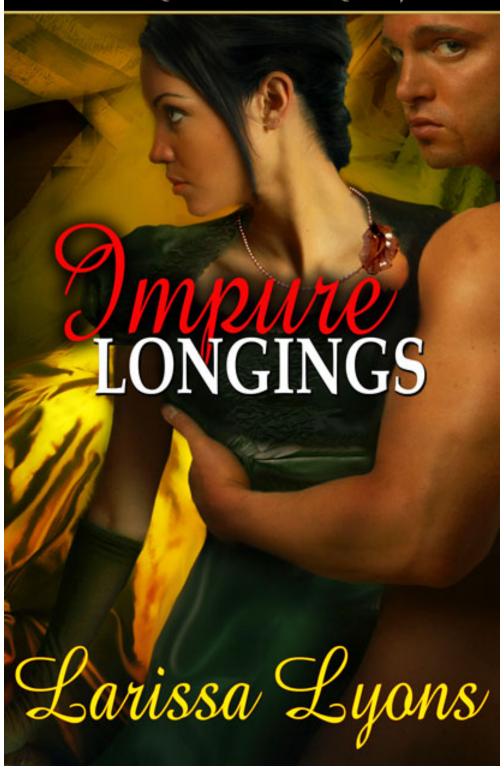
# Ellora's Cave Presents



#### An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



Impure Longings

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## **IMPURE LONGINGS**

Larissa Lyons

#### Dedication

To my super supportive mom, for reading rough drafts of crap before I learned how to write and listening for hours on the phone while I talk about my latest characters. If there was ever one of my sexy stories I wish you'd read, this is it.

### **Chapter One**

Tonight, she officially joined the ranks of the impure.

Dorothea surveyed the men in the room, feeling as if her stomach was in danger of expelling what little it held. How she was soon supposed to sit down and act engaging, during a five-course supper was beyond her.

Which man would be responsible for her imminent placement into the ranks of London's demireps and courtesans? Although, evolving from starving and practically homeless to protected and well-fed didn't seem like such a negative change in status. Actually, she'd be raising her consequence, in exchange for simply cultivating a pleasing manner and satisfactory presence in a man's bed. She could do that, surely.

Tonight's intimate gathering consisted of several titled, well-off gentlemen and an equal number of the fashionably impure. Women who, by choice or circumstance, were in the business of pleasing members of the ton. The men were either groping their current ladybirds or prowling through the room, acquainting themselves with the selection, before making their preferences for the evening known.

According to Ellen, tonight's dinner party was the perfect opportunity to meet Lord Tremayne. He rarely accepted invitations but did so this evening, not only to meet Dorothea but also because his closest friend was Ellen's longtime protector, Lord Selby. Ellen had indicated things might get a little salacious after dinner but Dorothea was grateful for the opportunity to meet Lord Tremayne in a group setting.

"How are you doing?" Ellen suddenly asked in her ear, causing Dorothea to start.

"Rather nervous, I'm afraid," she confessed, wringing her hands in front of her to stop their visible trembling. Oh why hadn't she thought to bring a fan?

Ellen always looked so very composed, her brightly hennaed hair done up in adorable ringlets about her face and her dresses were always in the latest fashion.

Something about sexual satisfaction must be good for the soul, Dorothea thought, for despite her thirty-five years, Ellen had nary a wrinkle upon her complexion.

Not quite a decade younger, Dorothea wanted to emulate her composed friend but as the minutes sped by, her calm demeanor remained only by a thread. Leave it to Ellen to notice, regardless of Dorothea's attempts to conceal her anxiousness, for Ellen placed her hands around Dorothea's and spoke earnestly. "You have nothing to fear. Lord Tremayne is a wonderful man. I truly believe the two of you will suit, else I would not have arranged tonight's introduction."

Dorothea nodded. They'd been over this before. Ellen was right. It was past time Dorothea found a protector, before she found herself cast onto the streets or starving. As it was, the only satisfying meals she'd eaten of late had come from Ellen's generous table.

"Which one is he?" Dorothea asked, her gaze skimming over the men in the room once more.

Would it be the portly gentleman in the corner who smoked—even in the presence of the women—and patted the bum of every female who passed within arm's distance? Or perhaps the older gentleman with a deep laugh and a nose so large Dorothea feared he'd poke out her eye were they ever to kiss? Or, mayhap, the gangly youth who stood off to the side, looking as ill-at-ease as she felt?

In truth, none of them appealed.

But she wasn't here to find a man who appealed. She was here to find a protector. A safe, steady man who would provide her with lodgings and food. And deep down she secretly hoped he might provide for her other needs as well, for despite her formerly married state, Dorothea had never experienced the "delights of the flesh" that Ellen waxed on about, a rapturous expression shining from her face, telling Dorothea all it took was a considerate lover. Somehow, she couldn't see any of the men present even attempting to put her needs above their own.

"La, that man," Ellen said. "I told Tremayne supper was served at nine p.m. and not a moment later. And still he runs late."

A surge of relief swept through Dorothea and she breathed easily once more. Mayhap the tardy Lord Tremayne would appeal after all.

\* \* \* \* \*

At twelve minutes past nine, Daniel Holbrook, Lord Tremayne, entered the formal dining room. He smiled and nodded at several acquaintances before making his way to this evening's hostess to make his apologies. Eagerly he scanned the women present, curious as to the identity of the well-hyped Widow Harper.

"Forgive me," he said to Ellen, with a slight bow, avidly inspecting the woman by her side in the muted candlelight. She was the only one he didn't recognize and the only one who looked more than a little out of place. His cock twitched, more than ready to bed the lovely widow, putting to rest any concerns he had about not being attracted to her.

"I..." he started to carefully explain his fabricated excuse for being late. He didn't enjoy socializing in large groups and usually avoided it at all costs. Tonight was an exception.

"Do sit down, Tremayne. I'm grateful you decided to finally grace us with your presence," Ellen told him archly, gesturing to the single empty seat at the table, which not coincidentally was on the other side of the woman. "But I've held back supper long enough. Hopkins, you may serve."

"Yes, madam."

Immediately, several servants began bringing out the first course. Amid the slight commotion, Tremayne dodged further introductions by settling himself into the chair next to the woman he suspected he was here to meet.

And to bed.

