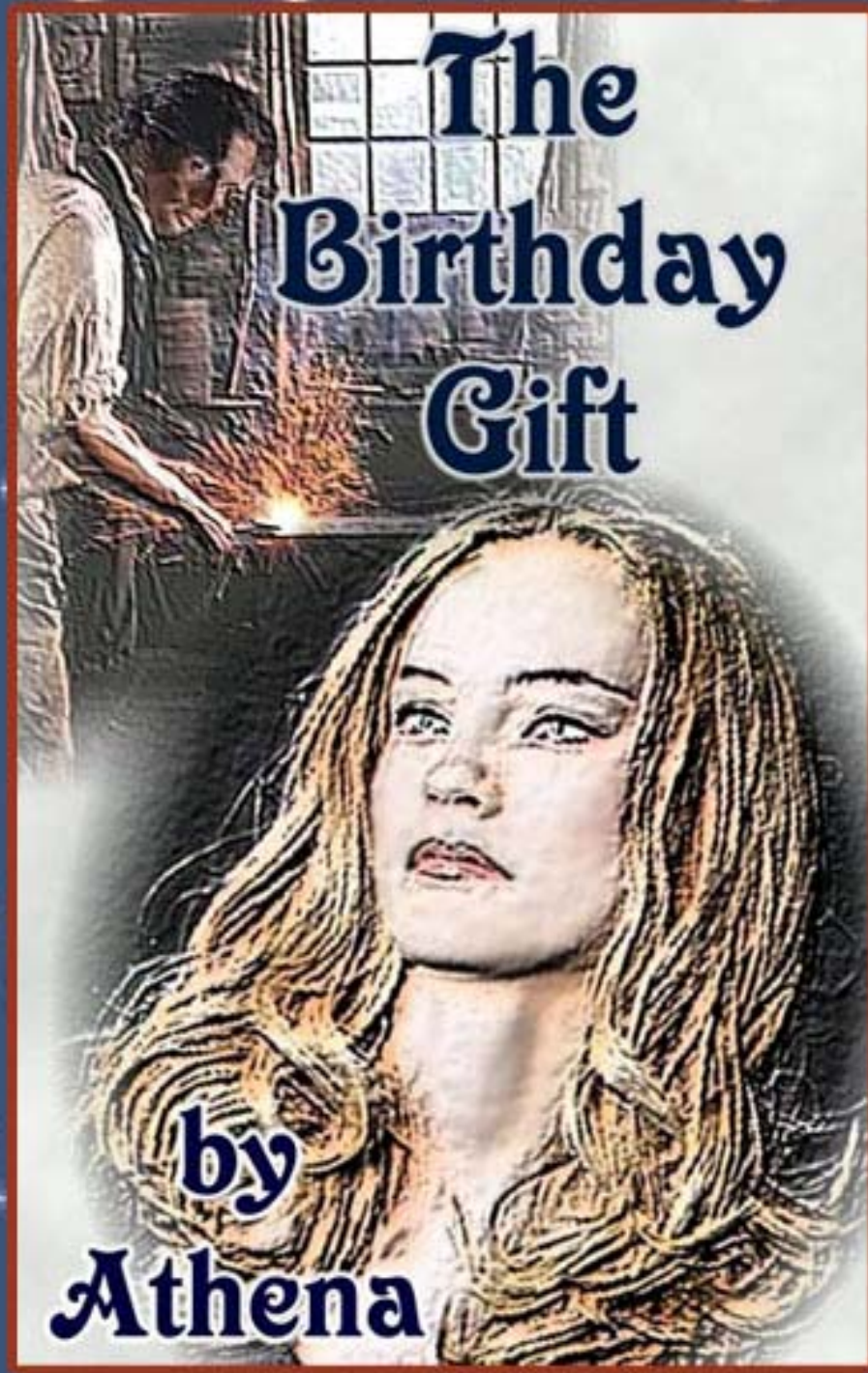


Aphrodite Unlaced Presents



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The Birthday Gift

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My name is Clementine Atwell. Tomorrow is my 21st birthday, and I have decided to give myself a gift: the gift of a man--namely, Daniel Bovee.

