

ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



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Highland Heat

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Edited by Briana St. James.

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HIGHLAND HEAT

Tilly Greene

Dedication

For the cutie.

While you were away, this kitty worked without Red Vines and missed you.

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Red Vines: American Licorice Company

Prologue

The Highlands, Scotland

Perfect!

It was the most romantic night of the year and she, dressed in her best, sat all alone in a car that had conked out on a deserted road. Casting her gaze around her surroundings, she looked for where the rabid beast from *Hound of the Baskervilles* would jump out and land on the hood of her little car, snarling as it attacked.

Why not?

A night which had started out so well had turned distinctly sour. To make matters worse, it looked like her imagination had hijacked her mind and left her with childish fears.

Shaking her head, she took a deep breath and pushed the unrealistic fears away.

Catriona Buchanan looked out the windscreen and couldn't see anything of substance to help regain her sanity. It was pitch black outside, with thick mist clinging to everything, making it look eerie. Of course, it was freezing cold inside the car so there was no doubt it was absolutely frigid outside. As if to prove her point, a brisk wind knocked against the vehicle, causing it to shudder on its unsubstantial wheels. She gasped as the miserable dampness pushed inside and further into her bones.

Great, she breathed out with frustration and watched the puff of white air confirm her conclusion that it was cold inside this metal box. Darn it, she hated being cold.

Despite being disappointed with how tonight had turned out, she was very happy with her man and couldn't wait to marry him.

Irving Cunningham was the man she loved with all her heart. He was her future and, unfortunately, he didn't always understand her, specially now with her hormones raging out of control. She was pregnant with their first child and neither one of them had anticipated the roller-coaster ride her emotions were taking.

Pulling her heavy coat closer, she crossed her arms over her swollen belly and thrust each hand into the opposing sleeve. In a moment of weakness, her mind went back to bouncing back and forth between being upset with Irving for staying behind and cursing her own stubbornness for leaving without him.

She couldn't stop the heavy sigh as it escaped. To help calm herself down, she talked with her baby.

"Okay little man, you have the Y chromosome, how could your papa not have his priorities in order? Everyone knows this is an evening for lovers, chocolate and romance, not the guys, beer and rugby. When you're older, I'll remind you of this fact, often. I'll make sure you know the right way to treat a lady."

Cat smiled as he moved around, maybe he was actually listening to her.

"Don't get me wrong, your father is a good man, although maybe a little afraid of you. I can't say anything bad about that because I am as well. Who wouldn't be scared? We want to do everything right for you."

The baby had been a surprise for them both, but they'd taken it in stride. Their wedding had been organized for over a year now and would take place this coming June. The only difference from their original plan was that there'd be a new bundle in their arms rather than a twinkle in their eyes.

Smoothing hands over her belly, she thought about the little man in her belly who brought her nothing but joy. Despite all the changes going on with her body, she couldn't wait for him to make an appearance so she could get to know him. To watch him grow up into a happy and healthy young man was what she looked forward to. She couldn't wait to see his face and kiss his tiny little feet. The latter she'd have to do in a bid to make up for all the horrible thoughts that rushed through her head whenever he kicked her awake or had her dashing for the restroom. Maybe his being an active baby meant he was going to be a football player. A star for the Rangers would be great.

A sob bubbled out and surprised her. She covered her mouth with a hand to not let any more out.

Now come on, Cat, pull yourself together and get on with it. Are you a woman or a mouse? All you have to do is step out of this car and walk home. It's not as if you've never done it before. She wasn't sure the pep talk was working or helping her move, although it was encouraging her gumption to make a comeback.

Okay, you've never made the walk in the dark, alone and six months pregnant, but it isn't far. All you have to do is make it through the forest, over a few fields, across a handful of backyards and you're home. No problem!

She wiped the window again and looked out the car window at her surroundings. Mist filled in empty space between towering trees. The sight was intimidating, overwhelming and highlighted her lack of courage. Intellectually, she knew once she made it through the trees and out in the open, everything would be fine. All she had to do was keep reminding herself of that fact and she'd be home in an—*oh, dear.*

In the end, a swift tiny kick to her bladder made the decision for her. The little one had made ignoring her needs impossible.

After taking a deep breath, she pulled the keys from the ignition and checked in her bag for tissues. With a couple of white paper squares clutched in her hand, she opened the door before she could change her mind. Stepping out of the car, Catriona stood still for a long minute, clutching her purse to her belly. Another nudge from her baby and she raced the short distance to the one tree she'd been eyeing earlier and made use of nature's emergency facilities.

Once she'd finished and nothing horrible had occurred, it became easier to accept that the walk home wouldn't be as bad as she thought it would be. Locking the car, Cat moved in the direction of their cottage, or at least where she thought it was.

There was one positive in all this mess, at least it wasn't raining. If it had been, there was no doubt it would be the final straw to mark this down as the worst day of her life. Of course she was exaggerating and she'd happily place the blame for that on hormones. Although in her defense, there wasn't a soul alive who would argue the point with her.

Okay, enough delaying, it was time to make her way home.

Cat looked over her shoulder to make sure no one was following her before picking her way through the trees. The idea was so ridiculous it managed to lighten her mood a bit. No one was going to be out here tonight. They were all tucked up in nice warm homes, safely snuggling with their lovers. Besides, it was so dark and thick with fog out here she wouldn't be able to see them if they were right in front of her. While still looking behind her, she tripped and suddenly everything changed.

Landing hard on her hands and knees, she screamed out of fear and desperation. All the terror and frustration she felt was right there in the loud cry. Her heart raced, pounding wildly in her chest while her throat burned with fright. Crouched on the ground, trembling, she waited for the horror of being attacked to begin.

Breathing heavily, it took a long minute to realize no one had launched themselves on her or tried to hurt her baby. Without any help from another, she'd tripped and fallen. Apparently she was able to create her own frenzy without any help.

She sat back on her feet and stroked her shaking hands over her belly while trying to calm them both down. "It's all right, little guy. Your mum is scaring herself for no good reason. Everything out here is just fine. We'll be home and tucked up in bed in no time."

Off balance because of the baby, she made an awkward ascent to her feet and then looked around for her bag. It was an impossible task. When she was ready to give up and leave without it, she stepped on it. Unfortunately, its contents had spilled all over. Except for her wallet, there was nothing of importance in it.

Ungracefully, she went back to her knees and crawled around, patting her hands until she found it a short distance away. Picking up the small clutch, she put it in her coat pocket and stood back up. Next she patted her other pocket to make sure her keys hadn't fallen as well. There was no way she was going to make the long hike only to reach home and not be able to get in the front door.

Pulling herself together, Catriona started walking again, slowly and with more care this time since she couldn't see exactly where her feet would land.

An eternity seemed to pass before she came upon an old stone wall. Wrapping her coat more closely about her, she took a second to cast her mind back to the last time she'd rambled this way with Irving. She needed to try to remember where the road met the wall in relation to the stairs she had to climb over. She didn't think they were too far from where she stood and started to walk further up the hill.

The last time they'd walked the fields, she remembered Irving saying something about always keeping the trees on the right and there wouldn't be a problem getting back to their village.

Instead of stairs, she came across a break in the stones and started to carefully work her and her belly's way through the opening. While she was wiggling through, a tree branch snagged her knit hat and whipped it from her head. Gasping with surprise, she turned and looked at her dangling chapeau while clutching her bare blonde curls. Chilled air nipped at her head as she tried to keep the shivers from rattling uncontrollably through her body.

There were two fields to cross, a few small yards and she'd be home free. If she kept reminding herself of this, then she could keep moving forward. The tree could have the beloved hat her mum had made for her. Irving would come for it tomorrow. Since the car was his to maintain, she figured he owed her big-time for tonight's debacle.

She walked straight across the field while keeping the tree line to her right. Here the moon shone brightly and made it so she could distinguish the land layout more easily. Unfortunately, there wasn't much to see because of the thick fog clinging to the damp grass. None of this mattered as she now felt more confident with making it home.

The worst part of this walk was how quickly her feet were becoming cold. Obviously she hadn't worn the right shoes for tramping through wet fields when she'd dressed for a romantic dinner with her fiancé. A foot rub from Irving wouldn't be too much to ask for tomorrow.

In the distance, she could hear bleating and a small smile started to bloom. The MacGregor family currently had their flock on the north field. This was a good sign. Being on their field meant she was taking the right path home.

The hard ground beneath her feet was frozen solid. Large clumps of turf littered the surface and made it difficult to walk on. Despite the mist clinging to the ground, she wasn't as afraid out here as she'd been in the forest.

A few steps later, she stumbled on a large clump of turf and slowed her pace. Nothing was going to hurt their little treasure resting comfortably in her belly, especially not a stupid evening jaunt across a frozen field.

After a few more minutes of trekking, she stopped. The trees were still to her right, but something was wrong. If she had the land plotted out correctly in her mind, then she should've come across the wall separating the MacGregor and Willis spreads. With the chill seeping further into her bones, she resumed walking, but with a little less assurance that she was heading in the right direction. When next she placed her foot on the uneven ground, she encountered a large rock and she tripped, falling hard to the ground.

Catriona's frustration grew. Tears gathered in her eyes and started slipping down her cheeks as she knelt on the frozen earth.

Stroking her belly calmed her down, so she did that and searched for strength to get back up by talking to her baby.

"I'll get us through this, little man, don't worry. I'm so very tired, but we'll get home and warm in no time at all. This walk is harder than I thought it was going to be. I knew it would be scary, just not so hard. It may not be as bad as the woods were, but I can't see much of the ground. I hope you're nice and warm in there. It's cold out here and while I can't see them, I can definitely hear the flock bleating. For some reason they don't sound happy to share the field with me tonight. Can sheep sound happy?"

Once she spilled her fears for God and everyone to hear, she worked to calm herself. Focusing on taking a few solid breaths helped ease her heartbeat. Realizing her legs were stiffening, she decided it would be best to get moving or it was going to be even more difficult to continue.

Eventually she calmed down enough to go on. With her hands on the ground, she braced herself to get up. It wasn't an easy move to make these days, but she couldn't crawl home either.

Suddenly, the chaotic bleating grew louder and the ground started to tremble beneath her hands. Bent in half as she was, Cat felt vulnerable and used all her strength to push herself upright. Before she had her feet solidly planted beneath her, she was unexpectedly rammed from behind and sent sprawling across the frozen turf.

Startled and terrified, she screamed. Something stomped over her body. The pain was unbearable. There was more than one thing attacking her. To her, it felt like hundreds of animals were running over her body, digging their sharp hooves into her flesh. Oh no, they weren't stampeding in general, they were after *her*.

Only one thought stayed in her mind during this horrific time. At all costs, she had to protect her baby.

With a great deal of effort, she braced herself on her knees, curled up into as tight a ball as she could. Wrapping her arms protectively around her belly, Cat exposed her back to their vicious attack, all while trying to speak with her baby.

"It'll be okay, little man, you'll be fine."

Suddenly, sharp horns stabbed her and she screamed as if her and her baby's life depended upon it, because she realized it did. Lying there while being attacked, she held on to the hope that someone would hear her and come running to rescue them.

"Help!"

But the torment continued. It felt endless. Tearing, gnawing, she knew they were going to rip her apart.

"NO! My baby! Someone help us!"

She heard nothing except her own cries, but she wouldn't stop trying. Whatever the cost, she had to shield her baby from harm. From the second he'd made his conception known, he had meant everything to her. It would break her if something happened to him.

"Help us!"

Holding her belly and her baby inside tightly, she prayed and called out for help. A hoof landed sharply on her head. Everything went black. Unconsciously her body continued to protect her baby.

* * * * *

"Have you heard the news?" A shopkeeper from the village said to the bartender as he sat himself at the bar.

"No, what's happened?"

"This morning, Catriona Buchanan's baby was eager to greet the world. Hamish Buchanan emerged screaming and was pronounced in stable condition, despite the trauma he'd suffered. Bless the lass for hanging on as long as she did for the young'un's sake." The good news was received with a heavy heart by those who heard.

It was a busy night at The Lazy Newt, full of locals who knew the family and the young woman herself. Despite the crowd, as the news traveled through the room, they all fell silent as they remembered the horrible night she'd been attacked in a nearby field. The bartender looked around his pub and found the usual patrons were present. They were a close-knit community and all had been touched in some way by the shocking attack on the young lass.

This past Valentine's Day had been a nightmare for everyone, but especially the Buchanan family. Almost two full months later, an explanation had yet to be found. Word was that something had spooked the flock and they'd ravaged the nearest thing that was alive. MacGregor was distraught over what happened and had all the animals involved destroyed. Prior to this tragedy, the old farmer had been a regular at the pub, now he never came here or anywhere else for that matter. He'd become a true recluse, causing them all a great deal of concern for his well-being.

As he pulled himself a pint, the bartender thought about how there'd been at least one miracle involved in the attack that night in the field. He'd been told by one of the first responders that despite the trauma her body had suffered, Catriona had been found clinging to life with a desperately shallow heartbeat.

It was incredible what doctors were capable of doing these days to bring about survival. Apparently, when the medical personnel had determined it was hopeless to save her, they hadn't yet given up on the baby. Less than two hours later and after much discussion, Maisie Buchanan, Catriona's mum, had made the difficult decision to keep her daughter hooked onto a ventilator for the baby to have any chance at survival.

As far as he was concerned, the Buchanans needed all the prayers and good wishes they had to offer.

"Everyone, raise your pints to the brave lass, Catriona Buchanan, and her young son, Hamish. May every day of his life be better than the last."

"Here, here!"

"Health and happiness to Hamish!"

"Here, here!"

"For young Catriona, may she soon be settled into a much better place amongst the angels."

"To Catriona!"

Chapter One

*Thirty years later
London, England*

An electrifying buzz filled the Royal Albert Hall. Alain knew it had nothing to do with the party that was going on and everything to do with them. They rarely attended functions in London, so when they did, a certain amount of excitement followed them.

On top of that, his companion could escalate matters to a fever pitch. His cousin had that kind of effect on people, always had and always would. It had never bothered him that Hamish was the main draw when they attended parties together. Even though he was almost a year older, he felt far too protective of the other man for something as silly as who gained more attention from the ladies to matter.

They didn't go to many of these formal social functions, but when they did, it was usually fun. Tonight wasn't fun and it was their fault. They weren't really trying to take part in the festivities. In fact, they were standing off to the side of the main ballroom, ignoring the guests and speaking only to each other.

"Who do you think will be the first woman to ask the question? I think Sarah Marshall will. Age hadn't diminished that lady's sassiness. I swear, last time I saw her and was wearing a kilt, she pinched my ass." He tried to engage Hamish, except he was met with silence.

The night's black-tie event required formal attire, and being Scottish, for them this meant kilts and jackets. Alain didn't bother to hold back his grin. They wore tartans most days back home and it never raised an eyebrow, but whenever they donned this more ceremonial set, it always brought out the saucy side of women. Usually, they received a kick out of fielding the questions of what they were or weren't wearing beneath the kilts, only tonight didn't follow any of their typical patterns.

He couldn't put his finger on exactly what it was, just that there was something going on with his cousin. Over the past couple of weeks there'd been hints of it, but nothing this drastic.

Out of the corner of his eye, Alain looked at the other man. Hamish Buchanan took physical perfection to a whole other level, all without trying. They were closer than most siblings and physically, they could be twins. In fact, he and Hamish were different in two ways, their eyes and hair. His cousin kept his hair slightly longer. More times than he could count, he heard women say this gave the man an untamed look. There was also an element of wildness in his golden brown eyes. They glowed with fire burning behind them, like they were now, and this further heightened his concern.

Despite everyone thinking they knew what type of man his cousin was, there was still much about him that was a mystery to the outside world. Only family and very

close friends knew Hamish, who he really was and Alain would do whatever he could to keep it that way. That meant he had one real mission while they were guests at this very public party. That was to make sure the other man stayed as calm as possible. With this challenge in mind, he tried again to engage him in a lighthearted conversation.

"Now there's a woman!"

"No, she's doll perfect, which to me clearly states she was created under a plastic surgeon's knife. Those breasts are water balloons, and like her lips, overfilled. There's nothing natural or real about the young lady. Nothing about her appeals to me or my cock."

Usually it was he, Alain thought, who was blunt and crude when teasing his cousin about women. Tonight he had a mission and had hoped for a lighter mood from Hamish in order to tempt him to, at the very least, think about Maisie's request. It was no secret his cousin would do anything for their grandmother, although right now he doubted this one had a chance. Definitely not with the attitude the other man was showing tonight, but at least he was talking, so he'd keep trying.

"Okay, what about the redhead over there? Her legs go on forever."

"Nice, but no thanks. She's not my type." Hamish wasn't looking at the woman when he answered his cousin's ridiculous attempt at pimping.

"I haven't seen them yet, but I heard the Watson sisters were supposed to be here. They're pretty good-looking and rumor is that they're fabulous to fu—"

"No." The answer was bluntly stated and without any qualifiers.

"Hamish!"

"What?"

"There are many beautiful women here tonight. Snap your fingers and any one of them would be yours for as long as you wanted."

"Listen, I've already told you that I'm not here to find a bedmate."

"What about a wife?"

"Fuck you! Above all others, you should know the lady who owns me heart, body and soul is what I want, and trust me, she won't be here. How big my bank account may be, what clothes I wear or where my home is won't matter to this particular woman. She'll love me for *me*. And when I say *me*, I'm including what this selection of society would consider my more depraved qualities. I know I won't find anyone with all these qualities here at a charity event where people come to be seen, but not necessarily to give. End of story. What's up with you? You're starting to sound like Maisie."

After swigging the last of his whiskey, Hamish started making his way to the bar for another. Before he'd gone two steps from his cousin, he grinned and made one last parting shot from over his shoulder just to rankle the man.

"You're single, Alain, how about going and finding a woman for yourself. That'll keep our gran happy."

Hamish knew his cousin was a good man, but this evening he found him too annoying to be around. Trying for a calming breath, he tunneled his fingers through his hair and felt the boned ridges resting just beneath the surface on either side of his temple. Something was definitely not right tonight. Whatever was happening inside him had been made worse by his feeling anxious and restless. It would be best for everyone if he went home early. His patience was obviously on a very short leash and he'd hate for it to snap here in the middle of England's upper crust.

They might be shocked by what a beast he could be.

Instead of making an extraordinarily early exit, he made his way to the end of the line for one last drink. It was difficult to do, but he forced himself to keep a tight hold on his patience. He wasn't in the mood to be bothered and decided it would be a good idea if he used his body language to discourage people from stopping to talk with him. Crossing his arms over his chest, he thought about how small talk wasn't his forte and neither was a large function like this one. It didn't help matters that everything about tonight seemed more unbearable with each minute that passed and he hadn't a clue why.

There were no surprises here and normally he'd consider this function a worthwhile party to attend. Every year he came down to London for this particular event, happily lending his name and presence to the cause in order to help them gain more attention and therefore more money. In return, the organizers guaranteed his privacy and never disclosed the amount he gave in his mum's name. It bothered him how there was always someone who wanted to know how much he donated, as if it mattered. That was personal and he'd do whatever it took to keep it that way.

Having recently celebrated his thirtieth birthday, Hamish thought it was possible he'd reached a turning point in his life. Maybe there was something big out there, waiting for him to reach out, take hold of it and start a new path in his life. It was just a theory though. Consciously or not, the frustration of not knowing why he was on edge was becoming unbearable.

Running his hands through his hair again, double-checking the ridges hadn't changed, he couldn't help but think how luck, both good and bad, had played such an important part in his life. His first breath hadn't been smooth and he hadn't had a parent to soothe him. His mum had died with his birth and his father couldn't handle setting eyes on him. Luck had been with him and had family stepping into the void and taking him into their loving embrace.

He believed his difficult start and the unconditional acceptance of his family had a great deal to do with the man he'd become. Receiving his education at home had also been a good turn. It had allowed him to excel in areas that interested him the most, like computers and maths. In no time at all, his focus and skills in these two areas brought him incredible fiscal success. Once he'd ensured that his grandmum and the rest of his family were comfortably settled, he'd moved on to the next challenge. Property development opportunities in Inverness had caught his attention and he'd jumped into

the arena with both feet. His timing had been perfect and he'd made an even bigger killing. He was still making money hand over fist and enjoyed what he was doing.

All of this success and security should mean he was satisfied with his life, but he wasn't. Hamish knew there was something more out there for him. Problem was he hadn't been able to figure out what it was, so he could pursue it. There was a sense inside him that once he had whatever it was, everything would be right again.

"Treble whisky, straight and no rocks. Thank you."

Taking the crystal tumbler of the golden elixir from the bartender, Hamish moved off to the side. Every year Alain came along to both give support for the Women's Defense Fund and to help keep him on an even keel. Apparently tonight their plan had backfired, because there was nothing cool or calm about how he was feeling. Running a finger along his collar, he took a sip and realized he was running hot, as if he had a temperature. Odd, he thought, he didn't think he was coming down with anything, nor did he normally feel this warm. Shaking his head cleared the muck away and he went back to thinking about family.

They settled him.

The more he thought about it, the more he believed Alain must've folded under the pressure and joined the family's quest to find him a woman, specifically a wife. There were few secrets within the Buchanan clan. Every one of them knew what type of monster he truly was and unfailingly kept his confidence. However, his cousin was the only person who knew the true extent of his more extreme needs. Alain knew and didn't judge his cousin's alternative sexual preferences which made the search for a companion a difficult undertaking, if not impossible.

Frustrated, Hamish took another drink of whisky and decided ten more minutes was all his hosts were getting from him tonight. It would have to be enough this year. He noticed a particularly determined social maven making her way toward him. Walking away from the wall, he started to circle the room. A moving target was harder to catch.

On an evening like this one, all sorts of things filled his mind, but tonight was different. Since he'd started getting ready to go out, there'd been something he didn't understand rapidly growing inside him. It wasn't a thing, but an intense need for some unknown and it left him feeling eager, agitated and uneasy. He needed to figure it out, and quickly, before things spiraled beyond his control.

Stalking the edges of the party was making it worse, and yet, now that he'd started delving in to what was bothering him, he couldn't find the will to stop. Having defined some of what he felt, it was time to figure out what was happening to cause this unease in him. With that thought, an image flashed into his mind and he immediately pushed it away because it didn't make sense. The problem was the same picture kept coming back until he truly looked at it and then put himself into it.

Not that it made much more sense, but as he turned it around in his mind, looking at from every different direction, it appeared as if he literally was chasing something.

Just putting a name to what was going on inside him had his heart beating so fast, like he was running full speed. Except he wasn't, he was walking around a ballroom, dressed up in his formal kilt attire and feeling out of sorts.

Without thinking about what he was doing, his eyes raced around the room, assessing the women attending the function. He took note of this one and that, casting them aside with little thought. While he continued tracing his gaze over various women, there was a need growing inside him until he finally settled on what it was he was searching for. He needed to find a woman.

No, not just any woman, but his woman. His mate.

Damn! Where had this focused need to find and mark a mate suddenly come from? When had he ever thought of a woman in such terms? He'd like to say it was his cousin's fault for putting the idea in his head, but it wasn't. It was his life, his needs that were making him feel this way and he'd have to find a way through it.

One thing he was sure of was that the woman meant for him would have to be very special, because the particulars that made him who he was could be seen as horrific. He'd always believed any woman would run when he was fully exposed, but the one who belonged with him wouldn't leave. With a fierce frown marking his face, he picked up the pace as he moved more intently around the room. Five more minutes and not a second longer, then he'd be free.

"Grace! You finally made it. What took you so long?" A nasally high-pitched voice shouted from somewhere behind him right before he felt a body brush by on his left. Natural reflexes had him following the flash of gaudy red as it moved past him.

"I missed my train and the next one was delayed in York." A soft brogue laced the words and caught his attention. His cock twitched with interest. Fascinating, especially considering that he'd just discovered why he was so on edge. On a whim, Hamish changed his route to follow behind the duo as they made their way toward the bar.

"Thoughtful for inviting me...very hectic...glass of wine..."

The two women kept up a senseless conversation, which he ignored, instead choosing to look over the new arrival. He had yet to see her from the front, but what he heard and could see definitely caught and held his attention.

Trying not to be obvious about what he was doing, Hamish looked over the woman walking in front of him in one long, slow sweep. First to catch his notice was blonde hair that looked as soft as silk and cut rigidly straight above her shoulders. This short style and her head movement gave him a peek of her very tempting neck. The sight of her satinlike skin left him wanting to kiss his way along the column to test exactly how soft she was. Then there was a light mossy green slinky silk dress embracing her body, outlining curves that made his mouth water. She had lush hips and an ass he'd love to hold and stroke. Without any pockets to thrust his hand into, he knew it was obvious to anyone who looked exactly how interested he was in the lady.

Having heard her talking, it was quickly becoming a necessity to hear her sweet voice speaking to him and not another. This discovery caused the tension already racing

through him to ramp up. The power this unknown person had over him made him uncomfortable, and despite this, he couldn't find the will to walk away.

Not from her.

Alain came up beside him as he stood off to the side, silently watching the duo join the end of the line for a drink.

"The blonde in green. Saw her come in and knew she'd catch your attention. Have you seen anything other than her fine ass?"

"Stop right there."

"What?"

Hamish looked at his cousin as irritation brought his eyebrows sharply together. Anger had filled him the second he heard the other man talking about this woman as they had others. That had never happened before. It didn't matter that he'd been thinking the same thing. There was something about this lady that felt different than others. This one felt very personal. He didn't want anyone to speak of her using these terms.

Thankfully, without him having to say anything, Alain understood what he needed.

"Fine, give me your drink and go queue up for another."

Hamish shrugged and admitted to himself it was a good idea. Handing the glass over, he then closed the distance between them in four large steps.

Standing behind the blonde in green, he inhaled her feminine scent, and in return, his body grew even more interested. With his lust gathering steam, his eyelids fell to half-mast as he breathed her unique essence. Heather and a hint of something else made her unique and teased him, giving him ideas of possessing this woman in the tall grass beside his loch in the heat of summer. There was definitely something special here that pulled him closer to her. This caused him a great deal of discomfort, which for him and his condition wasn't a good combination.

In the end, he decided the answer to this problem was to discover more about her.

Being a typical organized man, he decided to list what he did know. Her name was Grace, and she smelled and sounded of Scotland. As far as he was concerned, it was a great start. There was also a sense of femininity and delicacy about her that he found incredibly attractive. It wasn't because she was small and curvaceous. There was something else about her that called his male instincts to the surface. The spike heels he saw her walking in when she lifted her long dress so as not to trip allowed him to determine the top of her head would come up to his chin. This meant flat-footed she'd reach his shoulders or thereabouts.

While looking at her neck, he watched as her hand reached up and tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. Her wrist was slight and he imagined how those graceful fingers would feel tracing intricate and erotic patterns over his flesh. From that point on, he was lost in the need she created in him without ever seeing her face or knowing her full name.

Entranced, he wanted to see and hear more from her. The little glimpses he had of her made him hungrier for more and he wanted it all. Ready to tap her on the shoulder, bring her around to face him, he was suddenly thrown off course and left freefalling by her friend.

“Oh wait, I see Stan. Remember, I told you about Stan, Stanley Martin?”

The woman in red spoke in an overly excited voice that seemed to scratch its way across his brain. Before she received an answer, the woman picked right back up where she’d left off. “No? Anyway, I know I mentioned him because I want you to meet him. He’s single and very rich, you know. I’ll go get him. Back in a minute.” The red dressed wonder took off like a whirligig in another direction.

And that quickly, Hamish was turned off. It was if a bucket of ice cold water had been thrown on him. He wasn’t shocked, but very disappointed because she reminded him of home and tempted him to think about his dreams. Sometimes the way life could be turned on a pinhead simply sucked. That was all it took for him to be ready to walk away from the blonde without looking back. There was no way he would be interested in spending time with someone who was more interested in money than the person who had it.

That wasn’t a mate, at least not one for him.

While he was no longer interested in knowing more about her, she was still a nice eyeful and he decided to take in the whole package before he walked away. When his eyes finally left her backside, he noticed how her back moved that she was agitated. She was glancing around with a growing sense of uneasiness, then she turned around and looked right at him. His breath stopped in the back of his throat. Looking into her eyes, he felt as if her hand had reached out and tightly gripped his balls.

Apparently the foulness he’d heard a few minutes earlier hadn’t diminished the fire burning in his groin. This lady was one hell of a tempting morsel.

“Sir, I’m sorry to disturb you, but may I ask a favor?” The Scottish burr in her speech was toned down, but it was still there and even sexier coming through the most deliciously full red lips he’d ever seen. Porcelain-smooth white skin clung gracefully over her high cheekbones, enhancing crystal clear gray eyes.