Midnight hair framed a heart-shaped face. The flickering candlelight from the table caused shadows to outline her slightly angular nose and jaw. She was a mite thin for his taste but any hint of hardness in her features was belied by the bow-shaped mouth that commanded his attention.

He easily imagined those plump lips against his, tasting the passion he hoped was packaged inside this delightful exterior. He'd like to see her dark hair down, his fingers tangled against her scalp as he guided her lips over his rod, teaching her exactly how he liked to be licked and caressed.

The carnal thoughts aroused him to a state he hadn't felt in ages. It had been a long time since his body reacted this quickly upon meeting a new female. Ellen had been right. Upon first glance, he definitely decided he and her friend would suit, most definitely. Giving his body a moment to relax, he turned to his own meal.

Not that he needed help finding women. Not at all, he thought to himself. Actually, his was a rather altruistic endeavor tonight, if one stopped to think about it. According to Ellen, the Widow Harper was in desperate need of a protector.

And Tremayne, recently finding himself bored—if not downright disgusted—by his former mistress, had a vacancy to fill. It was his own fault, putting up with Louise for so long but he didn't like change. For years it had been easier to reduce the frequency of his visits rather than give the greedy, bird-witted, bird of paradise her *congé*.

Now, he was rather glad he'd waited so long. Or tonight's opportunity might not have serendipitously fallen into his lap. Judging by the manner in which Mistress Harper partook of her turtle soup, daintily spooning the mixture to her lips and by the way she covertly shot him glances under her lashes, she reeked of refinement. Something Louise had lacked in spades.

A young man might bow to the lustful needs of his randy body and overlook the absence of genteel etiquette and mindful conversation in the presence of insatiable, voluptuous physical attributes. A more mature man such as himself, a few years beyond the young buck stage, had a more discriminating palate.

Moments later, watching her slight wrist grapple with cutting the overdone mutton on her plate, the thickening in his cock again reminded him how long he'd gone since satisfying his own sexual palate.

His eyes skated over her features and a rush of warmth filled his loins. No haggard-looking widow, this, as he'd half-feared based on Ellen's continued attempts to gauge his potential interest in her friend the last few weeks. No, this woman looked more like an innocent maiden than a well-used widow.

When she placed a piece of meat between her lips and chewed, his focus was drawn to her mouth once more. Lush and pink, her lips put him in mind of all sorts of things better suited to the bedroom than the dining room they currently occupied. He hadn't caught a glimpse of her eyes yet but he wagered they were as dark as her hair. He couldn't wait to find out, to see her in the morning light, satiated from a long night of loving.

Based on his body's eager response, Tremayne was pleased he'd secured potential lodgings for the Widow Harper, sight unseen, on the off chance he would decide to put her up. He'd wanted to be ready. If he could deal adequately with Louise for several years, just think how long his interest in this divine little morsel might last.

Ellen hadn't told him much, only that she and Mrs. Harper had been friends for some time and that she thought he and the woman would suit—Ellen never had liked Louise—and for him to be gentle with the widow and to take things slower than he would with a typical new mistress. She'd also described her as petite, attractive and friendly.

Rather a bland description, he thought now. After seeing the woman and feeling his body's uninhibited response, the last thing he wanted to do was moderate his passion. He'd like to banish the other guests from the dining room, sweep the remaining food to the floor, throw Mistress Harper onto the table and have his wicked way with her. A strangled groan worked its way free of his throat.

When she looked at him directly, a puzzled expression on her face, he realized he'd gone almost the entire meal without uttering a word. Gad, he was an ass.

\* \* \* \* \*

Unlike a typical dinner party where one would expect conversation, entertainment, or possibly a few hands of cards, Dorothea didn't know what to do with herself or how to go on at the moment. Once the unusually plain repast was complete—no one had come tonight for the food—the men didn't linger over their port as was customary but instead joined the women straightaway and everyone repaired to the drawing room.

Several of the couples had paired off and were involved in rather blatant physical displays. She had been married for almost eight years, so the sexual act held little surprise. But she was quite aghast at the amount of skin displayed by two of the women, as well as the sounds emanating from their excited partners.

Who knew people engaged in this type of behavior in public? Ellen had told her what to expect but the present actions of the other guests was beyond Dorothea's limited knowledge. Anticipating that people would likely be engaged in intimate fondling and actually witnessing their motions were two very different things indeed.

Dorothea herself had been in Ellen's home many times during their friendship the past year but only in the morning hours and never when anyone else was present. She'd been surprised and relieved, to discover Ellen's home was tastefully decorated, much as Dorothea had imagined any titled or financially comfortable person's would be. Instead of the wicked collection of sensual furnishings in plush velvet and deep colors Dorothea expected a kept woman's abode to display, Ellen's home was simply decorated with modest furniture upholstered in cream fabric and the few ornamentations were placed carefully about.

Watching the unusual positions currently occupied by two of the physically engaged couples, Dorothea suspected she now knew why there weren't more knickknacks about the room. No doubt, they'd already been knocked to the floor and shattered.

A muffled groan had her turning to investigate. Gracious. The gentleman with the large nose had just pulled down a woman's bodice and was placing his lips upon her breast! Dorothea's own breast tingled in response. Warmth suffused her face and she quickly looked away only to be confronted by another shocking sight.

The young gentleman from earlier reclined on a chaise lounge, his hand so far beneath the gown of the woman sitting upon his lap, that Dorothea could see the woman's thigh above her stockings. The man's hand disappeared between her legs and she began to move her hips and moan, the sound carrying across the room.

Goodness but it was warm in here! Dorothea fanned her face. The heat bubbling from her core flushed her skin. Even though it was a cool night, the logs in the hearth remained unlit. Earlier, she'd wondered why. Now, she rather suspected she knew. She squeezed her legs together, trying to relieve the unexpected, somewhat unfamiliar, pressure and made her way to an unoccupied corner.

Darker than the rest of the room due to its lack of candles and wall sconces, she could hide and observe the others without standing right next to them. She wanted to be scandalized by their behavior—she *should* be scandalized. But a heretofore unrecognized part of her found the couples' actions arousing. She was enticed to stare, even as part of her was compelled to turn away. The conflicting urges confused her almost as much as the man she came to meet.

Her eyes sought out his form and she studied him, able to analyze his attributes now that he wasn't sitting directly beside her. The tall gentleman that she now knew was Lord Tremayne hadn't even attempted to converse with her during dinner, not once! Did that mean he wasn't interested?