Daniel is a blacksmith. He owns a small dwelling on the outskirts of town. He is a young man, but well respected as one who knows his trade. It is said he earns a modest living. He lives alone and has done so since his father died and left him the Forge. His father was a giant of a man, overbearing in every sense of the word. He visited me on occasion and had little regard for man, woman or beast. Daniel is now free from his father's oppression; I can see the change in him already.

I watch him each day as he rides into town to collect supplies or visit the saloon. He rarely sees me, for I am locked away in Bertha's Whore House, where I work. I have passed him in the street, and he has always bid me good day and tipped his hat. He is a fine looking man, tall and broad shouldered with strong, handsome features. His dark brown hair is closely cropped and his eyes burn bright into my soul. From the first moment I saw him, I wanted him. My body reacted with a flush of heat and excitement as I studied his muscular form. Daniel bears no resemblance to the sloth-like creatures that use my body and pay me money. I wish he would visit my establishment, but he never does.

I often wonder what he thinks of me when we pass in the street. He does not seem to judge me as so many do. Perhaps he realizes there is more to me than meets the eye. His slight smile warms my heart, just like Momma's. She had planned such a good life for the two of us after Pa died. "We'll be happy in South Carolina," she'd say, her voice full of promise as her eyes twinkled with anticipation.

I remember the day we moved to the sleepy town of Rock Hill. It was so unlike Chicago, but Momma wanted a new start. Aunt Cissy made us very welcome and helped us settle in. Momma got a job making dresses. I went to school and helped out in my spare time. We were accepted into this small community and soon became regulars at the tiny Chapel on Main Street. These recollections are burned into my soul. I was so happy. I'd even fallen in love with Jethro Bennett, even if he was a little younger than I. I like to linger in these memories, as if my feelings could somehow bring them back.

But they are gone forever. Aunt Cissy fell and broke her hip. It was I who found her lying on the kitchen floor. She never really recovered and passed on a few short months later. Momma was heart broken; we both were. And in no time at all she was claimed by consumption and joined her beloved Cissy in heaven. My cozy world had disappeared into a shell of nothingness. I had no one; I didn't even know where my next meal was coming from.

I was alone and at the mercy of whoever would look after me. The Pastor's brother offered to take me in, in return for housekeeping duties. I had little choice, so I agreed. Jonah Brown was nothing like his brother, Pastor Brown. I'd feel Jonah's eyes boring into me as I worked and, although I was a virgin, I knew instinctively what was coming. Sure enough, he had his way with me when the family was away visiting relatives. I was powerless to stop him, especially when he'd been drinking. I threatened to tell his brother if he did it again. He threatened to kill me and told me I was just another waif and stray no one would miss.

My sunny life had turned into a world of bleak despair. I never knew when the next round of abuse was coming. Jethro's drinking was on the increase, and it was only a matter of time before he did me serious damage. I had to get away.

Bertha approached me. She knew Jethro of old and knew I was dead meat if I stayed there. I did think "Out of the frying pan, into the fire", but Bertha promised to look after me, and I needed someone—anyone--to care about me. It was no different than being with Jethro, except I got paid and I had a safe place to live. Bertha was a shrewd woman. She employed Big Bartrum. He kept the customers in line, and there were not many who would go up against him. I had to live, and if this was the only way I could do it, then so be it.

This was my life and I could see it stretching into infinity. So, this is how my dream was born--my birthday gift. I could barely think about it without my heart fluttering. My mind flashed back to last week. It was the grand opening of Woolworth's new Five and Dime store, and the townsfolk were very excited at the prospect of shopping there. Mayor Downey performed the opening ceremony with an out-of-tune brass band. As the doors opened, a press of townsfolk rushed in for a glimpse at the array of wonders in this delightful bazaar.

