of him was in her mouth.

"Bloody hell," he groaned as he flexed his hips, forcing his length further into her mouth. "You're going to make me come, Jane, and it's too bloody soon." Then he angled his hips again, and Jane sucked on his hard length, eliciting a long groan and a string of words she had never heard used. "Another time," he said, pulling his erection from her mouth. "Another time and I shall allow myself the sinful pleasure of coming in your hot mouth. But now," he said, reaching for her jewelled wrist and dragging her up from her knees. "I want to come inside your scalding heat. Are you hot and wet for me, Jane?"

He brought her atop him. Parting her thighs, she

straddled his muscular legs. She felt shockingly exposed in this position, and she didn't know if she liked it or not.

"You're hot and wet, I can feel your honey seeping through the silk of my breeches. You're a houri, aren't you?" he whispered as he traced the contours of her body. "You're mine to command, aren't you, Jane?"

"Gavin..." his name was a breathless sigh as he captured her breasts in his hand. The rocking motion of the coach made her full breasts sway, and Jane saw that he watched them move with a look of longing and hunger.

"Raise your hands to the ceiling, Jane, and do not lower them until I say you may do so."

Lowering her bottom onto his lap, Jane reached above her head, her fingers entwined tightly together as the tips brushed the velvet covered ceiling.

"Up on your knees," he commanded, lifting her from his lap. "Now, arch your back and neck, Jane."

Closing her eyes, Jane did as he asked. Her long hair trailed down her back until the curling ends grazed against his breeches. Her hips were pushed forward, as were her breasts, and the rhythm of the coach made

them sway provocatively until the peaks were hard buds, aching to be touched.

"Very nice," he purred, as his hands skimmed over her belly and hips. His fingers stole around to her buttocks then to the inner facing of her thighs, only to move up again and glide through the ends of her hair. His hands roamed her body, and Jane felt as though she were a slave he was examining before buying. His touch was soft and provocative, yet masterful, and Jane responded to his words and his touch so easily. "You have a body made for a man to worship, Jane. Soft, welcoming, everything is there to indulge a man and his senses." Her breath left her lungs when he brushed her breasts with his hands, leaving them full and swaying--the nipples painfully hard. He repeated the motion, only this time his touch was firmer, leaving her breasts swaying more. She felt his erection stir beneath her and she saw that he stroked himself slowly while he watched her breasts bounce. "Tell me, Jane." His free hand kneaded a path from her belly to her mound. "How long has it been since you've had a cock imbedded in your sheath?"

Her lips trembled and she bit them, fighting the urge to whimper and writhe. When she squeezed her eyes shut, he reached for her bottom and spread her thighs further apart, then, sliding his finger along her wetness, he parted her sex and searched for the tight bud of flesh.

Slowly he circled it, wetting it, sensitizing it until she lowered herself closer to the erect shaft that he began to rub along her wetness.

"How long, Jane?" he whispered against her throat, "since you've been with a man? A month?" He licked her neck as he swirled his erection around the bud, slowly building her desire. "A week?"

She moaned when he traced tiny circles beneath her ear, then matched the rhythm as he traced the outline of her opening. "How long, dearest Jane, since a man has slipped into your body and stretched you?"

"I-I ... don't know," she panted moving her hips in an attempt to have him slide his erection inside her. But he stilled her with a strong hand on her hip.

"Has it been a day, Jane?"

She looked down at him and felt his eyes, accusing and turbulent cut through her desire. When she tried to lower her hands, he shackled her wrists with his fingers and held her arms above her.

"Has Winterbourne been inside you, Jane?" His eyes swept over her body to where his phallus continued to outline the entrance of her clenching body. When he looked up at her, his eyes were daring and dark. "Have

you let him fuck you, Jane?"

"No."

His fingers tightened around her wrists and his breathing became harsh in the quiet of the carriage.

"How long, Jane? How long has it been since you've felt a man deep inside you, loving you, bringing you to completion?"

"Never," she whispered as he lowered her arms and brought her lips down against his.

"Then I shall be the first, Jane."

Then she felt his hands glide down her bottom and the tip of his shaft was nudging her entrance. "Let me inside, Jane," he whispered, "but only a little. I want to feel you stretch around me, inch by inch."

She did as he asked, sliding her body onto his erection and not resisting when he planted his hands around her waist and raised her, allowing the very tip of his erection to stay inside her.

"Again," he commanded.

Over and over, she sank her body on his length. Each time he allowed her to go further, and each time she

moaned and tossed her head back, enjoying the feel of his hard length. When she went to slide down again, he stopped her and instead reached for her wrist, bringing it to his groin so that her fingers curled around his sex. It was hard and slick with her arousal and her stomach clenched as wetness seeped out of her body when she felt what would soon be claiming her. For that was his intention, she knew, as she raised her head and met his gaze. He wanted her to feel him, to know what and who would be deep inside her, loving her, completing her.

She stroked him, up and down, firming her grip on his shaft until his lids lowered and his fingers pinched and grasped her buttocks and then she leaned forward, and slowly impaled herself on his rampant length. He bucked up against her and reached for her hand, the one glistening with their arousal, and pressed it to her breast. When her nipple was wet and straining, he slipped it between his lips and sucked, his hips moving wildly beneath her as her breasts bounced in his mouth and his fingers tightened on her bottom.

"Gavin," she cried, matching his pace and forcing him to quicken his.

He said nothing, but placed his strong fingers on her buttocks, parting her and running his finger along her stretched rim.

Knowing he was feeling himself penetrate her body made her eager and wet. With a small cry, she felt her body stiffen and allowed him to thrust deep inside her.

Her climax was quite literally blinding, and she fell against him, breathing harshly and tasting the saltiness of the sweat on his neck. But he would not let her rest. Instead, he palmed her again while he stroked her deeply. When his fingers were drenched with her arousal, he brought them to his lips and licked them. "I love your taste, my shundori," he murmured, and she felt his body tense beneath her. "I can't get enough of it. I can't get enough of you." He splashed his seed deep inside her and clutched her tight to his chest.