She sincerely hoped not. For if she was to indulge in sexual congress with another man, she desperately hoped *he* would be the one. Unlike her late husband, who had, all

things considered, been rather nondescript, Lord Tremayne had presence and an air about him that was dangerously exciting.

Thick coffee-colored hair fell about his face in short waves. His dark side whiskers came almost to the bottom of his jaw and edged forward ever so slightly, directing her attention to his lips, which she found surprisingly enticing. The ivory silk of his neckcloth was tied in such a complicated manner, she half-wondered if that was the reason for his late arrival this evening.

Whatever the cause, the wait had definitely been worth it, she thought, gazing upon his person with interest. This was something she hadn't expected. He *more* than appealed. The very air around him seemed to invade her being and bring about sensations that had her almost embarrassingly eager for later tonight. She took a deep breath and thought about Lord Tremayne doing the things to her she had just witnessed.

Would he place his lips upon her breast and suckle her as a babe? Would his hand disappear beneath her gown and do things she could barely imagine, much less contemplate in detail? Almost sweating, Dorothea fanned herself with her hand again as the emptiness between her legs became more pronounced. She'd never felt quite this way around her late husband, she realized with a guilty start.

"Well? Will he do?" Handing her a glass of ratafia, Ellen asked the question in a quiet but excited voice, looking at Lord Tremayne who was conversing with Ellen's patron, Lord Selby, on the other side of the room. "He's rather a magnificent specimen, is he not? And the way he fills out his inexpressibles..." She made a sound of appreciation. "Impressive, to say the least."

Dorothea was at a loss. Though they'd been friends for over a year, she wasn't used to discussing men, or their attributes, in detail. Her murmur was noncommittal.

Ellen laughed quietly. "Don't mind me. Selby keeps me more than satisfied, financially and physically. I wouldn't be human, though, if I hadn't given a thought to being with Tremayne. Men like that don't appear every day, which is why I've pushed

for the two of you to meet. Tragically, it so often seems the attractive ones are either insanely boring or horribly depraved."

That comment caused concern in Dorothea's breast. "Depraved?"

"Certainly not. At least, not that I'm aware of. Tremayne keeps to himself more than most but I've always found him sincerely charming. Selby speaks highly of him. And the entire time I've been with Selby, Tremayne has only had the one mistress. Louise was as addlepated as they come but she just adored him."

Dorothea didn't care to hear about Lord Tremayne's prior mistress. If she was going to do this, she certainly didn't need to be comparing herself to another woman. Voicing her biggest concern, she said, "I'm not sure he's interested in me. He hasn't said much." That was an understatement.

"Oh, posh. Have you not noticed the way he's devoured you with his gaze since he walked in the door?"

She hadn't. With a slight shake of her head, Dorothea commented, "He is very handsome." Another understatement.

"Can you do this, do you think? Be intimate with him?" Ellen asked intently. "It's not too late to call a halt but I truly do believe he's a gentleman. He isn't addicted to drink or gambling." She laughed quietly. "From what I can tell, his worst vice is his propensity toward tardiness, a minor inconvenience at best."

At the thought of *not* going through with her intended plans for the evening, especially now that she'd seen Lord Tremayne, an intense feeling of dismay gripped her.

"Yes! I want to go home with him tonight." Good heavens but she sounded overly excited about the prospect. This was supposed to be something she *had* to do, not something she *wanted* to do. Tempering her tone, she continued, "Ahem. Well, if I must have a protector, then I believe Lord Tremayne will do." Quite nicely.

"If you're sure?"

Why was Ellen expressing doubts now? It had been her idea to begin with. After discovering the desperate financial situation Dorothea had tolerated since becoming a widow, she'd often suggested the idea of introducing Dorothea to a protector, something Dorothea had been loath to consider. Properly raised young women didn't do things such as that.

Once Dorothea's immediate circumstances became more pressing, with the threatening presence of a new landlord who wanted his overpriced rents paid with more than coin, Ellen had actively championed a specific arrangement between Dorothea and Lord Tremayne.

After finally meeting him, was she sure? She was positive that being with him far surpassed any other alternatives open to her at present.

"Quite," Dorothea said with an emphatic nod, guilty excitement tingling in her belly.

"Very well." Ellen grabbed her hand and tugged her in the direction of the two men. "Let us proceed."

### **Chapter Two**

At their approach, Lord Tremayne looked up. Dorothea's step faltered under his intense regard. His countenance was inscrutable but when she neared, he reached to grasp her gloved hand from Ellen.

"Mistress Harper?" his deep voice intoned as he bowed low over her hand, sending a quiver down her spine.

The tingling sensations concentrated in her loins and she had to force herself to speak. "Call me Dorothea, please."

He straightened and shook his head, pulling her a step closer as Ellen and Lord Selby moved a discreet distance away. "Thea, I think. It suits you...better."

Who was she to argue? At the look in his dark eyes, she was practically speechless. "Very well, my lord."

A series of short, loud squeals came from the woman on the chaise lounge, causing Dorothea to flinch.

"Are you agreeable?" Lord Tremayne cleared his throat and looked toward the door, his fingers making tiny circles against her palm. "Ah...to our union?"

It seemed she wasn't the only one slightly uncomfortable about their impending arrangement. Her hands were sweating in her gloves. She longed to rip them off and feel his fingers on her bare skin.

"Yes." Her head jerked in a nod. "I'm to accompany you home, then?" Her voice sounded softer than she was used to, more breathy.

His large hand squeezed hers. "I've arranged for your lodgings." He lifted her hand to his lips and placed a kiss upon her wrist. The warmth of his unexpected touch sent shivers racing up her arm and her heart skipped a beat. "We could retire there now?"

His inflection indicated the question and she almost melted. Her late husband rarely asked her anything. Rather close to swooning, Dorothea nodded her agreement.

Without further discussion, Lord Tremayne placed her still-full glass of ratafia on a nearby table, then escorted her to the door where Hopkins brought their wraps. With his arm placed protectively across her back, Lord Tremayne guided her into the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the carriage ride to the townhouse he had secured for her, Tremayne studied the subdued Widow Harper in the gaslight reflected from the lanterns.