The store buzzed with excitement. The town had seen nothing like it before. I was buying some particularly fine lace when I heard a ruckus at the back of the store. Enis Payne and Thomas Dooley were having an altercation. Enis in his battered hat and Thomas in his dapper suit were becoming louder by the minute. A crowd had gathered and I couldn't see too well. I heard, "Yer a lyin' cheat." This was followed by a clatter of metal buckets and bodies thumping hard on the floor as the two sparred unceremoniously. The manager spotted them, and within a couple of minutes, the pair hurtled through the main door and onto the dusty street.

"Now, y'all don't come back! Y'all are barred!" the manager roared. The fight continued in the street, and the rubber-necking crowd had migrated outside to watch the sport. One man was even taking bets as the sparring twosome was urged to kill each other.

At this point, Daniel appeared on his horse and stopped to study the hapless fighters. Rumour had it that Daniel had been the recipient of many a beating in his youth and abhorred violence. In seconds, he was off his horse and had the two men by the scruffs of the neck as he pulled them apart. "This is no way for gentlemen to behave," he stated firmly.

The pair stared at him, incensed.

"You a gentleman, Enis?"

“Nope.”

“You a gentleman, Thomas?”

“Sure ain’t,” the reply came.

With that, the two rounded on poor Daniel and socked him in the jaw. The double punch sent him reeling to the ground as the fight propelled itself over to the other side of the street. A large crowd had gathered, and human beings had somehow become animals, with smaller fights breaking out everywhere.

I rushed over to Daniel, who lay stunned on his back in the now-deserted street. No one cared; they were all too busy gawking at the fight. As I looked at his body, my own melted to a useless heap. My speech deserted me as the pounding of my heart overtook every part of my being. I reached out my white-gloved hand to help him up. His male scent hit my senses as I leant over him. I was so close. I’d never been this close before, and he was truly more beautiful than I ever could have imagined. His tanned skin and deep green eyes took my very breath away. He licked his lips slightly and my body shuddered. I hoped he hadn’t noticed.

He took my small hand and rose gingerly to his feet, rubbing his jaw, which had turned a glowing shade of red. “That’ll teach me ta mind my own business, won’t it?” he smirked as he retrieved his hat and plopped it on his head. He gave a discerning glance toward the crowd before his eyes settled on me, curiously questioning why I was not one of the leering spectators.

“Well, thank you, ma’am. I appreciate your generosity of spirit helping me.”

I mumbled something about it being no trouble as I reached up and touched his jaw. He winced. “Sorry,” I muttered, but he just smiled at me as he closed his hand over mine. I was just about to suggest bathing his jaw for him when the rabble moved back across the street and rudely separated us.

“You get indoors ma’am, away from these idiots!” he shouted as the top of his head disappeared into the throng. Then he was gone, and all I could do was make my way home. I raised my hand to my nose and inhaled his scent. My body was aroused just by the touch of his hand. I closed my eyes and let my imagination take me to the sweetest place on earth.

My mind was consumed by him. There was not a waking minute I did not think of him. I kept replaying the street scene over and over, making it come out the way I wanted. I could not think of a better gift for my birthday. I kept finding excuses to pass the Forge and watch him work in the heat of the blazing sun. His powerful shoulder muscles rippled as he swung a large hammer. Once he tipped a bucket of cold water over his head. I almost fainted as he rubbed his chest and arms. His body glistened in the sunlight. It was then I noticed the salty taste of blood in my mouth: I had bitten my lip.

As I studied him, I thought he was a young twenty-two years old, and I wondered how many women he had been with. He seemed a solitary man. Perhaps he had never had the pleasure of a woman. Perhaps I could teach him?