Jane clenched her body around his and he groaned, forcing her hips lower onto his erection. She toyed with the ends of his hair that had loosened from his queue and kissed his damp neck. The carriage continued to rock along the road, lulling her into sated sleep. "Should we not be at my house by now?"

"We're going to Richmond, my shundori," he said as he smoothed a hand down her back. "And there we will continue your lessons."

"Lessons in pleasuring men?"

"No," he said, clutching her face in his hands. "Lessons

in pleasuring me."

Chapter Eleven

The carriage rumbled along the limestone drive of Gavin's Richmond house. As the coach swayed, his arms instinctively wrapped around Jane, bringing her to his chest. Closing his eyes, he rested his head against the squabs and forced himself to cease staring at Jane as she slept in his arms.

Any minute they would approach the house, and Prakash would be awaiting their arrival. Any minute, he would be free of Jane, and his body would no longer burn for her. It was only because her sweet curves were nestled tightly against his belly and chest that he could not seem to think straight. Distance between them would soon get rid of these ludicrous thoughts running

rampant through his mind.

The coach rocked to a stop. Lifting Jane from his lap, he waited until the door opened and carried her down the stair and up the entrance of the house. Prakash was waiting for them. Gavin was thankful that he'd had the presence of mind to dress Jane.

"A hot bath awaits you, my lord. I have put the bath in the gardens, bondhu, as you requested."

"And the rest?" he asked over his shoulder.

"Everything is as you asked."

"Good night, Prakash."

"Good night, bondhu."

Gavin nodded, dismissing Prakash, then continued down the long hall to the bank of French doors that lay open. Stepping inside the conservatory he saw that every one of his orders had been followed.

"Jane," he whispered as he laid her down on a black divan, "awake."

Her honey colored lashes flickered then parted before slowly lifting to reveal her intoxicating eyes. "Have we

arrived?"

Her smile was soft and womanly and Gavin felt his insides begin to melt. Distance, he told himself. He couldn't let Jane's shy smiles be his undoing.

Straightening away from her, he motioned to the tub. "A warm bath awaits you."

Her eyes widened as he stepped away from her and she reached for him. "Will you not stay?"

"No." He couldn't stay, not now, not when he was feeling his heart fill with a strange wistfulness he had never before experienced. Her lashes lowered, but not before she could conceal the look of confusion in them. "I will meet you here in a while. I have business to attend to."

He left her then, strolling to the path that led to his study door. He heard her rise from the divan, the rustle of silk sounding over the gentle cascade from the nearby waterfall. His blood ran hot and thick, slowing in his veins as he thought of the dress being shed from her body. He thought of how her ivory skin would look in the golden candlelight, and he imagined her hands soaping her body--her fingers gliding over her breasts, down her belly only to slide between her thighs.

The crinkling of silk once again drew his attention and he mindlessly stepped back and peered between the branches of a palm tree only to see the silk gown skim down along her back and over her waist till it fell onto the floor. Her arms came up over her head and he could see the sides of her breast, full and soft and begging for a touch of his hand. She wound her hair up into a bun and secured it with pins, before turning and stepping into the tub.

A voyeur, he watched as she sank into the water, the bubbles of the jasmine scented water covering her body, shielding her secrets from him. But his mind supplanted the image of full breasts with coral nipples, a softly rounded belly that he couldn't wait to kiss and feel beneath his mouth, and legs, soft and feminine that would fit perfectly around his waist.

The images in his mind, coupled with seeing her arms move beneath the water made his brain ignite with yearning. She was washing herself, he knew it although he couldn't see her hands touching her skin. He wanted to go to her, to stand beside the tub, yet the sight before him kept him entranced.

Her hands sank under the water and she leaned forward. Her little foot, covered with bubbles and arched like a ballet dancer's, rested on the edge of the copper tub. She moaned, a soft, husky sound, then

rested her head back, closing her eyes as she did so.

Was she touching herself? Re-enacting what he had done to her? Did her breasts yearn for him? Was she wet and aching for his cock? Was she pleasuring herself while she thought of him? Good God, he was inflamed--consumed by the very thought of having her thinking of him.

A soft purring sound came from deep in her throat and her neck arched back. Water splashed over the sides and he was gifted with the sight of her breasts, wet and shining in the water. When he thought he'd give in to his desires and go to her, he saw her hand, the lapis bracelet sparkling beneath a froth of bubbles glide along her breast. Her neck arched once more, and her mouth parted on a breath that made his cock stiffen further. Bloody hell, he'd never seen a sight more enticing.

There was very little he hadn't done in his extensive sexual escapades, but watching a lady at her toilette had never been one of them. He shouldn't be intruding on her privacy, but he couldn't move, couldn't take his eyes off her hand and the bracelet he'd purchased for her. He knew she was rubbing her fingers along her nipples, hardening them but the bubbles concealed the most graphic vision of it. If one looked quickly one would think she was merely soaping her body and enjoying the water, but his gaze lingered, taking in how her dainty

foot arched with each movement of her hand and how her lashes fluttered and her lips parted on silent moans and whimpers. He knew then that she was doing much more than bathing. She was thinking about him and what he'd done to her.

The water splashed over the sides of the tub once again, nudging him into walking toward her. He'd already shed his clothing and his cock was hard and soaring to the ceiling. He stood behind her and without a word, he lifted her from the tub, ignoring her gasp of surprise. He brought her body, bubbles and all, against him. His mouth came down hard on hers and his tongue pushed past her lips, into her mouth, savoring every inch of her. She did not resist him. Instead she loosened the silk tie holding his hair, letting the length tumble about his shoulders while she threaded her fingers through it.

She moaned when he reached for her thighs and parted them, lifting her so that she straddled his waist. Her soft belly rubbed against his hard one and his cock leapt, searching for the entrance to her body. He could take her like this, he knew. She was weak and willing and would allow him to surge up inside her, but he pushed the inclination out of his mind. He had never been granted the privilege of seeing a lady soak in a tub, much less given an opportunity to join her. It was a thought that made his fevered brain burn hotter. He

stepped into the tub, sinking down with her still astride him without missing one stroke of his tongue.

"The floor," she murmured against his lips when his large frame sent half the water sloshing out of the sides of the tub.