Lust burned throughout him, even brighter than before and raged out of control when he looked at her incredible breasts. They were stunning and he knew they were natural. The woman’s cleavage was beautifully presented between two triangles of silk. He wanted to pull the scraps away and uncover the tips hidden beneath. Caught in temptation’s trap, he forced himself to look away from the dark crevice and take in the rest of her, specifically what he might discover about her body while mulling over her request.

The skirt of the dress drifted to the floor, skimming her voluptuous curves and pooling in a small puddle of green on the floor behind her. Twin straps traced from the cups up and over her shoulders until they slipped beneath the sheer shawl she wore.

Seductive and demur, a nice mix, he thought. Hamish suspected he would've fallen for the image if he hadn't heard the earlier conversation.

In his opinion, she looked mouthwateringly perfect. Unfortunately, her search for a deep pocket left an ugly taint across the otherwise elegant and poised presence standing before him. What a disappointment.

Seeing her face-to-face and hearing her sultry voice speak to him was all it took for his rod to regain its earlier rock-hard strength. The tip pushed against the woolen fabric of his kilt. He was tempted to step forward and take what he wanted. Feeling his body ignore his brain's warning of her ethical deficiency made him angry. Well, she was stunning, a night or two spent between her legs would be no hardship, as long as he could ignore the ugly fortune hunter issue.

"Of course." He drawled, curious what she was after.

"The woman who just walked away would like to set me up with a man I'm not interested in. And although I've said no many times, she won't listen to me. Would you mind paying attention to me long enough so she'll leave the issue alone?"

"Are you a lesbian?"

"Excuse me?"

"Do you prefer women?"

"Why does that matter?"

"Well, I heard her say he was single and rich—"

"Sir! How rude of you to listen in on our conversation. It's also insulting to think someone would be interesting because of his or her financial status. You're the most insulting, oh never mind." An adorable bright red flush spread across her cheeks as she spoke to him in anger.

It was the last thing he saw before she whirled around him and left the queue. He turned to follow her progress as she stormed past Alain. The beauty did a double take at the likeness between the two men and paused long enough for one final word.

"Your brother is an asshole. I suggest you teach him some manners before bringing him out in public again." Chin thrust out, she emphasized the point with an emphatic nod and continued to make her way across the room. In too short a time, she'd been swallowed amidst the mass of people.

Hamish heard a little of what she'd said to his cousin, but was spellbound by how animated she'd appeared. He walked over to stand next to Alain, his eyes glued to the place where he'd last glimpsed the sexy firebrand. Privately, he hoped for another glimpse. She'd been a sight of amazing beauty and strength in a sea of mediocrity.

"What did she say to you?" he asked Alain when he came to a stop beside him, curious at the other man's smile.

"Hmmm, let's see. To paraphrase, you screwed up big time. There goes one beautiful woman when she's full of fire. I think it's safe to say you pissed her off."

With his eyes still glued to the place where Grace disappeared into the crowd, he finally understood the restless, hunting feeling he'd been experiencing this evening. The impatient edginess reminded him there was something still waiting for him to find and secure it. And apparently his time was up. There'd be no more delays in hunting for a woman, his woman.

Unfortunately, he had a gut feeling that she'd just walked away from him.

Lifting a hand, he slid it through the hair hanging around his temple and smiled when he felt the bony ridge start to grow. Time to leave, but not before he knew the full name of the woman he intended to pursue.

"I'll be right back," he mumbled to his cousin before taking off. It took little effort to find the lady in red. He changed direction and moved toward her, ready to work his charm to obtain the information he wanted and then leave before anything bad happened.

"Excuse me, ma'am. I wondered if you could tell me how best to reach your friend, Grace. She had to leave as the result of an emergency, but asked me for some information and I'd like to ensure she receives it."

"You're Hamish Buchanan, aren't you? Well, sir, what a pleasure." The woman looked flirtatious and, in his opinion, it seemed she was offering something more to him. It didn't matter. He wanted nothing from her except Grace's details.

"Pardon me," said Hamish, with his impatience for this woman growing. "But I'm in a hurry as well. Earlier I saw the two of you together and assumed you knew Grace well."

"Yes, yes, of course. Grace Strachan, the best milliner in and out of Britain. Recently she spent most of her time in Edinburgh. That's where her primary studio is located, although she does have a shopfront here on Old Bond Street. You know, she graduated with a first from the Royal College of Art, despite being miserable in the city. I don't understand it myself, but she can't stand London. Of course, we're friends from way back and I ensured she received an invitation for tonight. Poor thing isn't very active in this social circle, you see, but such a —"

"Sorry, but I must leave. Thank you very much, um..." Hamish didn't want to be too rude. At the same time, he didn't have the patience needed to deal with this woman for a minute longer.

"Penny, Penelope Winton-Glasser. My father is Peter Winton, Minister for Putney. Well, since I have your ear, I should mention I'm chair of the Ladies —"

It seemed that the opportunity to hit him up for some event's sponsorship was too much for her to pass by. Shame, because his tolerance for social niceties had gone with the sexy blonde.

"Yes, thank you, ma'am. I appreciate your help. Enjoy your evening." With a polite smile, he nodded and walked back to Alain.

"I'm leaving now, you coming?" Hamish reached for the tumbler his cousin still held and finished the whisky in one tilt of the glass. The amber liquid burned its way down to his belly and joined the fire Grace Strachan had left roaring out of control.

"Of course. I want to see what you do next, especially since your hard-on is about ready to drill a hole through your plaid." Alain laughed at his cousin's predicament.

Hamish frowned at him. "You don't need to tell me. I'm fully aware of its presence. It'll be taken care of by one sassy blonde and no other."

The quick pace he'd set quickly put them in front of their hosts for the evening. Patience was quickly vanishing, but he still managed to politely thank the elderly couple for their efforts and promised to be there again next year.

They walked out of the opulent hall and into the cool fresh air. Alain couldn't help but grin at his cousin's back. This was the first time he'd ever seen a woman walk away from Hamish and he was intrigued. In fact, he was curious to see what she could possibly do next. What he found even more interesting than the lady's actions was how it looked like his cousin planned to chase her down. The man never had to do that before, nor wanted to. Maybe this was the one who would rock his world and could fully accept him, and all that meant.

Seeing his cousin stroke his temples brought both concern and more questions. If he had to guess, it would be that the woman piqued Hamish's interest. On the other hand, there was also the chance things had moved beyond control and he would need to act quickly to get Hamish out of the public's view.

No matter what, he knew the turn of events required a call to Maisie. Tonight's happenings would definitely put a smile on her face and a sparkle in her old eyes.

Chapter Two

What a jerk!

Lifting a portion of her dress so she wouldn't trip on it and embarrass herself further, Grace walked as quickly as she could in her high heels. Escaping from the claustrophobic confines of the party and the horrible attitude from that man was necessary for her sanity. If she didn't get away, there was every possibility she'd scream the roof down in frustration.

Once she left the building and the ugly incident was left behind her, she felt as if she could breathe a bit freer. Grace carefully made her way down the steep stone steps and onto the sidewalk. The only thing she wanted to do was find a cab and get away from here. She hadn't wanted to attend this function, but had arranged to be here when a well-meaning acquaintance had made the effort to get her an invitation. Despite the train troubles she'd experienced to arrive on time, it wasn't in her to be rude and ignore such a thoughtful gesture. Now she wished she hadn't come because the gorgeous man she had words with left a blot on her evening and not one she wanted.

Seeing no cabs coming down the busy road, she started walking toward the corner to catch one. It was chilly tonight and as she shivered, Grace wished she'd worn a coat instead of a sheer shawl. Wrapping her arms around herself, she kept an eye on the traffic and tried to ignore how the person she'd run from managed to make himself at home in her mind.

Maybe he could do this because he was Scottish and sexy as sin. None of this mattered though. He was a complete boor, nothing more. It was, however, very disappointing. He was definitely a man who tempted her to think of what he'd be like in bed, which wasn't normally how she remembered people. The fact that he'd actually pulled off wearing a kilt so perfectly didn't help matters either. She had a weakness for a man who could carry off wearing a tartan, especially if he wore it the traditional way.

Despite the cold air pushing against her eyes and bringing tears to them, she fanned her heated face as she remembered the flash of knees he'd offered. Seeing the length of his tartan was spot on and that he had his sporran in the proper place had her wondering if he took the traditional dress to the full extent and had dressed commando. Her knees trembled again. Her frame of mind wasn't helped when she remembered his mussed blond mane. It gave him a wild, just came from bed look. Thinking about it teased her imagination to go back inside so she could run her hands through it, pull his head down and taste him.

Damn it, he was a true enigma that managed to catch her attention and she didn't want him to.

She stopped where she was and looked blindly ahead. When she first turned around and looked into his stunning face, he induced an immense storm of passion to rush through her body and blinded her to everything else happening around her. The need heightened further when he spoke with the voice of home. Grace understood in that moment she'd been his for the taking and didn't like that vulnerability.

When she'd looked into his golden gaze, it had left her feeling as if she'd been hit over the head with a hammer. Dizzy and weak for him. The way he'd looked at her while she waited for him to answer her request gave her time to think about him carrying her to his lair and taking her. She felt lust and even love before, but in her lifetime she never had an attraction strike her so completely and immediately as this one had. There'd been something about him that drew her in and she'd seen no reason to resist.

In fact, she would've stepped closer to him, but the attraction swiftly turned sour. The stranger had managed to send her hurtling to a place where she was ready to share herself, only to have her spirit dashed by his thoughtless words.

She shook her head with disgust and tried to refocus on the traffic dashing by, looking for a black cab with a light on to show it was free.

Okay, time to be honest with yourself, Grace, and admit what's actually on your mind. While this was very unlike her, she had to accept that she wanted the man in a very base manner, on a physical level, for no other reason than his appearance and reminders of home. A gorgeous hunk of manhood, a voice that made her bones melt, wild and untamed hair, eyes burning brightly and intensely focused entirely on her, all merged together. The entire package had called out to her body on a very intimate plane and she would've been happy to answer.

While he'd been taking in her appearance, she hadn't been insulted by his inspection of her body. Just the opposite. She remembered the way his gaze took in her form had, in fact, turned her on. Grace had enjoyed his interest, even felt her body prepare itself to entice him to step forward and seduce her. She'd noticed he possessed a magnificent hard-on that had been pointing at her from beneath his kilt. It had tempted her to reach out and touch the rod. The temptation to do just that had been right there and then he'd opened his mouth. From that point, her personal interest had gone. Although replaced by anger, it became apparent her body didn't receive the message. It still hadn't.

A black cab turned the corner. She stepped to the edge of the sidewalk and flagged it down. She was relieved when the driver found an opening to cross through traffic in order to answer her call. Stepping up into the roomy back, she shut the door and moved to sit down.

"Piccadilly and Old Bond Street." Leaning forward, she gave the address to the man through the small opening in the glass partition between them.

"Yes, ma'am."

She could hear the driver had an African drumbeat playing low. It filled the car with its mysterious sensual rhythm and helped lead her right back to him. She sat back and fidgeted with the small beaded bag in her lap. *Damn it, was everything going to bring that man to her mind?* She crossed her legs tightly in a bid to ease the throbbing in her pussy as it searched for fulfillment. There was nothing she could do to keep her hard nipples from thrusting out for his touch.

After the brief interlude that left her mentally cold, her body was still heated and screamed for satisfaction from the Scotsman. At the start of the night the clothes she wore were light and airy, now they felt heavy, tight, constricting and it was entirely his fault. She could tell he'd noticed her being turned on by him and apparently it was her problem to deal with alone.

Hyde Park passed by on her left as they drove through the busy Knightsbridge evening traffic. Once they made it around Hyde Park Corner Circle, St. James Park appeared on her right.

Almost home.

In a bid for calm, she breathed out and tried to let the bustling city take her mind off the man whose name she never managed to get. Unfortunately, it didn't work. He had seemed familiar, but obviously her mind was stuck on other matters. Lust and need were at the top of the list, although she was equally angry with his rudeness.

The next breath stopped in the back of her throat when she suddenly realized she was actually thinking about doing something she'd never consciously thought of before. For the first time ever, Grace actually wished there was a man in her life who she could work off all the built up sexual tension filling her. And, to make matters worse, she had no one, not even a recent date or past boyfriend she felt comfortable with turning to for a sex only call.

"Excuse me. I can get out here." Traffic was stopped and didn't look to be going anywhere fast. At this rate, she'd be able to walk home quicker than driving. Besides, she needed to do something, anything to escape her thoughts. She moved to the small jump seat sitting behind the driver and held a ten pound note through the small opening as he maneuvered closer to the sidewalk. Four pound coins were returned to the change bowl. She picked up two before moving over to open the door.

"Thank you."

"Thank you, ma'am."

Closing the door, she moved out of the way as the cab pulled back into traffic and was greeted with a horn's toot. Trying to find her smile again, she held her formal gown out of the way and brought her shawl together with the other. Once she turned onto Old Bond Street, she thought window shopping to her place would hold her attention.

Of course that wasn't possible. No matter how interesting and outlandish some of the clothes being shown in the windows were, her mind wasn't going to be pulled away from thinking about him. Grace knew she was curious about him and how one short interlude had made her hungry. She wanted satisfaction for all her sexual needs, even

the more intense desires. She had to erase him from her mind before she did something she'd regret later, because right now she doubted that would be possible.

Arriving at her shop's door, she opened her small purse and pulled the keys from it. Using one to open her shop, she found it interesting how her time with the man had been both too long and not nearly long enough. She'd come away from their time together with a belief that he possessed a powerful dose of control over himself and others as well. Secretly, it was that power she wanted to test. He seemed to know what he wanted and looked as if he wouldn't hesitate to make it happen.

The dominating presence she'd settled around him actually suited him. She found it incredibly sexy and attracted her like a bee to honey. She was sure there was something else there, something very intense hiding behind his composed façade and would've enjoyed discovering it.

Well, it was his loss that he'd crushed whatever could've been between them before it had even begun.

* * * * *

Hamish had his mobile out and was making a call as soon as he settled in the back of the car. It was urgent he find out all he could about the lady he'd just met and insulted. The need to know the details about someone he found attractive was a new phenomenon for him. Women came and went, who they were or what they were about played little part in what he looked for from them. Everything about tonight was different and he didn't feel inclined to alter the path he'd found himself on.

The number he phoned rang three times before his assistant, who was also his nephew, answered.

"Hey, Hamish, you're calling late. Everything all right down there?"

It was and it wasn't. There'd be no rest for him until he found all he could about Grace. The intensity he felt had him offering an abrupt greeting before giving the young man instructions.

"Duncan, I need you to do something for me. Gather all available information on Grace Strachan." He mentioned what little bit he knew and hoped it was enough to help the other man find something more about her. A few questions came back and he answered them as best he could.

"Yes, definitely Scottish and I believe a milliner, a hat maker. It sounded to me like she did business in both Edinburgh and London, but I'm not entirely sure. Get me everything you can find about her. Addresses for home and work, phone numbers, family history, anything. Whatever you can get, I want. Call me back on this line as soon as you have something."

Silence filled the car as he listened to the young man ask the question he'd anticipated. Duncan wanted to know what it was all about, except he wouldn't share

the feelings she'd planted in him. Not yet and maybe never. "Later, okay? I appreciate your help this late at night."

After disconnecting the call, Hamish needed to find a way to relax. He slipped the small mobile into the inside pocket of his formal black jacket, stretched his legs, leaned back and closed his eyes on a sigh.

Normally, whatever or whomever he wanted was there to be had. Apparently he'd become used to not having to put himself out for someone's attention. Now he had to jump through a few hoops to get what he wanted and realized he thrived on the hunt. Adrenaline pumped through him, making his need for this particular woman grow. There was something about her that spoke to him. Obviously he found her attractive, although it felt like more than that. She was the type of woman he dreamed of having in his life.

The dream of having one lady in his life that he could share everything with, the good and the bad, had always been just that, a dream. Tickling at the edges of his mind was a picture of him closing his eyes each night with her lying at his side and having the sun wake them up beside each other. What was even more interesting was that there had never been a woman in his life who came close to bringing the concept of domesticity to him.

Hamish wasn't sure how comfortable he was with this idea, he'd have to delve deeper into the development later when he was alone and clearheaded.

There was, however, no doubt in his mind that Grace Strachan would entice more than his cock to come out and play. To have traversed the complicated world of business was tricky enough, but apparently to have come out on top as her friend claimed provided tantalizing clues to her personality. She wouldn't give up easily nor would she step back and always let him have his way, not with that fiery manner he'd glimpsed.

Unfortunately, right now there was nothing more he could do except wait to hear back from his nephew. Working on leveling out his breathing, he revisited what had bothered him all night. This idea that he was hunting a mate. He's not the type of man who spent time focused on him or how he felt. There were some things he didn't want to know the answers.

However, as he remembered everything that happened earlier with Grace, he realized he actually wanted to examine every strand of emotion racing through his body that led back to her. Each thread felt alive, full of verve. It was unlike anything he'd ever experienced before and wanted more of it.

The oddest part of this situation, which should've thrown up a multitude of red flags, was how it didn't bother him how quickly and thoroughly he'd been drawn to her. All effort spent trying to do what was expected of him as a respected businessman had been pushed out the window without a second thought when he looked into her beautiful gray eyes.

This change from his usual pattern fit comfortably with him. Pursuing Grace felt more like destiny than anything else. He liked the excitement she brought with her. It was a euphoric feeling and addictive. The way his heart raced, his body tensed and his mind tried to solve her puzzle made him ravenous for more.

He looked at her and saw a beautiful woman with vivacious energy and spirit. Whatever it was that had passed between them during their brief interaction back in the ballroom, it already felt like she was going to be important to him. Who knew what was going to happen, not him, but maybe she'd be the woman who'd become more than just someone to fuck and leave.

After having that one far-too-brief conversation with her, the world appeared different, as did his place in it. Dreams and hopes now seemed possible. Everything appeared much more intense and lively since meeting the fiery lady in green, and he couldn't wait to see what happened next.

Grace Strachan. Yes, the name suited her quiet, ethereal beauty. Her quick temper was just as intriguing. He smiled, reached down and gripped his hard-on through his kilt. While she encouraged his imagination to run wild, he was happy not to restrain it. Why not let it go wherever she led? Flashing across his mind was what he wanted to happen and soon. This woman who was so full of life on her knees, hands behind her back, begging for his cock. That was what he wanted.

Surrounded by his passionate and lustful needs, he had a brief unrealistic flash where he wondered if he'd suffocate and die without her touch. The need was that intense. He struggled for his next breath. Nothing was going to happen this evening, so he had to get a grip on himself and calm down. Later, when he was home, he could use his hand to alleviate the pain between his legs. On second thought, he'd wait until she could take care of it.

Lost in their individual thoughts, he and Alain sat in silence as the car slowly made its way through Kensington. Shopfronts and sidewalks had people heading out for the evening or just walking through the chilly night. They entered the Brompton section of the city and the roads eventually became more residential. By the time they pulled in front of an old Victorian building on Cadogan Gardens, his patience had stabilized.

Stepping out of the car, they made their way up the front steps, through the front door and into the lobby of the private club where Alain stayed when in London. His cousin preferred the relaxed and familiar ambiance not often found in hotels, no matter how nice they were. They walked down the short hallway and into the library, which now held the bar.

"Two pints of Black Sheep, please. We'll be over at the corner table. Thank you."

In no time at all, they sat in large well-worn leather chairs, tucked away in one of the dark corners. Like him, Alain didn't need to delve into the obvious subject consuming the space between them, they'd get to it soon enough. In the meantime, they watched the football highlights and enjoyed their dark ale. After ordering and drinking

most of a second round, he knew the tension surrounding him had lessened considerably, so the inevitable questions began.

"You ready to talk about her yet?"

Hamish ran his hands through his hair, quickly using his fingers to make sure the hard ridges were under control.

Alain had a reputation within the family for having infinite patience, while he had to work hard to maintain control of his emotions. This wasn't easy for him to do and never would be. His family and friends knew why he tried so hard to keep calm under the most trying times. They helped him when he was at his most vulnerable and helped hide the fact he grew the horns of a ram when he became too emotional.

Taking a drink from his pint, he thought about how he'd found himself in the position to maintain a relaxed frame of mind.

With his birth and the appearance of little boned horns popping out each time he cried came a great deal of confusion and fear. Eventually, when he finally began to thrive, the need for secrecy became important. His family and the medical personnel who'd been there with him, had circled around and all vowed confidentiality. There was the luck thing again.

He and Alain took their connection to another level. They were closer than friends or even brothers. They were simply there for each other, no questions asked and no conditions applied.

Even at thirty and successful, he couldn't imagine not having the other man's guidance. Things could quickly spiral out of control in his world if he didn't have such a strong person who truly listened to him. There were no judgments passed between them because they were friends and family. Having his cousin beside him was very important to him and his sanity.

"Yes, I think so." Hamish finally answered, then took a deep swallow from the pint in front of him and leaned back, ready to unburden himself. "It's all new to me, so I'm still trying to figure it out. However, I do know one thing for sure. I've never felt anything like this before. For the past couple of weeks I've thought something was happening inside me, something different, and whatever it was left me feeling edgy. I didn't have a clue what it was or why I was feeling so restless. Then tonight it ramped up until I saw her. From that time on, I haven't been able to think of anything other than having her. Literally possessing her for myself.

"Alain, my brain tells me this can't be right. I'm a man. I walk on two feet and use logic to reason through my actions and choices. I know the difference between how an animal and human would act in this type of situation. And yet there's this thing inside me that says I'm hunting her as if I were a wild beast." He took another drink of his beer, still working to maintain his composure and hold it together. Out of habit, he used his hand to feel a hard ridge on his temple, making sure the boned horns weren't getting out of control.

"Are they growing?" Curiosity was in Alain's question, but so was the necessity to have an honest answer.

"No. But like my cock, the horns aren't going down either." Hamish spoke in a low voice with a note of confusion.

"Are you all right?"

"Yes, yes, I'm fine. It doesn't hurt and there's none of the anxiety I'd normally feel when they're pushing for air in public. Maybe I'm totally at ease with whatever's happening to me because it involves her." While he took another drink of ale, he stared at the television screen without really seeing anything and tried to make sense of what had taken place tonight. Actually, there was no chance of that happening, especially since logic wasn't a part of any of this.

"There's frustration and satisfaction, desperation and calmness, inevitability and unpredictability, all mixed up together with a healthy dose of lust and desire for her. I think I'm handling the situation as best I can and yet I screwed up back there, which says I'm not doing it right."

"Give yourself a break."

"I can't because I want her too much. Alain, can you believe it, I'm worried that I've screwed it up. I don't worry about anything, least of all when it comes to women. I just do what I think is right. But this woman is a problem. A gorgeous difficulty that I can only think of how I'm going to fuck her first."

"Hamish, I have confidence that you'll make it right."

"Hopefully I'll get that chance. I feel like I'm no longer in control of my life and that scares the shit out of me. That doesn't work for me. I was handed a plate of problems at birth that meant it was for me to take charge and make my own destiny. It's all up to me. I have the power to make things happen for me. Then I see this woman and imagine her settled perfectly at my side. Suddenly I'm sure no one else will suit me as she does."

"Wow! You've just—"

"No, don't even say it, Alain."

"But—"

"No, trust me, I know how ridiculous this all sounds and can't do anything about it. You see, in the chaos, I understand at least one thing. All this emotion and upheaval is because I need to earn the right to have her in my life."

"Are you kidding me?"

"No, I'm fucking not." The frustration was raw and on the surface, so he ran his fingers through his hair to check on the horns. They were holding steady, but maybe not for long because he couldn't stop his annoyance or see a way out of it. "I feel like I'm going crazy here. None of this makes sense, but I'm going with it until I can figure out what's what. In the meantime, I'll do anything to have her and won't stand by for

time or niceties to delay me. I want her now. Right now, and the longer it takes, the more out of control I feel and act."

"Humph, noticed that back at the party."

"I'm telling you, nothing like this ever happened to me before. The second I looked into those soft gray eyes of hers, I was hard as a rock and ready to mark her as mine. Do you see what I mean? What the fuck is that? Mark her? That isn't me. I don't think that way. It's crazy, and yet even now, my heart races with a need for her. If I didn't know better, I'd think I'm in season. You know, in heat like an animal."

"No, you aren't an animal, Hamish."

"I know, I know. I'm a man and I can control that other side of me. When I think of being able to claim her as mine, I feel at peace. Shit, Alain, it all happened in an instant. Without any warning, my world changed the minute I looked into those beautiful pools of tranquility. I don't think I'll feel at ease until she's at my side."

"Okay, she brought the sun and all that shit into your dark dismal existence, so what went wrong? Women don't walk away from you, Hamish. Never." Alain polished off his pint and waved toward the barman for another round.

"I called her a lesbian." Hamish admitted with shame.

"You what?" Shock was written all over the man's face and so it should. It still surprised him that he'd acted so brainlessly.

"I know it was stupid." Finishing off his own beer, he looked pensively into the bottom of the empty glass.

"Shit, no joke. I think we can agree that was definitely not one of your better lines." Taking the two fresh pints from the barman, Alain set them on the table and then each man handed over their empties.

"Okay, I'll bite. Why did you say it?"

"The woman with her, Penny something or other, mentioned going to find the man she'd picked out for Grace. Rich and single were his qualifications."

"Ah." Hamish could tell his cousin had no problem figuring out why he'd screwed up. If there was one thing he couldn't stand, it was to not be accepted for him, flaws and all. To see superficiality in another person left Hamish cold, angry and ready to distance him from them as quickly as possible.

"Threw me into a spin and I couldn't recover."

"Have you now?" Alain asked before taking another drink.

"Yes, kind of. She definitely gave me a piece of her mind and it was a spectacular sight. While she didn't deny my outrageous claim, I'm sure she wasn't indifferent to me either. Her nipples were hard, poking straight at me from beneath the silky thin gossamer covering. Trust me when I say they rivaled my rod for sturdiness."

The other man laughed loudly. To make matters worse, if it weren't for his mistake, he might've had one of those delightful nipples in his mouth right now.

"Seriously though, I insulted her and that was wrong on many levels. I must make amends, especially if I wish to make a space for myself in her life."

"Wait a minute. Calm down, I think you're moving too fast."

"No, I'm not, just the opposite. I've told you what's going on inside me. I think all of this is much more than a need to play with her body for some physical relief or sexual gratification. All that I'm feeling, experiencing, revolves around that one beautiful petite lass with silky white-blonde hair and flashing gray eyes. To once again be on stable ground can only happen when I have her in my life."

"Don't put all your —"

"Stop right there. I'm an adult. I can handle disappointment. However, in this case, with this woman, it feels right to think big. To reach out for the whole prize. Alain, it's all so good to think about her. I can almost taste the satisfaction I'm sure she will bring." Without thinking, his hand once again rose to stroke a ridge hidden beneath his hair. "If I'm wrong, then I'll deal with it. But I don't believe I am. That isn't my ego speaking, it's just what I feel. For now, all I ask is that you support me in this pursuit."

Silence followed Hamish's request. It was difficult for Alain to agree with his cousin. Everyone, including himself, knew he was usually the voice of reason between the two of them and there was nothing rational coming from the other man. Right now, his cousin was all raw emotions. The man was like a hot-blooded ram and not everyone could handle something so far removed from reality.

However, at this point in time there was only one thing that was important. Through all the upheaval and emotional turmoil was the fact that he loved his cousin and wanted nothing but the best for him. He'd do anything to bring this chance of happiness to him, including helping him in any way he could with this blonde.

"Of course, I'm right beside you, Hamish. Whatever you need." They raised their pints in the age-old manner of gentlemanly camaraderie. "You're never alone."

"Neither are you, Alain. No Buchanan will ever be alone."

Chapter Three

They shared another pint before calling it a night and Hamish made his way home. Using the Underground wasn't difficult, but if given the choice, he preferred traveling above ground. It wasn't that he was claustrophobic, because he wasn't. He simply preferred fresh air and the open sky above to racing around in the stifling darkness below.

The concierge at the club arranged for a black cab and he enjoyed the quiet ride home. The driver didn't chat at all, which was good because he wasn't in the mood for talking. He played some jazz that suited him perfectly. After going through it all with his cousin, he'd calmed somewhat. Now he felt contemplative. He tried to get comfortable with the new sensuality making its way through him. While he wished he could go out and find her, settle things immediately, it wasn't going to happen.

What he had to do was get a grip on his patience and keep it in check. The state he was currently in, close to the boiling point, there was no way he'd be able to handle simply speaking with her. The effort had to be made to keep the emotions in control. Too much was at stake not to.

Because it was so late, there was little hassle as the cab moved through some of the busiest areas of the city. They made good time on their way through the roundabouts marking Mayfair and Hyde Park Corner, along Park Lane with the grand open space of Hyde Park lost in darkness on one side and the wild and bright West End on the other. Within fifteen minutes, they drove around the Marble Arch roundabout and into a peaceful neighborhood in the bustling city. He owned a place here in London. With all the business he handled here and the fact that he periodically sported horns, it meant he didn't fit well into the hotel lifestyle.