She sat across from him, her back straight against the squabs. Her head was turned and she looked out into the darkened streets, exposing the pale skin of her cheek and throat to his gaze. Both feet, encased in scuffed leather slippers, were placed firmly on the floor and her hands were knotted in her lap. If he didn't know better, he'd think she was on her way to her execution, not her new home.

"Your...belongings?" he suddenly thought to ask. Other than a small reticule hanging from her wrist, she didn't have any personal effects with her.

A slight movement of her head indicated she heard his question. It was a moment before she answered. "I'll retrieve them tomorrow."

He thought to offer assistance but before he could phrase the words, she continued, "There isn't much, really. Only a few articles of clothing." She glanced at him and added, "Nothing I'd miss if they were to disappear." A shy smile, then she returned to contemplating the view beyond the carriage.

Ellen had been vague about Thea's origins and current situation, only saying that she'd known the woman for some time and was positive they'd suit. Ellen's only caution had been to not overwhelm the widow with passion too quickly.

Interesting advice, coming from a practiced courtesan renowned for her wild dinner parties that more often than not evolved into orgies. Preferring to focus his attention on one partner, Tremayne had rarely participated in the debauchery, even in his salad days. He shifted in his seat.

At the slight noise, she turned from the window and fixed her gaze upon his person. She didn't dress like a loose woman. Her olive gown had obviously seen better days. A thin scarf was draped around her neck and tucked into the low, squared-off bosom of the dress, concealing her attributes almost completely. After the overtly provocative attire Louise typically wore, Thea's outfit was almost puritan in its severity.

He found himself intrigued by the woman across from him nevertheless. Her large, surprisingly pale, eyes held his in the dim light and his arousal increased with her steady regard. He still couldn't ascertain their color but they were definitely not dark as he'd first imagined.

The constant clop-clop of the horses permeated the gently swaying carriage. As usual, muted scents of waste, both horse and human, rose from the ground. In the distance, sounds of revelry heralded parties and other social activities. In the confines of his *barouche*, Tremayne found it easy to concentrate on Thea.

The attraction between them hung in the air, heightening the tension. He needed to get her talking, to discover more about her. He thought a moment, determining the best way to phrase his question without revealing his weakness. "How long ago were you widowed?"

Now that was brilliant. He might as well have asked her if her husband was a good lover. Biting his tongue in frustration, he waited for her response.

"Not quite three years, my lord."

That was all she said. He ground his teeth and cast about for another question.

She saved him by speaking again. "We were married over seven. I, ah, knew Mr. Harper most of my life. He and my father were friends."

As if she had shared more than she meant to, she looked away again.

He longed to trace a path down the smooth skin of her cheek. To see if it was cool, like alabaster, or hot, like passion.

And why not? She was here for his pleasure, was she not?

The seats creaked as he rose and transferred to the one she occupied. Her startled glance whipped around to face him. With one hand, he covered the tangled fingers that rested in her lap. With the other, he cupped her cheek, its softness surprising him.

Warm. Even in the cool night air, her skin was heated, giving him his answer. *Passion*. No cold, frigid miss could have skin this warm. Thinking of the heights of passion they would reach together, a wave of desire rushed through him and he pressed his lips to hers. The fingers in her lap tightened further.

Giving in to his body's urging, he opened his mouth and slid his tongue over her lips.

She jerked back with a gasp, staring at him with overly bright eyes.

Oh, hell. If she scared this easily at his touch, how was he supposed to bed her? He wasn't in the habit of supplying lodgings for just any female off the street. Neither could he imagine taking his pleasure with someone who shrank from his touch.

He leaned back against the seat and expelled a breath. "Problem?"

She raised a hand to her throat. "What?"

"Is there a problem?" He waited a moment. When she didn't respond, he clarified, "With my touch? You have a problem with my touch?"

Her head shook abruptly, swinging to and fro so fast he wondered if a hairpin might fly out. "No!" she said emphatically. "Not at all. I, um..."

He watched her fan herself with one hand. "I'm not used to kisses such as yours."

Gad. Even his kisses were wrong. Too passionate? He wondered, then discounted the insane notion. He'd barely touched her. Despite his attraction, he was becoming concerned. If she couldn't stomach his kisses, how would she tolerate his cock?

The carriage rolled to a stop and he reached for the door. Before he alit, her quickly spoken words reached his ears. "Please don't hold that against me. I'm very aware of the honor you do me and once we arrive inside, I'm ready for you to take me, my lord."

Oh, God. The fabric of his trousers strained as his bodkin leapt to attention.

Yielding to her obvious preference, Tremayne resolved to take her quickly and simply, before returning to his own lodgings for the remainder of the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Uncertain as to the proper protocol of one in her position, Dorothea stood just inside the door of her new home. It was grander than any place she had lived in. A prominent staircase stood off to one side, leading downstairs to the kitchen and upstairs to the bedchambers. Since that, no doubt, was their intended destination, she stepped upon the first tread, hesitating a moment until Lord Tremayne followed.

Together, they ascended the stairs without speaking. At the top landing, he turned to the left and guided her to the first door. He opened it and walked in. "Your personal rooms."

She looked at the pleasant furnishings, amazed at her good fortune. Not only was Lord Tremayne himself much more than she'd ever expected, he was also providing her with beautiful—and more importantly, secure—surroundings.

In return, she had to make sure he was pleased. With her body.

"May I have a moment of privacy?" she asked, surreptitiously looking for the chamber pot.

He nodded and pointed to a door across the room. "I...believe what you seek is through there."

"I'll return directly." She felt her cheeks heat and hurried to the dressing room, securing the door behind her. Inside, she found not only the chamber pot but also a basin of water and a few necessities, including a long, sheer gown.

She disrobed and quickly took care of her ablutions. When she pulled the gown over her head, Dorothea desperately wanted to take the time to enjoy the sensuous feel of the delicate fabric but knew she mustn't tarry. Holding the overlong gown off the floor so she wouldn't trip, she returned to the bedroom where Lord Tremayne waited.

She found him standing next to the bed, fully clothed, save for his tailcoat which he had removed. At her appearance, pleasure seemed to flare in his eyes but was squelched so quickly she wondered if she mistook his approval.

"I am ready, my lord," she told him, as her heart leapt in her chest.

"Get on the bed." Lord Tremayne spoke quietly and her stomach did an odd flip.