"To hell with the floor, madam," he groaned, nipping her lips and cupping his hand around her neck to bring her closer to him. "I'm certain it'll be much wetter before the night is through."

He ran his hand up her back, soaping it with the sea sponge she had been using. She purred in appreciation, and he repeated the action while he kissed her. Over and over, his mouth ravished hers, with drugging kisses that dulled his thoughts and made him swell further against her belly.

Growing restless, Jane rubbed her slick mound against him and he felt his cock leap against her. It was so hard to resist what she flagrantly offered. Breaking the contact with her mouth, he turned her so that her back was against him and his searching member was far from her reach.

Picking up the sponge, he soaped her arms then breasts before slowly gliding down her silky middle. She purred and writhed, torturing him further with quick

flashes of erect, coral nipples that bobbed up from the water. Gritting his teeth, he ignored them, focusing instead on the sponge that was slowly making its way to the brown curls shielding her secrets.

He wanted to do more than please her tonight. The thought shocked him into stillness and Jane glanced up at him, her eyes worried.

The feeling became deeper as he looked down at her. His heart raced and he felt altogether different than he ever had before.

"Gavin?" she asked uneasily.

"I want you, Jane," he said, hoping she understood how difficult it was for him to need anything from anyone. "I need to feel your heat. I want your smiles."

She smiled and rose out of the water like a mermaid arising from sea foam. She was standing naked before him, bubbles sliding down her skin and she was trying bravely to bear his bold perusal. Jane, he wanted say, haven't you figured out how much I adore you? Do you not understand how beautiful you are, how your body inflames me? But he couldn't. He had never been able to utter the flowery words that tripped easily off other men's tongues. He hadn't the knack for sweet seduction and as he looked up the length of Jane's body, he

wondered if that was what she had meant when she said Winterbourne gave her what she needed.

"My lord?"

He saw her arms slowly leave her sides, and he knew then exactly what she needed. He caught her hands in his and rose very slowly from the water. "Wait here."

He left the tub and reached for one of the towels that Prakash had set on a nearby chair. He quickly dried himself, all the while feeling her dark eyes travelling the length of him. When he was finished, he discarded the towel onto the floor and reached for a dry one.

He towelled her off quickly, ignoring her gasps when he reached between her legs and dried her thighs. He bit back the urge to capture her mouth in his and replace the towel with his hand. He was determined to do something that he had never done before--he was going to give Jane a glimpse inside his soul. He was going to offer her a piece of himself.

Gavin picked her up as if she weighed nothing more than a feather and carried her inside the silk tent, where he put her down and told her to close her eyes. Her heart raced. She felt exceedingly vulnerable standing naked before him, not being able to see his expression. Was he looking at her? Scrutinizing her hips and

thighs? Was he comparing her to Catriona Hamilton? Her eyes flew open and met Gavin's green gaze.

"Have you ever looked at yourself, Jane?" He traced the back of his hand along her cheek.

"Yes," she said with a grimace.

"Have you ever looked at your body through a man's eyes?"

Her eyes darted to the cushions that littered the floor. A silk coverlet awaited her, she only had to reach for it and hide behind it.

"Come," he murmured when he saw the direction of her gaze. "I want to awaken you to your considerable charms, Jane."

She allowed him to take her hand and pull her to the cushions. She sank to her knees as he came down behind her and trailed the tips of his fingers along her spine, making gooseflesh rise on her already sensitized body.

"Such beautiful skin," he whispered before his lips caressed the nape of her neck. "So soft, so responsive to my touch." His lips moved lower and he placed a kiss between her shoulders. She was on already on fire for

him, and yet she somehow knew it would be a long while yet before she felt Gavin inside her.

His lips moved downward, and he pressed her forward so that she was leaning over her knees. His hands continued to skim the length of her back, up and down, studying her.

"I like this, Jane, where your waist indents to your hips. I like sliding my hands along your curves, feeling the flare of your hips. I like your bottom very much, Jane."

She felt her face turn hot and she was certain that every inch of her skin was flushed pink. His bold perusal was unsettling, and she gripped her knees tighter as if to protect herself from his far too seeing eyes.

"Have you any idea how good your bottom feels?" he asked, as he traced her derriere with his hands. "It's so wonderfully soft beneath my fingers. You have the type of bottom, Jane that drives me to distraction." One of his fingers traced the cleft and she gasped in surprise. She had never been touched there. "I'd like to take you from behind, Jane." She felt him sliding his erection along her buttocks. "I'd like to see my fingers grasp your hips and watch your spine curve gracefully as you take me into your tight sheath. I want to hear you gasp that way when I am inside stroking you, Jane."

He moved his phallus down her buttock then leaned closer and slid the tip along the petals of her sex. "I want to do it before a mirror, Jane. I want to see the look of pleasure on your lovely face. I want to see your lips part, your pink tongue dart out as you wet your lips as your passion escalates. I'd like to see your hands on your breasts as you play with them," she whimpered when she felt her nipples harden further and she squeezed her knees tighter. "I'd like to command you to do things, Jane. And I'd like to watch you do them. But not now, Jane. I am afraid that there is something more pressing I have to do. On your side," he commanded before helping her to assume the position he wanted. She was lying on her left side, her head propped in her hand and pillows scattered beneath her. He ran his hand down the length of her and she trembled. "You cannot hide your response to me, can you, my shundori?"

She shivered again as he leaned closer and brushed his lips against her shoulder. "Why would I want to hide it?"

"That is a game lovers play, Jane. But your passion runs much deeper than that, doesn't it?"

"I like feeling your hands on me."

"Where, Jane?" he asked, nuzzling her neck. "Where do you like to be touched? What do you want me to do?"

Tell me and I shall give it to you."

She didn't want to tell him what she desired, she wanted him to do what pleased him. She wanted just to experience his desire for her.

"I'd like to show you your beauty, Jane. Let me show it to you through my eyes."

She swallowed hard. A rush of trepidation coursed through her and she shoved it aside. She wanted this. This had been what she desired from him all along. It might be the only time he offered her such a thing. Indeed, it might be the last time that they were together.