It was well past midnight by the time Hamish made it home, and he was too wound up to sleep, or maybe he didn't want to. There was so much going on in his life to simply close his eyes and think everything would be settled in the morning. Instead, he sat in his living room staring at the flames flickering in the fireplace, without really seeing them. He couldn't stop himself from thinking about her, Grace. She was the woman who seemed to have the ability to consume his mind and body. Actually, he didn't want to push thoughts of her away, he liked how she fit inside him.

Duncan hadn't called yet with any details. Maybe it had been too much to ask of him this late. Honestly it didn't matter, he was too eager to know what he could about her, so he waited. He had to remember to keep in mind that no matter what else he learned, he still had to apologize for being such a rude idiot at the party. There were no excuses for how he'd acted, although Hamish hoped she wasn't really interested in the money over the person.

Or a lesbian. If she was, then he'd have no chance with her and he wanted one.

Walking over to the side bar, he poured a splash of whisky to sip while he waited. Lifting the glass, he smelled dark fruits, spices, oak and other aromas he found relaxing. The scent of fine old whisky never failed to remind him of home where he liked to spend time in his study, unwinding at the end of the day with a glass of the golden beverage. Before he could take a drink, he felt his pocket vibrate. Putting the glass down on the bar, he quickly pulled his mobile out and answered it without checking the screen to see who it was. It simply had to be his nephew.

"What do you have for me, Duncan?"

"Plenty. You ready?"

"Yes." Looking to be comfortable for this conversation, he picked up his whisky and went to sit on the couch. With his feet on the table, he took a drink and as the burn raced down to his stomach, he listened to the basic information of numbers, addresses and more before he made it to the part he'd truly been waiting to hear.

"I've already emailed all that information to you. Now, because of the time, I was only able to gather some basic fundamentals on the lady you asked about, but not much else. Her full name is Grace Ann Strachan. She was born in Edinburgh and is twenty-eight years old. Her parents died when she was thirteen, and without any other relatives stepping forward to help, she became a foster child. The family she was placed with brought her to live in Balmedie, a village north of Aberdeen. While there, she was a star student and took a variety of art courses along with English and history. The records show she received funding to attend Royal College of Art. It looks like she worked the same two jobs throughout her advanced education. One was in a boutique and the other a pub."

Hamish closed his eyes and tried to picture the woman he'd seen earlier as a student. He could imagine the fire for learning filling her eyes. She must've been full of energy, eager to embark on her chosen path and start fulfilling her goals. While lost in this picture, he murmured the first question that came to mind.

"What did she graduate with?"

"A first with honors."

He smiled, that's what he'd expected. The silence on the line finally caught up with him and he had a good idea why.

"Did you find any photos of her?"

"Yes, and she's stunning. Those eyes are —"

"I know. Where are the pictures from?"

"Graduation, and then there are a handful of others from a few years later. Those show her dressed up at various events and ceremonies she attended."

"What happened after college?"

"She went on to apply for and was awarded a grant from the Prince's Fund. At first it was to start a business making hats for the charity that maintains many of the estates

and gardens throughout the UK. After a year and a half, she went back to the board and was given approval to cut her contract short in order to open her own store. It's called Frivolity and the flagship shop is in a great position on Old Bond Street. Since then, I found she won the Accessory Designer of the Year award three times. Besides London, she owns shops in Leeds and Edinburgh, all of which are thriving."

The lady he'd cornered at the event earlier mentioned a few of these things, but this time he heard it with a more open mind. She hadn't been after anything from him or any other man. Grace Strachan was in charge of her own life. She'd worked hard for what she had and was successful. It also seemed like she had the support and respect of those in her field as well. This was a big deal and he couldn't help but feel proud of all she'd accomplished.

"Some of the most popular designers in the world are using her hats in their shows and advertisements. And not only does she have ladies who are known for their good taste as dedicated clients, in a few months time, she's going to receive a royal warrant from the Prince of Wales' second wife. Trust me when I tell you this award will thrust her into an entirely different bracket."

"I didn't know you were so into fashion."

"I'm not, Sara is. My girlfriend talks about nothing other than wearing a Frivolity hat to her best friend's wedding in the spring. I'm telling you, Hamish, this Grace Strachan is hot."

"Hmmm." That was something they agreed on, although maybe not for the same reasons.

"Now, fiscally she's—"

"Stop, stop. I don't want that information." He spoke loudly to cover his nephew's next comments.

"What? But—"

"No more, Duncan. I know you went all out to gather all this information for me, and I appreciate it. However, I've heard enough."

"Fine, it's my turn then. You said later, and it's later. Are you going to tell me what this is all about?"

"No, because Grace Ann Strachan is personal."

"What? Hamish, you can't do this to me. I've worked the phone and computer for a couple of hours looking into this lady's life. I feel like I now have a vested interest in her. You can't cut me off like that."

"Yes, I can and I am."

"Fine, but will you at least tell me if she's you personal or work personal?"

While earlier he may have spoken freely to Alain about what he wanted with her, telling Duncan didn't feel right. But neither could he lie to the other man. He was family. He'd brought the young man on board as his assistant so he could learn the business, be his left hand where Alain was on his right. Already the kid knew quite a bit

about how he worked, he didn't need to know this and the reason was simple. It was too new to share with anyone.

"All I'm going to say is that I'd like you to destroy everything you found and keep your search for information about her between us. No calling Gran or hassling Alain for more details. Got it?"

"Okay. Whenever you're ready, I'd like to know what's between you two."

"Fair enough. Thanks, Duncan, appreciate your keeping the late hours and working so fast on this for me."

"You're the man, Hamish."

He hung up with the first laugh of the night ringing out and filling the living room. His nephew's easy attitude was definitely what he'd needed to hear. Any lingering doubts he had about going forward with his plan to bring Grace to him had been lifted. She was the perfect woman for him. Now he just had to make her see this as well.

* * * * *

How was it possible that the man from last night was still on her mind, haunting her every thought?

He'd been there all night, keeping her up while he strutted through her dreams, alternating between pissing her off and turning her on. Damn that man. Grace stamped her foot in frustration and flopped into her chair with disgust. She decided to stop fighting it and let him wash through her mind and body. Then she'd be done with him for good.

The stunning man's commanding presence was still very much on her mind and kept her turned on. Somehow he'd managed to take control of her passionate soul, even though she hadn't given him permission. It was interesting because this was all new for her. Not the handing over control to a lover, but the blind consent bit, even if it had all taken place in her mind. She had to figure with distance from their brief interlude came more curiosity. She wanted to seek out his power again and test its boundaries.

What happened to her last night?

What did he do in just a few seconds to so thoroughly captivate and entrap her?

Sitting behind her desk at the back of Frivolity, she sipped a freshly brewed cup of chamomile tea. She glanced at her current design board and saw none of it. Not the rough sketches, color palette or words of inspiration to bring to life another season of hats. Instead, her exhausted mind took over and freely traveled where it wanted and that was to the man haunting her.

Had the months, okay, almost two years of celibacy turned her into a sex maniac? Her body seemed to think it had, at least as far as this particular man was concerned. It didn't matter that her brain classified him a jerk, her body still knew it wanted him to physically possess her, master her. Take her places she was sure her lust had never been

before, but where it would flourish. It was hard to argue with the kind of desire currently ruling her.

Leaning back in her chair, she closed her eyes and tried again to lighten up so she could find a way to come to terms with her mystery man. Apparently this was the only way she'd get through this day.

Sexually, she preferred being submissive. Grace knew what she was, what she enjoyed and was comfortable with her choices. She liked being led down the twisted path of pleasure domination offered.

She sighed with relief for finding a way to let this all float freely around her mind, without any restrictions.

Outside of his controlling demeanor and the resulting need for sex he'd given her, what was it about this stranger that continued to hold her attention? How, after he'd been so rude and insulted her integrity, was he still able to intrigue her?

Why him? Shoot, that was the real question, why him? What was so special about the Scotsman? Maybe it would help lessen this man's hold on her if she thought about the last man she dated. Was she immediately attracted to him? Where did she meet him? What did he say that made her think he was someone special enough to spend more time with him? Did he make her smile or turn her on?

Think, Grace, think.

All sorts of questions raced around her head and all of them remained unanswered. This wasn't working. She needed to push them away, him as well. Sitting up, she took another sip of tea. Work was soon going to be more hectic than she'd ever experienced before and in a good way. She must be prepared for anything to happen, especially the unexpected. Today her plan had been to take it easy, play around the shop with the ladies who worked for her, get back into the creative groove before complete confusion took over and reigned.

Despite the stranger hijacking her thoughts, Grace felt pleased and confident with her life. It was headed exactly where she wanted it to go, in the way she wanted it to, and today was no different. She'd dressed in her normal sedate manner, elegant with a bit of whimsy. The classic black stilettos, an ankle-length black pencil-slim skirt with a kick pleat in the back and a simple, beautiful white organza blouse were merely the canvas. Subtle pearl earrings and a bracelet were the only pieces of jewelry she wore and waiting on her desk was the *piece de resistance*, a wonderful black straw and red ribbon confection for her head. The minute she put the hat on, she'd be ready for customers.

She took a deep breath and contemplated her future. In a few months' time she'd stand outside on Old Bond Street where the Duchess of Cornwall would grant her a warrant for her patronage. Just thinking about having a royal seal placed on her shopfront still surprised her. It was an honor and would help remind her of the distance she'd travelled through hard work and dedication.

It began almost two years ago with two stores opened and doing well when a well-known stylist she knew by reputation alone phoned and asked her out for lunch. While they ate, she'd been given a few brief details about his female client of a certain age who was about to marry for the second time and wanted to change her public image. She'd offered options and ideas suitable for a soon-to-be wife who would be in the public's eye. It had been an interesting discussion that later became a request for a personal meeting with the woman in question. It wasn't until she'd been invited to the stylist's home that she discovered the client was actually a lady who was about to become a member of the royal family. Not that her opinions or ideas had changed afterward, she stayed true to what she thought was the right direction for this woman to take.

That had been a big day for Grace. The Duchess had been very nice and adventurous, willing and ready to step out of the traditional box when it came to her hats. They had tea and talked about colors, shapes and her desire for the *wow* factor. Grace thought it couldn't get any better and yet it did. They had started that day with something for the Duchess to wear for the engagement announcement and hadn't looked back since. Despite the fun they'd had creating the ultimate accessory for the older woman to wear, she'd still been surprised when the telephone call came, notifying her about the honor soon to be granted to her and her shop.

Once she'd been informed about the granting of this tribute, people from the warrant office had met with her personally. They told her what was about to come her way. She was to expect and prepare for the media to contact her requesting details about the duchess, her purchases and pictures of her in them, as well as firsthand accounts of their meetings. They also said she should anticipate an increase in both foot-traffic and purchases at all her stores, although at first the London store would most likely be the focus.

She was ready for it all, which, unfortunately, now left her with time to contemplate the gorgeous man who'd made a place for himself in her mind. Whoever he might be, he held her undivided attention. With a few sentences, an insult and one seriously sexy body, he'd managed to shake her equilibrium like no one had ever done before.

Slumping over her desk, Grace felt frustration filling her from the toes up. Maybe she should try to focus her thoughts of him on less seductive areas. There was one thing she kept glossing over and it might help things if she figured it out. There was something oddly familiar about him. She couldn't put her finger on it and hadn't heard his name, but maybe she knew him. It also appeared he had a twin or sibling there with him.

Grace knew her faults and memory, or lack of one, resided at the top of the list. This man was so very good-looking she didn't think it possible anyone could forget meeting him. Twins, for that matter, were usually quite memorable. Maybe she wasn't remembering what he looked like correctly. She had been fuming at the time, so it was likely a few details had been skipped over or embellished.

Then again, there was no proof the two men in kilts were related at all. They'd looked similar, but the hair was very different. Though superficial, she had a feeling the

wild tresses said much about him and encouraged her fantasies to add an untamed element.

Damn it! It didn't matter how good-looking he was or if he had a hundred relatives, she still couldn't put a finger on why she thought she knew him.

Having no luck in that direction, she tried again to change the focus of her wayward mind. Beyond his appearance, what he'd said was another oddity that stood out in her mind. She didn't want to make excuses for him, though maybe he deserved the benefit of the doubt for at least one thing. After having spent most of the night thinking about their encounter, Grace had reached at least one conclusion. The hurtful words he'd thrown at her had not been thought out. Instead, she believed he'd said them to get a reaction from her. Well, he definitely had and much more than she was sure he'd expected to receive.

Enough already!

Fine, she snorted, deciding to cut her losses and move on. She felt more relaxed for having made an effort to solve the quandary he presented, but no more. She had no problem admitting to curiosity about the stunning man and wanting to know more. Unfortunately, she'd hit the end of the line. It wasn't possible to unearth anything more, so she'd take back of her life and move on to the present.

"Grace? Grace, are you back here? Oh dear, where is that girl? Grace?" The clicking of high heels clattered down the hallway and emphasized the woman's calls.

"Yes, Aimee, I'm in the office. Is everything all right?"

Before she could come out from behind the desk to meet her store manager, the woman came skittering into the office and stood there staring at her with her mouth opened. With a hand on her chest as if holding her heart in place, she panted for air. The usually perfectly proper and dignified woman gasped for breath and spoke in bursts. "I think...you should...come out...front...now."

"What is it? Is everything all right?"

"Yes, yes, but please, luv, you must come out front right now." Frantically waving her hand, the woman shooed her boss forward. "Why didn't you tell me you knew that man?"

"What man?"

"Oh, please! You go up to Edinburgh claiming to be working when I'm sure you're actually spending time with, well, with the sexiest young stud of Scotland."

"Aimee! What would Terrence say if he could hear you right now?"

"He'd say, 'My darling wife, if you can get his attention, you can have him'."

"I'm shocked! No way would he give his wife over to another man."

"He would because he loves me. Now hurry, young lady, hurry."

Together they walked at a fast clip down the hallway toward the front of the shop. Grace stopped when she saw the beauty that greeted her.

Standing in the center of the stylish and obviously feminine shop was a pair of very masculine trouser-encased legs holding an immense bouquet. Dozens of long stemmed, pure white roses, surrounded by lush sprigs of heather and an occasional thistle, all wonderfully arranged in a large cut crystal vase. Besides the legs, all she could see of the man were two rather sturdy looking hands holding the arrangement.

Surprised, she suddenly didn't know what to do. The bouquet was stunning. At first glance, it eloquently brought images of home to her and gave a great deal of comfort no bouquet ever gave her before. However, she had no one in her life who knew her well enough to send such a wondrous gift that spoke so clearly and specifically to her heart. She was sure it was a mistake, but didn't want to say anything that would make such a joyful offering disappear. She was enjoying it too much to turn the flowers away.

Grace blinked and tried to think of what to do. She was at a loss, so she simply took in the beautiful sight before her. After a moment, she finally began to focus on the details. There were those strong, powerful hands her gaze kept going back to. Were they familiar? Had they touched her before? Next, she took in the fine wool pants and black brogues. When she put the clothes together with those hands, it said to her that this was definitely not the average delivery man.

Looking at Aimee for guidance, she instead found the other woman with her eyes glued to the floral arrangement with a look of unexplainable longing. Obviously, no help was coming from that quarter or from any of the other ladies who silently stared at the flowers. With a deep breath, Grace took the initiative and stepped forward. She tried to see the face behind all the flowers, only it proved impossible with such an abundance of flora. She went for her second option and simply spoke.

"Hello, um, may I help you?"

"Yes, lass, but first, where should I put your bouquet?" The deep voice, full of cool lochs and craggy hills, came to her from amongst the beautifully fragrant blooms. Now she knew who it was. There was no mistaking the man standing behind the beautiful spray or the emotions that sprang to life after hearing his voice.

"Oh yes, of course. Here on this desk would be perfect. Um, thank you." Once the arrangement had been safely set down, there was no chance of hiding from the man who had equally riled her anger and lust. Nor did she want to. The desire he created still danced through her body. Now he was here in her space and her passionate soul instantly lit up like Bonfire Night.

"Good morning, Grace. I needed to apologize to you in person. Last night I was both wrong and rude. You asked for my help, and while I was willing to lend a hand, I never should've taken information overheard as fact. Will you accept my apology?"

"You're Hamish Buchanan!" Without pause, she reached out to shake his hand. He was one of the most important people in her home country and it was an honor to meet him. This proved the point that last night he had her so totally messed up that she'd failed to recognize him. She'd known of this man since birth. Well, that was an

exaggeration, but she still should've recognized him. Although in her defense, she couldn't remember seeing a photo of him in years.

The story was that he should never have been born, much less lived the full and extraordinary life he had. When she was a child in primary school, the story of his birth had been told again and again. It was an incredible tale, with a book full of beautiful illustrations to match. Because the way his lovely blond hair had been depicted, she'd come to believe that when his mum died, the halo from the angel who escorted her away had been placed upon his head for hair.

Looking at the wild mane of hair, she could still see how the impressionable child inside her had come to such a whimsical conclusion.

She held her hand aloft, waiting for his to reach out to shake hers, except it didn't. She was about to drop it to her side when one of those beautiful and powerful hands she'd been admiring earlier gently took hold hers and then she felt his lips softly grazed along the top. It was old-fashioned, gentlemanly and left her feeling very much a woman. He startled her even further by turning it over and pressing a longer, more heated kiss to the throbbing pulse point on her inner wrist.

Grace gasped at the wickedly delicious touch of his lips and could have sworn she heard the others sigh in unison somewhere behind her. She wasn't sure they actually did this, but that's how it played in her head. The man brought with him an air of courtly manners that managed to make her feel like someone he wanted. She felt no shame in her desire for him and was fine with him knowing it, feeling her pulse racing beneath his lips. It was a natural reaction to seduction and nothing to be embarrassed about.

Standing there in the front of her shop, her body cried out for this man's touch. There was no doubt in her mind what he was doing. Without trying, he was seducing her to such a level there was no chance of her denying whatever he offered. As far as this man was concerned, the negative two letter word was banned from her vocabulary. She was ready and eager to drop to her knees, to beg for his body to take hers, however he would.

"Oh my." Aimee whispered behind them before she shooed the two assistants away. Thankfully, someone was watching out for her because her brain had turned to mush as his gaze burned her with an erotic fire.

She was pleased when a small group of women entered the shop and an excited twitter grew as the groups joined together and talked hats.

Chapter Four

"Would you like a cup of tea?" Not really thinking about what she was doing, Grace made the offer simply because she didn't want him to leave.

"Yes, that would be great, thank you."

Whatever she thought was going to happen when she brought him back to her office ended up being far from reality. The minute the door closed, what she secretly wanted to happen, actually did. This stunning man made a pass she never thought about denying.

"Are you single, lass?"

He invaded her personal space, crowded her. It was uncomfortable, yet not intimidating or unwanted. Her first response to his closeness was completely physical. Heat washed through her and her breath picked up its pace. The large and powerful masculine presence pushed everything away except for the passionate needs she'd been fighting since last night. Her passion rushed forward, eager for his attention.

"Grace?"

His deep voice rumbled over her skin, through her veins and down deep into the soul of her sensuous inner woman. The breath she'd been about to take was caught in her throat along with an answer. She was affected in every way by this man, and yet he'd simply held her hand and kissed her wrist.

This man was going to be big trouble and she wanted it all.

"Y-yes." She had to clear her throat before trying again. "Sorry. Yes, I'm single, why are you asking?"

"Isn't it obvious?" He stepped closer still and used his finger to smooth a strand of hair behind her ear.

She shook her head no, as if not understanding what he was saying. But she did know what he meant. He wanted her. Her heart raced wildly, her nipples hardened in anticipation and a pulse began to play in her pussy. Since first laying eyes on him, she desperately needed relief from the intense desire that controlled her body and now the chance was finally hers. There was no thinking about what was happening, merely what her driving hunger told her she should be doing. She needed to accept whatever he offered. She needed to step even closer to him, feel his hard solid body pressed against her softer one and give herself to him.

Somehow this man called her buried lust to the surface to play. Even better was the promise of satisfaction. She didn't dare think of denying him.

Unable to help herself, Grace lifted her head, leaned in until she almost touched his neck with the tip of her nose and softly inhaled his scent. As she'd thought, his unique

aroma smelled of cool, damp days in the highlands, walking across fields, with a crisp wind whipping against her face with an essence of sex appeal all his own. The man was highly addictive.

In her body and soul, the reason she gave herself up as an easy acquiescence to him was based on one thing. For her, Hamish Buchanan was home.

The man may be dangerous to some, but not to her. He felt safe, secure and accepting. Like Scotland, like home.

While her mind was lost in how his presence made her more aware of her needs, he'd moved even closer. One hand cradled her head while the other held her hip and brought her to him, holding her flush against his body.

From his feet to his very broad shoulders, he was solidly built and if she wanted, her head could rest with ease over his heart. She felt the length between his legs was hard, deliciously large, enticing her to reach and touch it. Stroke her fingers along its length and grip it with pleasurable intentions. The temptation was almost too much for her to handle.

Oh, boy. Goose pimples spread rapidly across her body and that was the only warning she had before everything escalated. His nose nudged its way to her ear and whispered softly. Grace wasn't sure she heard him correctly until she felt his words fill her body and knew she had.

"You smell of our home, lass. Soft heather blowing across green hills."

Grace sighed quietly. Oh, yes, she was definitely in the deep end here. They were so similar. Thinking of him brought her desire to submit herself to him rushing to the front. Even if he wasn't in to the scene, she had to have him. The flowers had made her weak with joy and his special scent made her want to rub her body all over him. Her naked body.

Suddenly she was scared at how quickly he'd been able to get beneath her skin. Maybe she should put some distance between them. Lifting her hands to brace them against his chest, she was prepared to push him away, except they landed on seriously hard pecs. She couldn't do anything other than let them rest on him, absorb the feel of him.

"No!" She gasped breathlessly. To put distance between them wasn't what she wanted to do and knew her doubts in doing so were obvious. Her eyes rose and clashed with golden brown orbs.

Her fingers clenched against his chest while she thought about not taking them away, and instead move them down to unbutton his suit jacket, rip open the fine shirt beneath and smooth her fingers over the muscled flesh. An image of pressing kisses across his bare chest paused in her conscience and waited for further contemplation. Did he have hair across his chest or was it bare?

"Oh, yes, Grace."

"No, this isn't rig—"

"Wherever and whenever we are together is perfect for us." Hamish held her head still and closed the distance between their mouths, stopping just before their lips touched. She could feel his breath caress her lips with each word he spoke. "Nothing will ever be off-limits between you and me."

"We aren't compatible," she said without thinking.

"I think we are." There was no hesitation about him or his belief in his claim. The complete assurance he possessed that they'd be together turned her on even further.

"Hamish."

"Shhh, trust me, everything will be fine." His tongue reached out and traced the slightly parted seam between her lips.

She wanted to believe him, but couldn't.

"How do you know? I might like, well, something different."

Different, that was putting it mildly. Hamish Buchanan was well known throughout Scotland and the world. His reputation was impeccable, never a bad word mentioned about him personally or professionally. The tabloids painted him as a gentleman, a gentle attentive lover, who had a problem with commitment. She never heard or read so much as a hint that he was into playing sex games like the ones she enjoyed. That kind of information would be worth a pretty penny to a woman who felt jilted and had been left behind.

The man was powerful and controlling, the side of him that attracted her most, and she seriously doubted he'd ever pushed it to the limits while in the bedroom.

When he paused in his sweet seduction and looked at her with confusion on his face, Grace could have kicked herself. Did it really matter if they had a delicious bout of vanilla sex? He had her quivering with need since last night. Honestly, at this point in time, she wanted him any way she could get him.

She blinked, ready to tell him it didn't matter, when a naughty grin graced his face. He appeared even more confident than he had before. It was as if he knew he had the means to ease her needs.

"Listen to what I have to say, then be truthful and tell me if my needs don't meet with yours."

Was this man ever not entirely sure about something? All she could manage in return was a small nod and waited to hear what he had to say. Thankfully, he didn't need any more input from her to continue his sweet seduction of her mind and body.

"I want you in my bedroom, stripped of everything except for a pair of these high heels you're wearing and sheer black stockings. After that, I'll strap you onto a spreader bar, something to keep your stance wide and ready. This way I can see, touch and play with your delicious wet pussy. And trust me, you'll be dripping. Your arms are secured to another rod for me to position you for our pleasure."

She groaned, wanting what he offered without any further delay. Did he read minds? How was it possible that he knew what she liked?

"Maybe this bar will hold you bent in half, placing you in the perfect position to suck on my cock with your beautiful mouth. Or so I can fuck you from behind. It could be your arms are stretched far above your head –"

"Stop!" Grace called out with a rasping voice. "Please, Hamish, stop talking." He was too much, what he was saying was too much for her to take in. She could feel the heat of her need rushing to her cheeks. They were so close, his body held no secrets from her. She felt exactly how much he wanted her and was thrilled to have the ability to bring him to this state. He gently held her head in his big hands and looked deeply into her eyes, her very soul.

Before they went any further, she needed to understand how he knew exactly what was going on inside her. Had he figured out what she wanted and given her the words to bring her to him, or did he really want what she did?

Her gaze felt heavy with need as they rose to meet his. There was no way to hide what his words did to her, nor did she want to pretend otherwise. She could feel moisture gathering low in her pussy, preparing the way for his possession and didn't doubt he'd take her to unimagined heights.

"How did you know?" She finally whispered, smoothing a shaking finger across his full lower lip.

He caught and held her the digit in his mouth, then softly bit down, trapping the tip between his teeth. His tongue teased the finger and sucked, all the while watching intently to see what effect his actions had on her.

"How?" She whispered again, unable to look away from his mouth where he gently worked on her finger.

"I told you what it was *I* wanted, nothing more, nothing less. Your saying you might want "something different" merely confirmed what I wanted was similar to yours. You see, we are well matched for each other."

Finally the small distance between their lips was bridged. He kissed her, pressing against her plump folds, testing their suppleness. The need to taste her was difficult to ignore. The woman was perfect for him. He wanted to go slow and savor every moan, every flavor, every move she made against his body, only it was difficult.

Soft, delicate arms slid up and wrapped around his neck. Hamish felt her ankle hook around one of his, in return his entire body tightened with need. It felt like she wanted to climb him, surround and consume him.

He loved it!

This wasn't how he'd expected their meeting to go. He'd planned to apologize, give her flowers and invite her out for lunch. Get to know her, but he wouldn't complain about how it's changed.

The side of him that had felt a desperate need to hunt was, for the moment, content. He felt more at ease because his quarry wasn't merely in sight, but in his grip.

Late last night, he'd received all the information he needed to know exactly how wrong he'd been about Grace Strachan. In fact, he felt a great deal of pride in how, under her own initiative, she worked to become an extremely successful entrepreneur in a reportedly cutthroat industry. Then there was when she'd said she wanted something different. It couldn't be more obvious they were meant to be together.

Through her skirt, he stroked her lush bottom and thought how, like his own tragic start helped mold him, her life helped make her into the woman she was today.

All the passion he'd experienced upon first seeing her had combined with what he now knew about her and warmed the possibilities before them. The desire to possess her ruled so much of his mind, Hamish found it difficult not to strip her naked and bend this beautiful woman across her desk, claim her as his, as was his right.

It felt like his right.

She moaned when he slipped his tongue between her lips to taste her essence. Searching her mouth, stroking and tangling tongues, he couldn't get enough. Hamish pulled her head closer still and gently turned it to the side so he could delve in even deeper.

On his next breath, as he inhaled deeply through his nose, he felt like a whole man. This was what his life had been missing. More specifically, he'd needed a beautiful sexy woman who was strong enough to be his other half, in and out of the bedroom. She was smart, full of vision, energy and courage, as well as soft and feminine.

He was on a passion high and had to do something about it.

Now.

A quick hooded glance around the room told him there was a flat surface close at hand. Slowly, while still kissing Grace, he started to back her up until he had her locked between his body and the desk. He released her head and used both hands to start gathering up her skirt until he could reach beneath and grasp hold of her ass. He was stunned by what he found and didn't find.

"Shit! Grace, are you wearing stockings?" His unsteady hands caressed their way up her thighs before kneading her bare ass cheeks over and over again. He couldn't get enough of her soft, silky flesh. There were no straps or fabric of any sort to hinder the sensuous path he took over her body. Her stockings must be the type that stayed up on their own. If he reached higher, he might discover if she was completely nude or wearing a thong, only he didn't want to know the answer just yet. Sometimes waiting made things even sweeter.

Besides, he didn't need to know what kind of undergarments she wore to think about how utterly delicious and wicked she was.

With her skirt no longer confining her movements, she moved a leg until it slipped around his hip. With that one move, he was lost to whatever she wanted. He'd give her anything and everything, immediately, if he could just get inside her wet heat.