Trembling with excitement, she crossed the room while he watched and pulled back the coverlet. The bed was fit for a queen and Dorothea marveled at her new circumstance as she climbed upon the high mattress and over the beautiful white sheets, so obviously new, she hated to wrinkle them.

She was actually eager for their joining to commence. What kind of lover would Lord Tremayne be? Slow and tender as she'd dreamed of as a girl, spinning fantasies about her future husband? Or quick and abrupt, as Mr. Harper had been? Or, possibly even masterful and commanding, as she longed for several years into her lackluster marriage?

Anything other than the almost-boring, perfunctory matings she'd become used to from her late husband would suffice. It seemed Mr. Harper had thought it his duty to have intercourse with her monthly, whether he wished it or not. More than once, he'd even fallen asleep in the middle of the act, leaving Dorothea vexed and doubting her very femininity. Ellen had assured her most men were not so indifferent in the bedroom. Since meeting Lord Tremayne, Dorothea was becoming increasingly eager to find out.

The mattress was thick and comfortable. And she even had a pillow! She sighed as she sank into the bed, running her hand down the sheer gown, positive that even in the candlelight Lord Tremayne could see her beaded nipples through the thin fabric. Should she lie back and pull the covers up to her chin? Unsure, she risked a glance at him.

Despite the dim light, his eyes glowed. She hoped that was a good sign. For, unlike Mr. Harper, Lord Tremayne certainly didn't look on the verge of sleep. Quite the opposite in fact. He studied her with an intensity that she might find alarming, coming from anyone else.

"T-Turn over," his rumbling voice commanded.

"What?"

"Over. On your stomach."

Confused, she complied, rolling to face the bed. Resting on her bent elbows, she propped her upper body over the pillow. In the stillness, she heard the thump of Lord Tremayne's boots hit the ground, then the shuffling sounds of fabric as he removed his trousers. When they too landed on the floor, tremors of awareness sparked in her belly.

He didn't say anything else but the bed dipped when he placed one knee next to her hip.

Dorothea longed to ask what he wanted, why he had her facing the mattress but when his hand ran down her back and skimmed over her buttocks, hesitating slightly, the words lodged in her throat like week-old dry bread.

A moment later, he tugged at her gown, raising it past her hips and bottom, to bunch the thin fabric at her waist.

Oh, heavens. He was looking upon her bare backside! Deep in her core, a restless yearning took hold...a strange longing to open her legs and press herself into the bed.

Instead, she clenched the muscles of her quim and bit her lip, waiting in the silence for his next touch upon her person.

Again, his hand grazed her bottom, this time lingering. His palm cupped first one cheek, then the other. She thought the very tip of his fingers dipped into the crevice

between but the action was so slight and over so quickly, she might have been mistaken. Involuntarily, her anus spasmed in...what?

Anticipation?

No. What she imagined was unheard of. Wasn't it?

Shocked by her wicked thoughts, it was a second before she realized his hands were gone and he'd climbed onto the bed and was straddling her body.

Goodness, this was strange. Knowing he was hovering above her, looking at her almost nude form. She licked her lips and swallowed past the lump clogging her throat. "My lord?"

Without speaking, he lowered himself on top of her. At the first feel of his man-part against the sensitive cheeks of her bottom, she felt herself flinch, then press up to meet him.

His long legs settled atop hers and his upper body rested on his bent forearms. Placing his arms around hers, he cradled her fisted hands inside his large palms.

His shirt was still on. The cream-colored linen almost blended with the ivory sleeves of her gown. But his pants were definitely gone. His hair-roughened body was warm along her backside and legs.

Against her bottom, his erection pulsed, hot and thick. And long. How she wanted to squeeze her cheeks together and hold him but she didn't dare. She still had no idea exactly how he planned to go about bedding her. Their current positions were highly irregular.

The scent of bay rum teased her nostrils. When he placed his cheek alongside hers and exhaled, she caught the subtle flavor of the port he had consumed directly after dinner.

He relaxed his weight against her and started to move, sliding his bodkin in between the crease made by the lobes of her bottom. The deliberate motions of him gliding along her crease pressed her lower body into the bed. A curious sensation began in her quim, one she'd felt before but never quite this strongly. It reminded her of that single all too brief touch of his tongue upon her lips. Such a shock, pleasurable to be sure but so unexpected...even now, the thought reminded her of his faint taste. She breathed in deeply, inhaling him.

His legs slid between hers, forcing hers to part, which slanted her core toward the mattress. He continued his thrusting motions, sliding along her fleshy crack. She squeezed her cheeks together, for if she didn't, he might slip and enter her — there.

The fast motion he'd set up became hard to follow and she was only lying still beneath him. Didn't he want to be inside her? To put his long stalk in her delicate flower?

Mr. Harper had used those words once, early in their marriage. Now, Dorothea felt as if her delicate flower were pearling with dew, preparing to open and bloom. If only Lord Tremayne would—

Suddenly, he gripped her hands in his fists and brought them directly under their faces, pushing her pillow to the side. His weight bore down, pressing her further into the mattress. A drop of sweat rolled off his face and landed next to their hands on the bed sheet. The veins pulsed on the back of his masculine hands. Light brown hair covered his knuckles. His skin was such a different texture from hers. She had a sudden longing to dip her head and taste him, to run her tongue along his wrist, up the side of his hand...to circle his thumb...

Her quim burned with sensation. Her hips began to rotate on their own, to move against the mattress, angling her body so that the bed provided friction to her core, even as her backside pressed up, into Lord Tremayne's groin. The delicious thrill of his rod riding her bottom was unlike anything in her experience.

When was he going to put himself inside her? She wanted that. Now. Past caring about her inhibitions, she gathered the courage to ask, "Lord Tremayne, when—"

"Shhhh." He made the harsh noise in her ear and his arms clamped around hers more tightly.

Giving herself up to the moment, Dorothea rode the waves of his undulating hips, relaxing her body in order to move in tandem with his. His side whiskers rubbed against her temple, abrading her skin. It felt so delicious, so manly. The foreign sensation sent awareness straight from her face down to her stomach where it felt as if dinner were dancing a quadrille.

The urge to press her lips against his skin grew stronger. She thought about turning her head and —

The force of his movements increased and a small groan escaped his mouth. His hips jerked twice, then once more and his seed warmed her back.