"Close your eyes, Jane." She did, and he reached for her wrist. There was the tinkling of china, followed by something wet that dripped on her skin. "Now, Jane, you will not peek. You will let me study you for as long as I want. You will let me do whatever I want. Do you trust me, Jane?"

She bit her lips and nodded. She could do this. She wanted to do this.

"Very good, Jane, now rest your head on the pillow and lie very still...."

Chapter Twelve

Incense burned from the braziers, blanketing the tent in an exotic mix of sandalwood. Gavin waited until Jane was relaxed before he lowered his quill to the delicate skin of her inside wrist. She jumped when the red vegetable dye met her skin. "Ssh," he whispered as he brushed the henna into familiar lines.

"What are you doing?" she asked, stiffening once again.

He looked up and saw that her eyes were tightly shut. "I am adorning you in my own way, Jane. I will show you what I have done when I am ready."

"Can't you tell me?" she asked, swallowing deeply.

He grinned. He felt her pulse quicken beneath his

thumb, and he raised her hand to his mouth and kissed her fingertips. "I am choosing my favorite parts of your body, Jane. You may ponder that while you withstand my ministrations."

When she quieted, he returned to his task, the ancient art form of Henna. Instead of the traditional designs that women used to decorate their hands and feet, he created his own. A piece of him, written to her, on her, in Sanskrit.

She would never know what he said, she would think it was simply a design he placed on her most treasured body parts. He would be safe that way.

He glanced up and saw that her face was at last relaxed, and her breathing was heavy as his gaze followed the rise and fall of coral tipped breasts. Soon, he consoled his raging lust, soon he would be making love to her.

Ignoring his throbbing erection, he left her wrist and pondered where he would next write his words of desire. Her neck. The hollow behind her ear that his lips were drawn to, where he couldn't resist nuzzling.

He dipped his quill again and dragged it across her skin. She shivered and moaned and he purposely brushed the feathers of the quill along her shoulder. "I adore the space beneath your ear, Jane. It smells of you

and it fits my mouth perfectly. I can feel your heartbeat pulse against my lips. I know the instant your heart beats faster for me, Jane."

Gooseflesh erupted on her skin and he felt arrogant satisfaction that he was responsible for it. She pleased him very much.

"Gavin. That feels very soothing."

"I'm glad," he said, before kissing her shoulder. "Now, roll onto your stomach, Jane, and I shall pacify you even more."

She hesitated only briefly before rolling over. His gaze skimmed along her back, to the indentation that drew him above her buttocks. She was perfect there, he decided as he traced her bottom. He'd always been drawn to a good bottom and Jane Westbury had the most perfect heart-shaped derriere he'd ever seen. It seemed such a shame to cover it. So instead, he used the henna on the flat of her back and kissed her plump cheeks when he had finished. "I'm afraid I was unable to pay homage your bottom, Jane. It is simply far too perfect for words." With a final stroke of his hand on her cheek, he kissed her back then whispered into her ear. "Now, Jane, on your knees, facing me. Don't open your eyes, I will help you."

There was no awkwardness as she kneeled before him and when she tilted up her face, the candles bathed her skin in a golden glow. She took his breath. He started, feeling his chest burn and tighten. Something very strange happened, and he couldn't stop himself from clutching her face in his hands and lowering his mouth to hers. His kiss was slow and provocative. He slid his tongue between her lips and mimicked what his cock was straining to do to her. She moaned and he deepened it, but kept the pace slow and sensual. When her hands trailed down his belly, he pulled away, afraid he would not possess the self-control to stop before it was too late. Her whimper nearly undid his control, but he stayed his hands from reaching to cup her breasts, and instead he reached for the quill.

He circled her areole with the feathers and watched as the nipple hardened. His tongue burned to lave it, but he squelched the impulse, knowing that soon he would have her. He chose her left breast, the one with the charming freckle that never failed to capture his interest or imagination. "You have beautiful breasts, Jane, do you know that?" She shook her head and he smiled, watching the taut flesh tremble beneath the quill. "They're full and heavy and spill over my hand. I like that Jane, very much. When I am on top of you they rub against me and I'm reminded of your voluptuousness. When you're above me I can watch you and study the way you move. I like to watch you, Jane."

She sighed and tossed her head back and he set the quill to her. He tickled the length of her midriff before reaching his most treasured spot. His finger replaced the quill and he circled her navel with it. He adored her soft belly. Loved touching it and putting his mouth to it. He couldn't wait to feel the soft and welcoming length of her beneath him. He looked up at her, her face lovely and serene. The emotion coursing inside him was so foreign, so strong that his hand shook when he dipped the quill in the henna and placed it on her navel.

His strokes were slow, thoughtful, and he wrote with all the emotion he had inside him. It didn't matter that she would never understand. He knew, and that was all that mattered. He couldn't tell her what her silky belly did to him, what thoughts wandered through his mind as he caressed her with his fingers and his mouth. But he did allow himself to kiss her softly and nuzzle her for the briefest of seconds. He was so close to her, he could smell her scent, and he knew she was aroused, and God help him he had never been more eager to part a woman's thighs and drive into her than he was now.

Letting the quill slip from his hands, he placed his fingertips on her mons and let his lips skim over the silky hair. Her fingers bit into his shoulders and the huskiness he heard deep in her throat made him thicken so painfully that he was forced to take his cock in his

hand and soothe the ache that was now unbearable.

Willingly she parted her thighs for him and he flicked his tongue to taste her arousal. "So bloody beautiful," he groaned. "Lay back, shundori," he growled. "I have to have all of you. I need you in my mouth and on my tongue."

"Gavin," she sighed, raking her fingers through his hair. "Is there nothing you haven't done?"

He looked up at her then, and brought her down to meet him. "There is," he said, trailing his hands down her back to cup her lush bottom.

"Tell me."

"I have never made love, Jane."

Her eyes flew open and he kissed her, laying her back on the pillows, he came down on top of her, his breath coming in short pants. "Show me what it is like, Jane. I need to know, I need to know what it is like with you. Love me, Jane," he said before claiming her mouth in a kiss he knew would destroy him.

Chapter Thirteen

The early morning light filtered through the bed curtains. Jane stretched and yawned and thought about the wondrous night she had spent in Gavin's arms.