With his hand on her backside, he pulled her into his body and ground his iron-hard cock against her mound. He didn't remember ever having the pressure building at

his temples not be his mind's main focus. Right now all he could think about was the sweet, sensual woman wrapped around his body, toying with his senses.

"Mmmm, Hamish, you're so lovely."

Breathing heavily, he had to accept that he might have heard her say something and didn't have a clue what it was. Unless she said no and he knew she wasn't saying that. Having her beneath him was all he could concentrate on. He sucked in a gulp of air. Suddenly he was very much aware of her hands. The slender digits began to seductively spear through his hair.

Immediately he pulled back from passion's grip and set about reestablishing control.

Without panicking, he carefully set her ass on the edge of the desk. It was time he set some ground rules for them to follow. He used his hands to take hold of her wrists and moved them behind her back. Looking at her face, he felt a split second of doubt. He wanted her hands on him, all over him.

There wasn't supposed to be anything separating them, they were meant to be free. He wouldn't allow the disappointment find a hold in him, not now.

"Don't move your hands, lass." The stipulation came out on a whisper. There was no way he wanted to say or hear anything that meant she couldn't touch him, but he had to. To soften the stupid yet necessary condition, his other hand came up and he used a finger to smooth it over her well-kissed lips. They were damp and eager, partially opened as her breath panted out in great gasps.

"It's you who is simply stunning, Grace." Now he remembered what she'd said and had to set her straight. Make sure she knew he was serious about her.

Unfortunately, the way she'd naturally settled on the desktop was too much to ignore. With her legs partially parted, she appeared ready to receive his rod. To answer her call, he closed the small distance separating them. Even through his trousers he could feel her heat. If it were possible for his cock to grow harder, it did when she groaned and shifted until her mouth grasped hold of his finger where it played across her lips to suck and chew on.

It was an erotic sight to behold. There was much more he wanted to see and experience with her. First, he had one question she hadn't answered yet.

"Will you accept my apology, Grace? Will you let me make it up to you for being a jerk last night?" Pulling his finger from her mouth, he traced the moist digit down her neck, onto her chest and deep into her cleavage. The dark valley had haunted him until he'd finally slept. Now he was actually touching it. There'd been no relief for the hard-on he'd sported. He'd eventually wakened as stiff as he'd been upon first setting eyes on her.

"Yes! Yes, Hamish, oh..."

Her words eased the last hold his brain had on keeping their meeting away from sex. He stopped at the first button after noticing her soft gray eyes following his progress. Hamish felt his heart beat faster when their gazes locked and his fingers

stopped moving. On a deep shuddering breath, he slowly and with great dexterity, unfastened the buttons on her blouse before she exhaled.

Using the same finger that made the journey down her cleavage, he methodically moved each section of her blouse until it was tucked under her arms and her breasts were exposed. For a second, he forgot to breathe and then she inhaled, her chest lifting and expanding before his eyes. He was lost to their allure. He needed to get a hold of himself and the situation, fast.

"Well now, lass, you possess many fine qualities and I'll make sure to point each and every one out to you later. Right now, I need to give these two beauties all the attention they deserve and appear to be asking for."

They were dazzling. Large, he was sure each mound was more than his hand could hold. They were topped off with scrumptious red, hard nipples that would fit perfectly in his mouth. He could almost taste them. There was a natural droop from their weight he'd noticed last night and now he wanted to see them free. She wore a bra that barely contained them in delightful unsubstantial lace.

Using his thumb, he softly stroked the slope leading to one nipple, coaxing the point to ride above the top rim of the flimsy cup. It took very little time before the pebbled tip thrust over the edge. Hamish strummed the eager peak. For him, this was better than any present he ever unwrapped.

"Oh yes," her voice quivered out on a breath.

"Do you enjoy having your nipples teased?" He pinched and tugged the excited point before she had a chance to answer. Soft panting gasps of pleasure were pulled from between her lips.

"Do you, Grace?" The wicked thumb moved to the other breast and smoothed over the glorious hill. This nipple had already found its freedom by poking through the lace cutwork. It was so tempting. He could do no more than lean down and taunt the eager flesh with the tip of his tongue.

"Ha-mish?" He liked to hear the hitch in her voice.

"Yes, my sweet little lass." Not rising from his bent-over position, he kept working his tongue over her excited flesh while waiting for her eyes to meet his.

He continued to flick at the poor tormented point until her passion-laden orbs met his. There was something drifting around the gray that called to him. Already he knew he was lost to the wonders her body presented and was excited because there was sure to be much to explore.

"Yes?"

"Please, I want more."

"More of what?" His tongue continued to work the one nipple until he felt her restless and frenzied movements increase beneath him. At the same time the fingers on his free hand kept strumming the other tip. Hamish was now completely immersed in

seducing Grace. Nothing else could find a foothold with him. This was it. He leaned into her until they were almost laid flat on the desk.

"You," she finally whispered.

"Grace, will you come to my home and play with me?"

While his teeth ruthlessly and gently gnawed on her excited tips, he knew there was one answer she could give.

"Yes!"

A few short minutes later, Grace stood before the full-length mirror standing in the corner of her office and fixed her appearance with shaking hands while Hamish made a call on his mobile. After she settled her breasts back into the bra, buttoned her blouse and tucked it in, she checked to make sure she was once again presentable.

Except for the pointed nipples pressing against her thin blouse, everything was back in order. She assumed he was rearranging his day for this unexpected interlude, but made no effort to eavesdrop. She wanted his possession too much to feel guilty about how he would make it possible.

Out of the corner of her eye, she took in the powerful man who apparently felt no shame over the substantial hard-on he was sporting. She didn't bother to hold back her smile. Personally, she took a great deal of pride seeing his cock pushing against his trousers and jacket, especially since she was the one who inspired its impressive salute.

If she felt the need to justify her actions today, it would be easy to say he'd created this desperate need inside her that begged for release, therefore, he should be the one to satisfy it. Fortunately it didn't matter. She was an adult, without any attachments, and didn't want to pass up an opportunity to spend time with the man who had the ability to turn her inside out.

Sadly, she knew a future with this incredible man wasn't really possible. She'd take what he offered, then hold the memories and pleasure close for the rest of her life.

The more she thought about it, the more she realized why she hadn't recognized him last night. While he was often quoted and discussed in the media, he was rarely photographed. And if he was, then they were generally candid. It was a shame he didn't sit for a portrait, the man was stunning. If he was on a cover of a magazine or tabloid, no doubt it would sell out. She'd buy a copy.

Placing her fanciful hat atop her head, Grace moved around the office, collecting her purse, keys and wrap before turning back to face him. She found him no longer talking on the mobile. Instead he was watching her with lust in his eyes. Her pussy throbbed in return, needing him and his touch almost as much as her next breath. It was kind of scary how quickly he'd found a way inside her trust, but he did and she wanted it no other way. Not today.

Without any further delays, she wanted him inside her, fucking her exactly as he'd mentioned earlier.

"What?" She asked him as he continued to stand there staring at her.

"You're very beautiful," he said quietly, almost as though everything would fall apart if he were too loud.

"Thank you." What a curious man he was. There was something tentative about him, not insecure or unsure, but he was suddenly hesitant. It was an endearing quality in such a powerful person. He could have whatever he wanted and he wanted her. She'd hold on to that for as long as this man held her and store the memories forever.

"Well then, shall we go to my house?" His arm rose and gestured for her to precede him to the door.

Instead, she walked up to him and stood close enough so her breasts teased his chest. She slipped her hand under his buttoned suit jacket to hold his covered hard-on. It was her first touch and he felt like perfection. Heavy and solid, this was a tool that knew pleasure. She didn't stroke or squeeze the rod, merely held it while looking up into his golden gaze.

The fire in his eyes was intense, the passion and need he felt was plainly visible. She enjoyed seeing those qualities because she wanted to be the woman who satisfied him and all his desires. What had Grace standing before him, holding his shaft, was because she couldn't go any further without testing his limits as he'd pushed hers earlier on the desk.

"My safe word is cactus. I enjoy being spanked, teased —"

"Shhh, it's all right, Grace, we'll speak about sexual preferences and more over lunch. Right now, before we take another step, I want you to know I'll never inflict any pain on you. That's not something I personally find enjoyable. I want to cherish you, fuck you, immerse myself in you and your body. Push against your limits and make you scream with pleasure, but I'll never harm a hair on your beautiful head." Hamish's sincerity was evident, clear for her to see. She gained a great deal of comfort from his honesty that she hadn't realized she wanted to hear.

"What about this incredible cock of yours? Doesn't it need relief?" Eager to get started, she wanted to go down on her knees right there, unzip his trousers and feast on him until he exploded inside her mouth.

The wait for him to answer was unbearable. Time seemed to creep forward on tiny feet and still he said nothing. The only hint of what he was feeling or thinking was the fire and lust there for her to see and hold. The bulge in her hand grew larger, harder and beat a mighty rhythm. It felt thick and weighty in her hand. She may have trouble taking this beast in her mouth. If she did, then there was no doubt she'd joyfully treasure as much of it as she could handle.

Grace wanted, no, needed, to please and seduce him, hear him howling with pleasure from her ministrations. It was only fair since this was where he had taken her in those few minutes spent on her desk. That quickly he'd had her begging, what would it be like if he had hours to work his magic?

Finally, when she thought she couldn't wait any longer and would just take what she wanted, he answered.

"It does, but I want you naked, on your knees and arms behind your back when you take me in your mouth. This way I can see those beautiful breasts quivering and your lips opened wide, waiting to receive me. None of that will I allow to happen here in your place of business. What we have is between us. You should also know I feel no shame in leaving here where anyone can see that I'm hard for you. In fact, for all I care they can imagine you screaming as you come over and over again as I ride between your beautiful thighs. Now, shall we leave?"

Her mouth opened slightly as she started to breathe deeply. The man continued to ratchet up her lust a notch at a time without so much as an intimate touch. All he did was speak his needs in clear, concise terms and she was lost.

At every turn, Hamish Buchanan surprised her and she didn't think she should be. In the space of less than an hour, he'd shown her on the desk behind them that he was a man who had no problem playing her erotic desires to perfection. Once again, she seriously wondered if he could read her mind. He knew exactly what she liked and how to tease those needs until she trembled with lust racing out of control. It took a long minute to regain her equilibrium before she answered.

"Yes, I'm ready."

"You certainly are, lass."

With laughter surrounding them, they left the office arm in arm and walked down the hallway to the front of the store.

"Aimee, I'm leaving for the day, I'll be back tomorrow."

"Goodbye, Grace, Mr. Buchanan. Enjoy yourselves." The final comment was offered in such a saucy tone, Grace had to look over her shoulder at the older woman. She couldn't hold back the giggle when her fierce look was met by a waggle of eyebrows from her store manager.

"We certainly will, ma'am," Hamish answered irreverently as he looked back and smiled at Aimee and the other women. He opened the front door and held it for Grace to pass through before following. With a wink to her manager, he left with one last thought for them to ponder. "And she may be late tomorrow, possibly not come in at all."

Gales of laughter from the women in the shop followed them out the door and into the cool clear day. Grace had known that he was trouble last night, just not how much pleasure she'd receive as well.

He was simply wonderful.

Chapter Five

Hamish drove them through the bustling streets commonly found in the vibrant West End and eventually into Marylebone, where it was much less busy. After a few lefts, rights and roundabouts, he turned onto a quiet, tree-lined, cobblestone road that to her appeared to be straight out of another era. Halfway down, across from a beautiful garden square, he pulled over and stopped the car in front of a grand old Victorian brick row house.

"Where are we? I know we're still in London, but it's like we've gone back in time."

"This is Montagu Square. About ten years ago, a consortium of builders, architects, historians, homeowners and others, came together and worked out a plan to revamp the entire square. From landscape to the buildings, they paid for the work themselves or found the financing for it."

"How did they get everyone who owned property to go along with it?"

"Most of the residents had voiced an interest at some point during community meetings in increasing their properties value. There were a few families that didn't want to be involved and were offered fair buy-out terms. One condition was that they were given a chance to change their mind once their home was finished. Those who couldn't fiscally afford to do anything and yet still wanted to be a part of it were offered no-interest loans. There were also a few homes owned by seniors and the group decided unanimously to absorb the cost of refurnishing their homes for them."

"What part did you play?"

"I was an owner." He didn't say anything more, but from what she knew about him, figured he was most likely the initiator of the project, as well as one of the financiers.

"Hmmm. Does this group take on any other projects?"

"A few here and there."

Oh yes, this venture was most definitely right up his alley. She looked around at the showcase neighborhood of historical conservation and found it very inviting. A peaceful enclave located in the midst of a vibrant city like this one, Grace knew the project had to of made the homes well sought after. No doubt they'd immediately become a great investment for all the participants. Another success chocked up for Hamish Buchanan.

All the exteriors were different, sympathetically renovated with the entire square fronting a gated garden. For a house in the middle of the city to have any green areas noted on their deed, much less a private garden, added a great deal of value to the

property. To her way of thinking, this was definitely a piece of nirvana. She hoped he found the time to enjoy it while he was here.

"Ready?"

Hamish held his hand out with a roguish smile. Without delay or a second thought, she reached out for it and they walked up the front steps together. He unlocked large mahogany and glass double doors that opened onto a foyer. Once they were inside, he continued his seduction by taking her wrap and hanging it on the coat tree while she placed her purse, keys and hat on the entryway table.

Before she had a chance to take in her surroundings, something infinitely more interesting caught her attention. Him.

Grace turned to face him and that was all it took to find them body to body, mouth to mouth, locked in a passionate clinch.

He wrapped his arms around her, pulled her to him and pressed his lips to hers. The kiss spoke of both their hungers and pushed her closer to the edge. She was ready to let him take over completely. Her legs felt weak with the excitement cascading through her. Letting her head fall back, she tangled her tongue with his. A big hand came up to hold her still as he pressed even deeper into her mouth. She'd already wanted him, now she was desperate for his complete possession.

Before she could tell him she was his to do with her as he would, a sharp knock on the door shook her. Startled, she jumped back and looked at him for help. What she saw was how cool and unconcerned he was with the unexpected interruption.

"It's all right, lass. I arranged lunch for the two of us to be delivered. I'm sure this is it." He opened the door to a small group standing on his front stoop.

"Mr. Buchanan, we're from the Carnegie Club with your cold lunch for two."

"Perfect. Come through."

She watched him take control of organizing their lunch, looking calm and without a hint of the passionate clinch they'd just been involved in. Grace shook her head in amazement when she discovered the man she'd just shared the most sensuous kisses with had to be made of ice. This was the second time in less than an hour he'd been able to cut off his desire like a switch. There was no way she could do that, especially not with someone who set her on fire with a mere glance.

Grace realized that his thoughtful gesture of arranging lunch had helped calm her raging passion and offered them a chance to get to know more about each other. Most likely he'd been arranging this while she'd been putting herself back to rights after their interlude on the desk. Hamish waved people through to a sitting room, looking sexy and commanding.

A half-dozen people came in and efficiently set the meal on a table resting in front of the bay window. She stood off to the side, out of everyone's way and watched as Hamish lit a pile of wood in the fireplace. It was an intimate space, perfect for them to talk and find their trust in each other. The end goal was to be able to discover a place where they could both enjoy a wicked game of sex.

Trust was usually a big deal for her and yet it hadn't entered the equation for this interlude. Her common sense had fled as well, but none of this was enough to deter her from spending more time with this man. To make matters worse, she had no intention of regretting a second of their time together. Pure and simple, time spent with this man felt good, right. An intense level of need came with Hamish, the type of desire that held everything else at bay. She had no intention of walking away from it.

There was something between them that encouraged her to lower the safety measures she usually presented a potential bedmate. From the minute he'd asked for her forgiveness with a beautiful bouquet of flowers in hand, with reminders of home in the arrangement and his voice, he had her in whatever way he wanted.

Grace gave herself permission to let all her guards go for the day. All she had to do was remember this didn't mean she was easy or stupid, just a lady who wanted a man. This man.

When they were finally alone, he led her to the table, pulled out a chair for her and they sat to enjoy a meal together. She wasn't surprised at how quickly they fell into a comfortable conversation. It felt right for them to get familiar with each other before they took it to the next level. Picking up a piece of cheese, she marveled at how they were already compatible in areas besides sex. She hadn't been expecting this discovery and was all the more intrigued by how well matched they were.

Then came the question that had her most pleased to hear and it had nothing to do with sex. He asked about her business.

For more years than she cared to count, all her energy had been funneled into her creations and getting them publicly recognized. During most of this period she had no one she could talk to about the ups and downs or even her fears of possessing so much responsibility. It felt good to speak with someone who knew what she was experiencing. She didn't ask for advice and he didn't offer it, but he did listen and ask questions, which meant more to her than anything else he could do.

"Are you going to open more stores?" Hamish spoke around the ploughman's lunch they nibbled on. The food was good, but she was definitely more interested in him than anything else.

"I'm not sure. Right now I have three. Leeds is my most recent opening and it's on target to make back the original investment within the next five years."

"The hat business is always good. A proper British lady wouldn't show up for certain events without a new one to wear."

"Yes, it is good, although there are other venues I dabble in, so I'm not completely tied to retail."

"Smart woman. Diversification is the way to go forward. What else do you have your fingers in?" His compliment left her blushing. It was gratifying to hear a man of his success confirm she was on the right track.

"Well, like you, the property market is one place I invest." She took a sip of her cold fizzy water, trying not to become lost in him so she had a chance to maintain some semblance of intelligence. It was too easy to become lost in his undivided attention.

"In what way?"

"I buy the buildings my shops are housed within. They are all located in good, stable sections of prominent city centers. I also prefer historical structures because they suit my product, as well as encourage a higher property value with the work I carry out. They all were in a state of disrepair and this allowed me to get a good price on them. I've had work done on them all, which meant I've been able to keep them as close to the original while being relevant for today's market. I like the challenge of remolding the gems into what works for me, without losing much of the original character. A bit like you've done here."

"You're right. It's very satisfying to have the final word on how something that's been around for ages will continue on for years to come. Now tell me, where do you consider your main base?"

"Scotland. Edinburgh in specific." Suddenly she was homesick for the view she had from her studio's window of Edinburgh Castle sitting solidly on its rock.

"A beautiful city. What section do you live in?"

"My store with a workshop is in the center, on Rose Street, behind Princes Street. All of my shops have a living space above them. This way I don't have to worry about finding a hotel when I'm working at any one of them."

"Good idea, but don't you ever want time away from work?"

"That's not been an issue since I started. I give Frivolity everything."

They shared a plate of delicious death-by-chocolate with a healthy dollop of whipped cream on it. As she took a bite, Grace looked up and found him watching her intently. There was something heated in how he looked at her and thankfully it didn't take long to hear what was on his mind.

"So tell me, Grace, what pleases you?" He took a finger of the cream and held it out for her. It was a decadent and naughty move, but she was so anxious for him to take her until she screamed. Leaning forward, she held his hand still and cleaned the digit off with her mouth.

There was no need to blush because this was what she was here for. They both were and they knew it. And still this didn't stop her from becoming heated by the images his question had dancing through her head. She wanted what he'd given her a brief taste of earlier in her office. She wanted all of it and more.

"That isn't as easy to answer as you'd think."

"Try."

"Okay. I like being with you, hearing you talk about what you want to do with me. The words, oh my, the words and pictures you create with them are intoxicating. Then

there's the way you look at me, touch me. When you had me on my desk, I felt like I was pure sex. It turned me on."

"I have to say you did a pretty good job finding a way to tell me what you like." He leaned forward and spoke to her in a gruff whisper, as if it was a strain to talk at all. "Do you still wish to submit your body and desire to me? To grant me the chance to give you pleasure?"

"Yes, I do." There was no hesitation in her words or in her gaze as it met and held his. There was not a bit of doubt in her mind that this was the correct answer. Being here with him felt right.

A long silence followed her emphatic, yet breathless, reply. She was curious about what he'd say or do next.

"Strip for me, sweetheart. Take everything off your body. I want nothing between us."

This was what she wanted as well. Without thinking twice about what she was doing, Grace placed her napkin on the table, stood and stepped away from the table. There was one question on her mind. Should she be seductive and slowly disrobe or strip as quickly as she could in order to have him all the sooner? Just thinking about the latter had her body screaming for no delays. Easy decision, she settled on the quickest solution.

Reaching back, she released the button and zipper holding her skirt together. With a shimmy, she worked the fabric over her hips and down until it dropped to the floor at her feet. Not wasting a moment, she unbuttoned her blouse and, once it was off, draped it with her skirt over her chair.

In quick succession, the bra and thong panties came off, leaving her in nothing except for stockings, shoes, earrings and bracelet. Bending over, she worked on the buckle of one shoe, stepped out of it, tossed it behind her, then moved on to its partner, leaving them both resting haphazard with her underwear near the chair. This wasn't how she usually treated her things, but there was nothing normal about today.

Raw hunger filled his gaze as he followed her every move. This thrilled her and she walked over to his chair to bring the temptation even closer. Putting one foot on the seat between his legs, she slowly unrolled her stocking and tossed it over her shoulder in the general direction of her clothes. She repeated the same seductive motion to remove the other piece of silk and sent it sailing blindly behind her.

Standing there in his front room, completely bare of clothes in the middle of the day, she felt both free and sexy beneath his focused gaze. She waited until his eyes met hers before she took off the earrings and bracelet, placing them on the table. The fiery look was still there, and was quickly joined by a delicious hint of wildness that caused her stomach to drop and roll as if she were looking over the edge of a steep cliff.

"We'll have to do something about the mess you've made, but it can wait. Right now I have to stroke this pretty, bald pussy." Before she could defend her clutter or not,

Hamish stood, lifted her into his arms and carried her up a grand staircase until they were on the top floor.

Grace knew she wasn't as light as a feather, so the man had to be incredibly fit physically. There'd been no huffing or puffing while he carried her up three flights. He didn't drop, shuffle or pause on the way to catch his breath.

She was very flattered.

Hamish opened a door, stepped inside and leaned back against the panel to close it. She still hadn't looked away from him. The man was pure magic for her. She didn't ever want to leave his arms, not when he made her feel so much the woman to his man.

With his back to the door, Hamish slowly lowered her until her bare feet touched the floor. The room was dark and he kept her pressed against his body while kissing her softly and stroking his hands down her back, over her ass and back up again. Possibly he did it on purpose, and maybe he didn't know it, but with that single, all encompassing stroke he left her feeling cherished. When his hand traveled over her body again, she knew this was where she was meant to be. In his arms. After what felt like an endless time embracing, he stopped and lifted his head until their lips were a breath apart.

"I want you to walk around and explore the room." He sounded so serious. She felt an arm move away from her back. The lights came on low and yet still bright enough to be able to see clearly.

"Why?" She didn't want to leave his embrace to see a playroom. From past experience, rooms set aside for sex games were all pretty much the same. Well, except this one was upstairs rather than down.

"It's important to me that you be totally at ease in this room, that you have some sort of reference of what's here, I want you to know there's nothing to be afraid of. Soon enough you'll feel vulnerable and that's good, it's expected. What I don't want is for you to ever be fearful. Not with me and not in this room."

Grace listened to what he had to say and could see his point. Nodding her assent, she slowly turned away from him, now eager to take in the details. No matter what preconceived ideas she had about what she'd find, she wasn't prepared for what was actually there.

"It's beautiful," she whispered without taking her gaze away from what was laid out before her. This was a space where the bondage equipment he had placed around the room fit as easily as a Chesterfield chair would. There were no hard edges or cold concrete floor. This was a space set aside for indulgences of all senses.

On taking her first steps, her toes sank deep into the thickly piled, dark-brown carpet. It was softer than what she believed a cloud would feel like. When she reached out to touch the wall, she couldn't stop herself from stroking the rich chocolate padded leather. There was an intriguing texture, feeling cool and soft as butter under her fingertips.

Taking her time to absorb everything, she walked across the room while enjoying the soft flooring beneath her bare feet. Lost with where to start, she made it simple and headed toward the long wall opposite the door they'd entered. The wall was covered from floor to ceiling in voluminous black velvet drapes, pooling decadently on the floor. Finding the center opening, she slipped behind it and had to giggle.

"What's so funny?"

"Nothing, it's just a childish whim to play hide and seek with a gorgeous man in this incredible room."

"I think we can manage to play an adult version of the game." The laughter in his voice trickled along her nerve endings and kept her needs teetering on the point of spiraling out of control.

A blush covered her face as she realized how close to the edge she was. There'd be no more delays, she was too anxious for their intimate time together to begin. Walking out from behind the drapes, her body quivered for his attentions. This was definitely a sensuous room fully equipped for playing erotic games. In her opinion, the color choice was all Hamish, dark and mysterious, but also lush, warm and very sensual.

Grace walked to the left and sent a hanging black leather swing swaying. She enjoyed the confinement and pleasure such a toy offered. As she made her way to the right, she couldn't stop from brushing her hands over the black silky-soft bed covering. It was huge, three or four feet high and she was tempted to spread out atop this seductive piece of furniture and lure him away from the wall.

But no, she'd wait for his directions. Surely her restraint would be rewarded with even more pleasure. While working to keep this mindset, she continued to take in her surroundings. There were no bedside tables, but as she walked back toward the center of the room, she stroked a finger over an onyx lacquer cabinet. It was the same height as the bed with sliding doors on the front and various push buttons along the top. There was a matching piece at the head of the bed, making it an angular sleigh bed shape.

On her way back to his side, she looked around the room again. There were other pieces placed around the perimeter, and as she moved to check them out more closely, she saw them. In the center of the room, hanging from the ceiling were a set of chains and what looked to be cuffs dancing at the end.

"Stand beneath them, Grace." At the sound of his voice, she looked over with a smile. Of course he recognized what had caught her attention. Feeling a naughty streak burble up, she added a sway to her hips because she knew he was watching every move she made. It was a good thing she was comfortable with her body. It was a woman's form, full of curves, and she loved every inch.

Once she stood beneath the hanging apparatus dangling out of reach, she stopped and waited for him.

Instead of coming to her, he discarded his coat and tie, folding and placing them on the chest to his left. His eyes never left her while unbuttoning his cuffs and shirt, finally pulling it off. Again, he carefully folded and put it with the rest of his clothes. With her

mouth watering and pussy pulsing, she couldn't help but notice he was a very tidy man. After he removed his shoes and socks, dropping them where he stood, she held her breath, waiting for him to finish undressing.

Having felt his hard-on pressed against her and holding it in her hand, she was eager for him to take down his pants so she could see his cock firsthand. She shouldn't have been surprised when he didn't do what she'd expected, and yet she was groaning under her breath with disappointment. Instead of taking his pants off, he turned to the side and pressed a button that dropped the padded cuffs with a metallic clinking sound. She looked them over before reaching up and touching them.

"They feel very soft." She wasn't sure why she was whispering. Maybe it was having the cuffs drop before her that made what they were about to do very real.

"Like I said, I'd never want you harmed." He pressed another button and a spotlight lit directly on her while the rest of the room fell into inky blackness.

"Hamish?" She heard the nervousness lacing her voice and was surprised by it. In a bid to calm herself, she raised her eyes back to where she'd last seen him, except now it was too dark to see anything.

"It's all right, don't be scared. I want to see you, only you and your passion." He stepped into the light so she could see him. Once he placed his hands on her, held her close so she could hear his heart beat, she felt more at ease, or as much as she could be while turned on as much as she was.

"Are you ready?" Hamish leaned back and smoothed his hands over her back as he spoke.

As if there'd been any doubts about what she was going to do. Grace eagerly nodded, ready for whatever came next.

After her assent had been given, he turned her around and dropped a gentle kiss on her shoulder. When his hands left her, she saw them reappear in front of her, reaching up and bringing the cuffs down. Without saying another word, he opened one cuff and patiently waited for her to place a wrist within the soft cushion. There was no question in her mind what this man had to offer was what she wanted and moved her hands forward to be locked together. Once both wrists were secured in the suspension cuffs, he spoke from over her shoulder.

"Are you all right, Grace?"

"Yes, yes, they're comfortable, secure." Slowly he released her hands and they stretched up above her head. She wasn't being pulled, although it would definitely take effort for her to bring them back down.

Restricting her body's movements turned her on. Anticipation of what was about to happen took over. Her breathing sped up and her pulse increased rapidly with need. All of a sudden she felt cold and nervous, while on the next breath, hot and needy. It was this mixture of emotions found in bondage and domination play that kept her coming back for more.

"Okay?"

"Oh yes, Hamish, yes. Everything is wonderful."

With her answer, he stepped away. In an instant she missed his presence. She could hear a rustling sound behind her and knew he was still in the room, although nowhere near enough for her liking. It sounded like he was breathing more heavily and this from a man who hadn't been winded by carrying her up the stairs.