Other than a slight twinge of his male part, nothing moved. His breathing stirred the hair near her ear and seemed so very loud in the sudden stillness.

"Ahhh." He shifted against her.

Would he tell her to turn over? Would he now thrust into her rose? Dorothea smiled with anticipation. Surely this would be a night to remember!

Abruptly, he released her fingers, pushing up on his arms and away from her back. He eased off her bottom. The air hit her newly exposed skin and caused chills to erupt along the sensitive flesh. A sticky wetness remained on her back.

"Lie still," he commanded.

What did he think she might do? Offer to rush from the bed and bring him a brandy? Struggling with confusion, for her lower body ached and now that Lord Tremayne was no longer lying atop her, she missed his weight terribly, Dorothea did as bade and refrained from moving. Wondering what would come next, she practically held her breath as she heard him step into the dressing room where she had so recently disrobed.

Waiting for his next instruction, she repeatedly smoothed the sheets beneath her fingers, searching out the spot where his drop of perspiration had landed. The simple motion calmed her, even though the spot of wetness remained elusive.

Lord Tremayne returned and approached the side of the bed. He ran a cloth over her lower back and bottom, even swiping once between her cheeks, which caused her rectum to clench all over again. Seconds later, she heard him pulling on his breeches and she rolled over to look at his face. "My lord? You're leaving?" Her voice squeaked on the last word.

Without sparing her a glance, he picked up his boots and went to the door. His hand on the knob, he stared at the wall behind her. "Thea. May I visit you again?"

"Certainly, my lord. You are welcome here any time." It was his money buying the house, after all. Buying *her*. "I will never turn away your company."

"Very well." It seemed as if he wanted to add something but instead, he shook his head and opened the door. He strode through the doorway and swung the door closed behind him. The finality of it clicking into place sounded disproportionately loud in the now silent room. Her senses more attuned than ever, she heard him pause in the hallway and pull on his boots. A moment later, he pounded down the stairs.

She held her breath, waiting.

He raised his voice, calling out, then he spoke briefly with another person before he escaped out of the townhouse and into the night.

After he left, someone shut the door and locked it.

So, in addition to securing the house, he'd also procured a servant? For her? Goodness, that would take some getting used to.

But Lord Tremayne had left so quickly. Had he been dissatisfied with her? But no, if that were the case he wouldn't have asked to return. Excitement over her new lodgings and confusion over Lord Tremayne's behavior battled in her breast.

Rolling into a ball, she placed one hand over her mound, curving her fingers past the tight curls. Moisture drenched her folds and an insistent longing held her in its grip.

Tomorrow. How she hoped Lord Tremayne visited her tomorrow, for she ached to be with him again. To have him inside her and not just on top of her. Of their own accord, her fingers delved further into her wet cleft. Never before had she felt so saturated. The warm juices from her own body covered her fingers as her inner muscles pulled them deep inside. With the palm of her hand, she pressed against her core, instantly flinching from the acute pressure. She moved her fingers, taking them higher into her body and her pelvis rocked against her palm. Instead of bringing relief, the motions only heightened the ache. Uncertain what to do next, she clenched her anus, confused anew by the alien sense of its empty state.

At some point, she slept.

But it was only after counting the nine hundred and forty-seven rose petals on the flocked wallpaper lit by the solitary candle. And only after coming to the surprising realization that in addition to her body craving Lord Tremayne's return, her mind longed for his company as well.

Even though she was his, technically bought and paid for by these very accommodations, when he looked at her, she didn't feel cheap or tawdry. Unlike the intimidating glare of her former landlord, Lord Tremayne's intense gaze didn't brand her as his possession. Instead, being with him made her feel like a person. And a desirable one at that.

Gracious. She'd only just met the man and already felt indebted to him, thankful he'd given her something she hadn't even realized was missing. Her dignity.

#### **Chapter Three**

The following evening, Tremayne held out as long as he could before abandoning his residence for Belgrave Square, the eminently respectable neighborhood where he'd arranged lodgings for Thea.

He left his curricle and team in the care of a street urchin, paying the boy well to walk the horses if they became restless. Then he bounded up the front walk, unaccountably excited at the prospect of spending another evening with his lovely *inamorata*. In her soothing company, he could almost forget the juvenile affliction that caused him to curtail most social outings.

The cheerful sounds of a pianoforte filtered through a window from one of the upper levels. Tremayne rapped on the door. Laughter and lively conversation continued, drifting on the air, louder than the music.

He lifted the door knocker and brought it down with more force. Several times.

Abruptly, the music stopped and in seconds heavy footsteps approached from within the townhouse. A moment later, Samuels opened the door, admitting Lord Tremayne into the foyer.

"Good evening, my lord."

"Samuels," Tremayne nodded, handing the man his cane and hat. "How are things?"

"Quite well, my lord. Mistress Dorothea is a lovely woman. She and Mrs. Samuels spent the afternoon in the kitchen and until your arrival this evening, she was playing for us upstairs."

Lord Tremayne nodded and smiled as usual, hiding his unease under a polite façade. "Where is she?"

A knowing gleam entered Samuels' eyes, damn the man. Couldn't a gentleman hire servants to work for his convenient lady love without having them smirk at his arrival?

"In the drawing room, my lord."

Lord Tremayne started in that direction.

"My lord? If I may?"

Samuels' words halted his footsteps. "Yes?"

"Miss Dorothea went out today, to fetch her belongings, I gather."

Tremayne breathed a sigh of relief. That meant she was as pleased with their arrangement as he and intended to make this her home. A surge of satisfaction swept through him at the realization.

Mrs. Samuels chose that moment to hasten down the stairs, her small, bird-like frame covering the distance quickly. "Milord." She greeted him with a curtsy, then turned to her husband. "Have you told him yet?"

"Getting to it, Molly," Samuels answered with admirable imperturbability.

"Is there a...problem?" Tremayne inquired, impatient to join Thea.

Mrs. Samuels explained before her husband had a chance. "Well, milord, we can't rightly say but when Miss Dorothea returned after her outing this morning, she was quite overset. She came running in, clutching her tattered bag, tears streaming down her face poor dear but she wouldn't tell me what happened, only made light of it and escaped to her room. We thought it best to let you know."

Protective instincts instantly overshadowed the desire thrumming in Tremayne's veins. How dare someone harm Thea? By God, she was under his protection and he wouldn't stand for it. "Very well," he said, striving for a calm tone. "Thank you for informing me."