He had made love to her so thoroughly throughout the night and throughout nearly every room in the house that it was a wonder she was even awake at all. She smiled sheepishly, remembering the things he had done to her and the scandalous and most deliciously wicked things he had said to her as he carried her up to his room.

"Gavin," she whispered, reaching for him. But he was not beside her. She sat up and brought the sheet around her. She searched the room and called out his name. There was no answer.

In a rush of panic, she pulled the sheet from the bed, wrapped it tightly around her and stepped onto the cool

floor. There, on the table before the window sat a folded paper with her name written boldly across the front.

She reached for it, her fingers shaking so fiercely that she could hardly open it. Already her eyes blurred with tears, her mind already knew what her heart refused to acknowledge.

Dearest Jane,

I have never been good with words, nor have I any experience with good-byes. I hope that you will forgive me for writing this, but you must know that I thought this the only way to keep from hurting you with my clumsy tongue.

Good-bye, Jane. You haven't any need for more lessons. You never really needed them. You always possessed the qualities to attract a man. You only needed the confidence to let them shine through. You never needed me or anyone else to show you the way, Jane. It was there all along, waiting to break free of your chrysalis.

I will never forget watching you emerge from your shell. I will always remember how you looked when you became aware of your beauty, the image of your smile and parted lips will forever be etched in my mind.

Take care, Jane, and remember me once in a while when you're entertaining your admirers. Spare me a smile or two in the ballrooms and I will know that you have not forgotten me.

Good-bye, Jane.

It was signed simply, Gavin.

Fat, scalding tears burned a trail down her cheeks. Why, she wanted to scream. Why couldn't he love her? Why had he lulled her last night into believing that she meant something to him?

Raising her hand to swipe away the tears, she remembered for the first time what he had done to her. Grasping the sheet in her hand, she stalked to the cheval looking glass and lowered the sheet, baring the red designs on her body.

She had never seen anything like it. His marks weren't recognizable, at least to her eyes. She twisted to her side and let the sheet drop lower revealing the large patch on her lower back. It was covered with the same sort of design.

What had he done to her, and why had he done it if he intended to leave her before she awoke?

The door cracked opened and Jane covered herself, but not before the maid peeked around the corner. Her dark eyes widened before she lowered them and kept her gaze averted from her while she put a bowl of steaming water on the commode.

She was Indian, Jane knew. Perhaps she would know what these strange markings were and where the artist was hiding.

"Maya," she said, remembering the girl's name. "Where is his lordship?"

Maya's hands were clenched tightly before her, and Jane could not help but notice how her gold bangles tinkled together as her hands shook.

"He is not at home, my lady."

"Where has he gone?" she asked, her voice breaking on a sob. She looked away and hoped that Maya would see fit to ignore her obvious distress.

"To London."

Jane nodded and tried blink back the tears that fell uncontrollably from her eyes. She felt utterly wretched, like her heart had been ripped from her chest. She had

never felt so miserable. Not even Archie leaving her for Arabella had made her feel this hopeless.

"Do not cry, my lady," Maya whispered. The servant's hands raked through her hair and smoothed it against her back. "He wouldn't want you to cry."

"How do you know?" she said through trembling lips.

"I know him very well and I know that he wouldn't want to see tears from you."

"He doesn't care." Jane pressed her fingers to her eyes. "He wouldn't have left if he did."

"You spill these tears for you, or for him?" she asked, as she picked up a brush and began stroking it through Jane's riotous curls.

"Both," she whispered before her breath hitched and made a tiny hiccup. She sniffled against the sheet and forced back a sob. "I'm crying because my heart is breaking. And my heart is breaking because of him--because I can't make him love me."

Maya's eyes met hers in the mirror and Jane felt the tears begin well again. "You can't?" she asked, before taking her hair and pushing it over her shoulder so that her curls lay against her breast. "Did he tell you about

these?" Fingers pressed into her skin on her neck, and Maya reached for her wrist to examine it.

"No, he did not." Jane huffed.

"It is henna. Women of my culture wear it to make our bodies more attractive to men. Our men--Indian men," she corrected, "have a special attraction for hands and feet. It is one of the only things that they are not forbidden to see, so we decorate them to entice them."

"What do the designs mean?"

"Nothing, really," Maya shrugged. "We create our own, whatever we want. But he has not done it in the traditional way. He has put his English touch to this ancient tradition."

"What has he done, Maya?"

"Show me and I will tell you."

Jane lowered the sheet, revealing her breasts and her navel, making sure the cotton dipped low enough on her back for Maya to see.

"He has written you a letter."

Her mouth parted in shock as she met Maya's smile in

the looking glass. "Read it to me."

"Show me how. Tell me where to begin."

Jane presented Maya with her wrist and the servant turned it to examine it closer. "He has written it in Sanskrit," she said, looking up from her dark lashes.

"He didn't want me to know."

"Perhaps," Maya smiled secretly. "Now then," she murmured. "This says, 'A moth seeking the flame.'" Jane frowned and looked at her wrist. "Where is the next one?" Maya asked.

Her neck. She remembered how he had kissed and tickled her shoulder. She recalled the feel of his face pressed into the hollow beneath her ear.

"Ah," Maya nodded, holding her hair away. "'A drop seeking the sea.'" Jane covered her breast with her hands and closed her eyes as Maya read the next one. "'My heart seeking yours.'"

She tried to say something, but Maya halted her. "Your back, my lady, that is next, I think." Jane swallowed hard and closed her eyes, waiting to hear what Gavin had written. "It is a poem that all Bengalis, perhaps all Indians treasure. It is by Rumi and it is the most

beautiful of all his works."

"Tell me, Maya," she said unable to stand the suspense any longer.

Maya smiled and started to read. "From the moment you smiled at me I was yours. You captivated me so that I was constantly looking for you. How foolish of me to not know that lovers do not finally meet somewhere. They're in each other all along." Maya met her gaze and brushed a lock of hair behind her ear. "He has fixed it to suit his needs, I see. How very English of him." She grinned.

Her heart was beating much too fast. Gavin had written that? What did this mean? Was he attracted to her? Did he desire her? Did he love her?