There was no point in looking over her shoulder to see what he was doing, because it was too dark to see anything. Instead, she tested the straps attaching the cuffs to the ceiling by putting her weight on them. It was spectacular to not feel much give or take, to have her muscles fight back.

As she played with the cuffs, he reappeared in front of her, only this time he stood just outside the pool of light. Despite not seeing him, she knew he was watching her intently with his golden gaze full of fire. He must've done something while her attention had been diverted because the straps holding the cuffs started to lower.

"To your knees, lass," he said while unfastening his pants. She couldn't move a muscle. Finally she was going to see all of him and couldn't think beyond that. The hand on his zipper paused until she sank down to her knees, then he continued speaking.

"Are you ready to suck my cock, Grace? Will you swallow my seed?"

"Yes, I want to taste all of you," she answered eagerly. The whirring stopped, leaving her arms still stretched above her head as she was settled on her knees, eyes glued to the prominent bulge behind his trousers' front placket. This was everything she'd thought of since he told her exactly what he wanted to do with her. No, it was when he'd stepped out from behind the bouquet. Even last night, while making her angry, he'd set her on fire with desire and unfulfilled need.

No more! He'd tempted and teased her long enough. Now it was her turn to work his passionate nature into a frenzy like hers was.

"Open those lovely, plump lips for me. Show me how much you want my rod in your mouth."

Like a bird ready to be fed for the first time, Grace eagerly opened her mouth. Her eyes never left what continued to remain hidden from her. She wanted this, to please him, thereby finding pleasure for herself.

"Beautiful. You're incredibly stunning." The zipper sang and out burst his hard, thick, rigid cock. It was like she thought earlier. There was no way she could take all of him in her mouth. He was too large for that. She would, however, happily manage and feast upon every inch she could take, with a great deal of delight.

Hamish stroked her neck until she looked up toward where she thought his face would be. Although he was lost in the dark, she knew she was at the center of his attention. He would be as much into this first personal touch as she was.

"Do you want—"

“Yes, I want.” Leaning forward, she used the tip of her tongue to tease the large, hard balls tucked up beneath his stiff rod. She sucked one into her mouth and gently played with the vulnerable flesh. Her mouth was full of him. She enjoyed how his moan reverberated down and around the treasure in her mouth. Grace released the ball of flesh and used her tongue to soothe the other one before she cradled it in her mouth, hopefully further enflaming his needs.

Looking up, she wasn’t surprised to find she couldn’t see beyond his beast of an erection. It stood out from his groin and curled until it pointed toward his belly.

She stretched up from her knees and tried to catch the tip with her mouth. She quickly discovered there was no hope for capturing the tool that way. She extended her tongue and tried to capture his shaft using a new method, but the strength of his hard-on and how it bent away from her made it impossible. Because she wanted the tempting rod in her mouth and soon, she tried again, only to no avail.

“Do you want to suck on my cock?”

Chapter Six

"Yes, Hamish, yes," Grace moaned before continuing with her acceptance of his very erotic query in the words they both needed to hear.

She enjoyed playing this kind of game and he was an incredibly sexy dominant to play with. With an aura of power surrounding him, he stood above her with legs spread wide apart and big bare feet resting on either side of her legs. The way he handled her, coaxed her feminine soul forward to bask in his attention. Although she couldn't see his face, Grace still looked up at him with eyes and mouth wide open, showing him how much she wanted to submit to him. With little patience, she waited for him to move his beautiful rod down for her to cherish.

"Here you go." Suit pants hanging on, simply because of his stance, she saw him put what looked like a remote in his pocket before giving her what she wanted. One of his hands came around and pressed down on the base of his shaft, lowering it to dance in front of her opened mouth. "Wider, darling." He stepped in closer and used his other hand to cradle the back of her head.

As if she were starved, Grace latched on to his cock and furiously suckled on the broad crown. Eager for even more, she leaned forward to take as much of him as she could. He thwarted her by moving his hand down the length and grasping hold of his cock, leaving only the tip and a couple of inches for her to take.

A small drop of pre-cum slipped from the tip. She forgot about being denied all of him and moved on to savor the small taste of him as it burst upon her tongue. That little sip left her immediately hooked on his unique essence. There was a hint of salt, otherwise she thought it was purely male and all Hamish.

Pulling her mouth off the thick pole, she swiped her tongue over and around the crown, relishing both the texture of his rod and tangy taste of his seed. With a fierce, hollow-cheeked suction, she slowly slid her mouth on and off as much of his hard rod as he'd allow.

Her tongue lovingly caressed each ridge it passed over and treasured every inch he gave her.

"Oh shit!" His hand clenched her hair. "I won't last long if you do—"

Grace heard him groan, but wasn't really listening to it. She was intent on her goal and that was making him come. She needed his control to shatter, to have his climax exploding in her mouth. Sucking harder, she paid less attention to experiencing all of his unique and lush cock and more on making it erupt. She moaned around him, making sure he understood exactly how much she enjoyed his plunging repeatedly into her welcoming mouth.

"Baby!"

There was a lewd side to her personality that came out when she was really turned on. She got off when she was fucked in a wild and wicked manner. This man must also enjoy his pleasure along the same lines. The words he used, how he treated her, made her think he did and that made this even better than she could have hoped for.

Pulling her mouth off his cock, Grace ignored what she thought was an impulsive pressure from the hand pressing against the back of her head, encouraging her to take him in her mouth again. Instead, she looked up into the dark and spoke to Hamish.

"Feed me, lover, I'm hungry for you." Closing her eyes, she opened her mouth as wide as it would comfortably go and let her tongue hang out to rest on her lower lip. It didn't take long before she felt the tip of his cock rest on the moist shelf. She opened her eyes and watched as he pumped the large beastly cock with his fist.

By the fifth stroke he was coming. The first load of seed she swallowed tingled on her tongue and down the back of her throat. He grunted each time his cock pulsed and more seed shot forth, bringing sounds of appreciation from her.

"Shit, baby, you're fucking hot." He slowly stroked his cock, pulling out every drop of cum he had for her to feast upon.

Leaning forward again, her mouth slid over the head of his cock and absorbed everything about him. His flavor, smell, texture, all called her wicked nature to the surface. She desperately wanted this man to fuck her, take her, own her.

"So my little beauty is ravenous for more." His voice soothed her, as did his combing the hair away from her face. She knew it was to provide a better view of her suckling his rod and didn't blame him one bit. It was probably both a lovely and lewd picture.

Grace took her mouth off him and spoke between licks laid on his hardening rod. "Lover, my pussy is wet and very empty. Please, will you fuck me? Please?"

"Don't worry. I most certainly will take your sweet little cunt." He rubbed his thumb beside her mouth. "But first," he reached into his pocket and pulled out a strip of black fabric, "I'll cover your eyes."

"Wait," she whispered.

The silence was heavy for a long minute before he broke it with a gruff tone.

"Grace, do you wish to say cac —"

"No! No!"

"What then, tell me now or we stop here."

"Ha-mish?"

"Tell me."

"I, I won't be able to see you."

"You can't see me now."

She thought about what he said. His claim was true, she couldn't really see him and at no point was she afraid. However, this didn't help her understand why she instinctively called a halt to their play. There was no chance to think it through, not with the incredible passion he built in her, owning her every thought. Grace forced herself to look inward and search past the lust racing through her body for why she'd had a moment of doubt. Once she had control again, she knew the answer and blurted it out.

"I'm sure I'll miss something important."

Now it was his turn to be quiet. It was a long unsettling time made easier because she knew his gaze lingered on her and hopefully could see that she'd given him her honesty. Despite the seriousness of the situation, she had a difficult time keeping her eyes from the wondrous sight of his cock growing harder before her eyes. The first few inches to the tip of his hard-on still shined from her mouth's personal attention.

"What if it's important to me?"

"Fine," she'd thought about her answer before giving it to him and then felt a need to add her own condition. "If you promise to take me without it."

"Deal."

"Soon?"

"Yes, my darling lass, soon. But now..." He stepped away from her until she could barely see his feet and in a blink, they too were gone. Before another thought had time to settle in her lust-drunk mind, he was there behind her. The soft, black fabric came over her eyes, completely blinding her to the already darkened room.

The floor was well padded, soft beneath her knees. This meant there was no discomfort to divert her mind from what was happening to her. Her mind was once again entirely focused on the desire controlling her body. Honey escaped from the lips protecting her slit, coating her upper thighs with her passion. There was a beat deep in her core, playing out a rhythm that begged for his interest. She felt him step away from her and immediately missed his being close.

Grace could hear nothing except his breathing. It seemed even heavier than before. Maybe she'd managed to ruffle his composure a bit after all. Just thinking about what she might have done to him made her nipples stiffen further. She thought she heard a grunting sound, almost as if he was fighting with someone, but didn't think it was possible. Surely she'd sense it if another person was present.

"Hamish, are you okay?"

Another hard, gut level grunt followed by a soft moan came from somewhere behind her.

"Hamish?" Very real worry laced her call.

"Everything's fine, don't worry," he said, but she could hear tension and maybe even pain in his voice. Although she wasn't sure what she could do if he was hurt, she

was tied up after all. Grace listened very carefully to every sound to see if she needed to call their love play to a stop. She didn't want to, but she would if he wasn't well.

After a short period of time, the air in the room seemed to change with the sound of rustling. She thought it could be his pants dropping to the floor and hoped it was. Some more time passed before she distinguished a drawer opening and closing, followed by what sounded like a cabinet door being opened, but not closed.

"How are you doing, lass?" The smooth Scottish brogue came to her and a soft gentle kiss was placed on her shoulder. Oh man, he sounded okay and still on a lusty path of seduction. Good, so was she. Pushing the worry aside, Grace was ready for whatever he'd give her and answered with what she hoped would make it obvious to him exactly where she was in the game.

"Horny."

"Well, let's do something about it, shall we?" Laughter tangled with his words. There'd been no warning, just his hot naked body resting flush against hers. From behind, he held her hips steady and used his knees to help widen her stance. Next, she felt him place a soft padded cuff around her one ankle, then one was put on the other, leaving her legs spread wider than normal, although not uncomfortably. Testing the range of her leg movement, she found there was none and her pussy clenched with excitement.

Feeling helpless, she enjoyed bowing to another's demands and couldn't stop a moan filled with need from slipping out. She was lost when his hands brushed her inner thighs, sending gooseflesh spreading across her flesh.

"Wonderful. I see what you mean. Your legs are sticky with your juice."

"Please, Hamish. I'm begging you to hurry."

"Don't worry, lass. I'll take care of you." Once again, she felt him move away from her side.

A drawer opened and closed. The whirring sound from the cuffs sounded and her arms went totally lax. He came up to kneel behind her, with his knees and legs pressed against hers and his big hand resting on her back. She started to pant and didn't care. This was what he'd reduced her to. Feeling his hardened body surrounding hers was heaven.

Using his hands, he encouraged her to put her head and chest on the floor, leaving her ass in the air.

"Have I told you what a spectacular backside you possess? It fills my hands perfectly and is soft as silk." Hamish smoothed both hands over her cheeks while he spoke and she preened beneath his attention. "Your derrière is very seductive when you walk. I couldn't keep from watching it last night when you stormed away from me. All I could think of was how this peach-like ass begged for my personal attention." He moved in closer, his cock poking about and making space for itself, thrusting through her plump lower lips and over her mound where it stretched toward her bellybutton.

"Delicious." Grace was quickly becoming incapable of forming sentences. She desperately wanted to feel his hard shaft thrusting inside her, not outside. No matter how delightful it all was, she was already begging him for sex.

Suddenly she felt liquid drip along her crack from above. It wasn't cold, but she still shivered with anticipation. She moaned with pure pleasure as he skimmed a thick finger from the top of her split over her puckered little hole and down until he stopped where his cock spread her open.

"Yes." She groaned, wanting desperately to ride the hard rod resting heavily between her legs.

He made a few more passes along the same path before using two fingers to hold her rear crease open and brought in a third to circle the tight rosette. Grace held her breath. She knew something was coming, but not what it might be or when he'd get to it! Lightheaded from all the passion swirling around in her head, she still needed, wanted, even more with each touch he made on her body.

Another large dollop of liquid pooled over the small opening. His finger rested right there, sitting insistently over the tight hole. On her next exhale he pressed slowly, yet firmly, before burying the digit down the channel and then pulled it out. Again and again the finger returned, taking the extra lubricant as it traced her body and encouraged the friction found in movement to give her a feeling of heat. Even more of the magic liquid was added with another digit as he continued to methodically tease her with pleasure waiting to be released.

"Faster, please, faster," she begged and tried to move, but all she could manage was a small rocking motion over his cock where it rested between her legs and the digits in her ass. The fingers stopped moving and stayed buried deep inside her as he softly swatted a cheek. It didn't hurt, although the sound pulled her back from the edge.

"Don't move, sweetheart, stay still and take what I give you." He softened the chastisement by dropping a soft kiss on the pinked spot.

She felt him add more lubricant and work it down her back passage before he pulled his fingers free. Disappointed with their absence, she moaned because the right words to ask for their return didn't come. Before the frustration could go any further, a solid object rested against the rose and pressed for entrance.

"Push out, baby, push out and let the smooth egg-shaped metal ball in," he whispered while holding her cheeks open. She loved toys. They added a new facet to her pleasure. "There you go, lovely. One more, there, that's it. You'll love these. They have a metal bead inside them that will drive you wild."

He grasped hold of both cheeks and moved them around while he rocked her over his hard-on. The two spheres knocked against each other and sent the internal beads he'd mentioned banging against the outer metal shells. They sent her lust skyrocketing out of control.

"Oh Hamish, I need, oh shit, please —"

Before she could finish telling him what she wanted, he was gone.

"No!" she cried and continued to rock her body. Even though it was just a minimal movement, it was both enough and not nearly enough. Her small motion still managed to send the two anal balls knocking against each other and yet desperation to be filled controlled her mind. She needed to spread her legs wider, hands free, something to bring on a release.

It was intense to be so frantic for an orgasm, especially knowing one was right there just beyond her reach.

Damn! She suddenly realized she couldn't do anything except wait for him to give her the pleasure she sought. He promised he would and she believed him.

Grace tried to listen to what was happening around her, only couldn't seem to focus beyond her body's cry for satisfaction. There was nothing she could distinguish other than her own heavy breathing and the muffled sound of the two balls clanking against each other. Something was definitely happening in front of her, she could sense movement. Unfortunately everything was stifled, which meant she had no idea what it was or what to expect.

"Here, lass, I'm going to help you stand up." Again he stood behind her and, using his hold on her waist, lifted her to her feet and patiently waited while she gained her balance. Her arms hung down in front of her, loose and relaxed. Then the whirring began again and slowly her limbs rose above her head. She was startled, but the passion high she was on didn't allow her to be concerned.

A hard, hot body rested flush against her softer one. His stiff cock rode up from her ass to the center of her back, tempting her to ask him to bend his knees and thrust it deep inside her slit. The balls in her ass had settled, although she knew they'd knock again when next she moved and she would shift because she wanted to experience more of the decadent and erotic sensations this man offered.

She couldn't hold back the gasp when his hands came around and cupped her large breasts. His thumbs strummed the hard tips, bringing them to an even stiffer state. The way he played with her breasts was everything she enjoyed.

"I adore your breasts, you should always be naked and their hard tips ready for my mouth or fingers." Giving the two nipples a firm twist, he let them go and smoothed his hands down to her hips and moved away.

"Hamish!"

"Easy, my love, easy. I'll not leave you unsatisfied."

"I know, but please—" She stopped speaking when they took a step forward together and she felt something hard push against her mound. "What?"

"Shhh."

An indefinable sound followed by the now familiar whirring noise and her arms were being pulled forward. She had no means to protect herself from falling, but there was no need to worry, Hamish was there. Strong, capable hands wrapped around her waist and held her steady as her arms were pulled, bringing her upper torso down to rest against a smooth leather plane. When everything stopped moving, she was laid flat

across a padded board that ran from before her mound down the center of her chest, leaving her breasts to dangle on either side. Her head rested in the center of a round cushioned donut-type shape. There was a memory of a padded bench that she'd seen resting against the wall, but hadn't explored. This must be it.

"Lovely." Hamish's hand stroked over her ass, pausing to give it a gentle swat. The two finger tap was enough to send the two eggs slamming against each other and the smaller metal beads knocking wildly against their confining space. She cried with frustration and pleasure.

"Do you feel this, Grace?"

She felt a thin plastic item moving from the back of her knee up her thigh before it slipped inward and teased the bare lips protecting her slit.

"Yes, yes."

"This is the wrapper of the condom I'm putting on."

"Oh, yes, fine, but Hamish?" She heard the rip of paper telling her he was taking the rubber out of the package. Next she felt the slinky sheath dance over her ass before he moved, bringing his rod up to rest against her leg.

"Yes, baby?" He answered and ensured she could feel him rolling the thin layer of latex over his hard-on.

"Would you fuck me, oh man, please, just—" Before the words were fully out of her mouth, she felt the knob of his cock lodge itself in the opening of her slit.

Finally, she thought, finally she was going to be sent to a place she inherently knew would be heaven and only he could send her there.

Hamish looked down to where he teased a few inches of his cock in and out of her cunt. She dripped honey, coating his rubber-covered rod. For the first time in his life, he wished nothing separated his cock from a woman's feminine clench. Especially this woman's pussy.

There was a need inside him to look into her face as he pleased her, except he couldn't, not tonight. Maybe never.

Shit! Already he cared too much, his heart, mind and body, all knew she was his mate. Soon he'd have to jump that particular fence, see if he could bring her to his side for all time despite his more unique qualities. But right now he was in paradise and wanted to wallow in the pleasure they created together.

The ram horns that had been pushing for freedom since he first set eyes on her had finally burst from his temples. Seeing her on her knees with his cock in her mouth was incredible. Feeling her suck him dry had been more than he could handle. They curled elaborately on each side of his head.

There was no way to hide them, nor was this the time or place to tell her about them either. Nothing mattered right now except him and her. They were in a spotlight together and he could see his possession of her. It was a beautiful view. He chased all thoughts of the future away for the time being. He would have her, bound in the dark

and facing away from him for hours, days, however long it took to ensure she needed him as much as he did her.

With purpose and desire raging within him, he slowly slid into her channel. Nothing could stop him now from possessing her fully. In one steady stroke, he packed his cock inside her until he hit bottom. He nudged a bit further, allowing his balls to rub over her clit. Her very feminine reaction to the pleasure he gave her was exactly what he'd needed to hear.

"Are you okay?"

"So big," she whispered on a groan.

"Is that good?"

"Oh yes, you fill me up."

"Your pussy grips me tightly, it's fucking delicious. Now hold on because I'm going to ride your sweet body." Warning given, he wasted no more time and worked on pleasuring them both.

He started with a long slow pull until again, only the knob rested inside her wet heated opening. It was almost too much desire to handle and he thrust back inside her tight clench. His balls rolled over her excited nub before he pulled out. In and out he plunged, over and over again because he had to. Grace herself inspired him to give more fully of himself than he'd wanted to before.

On the next stroke, he swore he heard the eggs in her ass knocking against each other. They must be driving her wild.

"Yes!" She screamed at the top of her lungs.

"You're so wet, easing my way through your tight slit." She'd mentioned earlier how much she liked his dirty talk, so he kept at it.

Already he was ready to blow. With each hard and fast thrust of his cock, he was closer to losing his control again and coming. Apparently having climaxed not too long ago hadn't taken as much of the edge off his need as he'd wanted. Her tight, wet cunt captured him in its clasp when he returned and made it even harder to leave. He looked at his hands, large fingers spread out, clenching her delicate and soft ass cheeks. Manipulating the full globes kept the balls continuously shifting inside her back channel as he took her to the edge of sanity.

"Uhhh. Ha-mish!"

"Here you go, beautiful." He jack-hammered in and out of her pulsing slit, using all his pent-up need to fully possess this woman.

"I'm close, lover, so – uhhh!"

"Let me feel you come. I want to know what it feels like to have you climaxing around my rod." He thrust again, searching for more depth and when he found a small amount, filled it with his cock.

"Yes! Ha-a-mish!"

Her loud scream was music to his ears. The tight pulsating beat her slit treated his rod to as she orgasmed was all he could focus on. She said she was close to coming and she hadn't been lying. He closed his eye and tried not to let it end so soon. Unfortunately, his actions managed to bring her climaxing grip more to the front of his thoughts and he was lost to its lure.

"Oh shit, Grace!"

Just like that his orgasm sneaked up on him. He threw his head back and thrust hard, trying to send his cock even further into paradise. He gloried in each throb of his rod as he came. The way he fit within her cunt, gripping and clenching around him, was like his soul was speaking with hers.

A strong beating rhythm sent his cum to rest at the end of his condom. Even the thought of the barrier couldn't diminish the pleasure he had shared with this woman.

His woman.

The satisfaction of coming inside her was intense and Hamish grunted with contentment. He leaned over, needing closer contact with her, but was careful to keep his horns from touching her in any way. He kissed a path along her delicate spine, cherishing her being there with everything in him.

Despite enjoying their time together, he couldn't stop the frustration at the limitations he was forced to endure with his mate finally in his arms. He wanted to rail against the injustice of his life, but didn't. There was no way he'd waste a second of his time with her holding him perfectly within her body. Not on something he couldn't change.

Normally once his passion was spent, his horns would go down. Not so with Grace beneath him. He had a feeling that as long as she was in his life, they'd never be far from the surface. It was the nature of his beast to want to preen before his mate, show his prowess through the majestically curled horns.

Chapter Seven

An insistent thumping rode through her body. It eased its way into Grace's subconscious and tried to gently pull her from sleep. Like most mornings, she was lying on her side, legs pulled up to her chest, hands folded together and sandwiched between her knees. Although she wasn't quite awake, she knew something was different. That there was some reason why she should be up, she just didn't want to.

The pillow beneath her head was soft against her flesh, not like her favorite crisp cotton pillowcases. It was also fuller than normal. Usually, a heavy duvet covered her because she was always cold at night. While she dozed between sleep and wakefulness, it felt like there was nothing more than a light sheet covering her. Then she realized what was wrong. There was something resting against her back. That was definitely different and didn't sit well.

The inconsistencies kept nudging her before finally pushing the veil of sleep away.

When everything pulled together and settled in her mind, she was wide awake, eyes open and staring into an abyss of blackness. Because she couldn't distinguish anything clearly, she knew immediately that this wasn't her bed or bedroom. She had sheers on her windows, so even on the dreariest of days there was some sort of light coming in. Things weren't adding up and now she was worried, tipping ever closer to being scared.

Where was she? What happened? Who was sleeping behind her? Did she know them? Should she scream for help? Would anyone come if she did?

No answers came forward, just more questions.

As the panic feeling grew, suddenly it felt like the oppressive blackness was going to swallow her whole. She had to move, find some light so she could figure out where she was and who was in bed with her. Stretching her legs until the toes pointed immediately brought everything she needed to know rushing back.

Her entire body screamed, not with pain, but with remembered pleasure and that brought the memory of one very sexy man.

Grace remembered most of what happened last night and she instantly relaxed. It must be him, Hamish Buchanan, sleeping behind her. The man had been amazing. He was everything she'd ever hoped to find mixed into one body. Surprisingly it had seemed as if he had a link into her soul. He'd been that in tune with her and everything she enjoyed.

What she found hard to believe was that he was the same person who'd pissed her off at the charity ball. The man who'd perfectly seduced her was so different from any

other she'd been with before and she wanted to spend more time with him. It was possible whatever was between them could go further than sex.

There was, however, one thing she knew for sure and hoped to find a way to have it. She wanted more of the passion and caring he'd offered.

As smoothly as she could manage, she scooted back to place her ass against his groin in a bid to encourage him to wake up. Grace wanted to feel his arms wrap around her, pull her closer to him and take her again. Maybe not exactly as he had before, she was still feeling a little sore, but there was no doubt in her mind he'd know exactly what she wanted.

She kept moving back until it finally dawned on her that he wasn't in the bed. Shifting onto her stomach, she reached a hand out to feel for him and found nothing except for a pillow tucked against her back. Grace looked around in the darkness and its thick inky darkness left her disoriented. Eventually she noticed a sliver of light coming from what must be the door.

Once she slipped her legs over the side of the bed and her feet sank into the lush carpet, she stood leaning against the bed for a minute until she had her equilibrium back. It was impossible to see anything in the room, although she distinctly remembered the light switch on the wall next to the door. If she could make it there and turn the lights on, she'd be able to find that man and remind him he'd made promises, like taking her without the blindfold on. Maybe he had, but she couldn't remember him fulfilling it.

Waving her hands blindly out in front of her, she carefully made her way toward the sliver of white coming in from beneath the door. Once she made it to the wall, she ran her hands from side to side, up and down until she found the switch and turned it on. Feeling proud of her accomplishment, Grace turned around with a smile and ended up with a frown on her face.

Hamish wasn't here, but resting on the chest were the clothes she'd stripped off downstairs. The man was definitely tidy. He'd folded each article perfectly and brought them up here. It was thoughtful, could even be viewed as sweet, except she didn't see a note from him resting on top. Nothing telling her how much he'd enjoyed their time together or how he wanted to see her again. Not even a few words saying he was sorry for not being here when she woke up in a strange place and terrified.

That was a big mistake on his part.

Suddenly she was starting to feel used for the sex, which in turn made her angry. Simply because she enjoyed allowing herself free rein when it came to her desire didn't mean she went with just anyone. In fact, she was pretty strict about who was invited to share her body. One thing she required without a doubt was respect and this didn't feel like respect.

Picking up the pile of clothes, she made her way into the bathroom attached to the room and took a quick shower. Squeezing a dollop of tea tree and lime body wash into her hand, she held her head out of the water and scrubbed the suds all over. He'd

mastered her body and teased her heart to come out to join the party. No man had ever done that before and she'd liked how it felt. At least she had until this morning when she woke up alone in the dark.

Rubbing her hands over her body, she finished washing before turning the water off with a hard twist. Stepping out of the stall and onto a soft mat, she grabbed a large, soft, brown towel. She didn't bother looking at or enjoying the sumptuous room. Instead she quickly dried off and ran her fingers through her hair before finally looking in the mirror.

There were love marks visible where her shoulders and neck met. She remembered him spending a great deal of time with his mouth right there and she'd loved it, begged him for more. Seeing them and remembering how he'd thoroughly possessed her brought the passion right back on high. She wanted him all over again.

Quickly looking away from her neck, she found red slashes of embarrassment, or possibly anger, marking her cheeks. There were also tears building in her eyes. If she let them, they'd start seeping out as well.

Turning away from what she'd discovered in her reflection, Grace gave herself a firm talking-to. She would not feel ashamed of her actions. He was the one who should be embarrassed by his behavior. Even though she knew this, she found it difficult to accept. Damn it, the man was close to making her regret the time they'd spent together and she didn't want to do that. She really liked him.

Hamish Buchanan was special and that was a problem.

In a few short minutes she finished dressing in her clothes and jewelry she wore here. Slipping on her shoes, she smoothed hands over her hips and took a deep breath. Maybe she wasn't giving him enough credit. It was possible he was downstairs waiting for her and not the cad her overactive imagination was making him out to be.

Before walking out to the bedroom, she took another look around. There were quite a few toys they hadn't had a chance to try out and she was sure there were even more in the cabinets. There was no doubt in her mind, their time together had been spectacular, and in her heart, she hoped to be back in here with him again. Soon, if her body had anything to say about it, very soon.

Going with this new positive outlook, she walked out of the room and down to the main floor without seeing or hearing another person. Seriously, he wouldn't have left her here by herself, would he? Making her way into the room where they'd had a lovely lunch, spent time getting to know each other, she was drawn to the window. Looking outside, she found a typically drizzling day in London. It was impossible to judge the time because his neighborhood was a quiet enclave that defied the surrounding city bustle.

The house was silent as she stood there and tried to figure out what to do. She couldn't see his car parked out front. Obviously he wasn't here and she needed to phone a cab firm for a ride, except she had no idea of the address. Disappointed in

misjudging the man and being left in such a cold way encouraged a self-pitying sigh to escape.

No, she wouldn't feel sorry for herself. There was too much going well for her to waste time on that negative emotion. Besides, he was the one who'd be missing out on all she had to offer. Moving away from the window, she made her way toward the front door, only to be brought up short by its opening.

Feeling both awkward and scared to be found in this man's house, she didn't know what to do. Screaming was one idea when she didn't immediately recognize the man stepping into the foyer. On her first real breath, she realized he was the one who'd been with Hamish at the party.

"Hello, Grace. I'm sorry to be so late. Hamish sends his apologies. He was called away and asked me to come over to see you make it home safely."

"Who are you?" The emotional roller coaster she was riding finally took its toll. While she knew the man must be family and knew his way around the house, by no means did this mean she felt at ease being alone with him. What kept her somewhat steady was that she noticed he kept his hands in the pockets and didn't walk fully into the room. If it was on purpose, then she'd say he was thoughtful, unfortunately, it didn't matter. The nonthreatening body language didn't lessen the tension she felt in being stranded in a strange house with a strange man.