"Doing our duty, my lord," Samuels said with a bow. "We like the lady and don't want to see anything happen to her. Not if we can help it."

Tremayne agreed. Perhaps the older gentleman hadn't been smirking earlier but had only been showing friendliness toward his new mistress. Come to think on it, Tremayne had a tendency to think others were condescending or smirking when he oft discovered later he was being overly sensitive. "Yes, well...keep me informed."

"Certainly, my lord." Both servants exited the foyer, leaving Tremayne free to locate Thea.

He found her in the formal drawing room, after only one wrong turn.

"Lord Tremayne." She stood and curtsied the moment he entered the cluttered room.

"Thea." He nodded and gave a short bow, remaining near the door.

Her hands were knotted in front of her. She pulled on her fingers with such intensity he half-feared she'd dislocate one.

How awkward it was, seeing her thus. He wanted to ascertain the cause of her distress this morning. He wanted to hear her play the pianoforte once more. He wanted to carry her off to bed.

"Please be seated." She gestured to the chaise lounge she had been sitting upon when he arrived. He took that as a good sign. She could have motioned him to one of the other pieces of furniture.

When he settled himself upon the cushion, she joined him, albeit at the far end.

"Would you care for some refreshment? Wine or brandy—" She broke off with an embarrassed laugh. "Forgive me, my lord. I'm not yet acquainted with the pantry and I do not know with certainty that those are available or what other beverages I have to offer."

The only thing he wanted to drink was her. He attempted to relax and make conversation, hoping to put her at ease. He also wanted to discover what had occurred that morning without point-blank asking her. He wasn't sure how forthcoming she'd be. "Nothing, thank you. I supped earlier."

She made eye contact again, then looked down at her hands. "Very well, my lord. Umm..." She fidgeted, sighed, then glanced at him again. "How was your meal?"

He almost laughed out loud. Her obvious unease was charming. "Fine. Thank you." He took pity on her and asked, "You and Ellen...met how?"

She flashed him a bright smile and relaxed her fingers. "At the circulating library, my lord."

It grated on him, the formal way she addressed him as "my lord" when he'd much rather she use his name. Perhaps soon, he'd ask her.

"It's a funny tale, really. There I was requesting a volume and Ellen..." She stopped and looked down. He saw that her fingers were once again wound tightly together. "Listen to me, going on. I don't mean to bore you with frivolous matters."

This was getting out of hand. Was she still so wary around him? Even after last night? He hadn't even entered her but had spent himself on her back, needing his own release but wanting to assure her he wouldn't do any act until she was ready. He wanted to do things to her—with her—that would probably shock her refined sensibilities senseless but dammit, he wanted her to desire him too.

So he'd make do with another taste tonight, something to satisfy his body's rampant longing but nothing that would likely be beyond her realm of prior experience. Nothing that would possibly frighten her, for that he couldn't bear.

Returning to his original question, he said, "I asked."

"So you did. Very well." She looked at him again, her pale green gaze surprising him. He'd expected her eyes to be dark, not this soft, fetching color that reminded him of the meadows near his estate, which he suddenly wanted to show her. He easily envisioned the two of them walking hand in hand over the grounds, until reaching the perfect place where he would take her body in such ways she would scream with pleasure. Then, they would return to their bedchamber where he—

Their bedchamber? He shook off the startling thought and listened to the rest of her explanation, of which he'd missed the majority due to his wool-gathering. "And since then, we've become closer, often walking together in the mornings."

He had absolutely no idea what she'd just shared.

His eyes moved over her form. Whether he paid attention or not, the brief discourse had been good for her. She no longer radiated tension but appeared relaxed. He could almost imagine he was simply paying an afternoon call on a woman he was courting.

Courting? Gad. He sounded like some young swain, about to spout lame poetry to his lady. Lord Byron, he was not!

Regardless of her newfound ease in his presence, Thea looked unbearably out of place. She was the epitome of young and fresh juxtaposed against a backdrop of tawdry cynicism.

The brocade chaise upon which they sat was upholstered in a color that put him in mind of blood. The velvet drapes were the same deep red. Around the room, atop the various dainty tables strewn about, sat do-nothings, carved from ivory or onyx. He recalled now that upon closer inspection, some were obscene—most were downright ugly.

He'd only visited the place once before assuming the rent. The furnishings and décor had remained from the previous occupant, who had recently moved from London and hadn't wanted the majority of items. No wonder.

What had he been thinking? This was no genteel establishment fit for a lady—But wait.

Technically, Thea wasn't a lady. She was his *ladybird*. Still, to expect her to live in these damnable surroundings day after day? He must have been mad to even consider such a thing. "Forgive me."

At his words, she stared at him blankly.

"You have an allowance," he finally remembered to tell her, reaching into his pocket for a few bank notes, which he placed in her hand. "Feel free..." He gestured at the furnishings in the room. "You may choose things more... to your liking."

She laughed and leaned forward, as if imparting a great secret. "May I keep them as they are?"

Her request shocked him. He nodded slowly. "If you..."

His words dried up when her hand caressed the fabric covering the decadent chaise lounge. Seeing the motion, the desire he'd worked to keep banked flared to life, inciting a fire along his cock.

"For just a short while, perhaps," she said. "I find I rather like the look of this place."

With a smile she stood and walked behind the chaise, digging the tip of her fingers into the crimson upholstery. "It's extremely opulent, isn't it? And so very rich. Why, I could almost pretend I'm a queen."

Seeing her fingernails burrow into the fabric made him yearn for her touch upon his body. He inclined his head, acknowledging her words, as he watched her stroll around the room, her fingers lighting upon various items. She stopped behind a candelabra, its multiple flames causing shadows to flicker over her body.

"I'm being dreadfully fanciful, I fear but I have had no occasion to enjoy furnishings such as these. Until now."

"Then leave the room as it is," he murmured, basking in the sensual atmosphere she created with her hushed words.

"I'm enjoying how this home makes me feel," she confessed, looking down.

His attention focused on her now-tangled fingers. They rested beneath her bosom, flexing intermittently. From where she hid in the corner of the room, she glanced at him from beneath her lashes. He wished she was closer and her features more clear so that

he could gauge her mood accurately. Judging by the tension that had returned to her posture, she was far from calm. Was she nervous about tonight?