"And this," she asked impulsively, showing Maya her middle, "what has he said here?" Maya glanced at her naval then picked up the brush and resumed running it through her hair.

"I cannot tell you that," she said very softly. "He must be the one to tell you."

"But he won't," Jane cried. "I don't even know where he is."

"Why do you want to find him?"

Jane stepped back and blinked. She couldn't believe that Maya didn't understand the depths of her feelings. "Because I love him," she said as if she were talking to a simpleton. "I don't want to lose him. I have to tell him, Maya."

The servant smiled brightly and reached for her hand. "Come with me, bondhu, and I will show you what to do."

"Where are you taking me?" she asked, grasping the sheet tightly against her breasts.

Maya turned and held her finger to her lips. "To the room of feminine secrets."

"I've never heard of such a room," Jane said suspiciously.

"That is because you are English. But we will fix that," Maya grinned. "And I shall tell you all the secrets there are to know about getting the man of your dreams."

Chapter Fourteen

Gavin glanced around his opulent surroundings and took a sip of port. He had been away from Jane less than a day and here he was, finding himself supporting the wall at Lord Manwarring's masquerade. What a joke, he thought as he took another drink. The costumes were nothing short of scandalous and the masquerade nothing less than a pretext to host an orgy.

His lips curled in disgust, but whether it was due to the couple who were fondling each other on the stairs beside him or himself for being there, he hadn't yet decided.

The groans from the amorous woman on the stairs made him turn away. Unconsciously he compared the husky, almost overdone sounds to that of Jane's breathless pleas and entreaties. What was she doing now? he wondered. Was she with Winterbourne? Did he have his mouth and hands all over her? Was her body clamouring for Winterbourne as it had for him the

night before?

Bloody madness! He growled, finishing his drink. What the devil was he thinking? He was in a room full of writhing women waiting for a tup. He only had to glance at one of them and he would find his breeches undone and an eager mouth swallowing him. But when he looked down between his parted thighs it would not be Jane's face he saw. It would be some harpy who meant nothing to him.

He should never have admitted a blessed thing to himself. What had he been about spouting off nonsense about making love? I've never made love, Jane. Show me.... What a fool he'd been.

"Where is your mask, darling?" a familiar voice cooed behind him. "Or was it your intention for me to find you this evening?"

He turned around and looked down into the masked face and the much displayed charms of Catriona Hamilton.

"Well," she said, pouting sulkily, "have you come to your senses? Have you realized that Plain Jane is not worth your time, or," she said huskily, pressing her breasts against him, "your precious energy?"

He tried to make himself reach for the sheer scrap of muslin that was supposed to be Catriona's toga. He tried to make himself bare her breasts and kiss her lips, but he couldn't.

"Now then," she purred, boldly stroking the front of his breeches. "Why don't you show me just how magnificent your stallion really is?"

She was so typical of the women he knew. She thought her boldness was making him hard and randy, but in fact it was only vulgar. Her beauty was gauche. There was nothing about her that was genuine.

A month ago he might not have even noticed, or cared for that matter, but tonight he did. Tonight he wouldn't be able to achieve an erection if had three women such as Catriona working on his member. There was only one woman who could satisfy his needs. And yet, he wasn't the right man for her needs.

"Come, Grayson, show me your sword and I'll give you something to sheathe it in." He looked away from her glittering eyes and pouting lips. "Perhaps you want to be someplace more private," she teased. "Perhaps you've got something very naughty in store for me. Is that it Grayson? You want me to be a naughty girl so that you may punish me?"

A ripple of murmurs suddenly erupted amongst the groans and moans that filled the ballroom. Looking away from Catriona, he searched the room for a sign of whatever had sparked the hushed excitement he heard.

A vision in jade green floated from the doorway into the room and his body reacted like it had not had release in months.

"Mmm, very nice," Catriona hummed. "You're certainly big enough, aren't you?"

He ignored her and her searching hand and studied the woman in the jade chiffon, dressed as though she had walked straight out of a Sultan's harem. He grinned. She certainly looked at home in a skirt that was slung low on her hips with a jewelled top that molded her breasts into perfect mounds. His mouth went dry as his gaze flickered up to hair that was left loose and flowing. The color of her hair was his favorite--honey brown.

"Come my lord," Catriona encouraged. "Let us not wait another minute."

His lady in jade scanned the room and he wished he were closer so that he could see her face clearer. Were her eyes outlined in kohl? Did she look as mysterious and forbidden behind her face veil as he had imagined she would?

His body tightened and he folded his arms across his chest to keep from running to her. He was not what she wanted. He was a half-breed, the son of a mother who had been a concubine. He had spent his life bent on revenge, not caring who he destroyed. He didn't deserve her. His mind knew that, but his heart, and his damnable cock had yet to register the fact.

Her eyes scanned the ballroom and his heart squeezed fiercely in his chest. Good God what was she doing here? Was she meeting Winterbourne? Was she meeting someone new? Would she even notice him? His heart hammered along and he felt prickles of perspiration trickle down his back.

"Grayson?" Catriona asked, as she followed his gaze. "Who is that?"

"She's beautiful, isn't she?" he said, scanning the jade lady's lovely and very scantily clad body.

"She looks like a Sultan's whore."

"Hmm." He grinned, not even bothering to look at Catriona. "I have a penchant for Sultan's whores. You will recall that my mother was one."

Catriona gasped and tugged on his lace sleeve. "I didn't

mean it that way, my lord. I just meant...."

The odalisque finally saw him and their eyes locked from across the room. Without a moment's hesitation she stepped forward, her hips swaying most invitingly, calling to his straining body.

"Tell her to go away," the countess hissed. "I'm not sharing you tonight."

"You tell her to go away and see what she says."

He followed her with a hungry gaze as she came closer. His gut wrenched uncomfortably. What was she doing at a party such as this, dressed like that? For whom was she playing the vixen?

Catriona squished herself closer to him, but he kept his gaze focused on her. She hardly blinked and he was suddenly very intrigued by the confidence he saw shining in those beautiful, kohl-lined eyes.