I have it planned. This is my gift to me. When Daniel is ready to ride home at sunset, I shall follow him. I shall dress like a lady and follow at a distance until he reaches home. He will not know I am behind him, even though he will look back because he senses something. I shall ride like the wind through the countryside. The light will be changing to dusk, and my heart will be beating with excitement. The wind will cool my burning cheeks, and I shall revel in the thoughts of what is to come.

Remaining at a distance, I shall watch him dismount and lead his horse into the stable. I shall follow him quietly, and he will look at me with surprise as I enter the stable behind him. Although he is surprised to see me, he will greet me politely and ask what he can do for me.

His jacket will be removed, and I'll gaze upon his strong arms and beautiful face. I'll admire his body and think how it will feel when his arms are around me and I cup his shoulders in the palms of my hands. I shall not hurry to tell him my bidding. I want this night to last. He will offer me a cup of coffee, and I shall accept. I shall tell him I was passing by on the road above and wondered how his jaw was.

He will laugh and tell me he shouldn't have interfered. I will make idle banter about Woolworth's. He'll sense I am a little nervous and will take my hand in his and comfort me with soothing words. He will tell me not to be afraid, that I am safe with him. My small hand will fit comfortably in his, and my body will tingle at this first connection. Suddenly I am shy and ashamed of who I am. He is a sweet, gentle soul, and I feel I am not good enough. Perhaps this is not a good idea. He sees the doubt and hesitation in my face as I think about leaving.

I glance towards the winding lane and he reads my thoughts. "Please don't go--I want you to stay." His gravel-like voice sets my senses on fire. I stay, and this is how my dream plays out:

I am overcome with emotion and lust. My eyes fill up and my lower lip begins to tremble. I am so full of desire, I can't contain it. He moves forward and strokes my hair gently. His scent intoxicates my senses as his soft touch sends fire through my body. A silence overcomes the two of us. I raise my eyes to look at his, and there it is: the look of need burning brightly. I know it of old. But Daniel is not a client, and it has been so long since I've been with a real man, I'm not sure how to act. I feel like a fish out of water. The silence is broken as I tell him today is my birthday. I ask him to call me Clemmie. He strokes my cheek and gently kisses it as he wishes me a happy birthday. He holds me in his arms and invites me to sit beside him. Day is fading to night, and the air is sweet with the smell of burning and smoldering coals.

We sit on a bale of hay. The light is almost gone and I watch moonlit shadows flicker over his handsome features. The air is completely still and I feel as if time itself has been suspended. We talk some, but never venture into my livelihood. I tell him I was sorry about his father. He tells me he is not. The small talk continues awkwardly as my senses drown in his every word and movement. My attraction is so strong now; I can barely look at him. When he speaks, he looks directly into my eyes. He is straightforward, honest and direct. He is so much more than I imagined. I came wanting his body, but now I am falling in love with all of him.

He tells me about the Forge and how he feels so lonely sometimes. I ask him about women, and he tells me he is naïve about them. He has kissed and touched some girls, but has never gone beyond that. In a low breath he tells me he never wanted to be like his father. It is obvious he respects women--a rarity for men these days.

He asks me what I would like for my birthday. I am silent for a while, apprehensive of telling him the real reason for being at his ranch. Eventually, I take a deep breath, look into his half-closed eyes and reply:

"You, Daniel Bovee--I want to make love to you. That is what I want for my birthday." My voice is trembling as I talk to him. I look away, fearful of his response. My heart is beating so fast, I think it will escape my body. I force myself to look at his face. My statement takes him aback. He smiles warmly at me and tells me that I shall have my gift. My excitement rises as I realize we are soon to become lovers.