"I'm Alain, Alain Buchanan, Hamish's cousin and business associate."

"I recognize you from the other night."

"Are you all right? I've startled you. Here, sit down. You're as white as a ghost. Let me get you a glass of water."

Stunned, she watched him dash off and return with a glass full of water. She took a sip of the cool liquid and then another. By the third, she felt calmer and seriously ridiculous.

She looked up to thank him and found him watching her with a gentle smile. There was something in his eyes, or maybe it was there on his face, she wasn't entirely sure what it was except that she saw a flicker of something that made her feel at ease in his company. For the first time since she'd woken in a dark room, she felt on stable ground.

Grace took another drink and tried to find a good conclusion to her time with Hamish, only she was having a difficult time doing it. No matter how she felt about what they did together or how she'd like to remember it, this was her life and on it went.

She had a million questions to ask and finally settled on just one.

"Does he usually leave his guests to wake up terrified to find they're all alone in a strange dark room?"

"Never, and trust me, he'll be very upset when he finds out you were scared."

"Oh, come on."

"No, Grace, please listen to me because I'm giving you the truth. I won't put any words into my cousin's mouth. Trust me. He's big enough to tell you what's on his mind all by himself. However, I will say one thing I know for sure. The man never went after a woman with such single-mindedness, until you."

"I'm sure it's because no woman walked away from him before."

"You're right, there haven't been many who have turned him down, but that isn't why he came after you or why he wanted a friendly face to greet you when you woke up. For him, you're in a totally different, never fully defined, category."

Lifting the glass to her lips, she watched and listened carefully to what he had to say. There was an aura of sincerity coming from him, which made her think he believed wholly in what he was telling her. This didn't make it true, though, and Hamish's absence was speaking louder than his cousin's comforting words.

Damn it, when had she become so cynical? This wasn't like her at all. Before any further damage was done, it would be for the best if she cut her losses and left.

"Would you mind calling me a cab? I don't know the address and need to get home before heading in to work."

"Grace, you have to trust me about Hamish."

"Thank you for everything you've had to say, but really it's your cousin who needs to do the talking. In the meantime, I left work early yesterday and should get back. Hamish knows where to find me if he'd like to explain his behavior."

An odd look came across Alain's face. If she didn't know better, she'd say he was trying not to laugh.

"What?"

"Well, Grace, you've actually been here for two days."

"Are you kidding me?"

"No, I'm not. The charity ball was Friday night, Saturday Hamish came to apologize to you and apparently brought you back here. It's now almost eleven o'clock on Monday morning."

"What did that man do to me?"

"Well—"

"Stop! Don't answer that. I *know* what we did, what I meant was where did all that time go? Ooo!"

"Do you want me to answer that one?"

"No, please don't. All I ask is that you call a cab so I can get home and try to get back to reality."

"I'll drive you myself." Any sign of a smile had been wiped from his face.

"That isn't necessary."

"Of course it is, so please, do us both a favor and don't bother arguing."

"Fine, not many people would be willing to drive to Old Bond Street in the middle of the day."

"That's where your shop is, where do you live?"

"My apartment here in London is above the shop."

Thankfully, from that point on their conversation became less personal and therefore much easier for her to handle. She didn't know whether it was Alain or her who changed the direction of the conversation. It didn't matter because she was too pleased by the turn to think about it further. There was enough going on in her head without having to hold a meaningful discussion at the same time or unintentionally walking into another minefield of sexual innuendo.

As soon as she got home and had a minute to herself in her own space, she'd have to think about how she'd actually spent two days in a man's erotic playroom and not realized how much time had passed. It was looking like she'd been on a bender, a seriously good sex bender. The way her body still tingled with pleasure seemed to confirm plenty had gone on between them.

Once Alain dropped her off, Grace thanked him, stepped out of the car and walked into the shop with her head held high. With a quick tug, she made sure her wrap covered the state of her neck, then walked in the front door with poise and purpose. Ignoring her own embarrassment, she cheerfully waved at her startled store manager, employees and a couple of customers while wearing the same clothes from two days ago.

As she made her way down the hallway, she called out over her shoulder to Aimee, who she was sure had followed her.

"I know, I know, I should've phoned. As you can see, I'm all right. I'll be back down shortly and you can give me the third degree then."

"At least tell me if that gorgeous Scotsman survived the weekend?"

There was no holding her laughter back on that one. The woman's comment was exactly what she'd needed to hear as she worked to reconnect herself with the person who spent two days indulging all of her sexual desires. She turned back around and dashed back to give the woman a quick hug.

"He did."

"Will you be seeing him again?"

"I'm not sure."

"Luv, I have no doubt he'll make every effort to ensure he does. Don't worry about coming back down, we have everything under control."

"No, I'll be down later. I need to shower, change and get my head back in focus."

"Fine, we'll see you when we see you."

With a momentary lightening of her heart, she made her way up the stairs, past the floor that acted as the stock room to the top level where her apartment was. Grace unlocked the door and walked in, pleased to be here.

It wasn't a large place and happened to suit her needs perfectly. She set her hat, wrap and purse on the table, then made her way to the couch where it sat beneath a large window. Slipping her feet out of her shoes, she sat down and folded her legs beneath her. She leaned over, rested her chin on the ledge and looked out over the rooftops.

Within seconds of finding the peace this place offered, her mind drifted back to Hamish Buchanan and how they'd spent the past couple of days together. The finer points were sketchy, but she definitely remembered wonderful sex, eating in bed and even him carrying her into the bathroom when she needed it. What she didn't remember was the details like if the blindfold ever came off, if they used other toys besides the anal balls, things like that.

Right now everything she recalled was surrounded by darkness. Did he drug her? No, no, that was one thing she felt sure about. To do something so vile was far beneath the man.

It took a few seconds to register her phone was ringing and that she needed to answer it. It would surely be Aimee and Grace was prepared to tell her again that she'd be down in an hour.

"Hello."

"Hi, Grace."

Whether she'd been expecting someone else or not didn't stop the surprise she felt at hearing the now familiar deep sexy voice coming down the line. The Scottish burr ran through her body, raising goose bumps along the way and working on softening her upset. Her lips parted and her breath started to come more quickly. He did this to her with just two words, what could he do with more? Grace wasn't sure what to say, so kept it simple.

"Hi."

"What are you doing right now?"

"Sitting on my couch trying to figure out how mad I am with you." Good, she gave herself a quick pep talk. Don't hide anything from him.

"Please don't be upset. If I could've been with you when you woke this morning, I would've been."

"Hamish, for two days I was in that play room of yours and I—"

"I know, great, wasn't it?" Pleased, and without any real doubt what her answer would be, came from him loud and clear.

"Yes, but—"

"No buts, lass, it was perfect."

"Okay, it was wonderful, fine, but I feel like I missed something I should know and am not at all comfortable with that." She believed this and yet still couldn't put her finger on what it was or why she thought it did.

"Do you know that I'd like to see you again?" There wasn't a hint of doubt or insecurity in the man. He came across as confident and yet not demanding.

"That's a given. I've just spent two days as your love puppet. No man would choose to walk away from that."

"Well, I want more than your submission in the bedroom. I want much more than that."

"I see."

"Do you, Grace? Do you know how it hurt to leave your side? Do you know I wanted our first time together to be perfect? I wanted you to know how very special you are, except I couldn't seem to stop myself from taking you over and over. There's an insatiable hunger building inside me and it's for you."

Her quivering hand moved up and covered her mouth. Telling her what he was feeling made her heart leap and stomach drop. They were a good pair. No doubt about it, but she wasn't ready to throw in the towel and let him have total control over her. It was time to give him a few hard truths.

"It was terrifying to wake up in your room, in the dark and all by myself. I didn't like that at all."

"I'm sorry, because I wanted to watch you wake up, see you in the sunlight." She heard his voice deepen and felt her body respond to him. She wanted him, but knew it wasn't enough to be all about sex for him.

"I enjoyed what we had and while you gave me a taste of your brand of desire, I actually want to be more than someone who gets you off."

"Don't ever doubt you engage all of me. My brain and body."

"Pretty hard to do from where I sit right now. I feel used, Hamish, and don't like it one bit."

"Don't, please don't think for a second that I hunted you down merely for sex. What we shared was much more than that. It's just that my cock ruled the time we spent together."

"Sweet words, Hamish, but I don't want to hear any excuses."

"None given. I know I've screwed up from the beginning."

"What do you mean?" She liked this man, really liked him and wanted to be able to see past her anger. There was a real chance of something more between them.

"First, I insult you. After that I basically keep you as my, what did you call it, love puppet? Yes, that's it, love puppet, without caring about your responsibilities. Then, to finish it off with a cherry on top, I'm not there when you wake up. This isn't what I intended to happen when I stopped by your shop on Saturday. I promise, Grace, none of this was planned. What can I say? I lost my head when I set eyes on you and my brain went with it."

Grace listened to him and appreciated how he didn't offer any more excuses for what happened. Although the head loss thing was pretty close, it was one she actually

understood. She didn't exactly behave as she would normally either. It wasn't usual for her to go have wild and kinky sex with a man who insulted her one minute and gave her flowers the next.

"I'm upset about what happened and don't know what to do." What else could she say? Apparently confusion ruled her mind.

"Will you go out with me tonight? Start again as we mean to go."

"I don't know, Hamish. I can't afford to lose more days like I already have. Not right now." There was the new season coming up, the awarding of her royal warrant and the fact that her success was reliant entirely on her. If she didn't do the work, then there'd be nothing to sell.

"How about good food and interesting conversation, but no sex?"

"I'm not so sure we need to go that far. What would you say if we eat and talk, then decide about sex?"

"Ms. Strachan, are you negotiating with me?" There was a delighted element of surprise to his query and she felt empowered again.

"Why not? I'm a businesswoman who knows what she wants and it just so happens to be you, all of you, not just your delightfully kinky passion. We've done that one already, let's see if we can go for more and this time bring our brains to the party."

"Deal. I'll pick you up at six. How do you feel about Chinese food?"

"Seven-thirty and what about a curry?"

"You're just begging for my hand to spank your ass, aren't you?"

"Absolutely. Do we have a deal?"

"Deal."

"Hamish?"

"Yes, lass?"

"I like the way you do business."

"You wouldn't know it, but I have a reputation as a hard-nosed businessman. I can be ruthless, brutal, demanding everything as suits me. Apparently when it comes to you, I lie down and roll over." His laughter was contagious.

"It's all good as long as you're hard and demanding when it's necessary."

"No need to worry about that. With you I can't seem to be anything except hard and horny."

"Now that's the image I'll take with me while I clean up and change before going downstairs. Thank you."

"You're naked now?" His voice lowered like it had when he was about to do something deliciously naughty with her body and it made her shiver.

"Nope, but I'll get there in a second and think of how well your hard-on can lift a kilt. See you tonight."

With joy filling her, she blew a kiss down the line and hung up. There was no way to keep the smile off her face. It was simple, really. There was something about the man that encouraged her to feel more alive than she ever had before. She was looking forward to exploring him further,

All of him.

Mind, body and soul.

Chapter Eight

After she hung up, Hamish was thoughtful. When he set out to claim Grace, he'd brimmed with confidence in his success to bring her to his side. Then, while he had her in his grip, he'd been even surer they were meant to be together. Now that she wasn't here and was angry with him, his assurance that he had control over what was happening between them or where they were heading had diminished.

It was taking a great deal of effort for him not to drive over to Frivolity and bring her back to his home so they could start the day differently. Of course he knew this wasn't a realistic idea, but he'd keep it in mind because he was sure he'd be more in sync with everything if he could reach out and touch her.

Stretching his legs, he put his bare feet up on the coffee table and leaned back into the couch. He stared blindly into the fire he built once Grace left with Alain. He didn't want to think about not being there when she woke up. He didn't want to miss loving her and watching the wonder of a new day brightens her eyes. That was where he wanted to be, with her, wherever that might be, and he couldn't do it.

Unconsciously he stroked a finger over his horns and thought about how they were the reason he hadn't been there when she'd needed him most.

Slipping away from her warm and satiated body was one of the most difficult things he'd ever had to do. This morning, before dawn, with his horns fully exposed and unable to do anything about it, he'd been sure it was the best solution available. There was no way he could second-guess this decision, nor would it do him any good to ask questions now that it had been done. He had to move forward and ensure she knew he cared for her beyond the sex.

What he was absolutely positive about was that it wouldn't help his case if she found herself sharing a bed with a man sporting horns.

It had been almost impossible to keep the protruding bones hidden for two solid days. They'd started actively sprouting from the sides of his head the second she'd taken him in her mouth. Thank goodness the room had been lit in such a way that he could see her, but she couldn't see him, at least not clearly.

Early this morning, when he opened his eyes in the dark room, his head ached tremendously. The effort of trying to keep the horns hidden had finally caught up with him. Beyond just his head, pain encompassed his entire body. He'd used everything he could to keep her from discovering them, especially when her hands roamed freely over him.

In his lifetime, there'd been less than a half-dozen people who had ever touched the unique bones and no one except him since he hit puberty. He was curious to know how another's touch would feel, especially one from a lover. That's where he stepped onto

shaky ground. He definitely wasn't ready to tell her everything, not yet and maybe never.

Grace was the first woman he even considered bringing so deeply into his life, far enough to know his secret. He'd thought quite a bit about it this morning and if he ever reached the point where he could tell her about the horns, then it had to be handled very carefully. He wouldn't simply let her wake up and find them there. Too much was at stake if it didn't work out. In the end, it might be telling the truth was too high a price for him to pay.

The worse case was what he had to think about. Generally this brought to mind the same question and today was no exception. How hard would it be to spend the rest of his life trying to keep someone he cared about from discovering horns grew from his head?

Shrugging his shoulders, Hamish rolled his head along the back of the couch to help ease some of the tension settling in his neck. The idea of making himself vulnerable to another was not something he'd choose to do. It just wasn't him. However, if he wanted to be with her, he most likely would have to do this to some extent. So far, everything he knew about her said she was worth the risk in finding himself exposed as a modern day monster.

Despite this morning, it seemed to him like they were off to a good start. They had the sexual compatibility thing down and they had talked some, although nothing serious. Either way, he wouldn't be sure until she said so herself.

Moving his hand down to cover his hard-on, he was no longer surprised to find himself eager for her. For two days they'd indulged themselves in each other's bodies and it had been divine. They'd spent little time sleeping, a bit talking to each other, but mostly he'd allowed himself to feast upon her as much as he wanted and to their mutual satisfaction. As far as he was concerned, it had been perfect. Their time together solidified his belief that she was going to be a part of his life. The challenge for him was not to ruin it before she had a chance to know more about him than what she'd already discovered. She was more than a love puppet and he was more than the skill in which he brandished his cock.

Leaning forward, he lifted his coffee mug and settled back against the cushions of his comfortable couch with a snort of self-disgust before sipping the hot brew.

Unfortunately, he hadn't been thinking clearly enough on how to make certain Grace knew how special she was to him, in and out of bed. That had been a really stupid mistake. After speaking with her, he was sure at some point she must've thought she'd been a one-night stand. Okay, technically a two-night stand, which couldn't be further from the truth. In his mind, it was obvious how much he cared for her *because* they hadn't come up for air since he delivered the flowers at her shop on Saturday morning.

How wrong he was.

Hamish thought about it some more until he realized this was the perfect example of how men and women looked at things. These issues hadn't mattered to him before because he'd never had a relationship where he cared. There'd been less than a handful of women who'd stayed around for any substantial length of time. Granted, even those few hadn't lasted in his life any longer than a couple of months. Apparently he had quite a bit to learn about being a good mate for Grace.

Frustration struggled to take hold of him as he remembered this morning, but pushed it back. There was no point in getting worked up and agitated. It would make trying to calm down enough for the horns to retract more difficult. Hamish did, however, remind himself it was understandable to be pissed. He'd opened his eyes this morning and discovered, regardless of all the pleasure she'd given him, they were still out and at full curl.

This was new for him. Usually, once his needs had been satiated, the horns would retreat, not all the way, but down to be ridges easily hidden beneath his hair. None of this occurred with Grace, so he'd had to do something and quickly.

Several hours had passed and they were still curled around the side of his head. There'd been a little progress in their retraction, only the bones remained unfurled far enough that they couldn't be hidden beneath his hair. In fact, he was sure that if she chose right then to walk through his front door, no question, they'd immediately grow back to their complete curl.

Despite the ups and downs he was going through right now, this was actually an interesting and exciting period in his life. It was full of new adventures and experiences, all because of one particular woman. One thing he was going to have to do was reinforce his power over his body. For the first time in years, he was faced with having to take back control over the horns and he knew it wasn't going to be easy.

Bringing the mug to his mouth, he took a sip of the brew and realized he couldn't dwell on the mistakes he'd already made or trials he'd have to face to keep her in his life. There was little doubt in his mind that this morning wasn't going to be the last gaff he'd make. Unintentional or not, they were sure to happen again. What he had to do was stop wasting time and come up with a plan for keeping her at his side no matter what he did wrong in the future.

So what did they have going for them?

Obviously they were compatible sexually. They'd also already had a chance to talk about their mutual interest in property development and the various aspects of it. They both worked hard and were successful because of it. There were more things he knew about her personal and professional life, but not from her own lips, so he didn't include them.

It was a substantial list, with much more to learn. By no means did he want to know everything about her, instantly. There was great joy in discovering what made her special. At the same time, he wanted the opportunity to unearth her secrets and desires,

hopes and dreams, as well as those things that made her sad and fearful. Those were the reward of a true lover.

If he pulled everything together, then the ultimate goal was both simple and convoluted. He wanted Grace to love, know and respect him, no matter what. To do this she had to want to bring him inside her heart, like she had her body, and from there he'd find a way to her soul. Of course this wasn't going to happen in one night or two, although he could get things started.

The earlier he did that, the sooner she'd be his.

Alain chose that moment to come back to the house. His longtime cohort didn't say a word on his way into the kitchen or once he settled on the other end of the couch drinking from a mug, watching the flames. There was something different about his cousin. He wasn't being his usual teasing and cheerful self.

"Thanks for coming over here to help me out this morning." It was the truth. He knew the timing of his call had interrupted the other man with his own bed companion. Without looking at him, his cousin broke his silence.

"I like her."

"Who?"

"Grace, you fool." Alain finally looked at him and was frowning.

"Well," said Hamish, "I didn't know if you were talking about the woman whose bed you left when I phoned or mine. I had to ask to be sure we were on the same page." There was something definitely going on with the man. It wasn't like him to be so short.

"Sari is complicated. Your Grace isn't, she's delightful. She blushed so prettily when she realized how much time had passed while playing with you upstairs."

"What do you mean complicated?" Interesting. He'd never known the other man to describe a woman with such a term. Before Grace, they were of the same mind. Women were for pleasure and there was nothing convoluted about that. It'd been a while since his cousin had dated anyone seriously. Although, if he remembered correctly, there had been one particular woman his cousin had described as problematic. It was back when Alain was at college and ended up having his heart broken. What was her name again?

"Leave it, Hamish."

"Why? I could do with not having to think about my own problems for a few minutes. Call it a diversion, whatever—"

"No."

Warning bells went off in his head. Now wasn't the time to pursue this, they'd have to talk about it later though. He had a gut feeling that this was an area his cousin needed to talk to someone or it could eat him alive. In his opinion, when things weren't going smoothly, it never helped to keep them bottled up inside. Nothing was ever solved that way.

"Fine. For now, but you aren't off the hook about this."

"Your hands are full with your own lady right now. Why don't you focus on her and let me deal with mine." Alain's irritation was palpable. They'd definitely have to come back to this. Just because his own life was all in a tumble didn't mean he wouldn't be there to listen to his cousin open up. For the time being, he'd do what Alain was asking of him.

"How was Grace when you saw her?"

"Scared. Lost. Confused. Poor thing didn't seem prepared to be left in a dark room all alone after days filled with debauchery."

"Take the attitude down a notch, cousin. I know she's pure gold and there was nothing depraved or wrong about our time together." There wasn't any anger in him because he knew his cousin didn't mean to sound so cold-hearted. Not Alain and not about someone he knew was important to Hamish.

"Damn! You're right, I'm sorry."

"Are you sure you don't want to talk about this Sari?"

"Yes, yes, I'm sure. How did it go? Is Grace yours now?"

"Nope, closer, but no, she's not mine yet." There, he'd finally said it out loud. It was hard to admit, and yet after all his soul searching this morning, he'd concluded he didn't have a clue how to woo this woman.

"What do you mean? This morning she looked very satisfied to me, albeit irritated with you for leaving her to wake up alone."

"Don't get me wrong, she's very happy with her time spent with me and in my bed. We're very well matched when it comes to sex. However, I have to admit to having fallen short in almost all other areas. Apparently I should've left her a note saying I wasn't here and that I'd call her later."

"I suppose something like that would've been better than nothing at all. That's a simple mistake, though."

"Actually I've made a couple of slip-ups, such as living down my rude comments made to her during our introduction."

"Hmmm, that was pretty bad, but I think it became worse when she discovered she didn't know the address of where she was to arrange for a cab to pick her up."

"See what I mean? My stupid mistakes are causing problems with my love life."

"I take it you've called Grace and explained what happened to you this morning?"

"Kind of and I'm sure I haven't heard the end of it yet. She couldn't decide whether to be pissed or pleased to hear from me."

"Smart cookie that one." The first real smile lit Alain's face and his own matched it.

"Oh yeah, that she is."

"So, I've been curious about something. What exactly happened that caused the lass not to realize two days had passed her by?"

"A little this, a little that."

"I seriously doubt there was anything little about what you two did. I don't want to know the details, but tell me how, after all that time passed actively involved in more intimate pursuits shall we say, she doesn't know you have the horns of a ram. They are out when you come and I assume you did quite a bit of that during your time together."

"A mixture of things. If it wasn't dark or the light on her alone, then her hands were confined so she couldn't touch me. Other times I focused on keeping them from unfurling. I have to figure those were all enough because she didn't mention it during our conversation. She'll see me again, so I have to assume she still doesn't know about them."

"Oh man, I'm surprised you were able to pull it off."

"Tell me about it. To me, it seemed like they were always there, curled about my head and trying to impress her. I've never had to work so hard to keep them hidden. That is a big problem because she likes my hair and keeps trying to run her fingers through it."

"Really?"

"Alain, I can't explain to you how much I wanted to allow her to do that. I almost relented at one point because I wanted so badly to feel her hands on my horns." Hamish couldn't stop himself from rubbing a finger over the blunt tip of the bone as he imaged her hands on him.

"Seriously? You hardly know her —"

"She's a good person, Alain. You've seen that for yourself." Wanting to believe she wouldn't turn from him and his horns in revulsion wasn't enough to push Hamish over the edge and tell her all of his secrets outright. That was too big a step to make right now, maybe ever. "We're going out to dinner tonight."

"That sounds good, if you can figure out how to get those things down and to stay down."

"You know to some extent I can keep the bones from pushing for air by controlling my emotional responses to various things. For the past couple of days I've tried everything to keep her from seeing them. It wasn't easy to do though. All the energy I spent doing this was exhausting. Maybe because my attention was fully on her, pleasing her, I found it even more difficult to do. In time, the random headaches the fighting against my nature rolled in to one big one. I was weak and couldn't let her discover the truth that way."

"Not that I don't already know the answer, but I have to ask. Was it worth it?"

"Let me tell you, Alain, no matter how much it hurt, it was worth it to eat dinner with her in bed, take a shower with her, everyday things lovers do together."

"You haven't had to expend so much energy to keep them down since you were a kid."

"It hurts more to do it now than it ever did back then."

"Maybe because the horns are larger."

"Could be, but I think there might be something more to it."

"Like what?"

"I'm not exactly sure. When I think about sex, then Grace comes to mind and the horns appear. When I think of how I'm going to spend my day, there's Grace. You see, all of sudden Grace and my life are all mixed up together."

"But you two just met, fucked quite a bit, talked a little. That isn't knowing a person. How can she be imbedded in your life so deeply, so quickly?"

"I don't have a clue how it happened, only that it did and I'm not unhappy about it. It's like we're connected in some way and with that brought out a new dynamic to my horns."

"Explain." Alain took another sip and turned to look at him.

"I'll try. I see her, I need her and the horns push out for air without delay. Of course my emotions are soaring out of control and that could be a part of the bones coming out. Although I don't think so. I've been thinking about this and I keep coming back to the same idea. Remember at the party when I said it felt like I was hunting something?" He waited for Alain's nod before going on. "Well, I was. It's almost as if the part of me that is an animal takes over where she's concerned. I swear Alain, it's like my horns have a mind of their own and want to get her attention with their presence."

"Shit, that's weird, Hamish."

"I know it. At the same time as the ram side is there, trying to impress her with the horns, my body is doing the same thing with my cock. Look at this. I'm still hard after two days with her."

"Interesting. You may be on the right track."

"I think so. I've become complacent about my horns over the years, but I can't remember them ever having pushed to be free so forcefully before. With Grace, I have to struggle to keep them down and I'm not winning the fight."

"You might be right about it having to do with her. She's the one thing that's new in your life."

"If I need an answer for what's happening, then it works for me. That said, I don't think I need to find answers or make excuses. What I feel isn't just physical. She makes me happy and allows me to think anything is possible."

"Be careful, Hamish. Seriously, if we were back home I wouldn't be so worried. Down here in London, so far from family and friends, I don't know. I just don't have a good feeling about you being out in public with the very person who's making it difficult for you to keep them hidden."

"Don't worry, I have a plan. If I think it's going to get out of control, I'll leave. What a fucking pain in the ass." He didn't want to think about having to leave Grace at a moment's notice, not after how she felt this morning, waking up without him.

"I know it is."

"It's infuriating. I had to leave my woman all alone this morning because of the horns. I hated having to do that and now I have to consider doing it again."

"Don't worry. Those bones are nobody's business except your own and whomever you choose to tell about them. You'll know when it's right for her to see them."

"You're right, you're right, I'm just frustrated."

"Okay, keep cool because getting pissed won't do you any good. I'm going to leave you to relax and get those things down before you need to go out. Call me if you need anything. I'm staying down here for at least another week, possibly longer."

"You don't have to stay on my behalf. I know you can't stand spending time down here in London."

"No, work and stuff are keeping me here."

"Stuff?"

"Leave it, Hamish."

"Come on, Alain, I spill my guts about Grace and you listen, then you help me figure it out. Why won't you let me do the same for you?"

"Because I'm older than you, that's why."

"Bullshit!"

"Maybe, but for now it's the only answer I have for you."

"Go away, Alain."

"I'm going. Let me know how everything works out tonight."

"Possibly."

"Have fun tonight." His cousin laughed all the way to the front door. "Tell Grace I said 'hi'."

"Yeah, yeah. Go!"

As soon as the door clicked shut, Hamish put his empty mug on the coffee table and stretched out on the couch. With his arms folded beneath his head, he closed his eyes and settled on an image of Grace, sleeping curled on her side on his bed upstairs. He pictured himself walking in and snuggling up behind her, pulling her close to his body and sleeping.

Hamish slept peacefully, calmed by the pictures in his imagination, only to wake hours later feeling refreshed and on target for being late for his date.

"Shit!" Looking over at the clock on the mantle, he saw it was already six-thirty and dashed upstairs. As he took the stairs two at a time, he ran his hands through his hair at the side of his head and found just ridges. Those were okay, his hair would definitely keep these covered. He pulled his t-shirt over his head, dropped it on the bedroom floor and stripped off his sweatpants while turning on the shower.

In double quick time he showered, dressed, and in less than forty minutes, was making his way through the city center's evening traffic. The slight panic dissipated the minute he pulled up in front of Frivolity and saw Grace standing behind the front desk.

Stepping out of his car, he walked up to the locked door and tapped on the window. The smile that spread across her face as soon as she recognized him brought a sense of satisfaction and rightness to him. This was his woman. With her came a sense of contentment. She made him happy, was intelligent and enjoyed her work. And, wow, she had incredible cleavage.

When she walked toward him carrying her coat and purse, all he noticed was the dark line separating her breasts. The black dress she wore clung gently to her curves and showed her to be the feminine delight she truly was. Using a key, she unlocked the door, turned off a few lights and left others on before leaving.

Hamish didn't see any reason to deny himself the pleasure of pulling her close. He kissed both her cheeks and then softly on her lips. This wasn't a night about passion. It was much more than that. Tonight was the next step in claiming her as his mate. They knew each other intimately, now it was time to start letting her see what was inside him and having the opportunity to explore her further.

"You look beautiful." It was a simple compliment and very true.

"Thank you."

"Do you have a particular curry house in mind?"

"Have you ever been to Tamarind on Queen's Street, off Curzon?"

"No, you like it?"

"They have a great biryani."