"Go away," Catriona hissed, before draping herself on his chest. "Can't you see we're busy? You're not wanted here."

His lovely odalisque glanced at Catriona before returning her heated brown gaze to him. "Is that true, my lord?" she said, her voice laced with sensuality. "I

am not wanted?"

Good God, he thought, swallowing hard as he hungrily raked his eyes over her voluptuous form. Not wanted? He wanted nothing more than to tear the chiffon from her body and bare her beautiful heart-shaped bottom to his gaze and his hands. Then, he thought feverishly, he'd free her breasts and suck them until she begged him to fill her with his cock--a cock that was growing bigger with each passing second.

"My lord?" she asked again, and he could see her red-painted mouth pout beneath the veil. "You do not want me?"

"Do you know what you're about?" he asked, freeing himself from Catriona's cloying embrace. "Do you know what you're letting yourself in for by choosing me out of all the men who are clamoring for your attention?"

"I do," she whispered.

"I am a half-breed, madam. My blood is tainted and I have lived a sordid life. I have not always acted with honor. Now are you certain you wish to choose me?"

"The only person I want is you, Gavin."

He picked her up then and swung her into his arms,

ignoring the stamping of Catriona's silk slipper against the marble floor. Before he could think of what he was doing he was climbing the stairs in search of an empty bedroom. He had to have her. Now.

"You do realize that you've just given up your chance to find yourself a husband."

"I have?"

"You have."

"Do you know who I am?" she asked.

He heard the brief flicker of hesitation in her voice before she tried to mask it. His eyes darted to the lapis bracelet and inwardly he grinned. He didn't need to see his gift encircling her wrist to know whom he held in his arms. "I do."

"Who am I?"

He flung open the first door he found unlocked and placed her in the middle of the bed. He returned to the door and locked it, all the time ruthlessly untying his cravat and the buttons of his waistcoat. He flung his frock coat onto the floor and kicked off his shoes as she watched him with those unbelievably beautiful eyes.

Her gaze followed his shirt as it landed on the floor, followed by his breeches. He tossed his cravat on the bed and waited for her to look up at him. Their gazes locked and with a grin he put his knee on the bed and captured her chin in his hand.

"Good evening, Lady Jane Westbury."

"Gavin," she cried, flinging her arms around his neck.

"Jane," he groaned, pulling the veil from her face and ravishing her mouth with his. He was kissing her like a starving man. He couldn't keep his hands off her and more importantly--he didn't want to.

Pulling the ties that secured her beaded top, he freed her breasts and captured them in his palms. She moaned and arched forward, filling his hands with hardened nipples. The silky material of her skirt grazed his knee, reminding him of the barrier that was still between them.

Sliding his hand down her belly, his finger grazed something cool and sharp. He pulled away and glanced down between their heaving bodies. When he looked up he knew he was grinning like a first class rake.

"You did this for me?"

She nodded and ran her finger down the jade ring that pierced her belly. "It reminded me of your eyes."

"God, Jane," he groaned. "Your navel was a distraction to me before, but do you know what the sight of it does to me now?"

"Arouses you, I hope."

He glanced down at his throbbing erection and then back up at her. "There's no hiding my arousal."

She smiled a secret, womanly smile and stroked her finger along the length of him. "Lay back, my lord," she whispered, pushing him down and straddling his legs. She reached for his hands, letting her breasts graze his chest. He chuckled deep in his throat and nipped at her pert nipples when they were level with his mouth. "My, Lady Jane, what fabulous breasts you have."

He tried to move his hand and bring her breast to his mouth so he could tease her with his lips, but it was frozen, stuck to the bed. He glanced up and saw that one wrist was already shackled to the bed with his lace cravat. He looked to the other side to see her securing the other with his stocking.

"What is the meaning of this, Jane?" he asked, trying to twist himself free. "How do you expect me to get my

hands on you, now?"

"Let me arouse you with my mouth, my lord." She smiled wickedly.

His cock leapt and she grasped it in her hand. Her tongue came out and stroked the length of him and he nearly went off right there. She looked utterly exotic and seductive peering up from his cock with her lined eyes and the jade and pearl headpiece that came down the middle of her hair and dangled provocatively on her brow. Their eyes met, and she held his gaze as she swirled her tongue along the head of his erection. Then she smiled and took the whole length of him into her mouth.

"Jesus, Jane," he swore as he fisted his hands. "You look so damn beautiful."

"Do I?" she purred between flicks of her tongue.

"God yes," he groaned, feeling his climax upon him.

"I'll be anything you want," she said huskily as he met his eyes again. "I'll do anything you ask of me, if you will make me one promise."

He groaned as she began to pump him with her hand. He jutted his hips forward, begging her to stroke him

faster. "Promise me, Gavin."

He thrust his length into her mouth and groaned. "God yes, Jane, take me into your mouth. Suck me, Jane. Show me how much you want this--want me."

She played with him and brought him to the pinnacle of ecstasy, had him teetering just on the edge of coming most magnificently when she pulled away, letting him slide inch by excruciating inch out of her wet mouth.

"Jane," he begged, not caring how he sounded. "I have to come. I need to come."

"Soon," she said, kissing his belly.

"No, now, Jane," he cried, twisting his hands, trying to free himself from his lace bonds.

"Your promise," she murmured as she sat up and grasped her breasts between her hands. His mouth went dry as he watched her stroke her breasts before him. His eyes travelled down the length of her, to the intriguing jade stone that dangled in her navel and the Sanskrit words that circled her luscious belly.

Bringing her finger to her mouth, she wet it and brought it to her nipple, hardening it further. Damn her, he was going to make her pay for this. Good God, what

was she about? Was this Jane, shy, little Jane? His Jane?

"Well?" she asked, resting back on her heels as she slid her hands down her breasts, past her belly to skim, every so slightly on her sex before gliding down her thighs where she raised the hem of her skirt and slowly parted her thighs.

He waited, the roaring of his blood in his ears the only thing he could hear. His heart was pounding, his mind racing as he waited with hungry eyes for her to reveal her pink silk.

"Gavin," she crooned, inching the fabric up until he could see a dark shadow between her legs. "Will you promise me one thing?"