We sit looking at each other. It is traditional for the man to make the first move. He cups my cheek in the palm of his hand and begins to kiss me. I kiss him back, slowly and tenderly. His mouth remains closed, and as I gently probe my tongue between his lips, he parts them for me. He soon catches on, and in no time at all, his tongue is dancing with mine and he is groaning with pleasure. He grabs my hand and rubs it against his hardness. I unbutton his pants, slip my hand inside and begin to caress him. He has barely touched me, but this is more than he can stand. He quickly builds to a climax. My body presses against his and I can feel his heart pounding. I stroke him gently, trying to make it last, but his passion is high and soon his seed is dripping over my hand. He shouts my name and his body is quivering as he comes. It is all over, or so he thinks. This is as far as he has ever been with a woman. I tell him there is much more and ask him to undress me. He holds me tightly, still shaking, and tells me we had better go inside.

He carries me to his bed. His strength makes me appear weightless as he kisses me and climbs the wooden stairs. The room is as I had imagined, warm and cozy and the fire is lit. Candles burn softly in dark recesses. Shadows flicker silently across the walls, and there is an air of expectation. The window is small and there is little light from it. The walls are plain brick. There has been no woman's touch here. He sets me down on my feet and kisses me. This time his tongue is chasing mine, and he is grasping my breasts through my dress. I moan in pleasure as my body begins to react to his touch. I can feel my pantaloons becoming wet. I am breathless as I ask him again to undress me. His large hands deftly remove my layers of clothing until I am standing naked in front of him. He gazes down at me and tells me I am beautiful. His voice is trembling with excitement. He tries to loosen my hair, but cannot find the pins that bind it. I take them out and shake it loose. He runs his hands through my hair and kisses and licks my face. He is learning.

He is hard again and reaches for my hand. I tell him gently, "No." I offer my breast to his lips and he takes it hungrily. He watches as I stroke my nipple and copies my action. My body is bursting and I can wait no longer. I guide his hand down over my belly to my apex. He quivers as he touches me gently, not quite knowing what to do. I whisper to him to touch me. He groans and clasps me tightly to him. His breathing is ragged now and his body is shaky. He wants to enter me, but I want to teach him the ways of love. He is stroking me hard now as I slide his fingers inside me. I am so close to climax, I place my hand over his and guide his movements. He looks as though he will pass out as his coarse hand explores my soft folds. He is eager to learn and lets me guide him. I can barely stand and wish we had lain

down. He continues his assault on my body as I move rhythmically against his hand. I begin to buck violently against him. He senses the tension in me, and I tell him I come just like he does. My voice is barely a whisper. This shocks him until he feels my wetness gush over his fingers as my body convulses and I scream with delight. He instinctively strokes me until I subside.

He waits for me to recover and holds me close to him. He strokes my face and I tell him I want him in my mouth. He is bemused by my request, but the excitement is irresistible. I lead him to his small bunk and gently push him onto his back. I can see his senses are reeling, and I stroke him gently with my hand before I lick him sensuously. I run my tongue along the underside of his member and swirl it around the tip. I suck the tip and drive him wild until I eventually take all of him in my mouth, like the expert I am. He emits a low groan that becomes stronger as I suck and lick him and tease his sac. He tries to contain his movements for fear he will harm me, but I encourage him to let go. His body is shaking and his eyes are wide. He says my name over and over as he tangles his hands in my hair. I feel him tighten. He is ready to come. He panics when he thinks he is going to spill his seed in my mouth, as if it were unclean. I soothe him with my hands and refuse to let him push me away. He feels warm and delicious in my mouth as he grows and becomes harder. His pace quickens, but he pulls away at the last minute, fearing he may harm me. "Clemmie," he says. His eyes are brimming with tears of ecstasy as I kiss him and he tastes himself in my mouth.

He lies back on the bed, arms above his head. He is wide eyed and breathless. He tells me he loves me and he never knew such pleasure existed. I tell him there is more, but he does not believe me. He laughs. He is so full of passion and life, and for these sweet moments, so am I. We are lost in each other, so far removed from the rest of the world.

We drink beer and gaze upon each other's nakedness. We are comfortable now and I can see his eyes admiring my firm body. I turn over onto my belly, and he strokes my back and buttocks, tickling me with his hands. He explores all of me, kissing, licking and nipping and watching my reaction. His intelligence and sensitivity are unique. He is like no man I have known before.