"Sounds delicious to me." She had an addictive sparkle in her eyes that drew him in even further. Hamish didn't want it to end.

"It's not far, you want to walk there?"

"If it isn't too cold for you."

"No, the fresh air will be nice after spending all day in the shop." Slipping her arm through his, they started down Old Bond Street and took a casual stroll along Piccadilly. As expected, she felt immediately at ease in his company. It could've been awkward, their having spent a couple of days indulging themselves and their desires, but it wasn't.

She breathed in the cool night air and allowed her mind to clear and go where it wanted. There'd been a few times today when she'd caught her breath while thinking how quickly and deeply she was falling for him. She didn't feel any embarrassment or shame for having had wild and wicked sex with him so soon after meeting him. Nor would she dwell endlessly over her decision to hand her trust back to him. Hamish Buchanan was special. There was more of him for her to uncover.

As they headed for dinner, Grace knew that if he turned to her and suggested they go back to his or her place, she would. It was simple really, she'd do anything to be naked and under his control again.

However, when they weren't up on the top floor of his house playing their games, she'd like to spend time getting to know the man who made her feel so much. He made

her think, dream and wonder about a life with him and how far they could take what they had together. There was something in him that made her feel that whatever was happening between them was about more than sex. This was her chance to delve in and unearth all his secrets. She was looking forward to making her discoveries.

They were walking down the famous street at a comfortable pace. She was very aware of him and how they moved together like a couple and it felt good. Then he took the closeness she was experiencing a step further and excitement bubbled up.

"How was your day?" He asked, leaning down to hear her answer and looked genuinely interested. This was what he'd done that first day at his home. He'd put her at ease by talking with her about everyday things. She liked this about him.

"Great. I worked with a couple of customers and was able to get some new drawings finished."

"Tell me how it goes from your imagination to a hat atop someone's head?"

Her heart picked up the pace when he placed a hand over hers, holding her connected to him. It was a simple move to make, and yet with that minimal connection, she felt herself being emotionally drawn closer to him. This was definitely the man she enjoyed spending time with and no longer felt guilty about skipping work to be with him.

Chapter Nine

"These bloody horns! Alain, what can I do? I love Grace. Love her and can't bear the thought of her not being in my life, at my side, in my bed. Shit! This is the woman I think about having children with and I can't stand the thought of her walking away from me!"

Not since they were young and discovering girls had he seen Hamish so filled with anger over his lot in life. Alain watched as the other man paced his office while he speared his fingers through his hair. Frustration was obvious and Alain knew he had to do something before his cousin pulled his hair out. Then there'd be no chance of hiding the horns.

He turned away and looked out the office window, searching for something to say. This man was not merely his cousin, he was his best friend. He'd do anything for him. Unfortunately, Alain knew he was going to have to get tough and hand an ugly reality sandwich to him.

He might not know all that went on between them as a couple, but one thing was clear to him. Grace wasn't the problem, his cousin was.

"Hamish, have you two spent much time together out of that playroom of yours? How can you be so sure of what she means to you if all you know about her is discovered through is sex?" Of course, Alain knew Hamish wasn't merely sowing his wild oats. He'd understood from the beginning the little blonde had a hold on his cousin as no other woman had before. The night they met, he'd made a point to phone their grandmum Maisie and give her the latest development. The older woman had been excited to hear about what had happened at the charity event.

"Of course we have. We've been out on dates, talked about everything, well, almost everything. I freely admit there's been no shortage of time spent upstairs. What can I say, Alain, she does that to me. It's getting easier, but I still have to work to keep my horns from bursting out at the mere sight of her. The other night I walked into the room, it was completely dark and I couldn't see her, but I heard her breathing and out they came."

"Would it be so bad to tell her the truth? I met her that first morning when she wasn't at her best and a handful of times since, she seems to be an intelligent and decent woman who wouldn't be quick to judge another. Think about it, she's Scottish and must know about the circumstances surrounding your birth. The horns may not be such a shock."

"I know, and yet I couldn't stand it if she ever looked at me with disgust or fear. No, those are two things I never want to happen. Grace brings such an immense

amount of joy and love into my world. For my own good sense, I can't risk her ever going away."

Alain heard the pain in Hamish's statement and collapsed in the chair opposite his brooding cousin. He felt all the air leave his lungs in one whoosh. He was shocked. This was the first time he'd ever heard Hamish speak this way. His cousin had always faced the world head on and won every time. The only weakness he knew the man held was in regards to his mum and what she'd suffered.

Catriona's horrible death had been a terrible price for a baby to pay, and then being infected by the animals that had killed her only added to the pain. However, there was something more to the man's true character than the tragedy surrounding his birth. He knew Hamish blamed his horns for his father's suicide. Maybe this had left a larger mark on his cousin than any of them ever realized.

With Maisie at the helm, they'd all surrounded him, giving the boy love and a strong sense of self-respect. Even through all this time, none of the doctors and nurses who helped save him and cared so much for him had ever revealed his secret. With so much support around him, Alain never considered that Hamish might suffer from insecurity. It surprised him. His cousin was always a pillar of strength, a true leader, sure of himself. He always knew where he was headed and didn't care what others outside the family thought.

Until now. Until Grace.

Because emotions were running close to the surface, Alain began with a softer approach than he'd planned a few moments ago.

"Talk to her. You understand people and can see beneath the public veneer they wear better than anyone else. Do you truly believe she'd shun you?"

"No, I don't think she would. She's a strong, smart woman, a survivor. There isn't a shallow or cruel bone in her body. All the same, I'm not sure I can risk losing her because of these things." Hamish raised his hands and rubbed them over the boned ridges lying beneath his hair.

The past couple of months had been difficult trying to keep them hidden from his lover. That said, he was glad for every second he had with Grace and wouldn't trade them for anything. He had memories of her, their time together and would always hold them close, no matter what. Although, he admitted to himself that he'd much rather hold on to her than recollections of their time together.

"Hamish, this isn't you. You're a great man, confident, full of power and self-assurance. I look up to you because at all times you know what you want and have no problems taking hold of it with both hands. Get off your ass and go over there. Talk to her!"

"I've already told her I'll be there later. Today's her big day. She's going to receive a royal warra —"

"Fuck all that, Hamish! Get in your car and go over there now. This is the woman you love, right?" Hamish was surprised the usually calm and lighthearted man acting so irritated with him, he could only nod and wait to see what happened next.

"Go, support her, be there for her, show her she means something to you outside of that dark bedroom of yours, and for fuck's sake, talk to her!"

"Alain, are you shouting at me?"

"Yes, I am! This man sitting here, willing to accept the fact that he can't reach out for what he knows will make him happy, is not my cousin."

Silence followed the unusual burst of irritation. He listened to what his cousin said and quickly discovered that Alain was right. This wasn't how he conducted himself in things that mattered in his life. He'd always been the type of man to step forward and work, fight for what he wanted. And he knew that if he was to be happy, he needed Grace in his life. There was no other way around it. To get his woman, he had to take a chance, open up and tell her everything.

Abruptly he stood, stepped forward and slapped a friendly hand on his cousin's shoulder. "You're right, I'll see you later." Without another word, he strode from the room, down the stairs and out the front door.

Once he was in his car and heading to Frivolity, Hamish took the time to think through what he wanted to say to Grace and how to say it. Telling his lover he had the horns of a ram could be a bit shocking and so it had to be done just right.

Suddenly Hamish realized he was missing something significant and pulled over at the next set of shops. He needed flowers. This was a big day for her, huge, and she should have something special to mark the occasion. Besides, she seemed to have liked the other bouquets he picked out and they might help ease the way for his revelation. He walked a short bit down the road looking for a florist, but couldn't find one.

This wasn't good. He must have some posies to give her. Seeing a small card shop, he nipped inside and asked the shopkeeper if she knew of a florist nearby. Thankfully, the woman thought there was a nice one a few streets away. He dashed over and bought a beautiful spray of white peonies with a single thistle in the center to remind Grace of their home.

Back in the car, he checked the clock and found he had just over four hours before the event would officially begin. Good. If she was too busy to talk, he'd stay around to offer her any help, watch the ceremony and they'd talk later. The presentation of a royal warrant was a big deal, one Grace had worked very hard for, and he wanted to be there to support and celebrate her success.

Old Bond Street was already blocked off in preparation for the upcoming royal event. Instead of hassling with driving up and down surrounding side roads looking for a place to park, he pulled into the alley and parked there. As was his habit, he took a moment to run his fingers through his hair and check the ridges to make sure his horns weren't at the point of pushing through. They were there, as they always were

whenever he thought of Grace or was in her presence, although not more than an inch or so.

Confident he was okay, he spent some time to find the calm place inside himself, anything to help stave off the horns' appearance before he had a chance to tell her anything. Taking a couple of deep breaths, he soon felt steady and stepped out of the car. After he collected the flowers from the back seat, he pressed a button on the key fob to lock it and turned to head down the alley. As he walked past the back door, he noticed it stood ajar.

It wasn't like Grace to leave it open, but he guessed it was a busy day for them, so didn't think anything more about it. He smiled to himself and decided to make use of the shortcut. Maybe he'd be able to miss seeing the store manager, Aimee. The woman was a saucy handful and didn't fail to notice even the smallest thing. The other day she'd phoned Grace's mobile and when he picked it up because his lover had been tied to the spreader bars at the time, the woman demanded he let her boss up for air and send her back to the shop. He still had to laugh over the conversation. There was no doubt in his mind that he'd walk a mile rather than face Aimee when he wasn't in top form.

Stepping into the back hallway, Hamish turned and shut the store's door behind him. There were the usual sounds of bustling activity and nervous laughter coming down the long hallway from the front. Grace had a great group of women who worked for her. They effortlessly and enthusiastically sold her hats to everyone from high society mavens to tourists who walked in on a whim. They made sure the right chapeau for the woman and event left the shop for total satisfaction.

From what he could tell, it sounded like everything was going well, although he hadn't heard her voice in the mix. Hamish decided to check her office first, make sure she wasn't working at her desk before he braved the estrogen overload zone.

With a knuckle rap for warning, he turned the knob and walked into the room. The smile he was ready to offer his lover never fully bloomed and her name froze on the tip of his tongue.

Instead of seeing his sexy and composed Grace sitting sedately behind her desk, sipping a cup of tea, he found her standing in front of a man holding a knife pressed against her throat. Gagged and hands behind her back, his heart and mind saw her looking at him with fear in her eyes.

Seeing that terror was all it took for Hamish to let his rigid control go.

Dropping the flowers on the floor, he shot forward without a thought of anything other than alleviating her fright. He heard himself growling like an animal as he rushed the man. He didn't care because he felt like an enraged beast ready to protect his mate at any cost.

"Stay where you are or I'll kill her!"

The hand holding the knife shook wildly when he shouted, except Hamish took no notice of his words. There was a weapon pressed against his woman's neck, that's all

that mattered. He kept moving forward, not caring when he felt his horns burst from his temples.

"What the – stay back!"

"A-mis!"

Through the haze of anger, he noticed she'd already been harmed. There were red scratches marking her neck that stood out like large slashes against her soft skin.

Grace was hurt!

"Aagh!"

In a flash the horns had fully grown, curling along each side of his head. There was no thought spared to the discomfort or concern he felt at their appearance. All he could think of was rescuing his woman. He leaped forward, took the hand holding the knife and broke it with a quick hard twist. The weapon clattered to the floor as the intruder howled in pain. The man immediately released his hold on Grace and sank to his knees.

"You hurt me!" He screamed with pain.

"You *hurt* her! I'll kill –" Rage consumed him. Hamish was blind to everything except the need to destroy the man who'd dared harm his woman.

"A-mis! Ooo!"

Grace stepped up and put her head against his arm. He could tell she was using it to dislodge the gag, but he couldn't think beyond obliterating the other man.

"He scared you, hurt –"

"Ooo!" She worked harder and freed her mouth. "No, Hamish, don't! Please, my love, please calm down. Let's call the police so they can handle it. Listen to me, please! He's crazy out of his mind. It wasn't even me he was after. He wanted to disrupt the countess's appearance today. Please, Hamish. Look at me. It's okay, I'm all right."

He knew she stood beside him, touching him, and yet Hamish still found it hard to focus on what she was saying. This man dared to harm the woman he loved. He would not, could not, stand by and let him live. Then he felt it. Her lips pressed against his arm while she quietly pleaded with him to stop.

Looking down at her, he knew there was nothing else he could do other than ease her distress. He had to pull himself back together for her.

"Shhh, it's all right, Grace, shhh, I won't hurt him. Now turn around, I want to untie your hands. Then we'll secure him for the authorities. Okay?"

She looked up at him closely and, after a long minute, found whatever she'd been looking for, most likely his sanity, before turning her back to him. Once her hands were free, she twisted back to face him and wrapped her arms around him, holding him closer than she ever had before. He closed his eyes and felt her love surround him.

After a short period of time, Hamish realized he stood before her with his horns fully revealed. He moved his head to look at her closely and saw no signs of horror or disgust with his appearance. After a long minute, he closed his eyes again and real joy sank in, filling him up. The peace he finally found rushed through him, settling in the

place where his heart and soul had tensely waited to see if she accepted him and his altered appearance.

In his mind, there was no question that her heart was bonded to his. Nothing would ever separate them. He understood his life with this woman in his arms was not only possible, but was here, now.

Eventually she stepped away to tie the other man's hands together and immediately turned back to him.

"Why didn't you tell me?" She asked earnestly, stroking his horns once she was back in his arms. He needed her there so he could help alleviate the terror she'd just endured, as well as the one he suffered in seeing it happen. Grace could have been lost to him forever and she never would've known how much she meant to him. There were no excuses. He had to be honest and tell her everything without any further delays.

"Besides coming to share your big day with you, I came here to tell you everything. I had to see if there was a future for us." He stood there basking in the adoring attention she was paying his boned protrusions. No one had ever touched the most unique part of him with love and lust in their eyes. His cock stretched out for similar attention as his horns were receiving.

"Stupid man," she mumbled without truly meaning it or moving away from his embrace.

"How was I supposed to know—"

"Don't go any further, Hamish Buchanan. You're on the way to pissing me off even more than you already have. Now, we should call the police. I want this man out of here, then we can get on with our day."

This was what he loved about her. She wouldn't wallow in the horror of what had just happened. Instead she pushed through the bad and stepped back on the road moving forward.

"Not with these things at full curl. Believe me, I hate to say this because I'm enjoying it very much, but you have to stop stroking them. Baby, your touch on these boned protrusions goes straight to my cock and it's already hard, eager to come out and impress you with its prowess as well."

"Is this why you've kept our loving in the dark? Or my hands tied?"

"Yes, although I think it would be better if we discussed this later when we're alone."

Grace used her grip on his horns to pull his head down and kiss his tempting lips. "Fine, but we aren't finished talking about this."

Neither of them noticed the door being quietly closed or the pleased look on Aimee's face. She always knew there was something very special about that man and as far as she was concerned, he was perfect for her boss.

* * * * *

Later that evening, once all the drama and celebrations were finished, they took time for themselves. After being held hostage at knifepoint, seeing her beau with a full set of ram horns and then receiving a royal warrant with all the pomp and circumstance that goes with it, Grace needed this time for just the two of them.

They sat on the couch, his arm around her shoulders and her hand resting on his thigh, while they sipped champagne before a fire. Soon they'd retire upstairs to the big, beautiful bed and indulge their passions without secrets, in full light, face-to-face. But right now, it was all about them, two people facing a lifetime together, without any secrets holding their love in jeopardy.

For a time they sat comfortably in the silence, lost in their own thoughts until Grace quietly opened the one subject that hadn't been addressed.

"How did it happen?"

Hamish knew what she was asking, and for the first time ever, he spoke to someone about his curse.

"The night my mum was attacked in a field is always described to me as horrific. To this day, anyone who saw her after the flock had assaulted her still finds it difficult to look me in the eye. They say she'd fallen forward with her arms wrapped around her belly, trying to protect me while the animals kicked and stomped on her. They've never determined exactly what happened, but something did, and during the attack some of the ram's blood found its way into hers and then mine."

Hamish took a sip from his glass and looked down at Grace. He was surprised he was able to talk so easily about what happened that night to his mum. The subject was rarely discussed by him without immense sorrow for what he lost engulfing him. Being able to do this proved this woman was his other half and belonged with him. She gave him a sense of peace like none other. He wanted to share himself with her.

"The machines keeping my mum alive long enough to better the odds of my survival. In the end, they sealed my fate by searing the genes of the ram in with my own. From birth it was there. As a baby, I'd cry or laugh and little horns would burst through. Inevitably, as I grew older, I was better able to control my emotions and their appearances. However, they still come out whenever I experience the intense emotions. If seriously angered or, um, really turned on, there's little I can do to keep them locked inside. I had some control over their appearance, then you came along and thirty years of having power over them was gone. I swear they come out to impress you."

Looking down at her hand on his lap, he felt warm contentment and had to smile. There was no big upheaval running through him right now. The horns were out because she was there and he wanted her fiercely. Finally, he no longer had to fight their natural inclination to be free, especially in her presence.

"It's amazing the medical staff never said a thing."

"In the beginning I'm sure it was because they didn't think I'd survive and didn't want to cause the family more distress. Then, when I began to thrive, I think they were simply too shocked by my horns to do or say anything. I've been told the group who were with my mum and me from the start were very protective of us by the end, and then me as I grew. They are a part of my family now."

"How many people know?"

"All the Buchanans, the medical personnel who took care of us and you."

"It's so amazing the press doesn't know about this and reported on it. You're big news."

"I can't say it wouldn't bother me if it did. As long as you're with me, I think I could handle anything."

"Well, I'm not going anywhere, so no need to think about it. What about your father and his family? You haven't mentioned him at all. Do they know?"

"Irving Cunningham, a handsome lad who hadn't been able to find his maturity before becoming a father. Apparently he couldn't handle his guilt in not leaving the pub with my mum that Valentine's night. Maisie said he was eaten up with it before I was even born. Despite their being engaged to be married, he deferred to her in all the important decisions to be made regarding Catriona's and my health. Once she died, he was inconsolable and when it was decided I could leave, I went home with Gran. It was almost four months before he made an effort to come over to see me. Unfortunately, what he found was a monster for a child rather than merely a reminder of his beloved fiancée."

"Don't ever use that term or any other derogatory name to describe yourself. Honestly, Hamish, you don't want to make me angry."

"I see, lass, and I'll not speak poorly of my horns again."

"Good, now go on telling me about your dad."

"Not a dad, Grace, a father. After he saw me for the first time, he took a pistol, went out to the field where Catriona was attacked and killed himself." It was never easy to talk about his mum and how much he lost by not having her in his life, but he didn't feel any connection with his father other than the most basic. As far as he was concerned, Irving had chosen his own fate.

Grace looked up at him with tears in her eyes. If it were possible, his heart opened even wider and Hamish gladly welcomed her inside for infinity and beyond.

"I'm sorry."

"Shhh, baby, it's all right. I'm healthy and loved, mentally sane, or at least I was until I saw you. All my control fled forever the moment you turned around and asked me to act like I was interested in you."

He was thrilled to see the small smile trying to make its way across her lips. The need to hold her close overwhelmed him. Taking her glass and his, Hamish set them on

the table behind the couch and pulled her onto his lap, bringing them even closer together.

"Do they hurt?" She whispered, pulling on the horns to bring him close, until their lips pressed softly against each other.

"No more than a brief headache, gone and forgotten the minute they're out. It's been harder to keep them in when I've been with you." Swapping their positions left her lying on her back on the sofa. He was stretched out atop her and loved being able to look at her while his body made it clear how much he wanted her.

"You know, they're very sexy," Grace said while lightly stroking his horns. She snagged his lower lip between her teeth, giving it a good tug before letting go.

"Really?" he queried on a deep aroused growl. Feeling her hands holding and touching his horns, using them to pull him to her, was very erotic.

"Oh yes, very sexy," she told him, bringing her legs up to wrap around his hips. "No more hiding in the dark, lover, I want to see you as you love me." Arching her back a small bit brought her breasts up against his chest. Her hard nipples stabbed into his chest, tempting him. "Do you want to play with me, horny man?"

Chapter Ten

“Horny Man?” Hamish snorted with humor and answered by pressing his lips more firmly against hers. His cock was hard, and with each second that ticked by, each stroke her hands made over his horns, it grew thicker, longer and hungrier for her. This much happiness, love and passion far surpassed anything he’d dreamed of and it was all because of a beautiful impassioned lass named Grace Strachan.

Not able to wait any longer before he had her, he stood up with her arms wrapped around his neck and started to make their way to his bedroom. His hands cupped her delectable ass as he carried her up the staircase to the top floor. He wanted to do what he’d never done before, take his mate in the light.

Walking into the room, he used his elbow to flick the main switch, bringing all the lights on full. He made it to the center of the room before he released his hold on her backside. It took some coaxing, but once her legs let go of his hips and she stood on her own, he stepped back to lean against the wall and watch her. Folding his arms over his chest, he patiently waited to see if she remembered anything of their time spent up here over the past months together.

Of course, he wasn’t disappointed. Before he’d had a chance to do more than sweep her body with his gaze, Grace had already started working on the buttons lining the front of her blouse. He was in heaven because he’d found such bliss in her presence. It was possible some people would think he didn’t deserve her. He did though and that was all that mattered. No, what really mattered was that he was going to make them both happy and keep her.

A slow seductive striptease wasn’t in the cards for her tonight and he was pleased. As far as he was concerned, the sooner she was naked, the better life would be for them both. Under his unblinking gaze, she quickly dispensed with her top and skirt. All that remained was an enticing picture of her in a red lace, demi-cup bra and matching g-string, sheer black stockings and black patent leather Mary Jane shoes with naughty four-inch heels.

“Sweetheart, those shoes and stockings stay on. I can’t believe you had all this on under your clothes today. You look very erotic, total temptation. If I’d known about this, we may have had a longer delay calling the police than it took for my horns to go down.” Unable to stop himself, he started unbuttoning his own dress shirt, beginning with the cuffs. There was no way he could remain still with her looking lush and sexy before him.

“I’m glad you like them. This morning I saw the lingerie in a shop window. Without thinking twice, I walked in and bought them, knowing you’d enjoy seeing them later, especially with the shoes.” Reaching back, she unhooked her bra and

released her large breasts. His eyes caught on the mounds jiggling with freedom. He heard her giggle.

"And I see I was right." There was no doubt what she did to him. He was as hard as a rock and eager to start with his plans for their first time loving in full light. What he'd thought about most often was watching her come as his mouth worked over her clit and pussy. Yes, that was at the top of his long list of wants with and from her.

Grace stood before him in all her glory. Except for the stockings and shoes, she was naked. This drew his attention straight to her plump, bare pussy and his cock pulsed for immediate entrance into the heated channel. She folded her hands behind her back just the way he liked. It was simple, he enjoyed this position because it thrust her breasts even further forward. Her pretty pink nipples were hard, tight points. His tongue swiped across his lips, ready to taste them, feel the tender pebbles trapped between his lips while he suckled. He looked back down at her pussy as his hand drifted over the bulge in his pants.

Oh yes, to finally slip down between her thighs and not have to worry about his horns touching her tender flesh, all so he could eat up the honey collecting in her sweet slit. That was going to be the perfect place to start this next stage in their life together.

Barefoot and still wearing his fine suit trousers and partially unbuttoned shirt, he stepped forward and rested his chest against her softer one. He wrapped his arms around her and linked his hands with hers, bringing them down to rest at her side.

"I love you, Grace, very much," he whispered against her lips, looking into her lovely gray eyes.

"I love you, Hamish Buchanan, everything about you," she told him while holding his golden gaze, full of fire and joy.

With lustful purpose clearly evident, he walked them over to the corner of the room where the swing dangled decadently from the ceiling. Reaching out, he plucked at her nipples, simply because he couldn't deny himself any longer.

"Oh Hamish, harder."

"Like this?" Hamish stepped in until his hard-on nudged her pussy. Putting one arm behind her back, he bent over and took one tip between his teeth, then gently ground the stiff point. After a moment of tender torment, he started to suck, soothing the tortured nipple only to return and softly chew the flesh again. The other breast wasn't ignored as he strummed his thumb over the excited tip. He pinched it hard, pulled, twisted and rolled until she moaned, and wrapped a leg up high on his hip to help bring him even closer to her.

"Yes! Yes, harder! Uhhh, oh yes!" She thrust her chest out even further by bending her back and giving him more breast to toy with, thereby receiving even more from him. Instead of feasting on the mound of flesh, he pulled her back up straight and flicked at her nipples with his fingers, teasing them endlessly.

Eventually he helped settle her beautiful form into the swing with the strips of leather positioned to resemble a chair. Next, he secured her arms up along two straps,

giving her something to hold on to. He was being methodical, taking the time to bring his urges back under control for when he finally had her pussy dancing before his mouth. The last step was to hook the heels of her shoes on the stirrups and secure her ankles to the straps before stepping back in order to see all of her. Her legs were spread open and tempted him to come forward and feast on her bald pussy.

Before he could dabble there at the fount of her cunt as he wanted, he stepped over to the wall and used the lever to raise her form. When she was suspended at the height necessary for what he planned to do, Hamish carefully secured the swing and walked back to stand between her legs. Now his mouth was level with her slit and his eyes traveled up her body to meet hers.

He smoothed his hands over her parted limbs. From the silk stockings to her soft flesh, he used his thumbs to awaken the taut skin leading to her plump and pink lower lips.

"Mmmm," he swiped out a tongue, tracing it along her slit. "Can you see, sweetheart? I don't ever want you to think you're missing something important." He turned the words she'd spoken on their first night together back to her.

"Oh Hamish, I see you...uhhh."

Not able to wait any longer before tasting paradise, he slipped his tongue into her heated depths and pulled it out with the taste of her in his mouth. Her essence was perfect. It teased his taste buds like fine champagne.

"Delicious." He dragged out the word as he whispered praise into her pussy.

He slid a hand up and over her mound, leaving his thumb in the position to nudge her clit free. When the hard kernel was exposed, he pressed down and rubbed the digit over the bundle, wringing screams of pleasure from his mate. Her reaction brought him even more unimagined joy. This was heaven.

"Yes!"

Pulling his tongue free, he savored her honey and immediately went right back in for more. "You're a tasty treat, my sweet lass." She was close to coming. At least the clenching of her pussy around his tongue suggested that she was. "One I'll never get enough of."

"Ha-mish!"

"Uh-hum."

"Please, please..."

Using his pinching grip on her nub, he gently rocked her suspended body on and off his thrusting tongue. Sometimes his nose nudged the treasure trapped between his fingers, bringing more groans of passion from her lips.

"Come in my mouth, baby." He'd fantasized this exact experience so often he couldn't believe it was really happening. Now that it was here and not a dream, he wanted it all. Not just to feel and hear her fall apart around him, but to see her splinter on his mouth. He'd needed to see the way her gray eyes softened before her lids

lowered. See how her lips parted while panting with pleasure. To know by his own sight that her breasts jostled beautifully with her every breath and from her body's soft landing against his face.

Taking her this way was so personal. It was bliss in motion. This experience was what he'd desired, and on the next curling of his tongue against her sugared walls, she climaxed around his tongue.

Quickly, he stabbed in and out of her pulsating grip, loving how she looked swimming in the pools of their passion. He'd missed this pleasure when they loved in darkness, and now he never would again.

When he felt her body go lax, Hamish stepped back and took in the entire picture with his lover at the center. She was splayed and satisfied, divine in her satisfied state.

"You are stunning." He couldn't stop his hand from covering his trouser-covered hard cock, squeezing it in a bid to ease his own needs. Silently, he assured himself he'd soon dip into her warmth again, unfortunately that wasn't enough to relieve the urgency rising in him. Without any further delays, he needed them to be as intimately connected as they could be.

Moving to the wall, he used the lever to carefully lower the swing with his woman in it. After again securing the straps, he went over and helped release Grace until he held her in his arms. Kissing her softly, she managed to tell him what she wanted.

"Take me, lover. Please put your marvelous cock inside my pussy and take me."

"I will, but tonight is all about firsts. I want to love you on a bed, unlike any other time we've been there before."

She reached up and took hold of his horns, pulling his head down.

"Now, Hamish, don't make me wait any longer."

He walked over to the bed and gently lowered her to the soft sheets. The sight she presented was one he would hold forever. Her voluptuous form satiated from coming and ripe for more. Unable to tear his gaze from her, he gave her something he believed she wanted. He slowed things down while he took the time to look and be looked at by his lover.

When it finally felt right, he grasped hold of one of her beautiful legs and brought it up to rest on his shoulder. While watching her bare mound, he realized how much he wanted to open his pants and plunge his cock into her deepest depths. Another time. Tonight he wanted to go slow, take pleasure in the sensual sight she presented, and before he lost himself inside her body.