He couldn't talk, could barely even move. Lord he just wanted a glimpse. A tiny look to steady his raging lust. A glimpse of her to sate his overwrought nerves. She was Siren, an houri. His body was on fire for her, for just a glimpse of the honey between her thighs.

She took her finger and circled her belly, making the jade stone dangle. He watched as she lovingly traced each word that he'd written around her navel. She met his eyes. "Will you promise to read this to me?"

Oh God, he couldn't promise her a damn thing. And yet he so desperately wanted to. He was on fire for her. He wanted to be the man she wanted, and yet he wasn't sure of himself.

"Let me free," he gritted out, testing the lace that bound his wrists to the headboard. "I want my hands on you. You want my hands on you."

"True." She smiled. "But perhaps you'd care to see my hands on me."

He choked then. Truly to God he thought he'd disgrace himself. What the hell had happened to her? Had she imbibed too much alcohol? Had he been poisoned to be this sexually frenzied? God, he was worked up.

"I missed you this morning," she said teasingly as her hands slid up her thighs and over to where her mound was hidden from him.

"Untie me and I will give you more pleasure than you ever knew was possible, Jane."

She closed her eyes and parted her mouth as her finger stroked through the fabric. God help him, he had to look. Had to glance down to see how she straddled his thighs, he could feel the wetness from her body seeping onto his skin. His cock was painfully hard and he was

tied, God damn it, to the bed like a caged beast with a prime bit of beef out of its reach.

"I thought about you all afternoon," she whispered, then met his gaze while she stroked his throbbing erection.

"Jane," he gritted his teeth to stop himself from crying out. "I have to come. I need your hand, your mouth, your beautiful quim around me. Something," he pleaded, feeling like he was ready to explode.

And then he felt the softness of her skirt float about his thighs and he looked down, over his erect cock and straight at the sight he'd been dying for.

"Well?" she smiled seductively. "All for your pleasure, for the cost of a promise."

He tossed his head back on the mattress and forced what he had just seen from his mind. She'd shaved her quim--just for him. He'd always dreamed of having a woman who indulged in the eastern tradition. He'd always fantasized about watching his cock slide in and out of a shaven quim. Lord, he'd never been so hot for a woman in his life. He was burning for Jane, and if she didn't give him what he wanted, he'd end up nothing but ash.

"Maya says that all the Indian women do it. It's supposed to be for the man's pleasure, but do you know what I think," she purred, parting her swollen sex and letting him watch as she expertly pleased herself. "I think it's so I can watch your beautiful mouth on me."

"And do you know what I think," he said, breaking free of his bonds and reaching for her. "I'm going to tease you as mercilessly as you've done to me."

Jane gasped as Gavin pushed her back and slid his body down atop hers. He nipped her belly, which was still tender from the piercing before he moved lower. She moaned when he settled his mouth on her.

"Look at you. God, you're beautiful," he whispered, nuzzling her sex and parting her with his fingers before flicking his tongue against the swollen bud. "Why, Jane?"

"Because I wanted to please you."

He looked up at her, eyes filled with emotion, and possibly fear. "Why have you come here tonight?"

She could no longer hold back. Her love and desire was spinning out of control. "Because I want you."

"For how long, Jane?"

"Forever."

"Jane," he whispered sliding up her belly and tracing the words he'd written on her flesh. "Will you be anything I want if I give you this promise you claim to want so badly?"

"Yes," she panted as he filled her slowly. It had been torture teasing him and waiting to feel his hardness inside her.

"Will you be my lover, Jane?"

Her heart raced and she nodded. "Yes."

"Will you let me look at you whenever I wish? Will you come to me naked and confident?"

"Y-y-yes," she stammered, feeling her passion begin to crest with each of his strokes.

"Will you be my wife?"

"Yes," she cried, clasping his face in her hands.

"The mother of my children?"

Tears streamed down her face and she nodded, arching

her back allowing him to stroke her deeper.

"Will you be the person who loves me forever, Jane? Who keeps the coldness away and makes me forget the person I have been?"

"Yes."

"Will you never become ashamed that you have given yourself to someone like me, Jane? Will you never regret marrying me or bearing my children?"

"Gavin, I could never be ashamed of you or our children. I want this to happen. I want you."

He nuzzled the hollow beneath her ear. "Will you be the one person I want more than anything?"

She raised her head and peered into his eyes. He stilled inside her and traced her painted lips with fingers that trembled. "Who is it you want, Gavin?" she said more breathlessly than she had wanted.

He smiled and filled her once more. "The woman I love," he whispered. "Lady Jane Westbury."

"Oh, Gavin, I love you so," she cried bringing him closer to her.

Raising himself up, he cupped Jane's bottom in his hands and brought her legs around his waist, stroking her slowly, watching as her body took him in and loved him. Looking up from their joined bodies, he reached out and placed his finger on her belly, tracing each word as he read them aloud. "I never knew love till I met you, or pain until I knew I must leave you. I will love you for all time and I only wish I wasn't afraid to tell you." She clutched him tightly to her, her tears streaming down her cheeks and running on to his. "That is what is written on my most favorite part of you, Jane. Those words are the piece of me I hoped you'd carry forever."

"Oh, Gavin, I'll do anything to make you happy, I'll be anything--anyone."

"Jane, all I want is the woman who smiled at me and captured my heart. I only want you, Jane."

"Not the odalisque?" she teased.

"Perhaps from time to time." He grinned, rolling off of her and pulling her down on top of him. "But not tonight. Tonight I want Lady Jane Westbury, soon to be Lady Jane Grayson."

"Just Plain Jane?" she teased kissing his throat and then his neck.

"Never plain, Jane," he said, grasping her bottom in his hands. "You've always been beautiful to me, and now, if you will cease teasing me, I'd like to make love to my future wife."

"She would like that."

"Would she?" he laughed, playfully slapping her bottom. "Well then, let me get on with the duties of a husband."

"She would like that very much."

"As would he," he groaned, taking her lips in his and loving her with such fierceness she would never again question her ability to entice and enrapture. For he was firmly enticed and perfectly enraptured with the idea of spending the rest of his life tutoring Lady Jane.

The End