"You took me in your mouth. That was..." He is at a loss for words as he shakes his head in disbelief. I tell him he can do the same for me. His surprise turns into a huge grin as his gaze travels to my center.

"How?" he asks. "Show me."

I lie back and spread my legs wide so he can look at me. His eyes darken with lust. "What you did with your hand, you can do with your mouth and tongue."

He is quivering with excitement and his body is trembling as he reaches for me. He leans over tentatively and presses his lips against my centre. I ask him to lick me. I nearly climax as I say those words. He is so gentle as he explores me. I encourage him to taste me inside and out. He slides his tongue inside of me and I nearly pass out. He cannot believe the pleasure he brings me. I am crying and shaking now. He remembers how I came before and he flicks his tongue over my sensitive spot. I moan as he puts two fingers inside me and strokes in and out. He learns quickly and senses my impending climax.

"Please....suck gently," I ask. He complies by taking hold and sucking my sensitive spot--lightly to begin with, then increasing the pressure as he feels me build. I tell him, "Harder". I writhe against him until I spill over him, my arms thrashing, my voice screaming. I feel a small death. I can't move, I can't breathe. He looks on in wonder at what he has done to me.

We sleep exhausted by our passion, until I awake and feel him stroking my body. I respond instantly as he kneads my breasts and bites my nipples. His large, rough hands graze over my body, dipping into me, causing me pleasure beyond description. We kiss as though our lives depended on it, like it was the air that we needed to breathe.

He feels my wetness. "I want..." he says. I know what he wants--to be inside me. I am ready for this final act of passion. I ask him how he wants to love me. He does not understand, so I open my legs and wrap them around his waist. I raise them as high as I can and guide him into me. He slips into me as though he has belonged there all his life. He has never felt this warmth before. The soft, sensuous enveloping of his body takes him to another place. I let him set the pace and squeeze gently on each thrust. His pace quickens, and I can hear small grunts coming from deep inside him. He grabs my breasts, my hair. He licks and kisses me as his movements become stronger. I meet him on every thrust until I feel as though my body is going to burst. I stay with him until I can feel he is going to come and then I let go. It is like nothing I have ever known, a feeling so deep it touches every part of my body. He calls out as he comes and grips me so tightly I know I shall have bruises tomorrow. I come over him and I can feel the liquid trickling down my thighs. God it feels so good, so natural. I want it to go on forever.

Eventually he collapses on top of me, still inside. For all his youth and strength he seems unable to move. I stroke him gently. I need no words; he knows what I feel.

He whispers, "Happy birthday, Clemmie."

"Thank you, Daniel," I reply.

He raises his head up and looks into my eyes. "Clemmie, I gotta see you again, but the night is getting late and I need to get back to work."

He is a gentle man who speaks the truth, and I know he means these words.

I melt into his arms and tell him we will work it out. He grins the broadest of grins and tells me he's gotta wish me happy birthday again. Who am I to argue?

Today is my birthday and I am preparing to follow Daniel back to his ranch. I ask for only one gift for this birthday: the gift of Daniel Bovee.

About Athena

Athena hails from England and lives a short distance from the ancient Roman city of Chester. She visits often and derives great inspiration from its silent and deadly past.

Athena has dreamt of Celts, Vikings and Romans and has travelled far and wide for original storylines. She has a deep affection for Athens and its glorious past, but she is just at home anywhere in Europe and Australia. She has yet to visit the U.S.

There is nothing more romantic than a moonlit gondola ride on the Grand Canal in Venice. Well, that's what she thought until she visited the buried city of Pompeii. A different kind of love flourished in those streets. It wasn't refined or cultured; it was pagan, ritualistic and utterly compelling. The faded paintings depict the true story of unbridled passion.

People have loved and lusted since time began and Athena feels privileged to write about them, both past and present.



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