"You're such a gorgeous woman with a bald pussy. You should know I'll never get enough of your breasts. I want to latch onto them and never let go." He gave her his honesty. Unable to shake his awe over her curvaceous form, Hamish had to let her know exactly what she did to him, how she made him feel when he looked at her, touched her.

Easing her shoe off, he dropped it behind him, reached down and used his fingertips to gently work her stocking down over her thigh. He liked how she placed her hands on the bed behind her to hold herself upright so she could watch him, although it didn't last long. She gasped loudly and fell back when he leaned down and took a nibbling bite from her uncovered inner knee. Using his tongue, he followed the rest of the stocking down to her ankle before he pulled it off, dropped it over his shoulder and gnawed on her instep.

"Hamish!" He liked hearing his name on a gasp from her. He threw his head back and tossed his wild mane of hair, feeling freedom fill him. He wanted to shout at the top of his lungs. Shout for her and the unconditional pleasure they shared.

"You're such a tasty morsel to feast upon," he whispered before moving on to enjoy her other leg until she was splayed before him. Having her naked, wet and ready for his possession was what he wanted.

"I love it when you strip for me, are naked for me. Now I'm going to offer you the same thing."

Again Grace braced herself on her elbows, making it clear she wanted to see what he did next and he didn't want to disappoint her.

After he finished unbuttoning his shirt, he pulled it off and dropped it down at his side. Keeping his gaze locked to hers, he unfastened and slowly unzipped his trousers. Hungry and eager for her, his cock thrust out from his open placket.

"You're a very handsome man, Hamish Buchanan. And you know the superior piece of flesh resting between your legs is stunning. A perfect fit for me." She bent her legs, pulled her gaze from his rod and looked him in the eye. "Stripping for me is delightful, but right now I need you inside me."

He pushed his pants down and stepped out of them. At the end of the bed, he opened the cabinet and pulled out a condom. Hamish tore the package open, pulled out a rubber and smoothed it over his raging hard-on. As he set his knee on the bed to crawl between her legs, Grace lay down and held her arms out, offering him the perfect place to settle into.

"I'm trying to go slow, to enjoy this moment to the fullest."

"There's no need, lover, we have forever to share our love for each other. Right now you have a very serious problem. I'm hungry for you and your cock. You need to put out this burning desire you've created by thrusting that quality shaft inside me and take me as only you can. Otherwise, I'm taking you."

"Tough choice. Now, while I want you riding me, tonight I have a plan, so..." In one stroke he thrust inside her until he bottomed out.

"Uhhh! Ha-amish!"

Holding himself on his elbows allowed him to see her face, feel her tight breasts drag against his chest as he fucked in and out of her slick clasp. He watched her eyes dilate and become all big, black pupils. Her lips opened as she panted, moaned, even groaned his name, and he thrived on driving each and every one from her mouth.

"Here, baby girl, is this what you like? A cock driving hard in and out of you?"

"Yes! Uhhh! No! No, your, your, your cock!"

"Oh, shit!" It was such an incredible sight watching her wallow in his loving. He lost it when she reached up, grasped hold of his ram horns and pulled his head down until a mere breath separated their lips.

It was an unmatched feeling to face her while they loved. To feel her breath on his face and have her gaze connected with his and her hands on his horns. This was unlike anything he'd expected and never wanted it to end. She was free to touch him, all of him and she did with passion. Their loving was always beautiful, but it became utterly erotic when she reached out and held onto the one thing that was so much a part of him—his horns.

Until Grace touched, no, stroked them as she would his cock, he hadn't realized how big a part they played in his sexual desire. With each pass of her hands over the bones or when she gripped them, his rod swelled further with need and his breath caught in the back of his throat. Her gentle hands on his hard horns led the charge of intense feelings rushing through him in his quest for climax.

"Ha-a-m..." He watched her eyes widen before they lost focus when she arrived on the precipice of an orgasm. Her pussy started to rhythmically pulsate around his plunging rod. Over and over again, her moist channel gripped at him, tried to pull him in deeper and keep him there. It was difficult for him to plow his thick length through the tight path, although he kept trying. Thrusting through the hold to reach his part of heaven found in the furthest reaches of his mate.

"Do you hear that, baby? Do you? That's what a tight, lush, all woman sounds like. My woman."

"Ha-a-mish!" With a cry, she shattered around his cock.

Grace kept screaming as her cunt pulled his rod in and beat a rhythm all its own against it. She fiercely clenched him and it took great effort for him to pull out before he plunged in again. Watching her climax had his come boiling in his balls, eager to be released.

He rose up on his knees and kept his head down low enough so she could maintain her hold on his horns. The feel of her soft delicate hands on the hard bone of his curling protrusions seemed to entice her further and brought out the beast in him.

"Sorry, baby. Sorry." With all his weight and strength behind him, he lifted her hips and plowed her depths. Over and over again. Harder, faster, he thrust his thick rod into her wet slit. He watched his cock move in and out of her gentle clasp. Her lower folds were spread wide to accommodate his girth. Hamish couldn't move his eyes away from the sight of his rough flesh being gripped by her soft sensuous body.

Grunting with the effort to give every bit of himself to her and in return feel all the pleasure he knew was possible between them, kept him pushing and striving for release.

"Hamish! Hamish!"

Looking up, he paused at her breasts and watched as they bounced wildly with his untamed fucking. His eyes trailed up further, caught her gray gaze and was lost. Her grip on his horns was firm and he realized there was no way she was going to let go, *ever*.

"Grace!" With his shout, cum was propelled down his hard rod, blasting against the end of his condom. He kept fucking her as if he was a machine. There was no way he would ever stop showing his love for this woman with his body.

In time, when he had no more strength left, he rolled to his side, taking her with him. He wanted them to remain connected this way forever. Hamish kissed her gently, lovingly, with his heart and soul opened to Grace.

"Oh lass, did I hurt you?" When a small bit of common sense finally returned to his thought process, he worried he'd harmed her when it felt as if the animal in him was taking his mate.

"No, never. You love me as thoroughly as I want and need." She kissed him softly, with her eyes wide opened, all while maintaining a firm hold on his horns. "Hamish? I truly love your horns."

* * * * *

"Sweetheart, I still don't think I can leave the house yet."

She shouldn't find it funny, but there was no discontent present in his claim. In fact, he sounded rather pleased with his present predicament and had no problem letting her know it.

"It's been almost two weeks since you've been out in daylight, are you all right?" Grace asked with concern.

"Yup, I'm fine. You should know that this is all your fault." There was a wicked grin on his face as he spoke.

"My fault?" The frown wasn't real. She knew exactly where this conversation was leading.

"Oh, yes! I'm sure if you'd fuck me for at least a month of nights and days without stopping, then I imagine I'd pass out from exhaustion. Once I'm out, then you could stuff me in the back of the car and drive me up to Scotland. We can go to my estate, have as much sex as we want, whenever or wherever we want. I won't have to worry about my horns being seen or anything like that if we're there."

One of their favorite ways to spend time together was sharing a tub full of bubble bath and they were indulging themselves. Regardless of being completely sleep-deprived and recently satisfied, she found it interesting that his horns were still at full curl and his rod was ready for more. He'd have to wait, because despite how he was approaching it, this was a serious conversation.

"Hamish, I need to work. There isn't anyone else I can hand the business over to. It's all up to me and I want to keep it that way. Did you know I haven't sat down at the

drawing board to do any design work in ages? I have commitments to others to fulfill, special orders to work on, and a business to run."

"I know, you're very good at it. Maybe if you moved your work things here, then we could always be close enough for a couple of quickies. That might make it all right until you're finished for the day."

"An inspiring idea, although I might have a problem with it. The more you have your way with me, the less inclined you'll be to need it constantly. And not far from that point is your not needing me at all." While her tone suggested she was merely teasing him, it was still a sad thought for her to have. She loved his wanting her so fiercely and constantly and didn't want it diminish one bit. Even after he'd thoroughly had his wicked way with her, he was almost always hard and ready for more.

Despite this rolling through her mind, when she looked over at him, she couldn't help but smile with happiness. The big powerful man, known for his cool reserved presence in the business world, had tiny white bubbles decorating his horns where she'd been holding them while riding him a few minutes earlier.

"Sweetheart, I don't think the day will ever come when I don't want you as much, if not more, than I want my next breath. We make beautiful love together and will make fabulous babies as well. Trust me, there's no one else for me."

Going with the water's flow, she eased her way over to straddle him again. Teasing her pussy over his hard-on, she took hold of his horns, tilted his head back and moved her lips until she was almost touching his.

"Hamish, my love, I was wondering..."

"Yes, lass? Could you shift a little further this way and slip your sweet cunt over my rod. Ahhh, yes, right there."

"I'm an old-fashioned girl at heart and you keep mentioning children..." Gravity took over and her pussy slowly slipped down, accepting his cock. No matter how many times she had him, he still managed to steal her breath when he entered her. It was a pleasure to have him inside her, although it took a few seconds to get used to his possession.

"Mmm, yes, lots of kids. You'll look incredible swollen with our babies. I wonder how much larger your breasts will get? You know I adore these delightful mounds. By the way, have you realized I'm not wearing a condom?"

She moved up and then settled back down over him, giving her chest an extra shake to make sure she had his full attention. He groaned and reached out to put his hands on her hips in order to take over their movement, except she wasn't ready to do this. Not quite yet.

"Yes, I do, and you feel delicious bare inside me."

"You feel pretty damn good as well. You should know I have a hunkering for a little cherub with white blonde curls to share a tea party with or a lad with your feistiness to kick a football around with. Yes, babies, lots of babies."

"Hamish?"

"Hmmm." He leaned up and took one of her nipples in his mouth. The pressure to move and take over their loving increased until she could hardly remember what she'd been trying to say.

"I want to go home."

"What? What do you mean?" Water splashed all over the floor when he rushed to sit up in the full tub.

"I want to go back to Scotland. That's home. I don't live here in London. This isn't where I want to raise a family or anything else. This is the longest I've ever stayed down here and I'm going crazy. I like to visit this city, the ladies in the shop, but not to live here. Let's leave tonight. We can be up to my place in Edinburgh around dawn if we don't stop except for gas."

"Oh, sweetheart, I'm sorry for not realizing you needed to escape the city as much as I do. I've remained here because you were here. We'll head north and get on with our lives." He held her close and pressed a sweet kiss on her lips. "What do you think about my finding a private creative space for you to work in, would you then move to my place up in the Highlands? I know you need to visit all your shops, work endless hours, but can my estate be the place you call home? I'm serious, you are my life and I want to be there with you."

"Hamish, by any chance are you asking me to marry you?"

"Of course I am! You just told me you're old-fashioned, well, so am I. You're my heart, my forever. Now give me your answer."

"Yes!"

"Good. Now, come here and let's make some headway on starting our family."

"Hmmm, good idea, my horny man."

Chapter Eleven

The Highlands, Scotland

Unlike his place in London, Hamish's house in the Highlands was a large, grand old castle that had been perfectly preserved and brought gently into contemporary times. The stone made it appear solid, timeless, an unmovable presence. Grace hadn't doubted that this was the type of place he'd choose to live in, although it was even more impressive than she'd imagined. Silly, really, she knew firsthand that the man didn't do anything by half measures.

His estate was huge, wild and suited him perfectly. After seeing him in this environment, she couldn't picture him anywhere else. The original structure was an Edwardian hunting lodge, built by some remote member of the royal family. It had been added to many times since then and yet had managed to maintain its charm.

There were outbuildings, guest and gatehouses. She thought the mixture of styles and eras blended well, but it was the follies placed randomly throughout the grounds that she loved. There were three of them, one on the hill overlooking her office. Every time she left, she sought it out and wondered about the man who had it built. It intrigued her how in times past follies were usually illegal and still built as a tangible expression of a man's love for his lady.

Maybe she should change things around for womankind and have one built for her man. Laughing out loud and not caring if anyone heard her, she continued trying to find her way around the main house. With all the wings and floors, the place was a true maze.

There it was, the painting of a huge deer and his many pointed antlers. It was a piece she associated with being near Hamish's office. Turning the corner, she saw a large window at the end of the hallway with a beautiful dark green panel pulled to the side and a door on the right. She was sure this was his office, but just in case she was wrong, Grace quietly opened the door and peeked in. The man she was looking for stood at the window, looking down the valley, over the loch toward Ben Hope in the distance.

The smile on her face grew when she saw the state of his horns. There was no doubt where his mind had wandered. It didn't matter what he'd been looking at because it was apparent his thoughts happened to have landed the same place hers had.

Trying to surprise him, she walked as quietly as she could, then wrapped her arms around him and held him close. There were no words necessary between them. She was where she wanted to be and when his hands came up to hold hers, press them closer to his chest, Grace knew her decision to come home early had been the right one.

Resting her forehead against his back, she closed her eyes and breathed in his scent. Clean, crisp and cool, that was her man and she loved to shake him up. Today she had the perfect means to do it to.

Without any warning or hinted at, she merely slipped her hand beneath his kilt and took hold of his hard-on. The fierce rod gave a mighty twitch in her grip and she smiled with delight. She tightened her clasp, and started to stroke up and down the sturdy length. The surprise for him was that she hadn't taken off her cashmere gloves and the softer-than-air fiber had to be driving him wild.

The way in which he moaned with pleasure told her she was right. His steely control would soon be on the rocks if she had anything to say about it. Holding his cock firmly in her soft grip, she teased him, stroking over his ready hard-on. While she couldn't feel his flesh, she could enjoy the blood pulsating just beneath the surface. The pace with which she stroked him wasn't quick, it was, however, fast enough to keep him heading steadily toward a climax.

After two, maybe three minutes, his head was thrown back and his rod was throbbing wildly with need. She knew she had him seconds from coming and was pleased to have shaken his control so easily. Then, as if he wasn't a few short seconds away from coming, he startled her by turning around and taking back power on a growl.

"Grace, my love," he whispered against her mouth, then thrust his tongue between her lips and instantly owned her body. Her hands reached out to grab his horns, hold him to her, only he shook his head and her hands fell away. While he scrunched her skirt up, Hamish told her exactly what he'd been thinking about when she walked in.

"I was trying to get some work done, but my mind kept slipping back to that first day in your office. There you were sitting on your desk, almost undressed and begging me for more. I wanted to take you so badly that day, right there on your desk. With this picture of you distracting me from important work, I came to the window to try to find my focus again. Then you threw it all away in an instant. You came in here and wrecked my ability to think of anything except coming because of how you worked these sexy gloves over my cock." The fists gripping the fabric of her skirt relaxed and started to methodically take her clothes away.

"I'm not sorry."

"That's fine with me, because either way I'll have you. And I can tell you I won't be sorry either."

Since she wanted this as much as he did, she helped strip down. There was a playroom here at the house. She didn't think it was possible, but it was even more delicious than the one in London. More toys, more space, more of everything, but right now, as far as she was concerned, it was too far away. When she started to pull off her elbow-length cashmere gloves, he stopped her with a commanding look.

"Oh, no, those stay on, baby. I want you to wear these wicked gloves. Call it payback."

Laughing, because now she knew for sure she'd had him on the ropes earlier, Grace let him have his way. She already had her victory and would keep it close until the next time, when hopefully she'd send him over the edge.

Completely naked except for the gloves, he lifted her to his kiss. His lips weren't gentle or playing softly against hers. No, they demanded she meet his lusty needs with hers. Instantly she felt loved and needed. With his hands holding her hips, he moved the two of them over to the desk and sat her down on its cluttered top.

While she was pulling her mouth away to catch a breath, she mentioned she was sitting on his paperwork. Ignoring her warning, he placed her hands on his horns and thrust his cock inside her. With no more than a grunt, he'd surged right into her without a pause until he hit her cervix and drove a squeal from her.

"Don't let go of the horns, baby, don't let go."

"Or what?" She gasped out as he pulled out and thrust back in, just as fiercely as before.

"Just don't let go."

Grace lost her train of thought as he again possessed her body. She loved every groan of pleasure he created in her. This was her heaven, having him taking her with utter and complete passion. They enjoyed their sensual play. He pushed in until he was buried deep inside her, then pushed for a little more space, pulled out and pushed himself inside her again. The power he put behind this last thrust caused her hands to drop from the horns and they fell back on the desk by her head.

The move sent things crashing to the floor, her eyes rolling back.

This was what uncontrolled desire felt like, raw and brimming with hunger for his satisfaction, as well as her own. There wasn't anything pretty about what they were doing right now on his desk. There were no gentle words of love being whispered or fucking for pleasure. This was an expression of pure need they had for each other. The reward would be the pleasure only they could offer each other.

Under his care and in his eyes, she was beautiful and wanted.

He pulled his cock out, nice and slow, so she felt every inch of his thick rod leaving her and then thrust in again, nudging his cock for that little extra space he always managed to find. Her back arched, thrusting her breasts up higher and her legs folded around his hips for balance.

With the next hard push he made inside her, she brought the gloved hands up to hold her breasts still. They shook so wildly with his feral loving. She opened her eyes to look at him and found an intense, passionate expression on his face. He had one hand braced beside her head and the other kept his kilt out of the way, permitting him a view of his possession. It was interesting that, despite usually watching where his rod disappeared inside her, this time he didn't look away from her chest.

On a whim, she changed her hands' positions until they were cupping the rounded hills of flesh. The fire in his golden orbs flared and she ramped up the flames by teasing

her cashmere covered thumbs up and over her tight nipples. While it was a sweet torture for her, it looked like the moves were driving him crazy.

"There you go, baby, make those tips nice and hard for me to suck on."

So, he wanted it that way. Well, she'd be more than happy to ratchet up his lust, hers definitely was. Already she was feeling like a sexy siren writhing naked on top of his desk while he had his wicked way with her.

Stroking with her index fingers, she circled the pink points. The soft yarn felt wonderful on her skin. She could see why he'd been enjoying the hand job as much as she was. Covering the two fleshy mounds, she moved her palms lightly over the tips, enticing them to stretch further for more contact. They did and she discovered that trying to tease him was almost more than she could handle. Deciding to reward herself, Grace pinched both breasts and moaned while giving them a gentle tug before rolling them like someone would a fine cigar.

She felt what she was doing to her breasts all the way down in her pussy. This was a particular set of nerves she enjoyed teasing. As a reward for her actions and the seriously tight grip she had on his cock, she was able to feel him pulsate with need. The hard swelling and pounding of blood through his flesh inside her brought another groan to the surface, slipping out as she arched her back again. There was one goal in her mind now, trying to drive him even further than he had been before.

It may have been a thought in her mind, but she was sure she could feel even more of him inside her body. Suddenly there was a need to ensure he didn't leave her body. She moved one of her hands down to her mound to try to push him back inside her, except the move backfired on her. Her eyes flew open and met his when he took one of her fingers and started to tease it over her excited clit. The feel of the soft glove over her tight nub drove her out of her mind.

"Wicked gloves, aren't they?" Hamish mentioned as he relentlessly kept the digit poised just over the hard flesh. She thought if she bumped her hips up it would bring him back into her cunt, but she couldn't manage to move from her current position.

"Aren't they, baby girl?"

"Please, please." She begged, wanting the climax that was right out of reach.

"Okay, okay. Is this what you want?" He moved her hands back so they held his horns and rammed into her pussy, encouraging her now free breasts to shake with delight. She held on to him as if her life depended on it while he rode her body hard and fast. Words were no longer an option, instead she groaned with pleasure. This became her only way to communicate with him. She started to move her legs back around his hips, but he stopped them and held her knees pressed down against the desktop.

"Hamish!" She screamed, loudly, as it felt like her body was about to disintegrate into a million pieces while she climaxed. From the top of her head down to the tip of her toes, she shook and clenched, trying to keep him inside her pussy and completely still.

She could feel how her slick channel gripped him tightly and tried to pull him deeper while the muscles quaked around him.

The climaxes he gave her were always more than she'd ever expected. They took hold of her and then sent her spiraling out of control. He possessed her mind, body and soul with love and lust.

Despite her best attempt to hold him inside her, he kept moving. It took a great deal of effort and unimagined strength of will, but he managed. Each stroke drove the breath from her. Then, when his gaze found and held hers, Grace could tell his time was near. And it was. He exploded inside her, sending seed into the furthest reaches of her womb.

Collapsing onto his elbows, he huffed in a bid to catch his breath. When the smile of satisfaction graced his lips, she wanted to laugh. The man was rather pleased with himself, as he should be. She was still basking in the glory of his absolute possession.

Leaning to the side, he rested a hand on her belly and stroked the flesh. Underneath his touch, her flesh jumped and quivered with excitement. It didn't matter that they'd just had one of the most incredible fucks of her life, because as far as her mind and body were concerned, the man was magic and always ready to go another round.

"Do you think we made a baby this time?"

"Hmmm, if I remember the calendar right then it's very possible." They were both serious in their desire for children. Because of his horns, it was a possibility they'd be born with them and they had to take that into consideration. No matter what, all of their children would be accepted and if it wasn't meant to be for them personally, then they'd adopt.

"I love you, Hamish, especially the way you go commando under your kilt. You're a real Scotsman."

"Why? Because I like to lift it and fuck you wherever we are?"

"That and because you look so bloody sexy in it."

"Well, I guess it's fair. I've always been partial to seeing you in your shoes and stockings. Now I'll have to add these gloves to the list of must have handy. Those are entirely too decadent not to come with a warning."

"Fine, with one condition."

"Are we negotiating again?"

"Absolutely."

"Okay, what are you looking for?"

"I'll wear them, and only them, if while they're on, I can stroke my hand over your cock until you come. No changing your mind. I've made you hard, given you a blowjob, but I've never been able to have you climaxing by my hand alone."

"Do I look stupid? That's a given." Hamish slowly pulled out of her loving hold and readjusted his plaid. "Now, come on, we still need to settle up before my gran arrives. She's an astute old bird, and trust me, we don't want to give her anything to wonder about, especially our sex life."

Holding out his hand, he helped her stand up and led the way out of his office. They walked down a couple of hallways and up the stairs to their bedroom. Neither of them was fussed about her lack of clothes, she liked how he looked at and appreciated her body. It turned her on and encouraged her to be herself when they were together. And right now, with him dressed in a t-shirt and kilt, she was right back to where she'd been when she came looking for him.

Frisky for him.

"Wait, what do we have to settle?"

"You took your hands off my horns and I distinctly remember telling you there was a price to pay if you did that."

"I thought you were kidding. Besides, they fell off when you slammed into me with such strength. It wasn't my fault."

"Excuse me, am I hearing you complain about how I make love with you?"

"No! Never! You know how much I adore holding those bones, especially while we're together."

"We will settle this and I can tell you it's going to involve handcuffs and those delightful silver anal balls. You remember them, don't you? They had the metal beads inside them that drove you nuts, had you begging for more."

"Oh."

"Hurry up, lass. We have just a couple of hours."

* * * * *

"Gran, this is Grace, Grace Strachan." Hamish used his best manners introducing the woman who completed him to the tiny, white-haired woman standing ramrod straight in his foyer. Tonight was the first meeting between the two most important people in his life and he wanted to give them time to get to know each other. There was no doubt in his mind they'd end up liking each other. They just had to get over the nerves first. It was one of the reasons he kept his lover busy in their bedroom for the past couple of hours, so she wouldn't have a chance to worry about it.

What he hadn't expected was how anxious he was. It was a good thing he'd spent all his excess energy on ensuring his woman was in a good place for tonight, because he didn't have anything left to feed the nerves.

"Grace, this is my gran, Maisie Buchanan."

"How do you do, ma'am?" Polite and proper was what he'd expected from her and that was okay. This was a part of her that came out stronger than any other when she was fretting. He found it rather endearing.

From behind her tiny glasses, Maisie was eyeing his mate up and down, without a smile on her face. He wasn't worried, though. His gran would see how perfect Grace was for him and would be happy for them. With his arm around the shoulder of the woman he loved completely, he waited for the older woman to say what was on her

mind. He had no doubt there was plenty going on in her brain, and yet, it seemed she had her own schedule to keep to tonight.

Using her stick, the Buchanan's grand dame slowly made her way into the sitting room and sought out her favorite chair. After settling down, she fussed with the hem of her dress and sleeves of her sweater, never taking her gaze away from them. Finally, the silence was broken by a soft voice speaking with a very strong burr.

"Hamish, your horns are out."

"Yes, Gran, they are."

"And you don't appear to be concerned by their presence," she stated matter-of-factly.

"No, far from it." They'd taken the couch opposite her and he kept his arm around Grace's shoulder to give her whatever support and comfort she might want. He loved his gran. She brought him up from birth. The woman at his side was his mate, the other half of his heart. If there was some way to make this introduction easier for either one of them, then he would do it. Unfortunately, he couldn't think of what else he could do, so he waited for them to find their peace with the other.

Even to him the silence seemed intense. It wasn't helped by the bright blue eyes from behind the small round glasses that remained focused on his mate. In his heart, Hamish wasn't the least bit worried about the outcome. This was the woman who completed him and was sure everyone could see it.

"Grace?"

"Yes, ma'am?"

"Do you realize why his horns are out?"

Grace turned beet-red, but still answered the question honestly. "Yes, ma'am, I do."

More silence. He was sure this was unbearable for Grace. She unfolded her hands and put one on his thigh. She was probably looking for strength from him to help her through this introduction. Unfortunately, it was a dangerous move to her to make with his kilt riding high up his leg and his need for her running close to the surface. The unconscious move for connecting with him revealed not only his knees, but some of his thighs as well.

"Yes, I see you do. Perfect. Well, laddie, you've finally found your other half and I'm very happy to meet her. However, I think you stayed in London too long. To make matters worse, you've been home for at least a week and at no point did you bring your Grace down to the house to introduce the family or myself to her. Alain had met her, although apparently it was brief so doesn't count. Oh, I had phone calls from you telling me how wonderful life was and all that, but nothing of substance was offered."

"I apologize, Gran. You're right. I should've done all those things and more. There are no excuses, all I can say is that I haven't been on solid ground since finding Grace."

"Good. Keep him off kilter, young lady, that way he can't always be in charge and sure of getting his own way."

"I'll do that, ma'am."

"You know what the big shame is about your lack of communication skills?"

"No, Gran, what would that be?" He was dreading hearing the answer. Hamish accepted that when it came to his gran, he had to pay the price for hoarding his time with his woman.

"That you didn't say anything about how beautiful she is. How she glows with love as she sits there beside you." Maisie was dabbing at her moist eyes with a tissue. "Do you understand? These are important things I wanted to know."

Now he felt like a total louse. The one thing he never wanted to do, he did. He'd upset her because he was feeling selfish about his time with his lover. How did he explain to the older woman who'd brought him up since birth that he hadn't been able to think of anything outside the bedroom?

"Well, Gran, it's been difficult to ummm—"

"Laddie, I see the horns, more grand than I've ever seen them before. If you aren't angry, then there's just one other option, you're—"

"Gran!" He interrupted her before she could say anything more about his physical needs.

"What? We're adults here and there's no way you can hide from anyone what you're feeling for this bonnie lass with those horns at full stand and your—" There was a satisfied smile on her lips as she stopped what she'd been about to say and looked at her grandson, pride clearly written across her wrinkled features.

"Fine! No need to put it into words either." He was disgruntled and blushing. This was the woman who raised him and she still had the ability to make him feel like he was back in short pants. Hamish stood to make his way to the wet bar on the other side of the room. He started to pour the ladies an aperitif and a treble whisky for him. He had a feeling he was going to need it.

It wasn't long before he heard it and had to smile. Grace and his gran were talking to each other with laughter and joy wrapping around their words. He knew it would happen and was delighted when it did. Picking up their glasses, he moved closer to them when he heard the unmistakable "horny man" and Maisie, his elegant grandmum, was laughing her head off.

"Grace!" Startled, Hamish couldn't believe she'd told the older woman her nickname for him.

"What?" She didn't look remotely sorry for what she'd said.

"I can't believe you told her!" Stunned at what he'd heard and yet how she pretended not to understand what she'd done left him fighting back his laughter. Grace was delightfully irreverent and all his.

"What, did you think it was a secret?" She asked him while looking pointedly at his hard-on poking against the kilt.

“Okay, I won’t be spending as much time at the office as I used to. I’ll make a great stay-at-home dad, though.”

“You certainly will, Hamish, a wonderful husband and dad,” Grace confirmed as she looked up at him with her love shining in her eyes for everyone to see.

This was his woman, gazing at him with love in her eyes. Everything would work out for them, they had each other and together they could handle anything. Whatever the future had in store for them, it was sure to be an adventure.

About the Author

Tilly Greene was born into the easy folds of a sleepy beach town and embraces the laid back mindset she grew up with. Life took a turn one day while sitting in the back of the school bus with her friends: she was introduced to the joys of romance novels and has never looked back. Every day she looks forward to writing about women who are independent and confident, the men who love them, and their twisting path to each other.

The author writes erotic romances in a variety of genres and enjoys hearing from readers.

Tilly welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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