Or excited?

"When I'm in this room," she said softly, drawing his gaze back to her face. "I feel pampered, indulged. Even a bit naughty," she ended in a whisper, her body shaking slightly.

The sight put him in mind of an innocent virginal offering standing at the edge of a great pit. Did her words and movements indicate eagerness for their impending joining or relief that their night would soon be over? He couldn't read her. Unlike Louise, who had been such an open book—one filled with blank pages—there was nothing left to discover, Dorothea seemed such a contradiction. A puzzle he wanted to unravel.

In addition to pampering and protecting her, he damn well wanted to explore this naughty side she'd just admitted to. The pressure in his loins demanded release. He stood, wanting to rip his confining trousers off, lift her skirts and plow into her—right on the decadent chaise lounge she *rather liked*. Before he lost all control, he bit out, "Shall we retire upstairs?"

"Certainly, my lord." Her words were hushed and she trembled even more, the action reminding him of his infernal self-made promise to give her time. He didn't know how much longer he could restrain himself before releasing the full force of his desire upon her person.

As he followed her up the stairs, her hips swayed beneath the faded fabric of her dress, causing his cock to twitch with excitement.

\* \* \* \* \*

Once in her room, Thea excused herself and changed into another new night rail. Edged in lace, the thin cotton brushed against her skin, raising goose bumps along her already sensitive flesh. It was lovelier than anything she'd ever worn, even though it was so large the neckline slid off her shoulder on one side. Fingering the delicate lace,

she left the dressing room, intent on expressing her appreciation but the second she caught sight of Lord Tremayne, the words evaporated off her tongue.

He stood next to the bed, wearing his trousers and boots. But his waistcoat and shirt were gone, leaving his chest bare.

Merciful God in heaven. How Thea felt blessed, for never in her imaginings had she known such an amazing sight could exist.

Saliva began to accumulate in her mouth and she wanted nothing more than to run her hands over his impressive torso. Corded with muscle and covered with a fine layer of dark hair, the sight of him standing calmly next to the bed—waiting for *her*—sparked treble sensations in her breasts, belly and loins. At once, all three places tingled and yearned for his touch.

She swallowed. "You may come inside me tonight, my lord," she said, as she walked toward the bed, with only a minimal amount of trembling. "That is, if you wish to. I do not mind."

At his intense stare, her eyes fell—directly to the bulge tenting the front of his trousers. *Please*, she wanted to add but lacked the courage.

"I would like that, Thea." The sound of his gravelly voice washed over her and a rush of moisture pooled between her thighs.

"Here." He gestured to the bed. "Lie on the coverlet."

Less gracefully than she would have liked, Dorothea climbed atop the raised mattress. Should she lift her nightgown? Or would he? What about the candles? Would he blow them out tonight and then join her? It had always been dark when she and Mr. Harper were together. They hadn't the funds to burn candles late at night.

It was a new experience, watching Lord Tremayne in the flickering yellow light as he rolled his head from side to side, stretching his neck, then flexed his shoulders, before his hands dropped to his trousers and began working the fastenings. She reclined on the bed as he instructed but oh, how she wanted to sit up and run her hands over his lightly furred chest and then lower, to touch the thick, flushed bodkin he had just freed. At the sight of his hand holding his length, her heart beat faster. The quiver between her legs intensified and she remembered touching herself last night after he left. Instead of her fingers, Lord Tremayne's male-part would fill her tonight. To keep from telling him to hurry, her teeth sank into her bottom lip.

"Like this." His strong hands tugged her legs and rotated her body a quarter turn until she lay on the bed in the opposite direction intended for sleep. Her knees bent over the side, which left her feet dangling toward the floor. Her gown had bunched beneath her when she moved and her mound was exposed to his gaze.

How incredibly vulnerable the position made her. How excited as well.

He ran his hand along the length of his rod and held it a moment at the base, making a tight circle between his thumb and first finger. Watching him touch himself caused her body to wind tightly.

She craved all sorts of things but couldn't seem to focus on any one. His ballocks drew up closer to his penis, then relaxed. The heavy-looking sac intrigued her. During her perusal, Lord Tremayne breathed deeply, his gaze never leaving her face.

He was so intense, this man who was about to enter her body. For the first time in her life, she was about to experience the sex act with someone other than her husband. Shamefully, she couldn't wait. The longer he stood between her bent legs, the longer he held himself in front of her, allowing her eyes to look their fill, the more she craved him. The more she squirmed. The more tightly wound her quim became, until she thought she'd cry with frustration.

Why was he waiting? Why didn't he put himself in her?

What did he want from her? A sign? Permission? Licking her lips, she spoke from a dry throat. "I'm ready, my lord."

With a fierce growl that caused her to flinch, he released his rod and lifted her by the hips, angling her body until the tip of his penis nestled just inside her hungry folds. Watching his every move, she nodded and he began to slide inside. Her muscles spasmed around him, trying to draw him in faster.

More. She needed more. With a cry, she flopped back against the bed and lunged forward with her pelvis, until he took over and pulled her hips to his groin, burying himself in her body. Oh dear Lord.

The sensation of having *his* thick phallus inside her quim. Her inner muscles clamped around his circumference, enjoying the sensation that had been missing from her life almost three years.

Luxuriating in the feel of his warm male body in the depths of her "flower," she relinquished her concerns and fears from the past months and resolved to take pleasure in this experience. But not just any man's part would have her thinking thus.

Only Lord Tremayne's.

Milking his muscle with her sex, she noticed the curious sensation from the night before begin again, centered directly above his plunging member. She curled her fingers into the bed sheets to keep from touching herself there. Proper ladies didn't do things like that.

But a proper mistress might...

She wiggled her hips, trying to get closer. His large hands were still wrapped on either side of her pelvis, holding her bottom several inches off the bed. She had little leverage. Her body was on fire. A moan escaped her lips and she turned her face toward the coverlet, embarrassed. Never with her husband had there been this heat, this yearning to touch herself everywhere and nowhere.

When she felt Lord Tremayne begin to pull out, just as Mr. Harper had done after he was finished with her body, instinct took over and she wrapped her legs around his waist, forcing him to stay.

The sensations were too much. Bucking against him, she touched herself as she had last night, placing her fingers at the base of her curls.

## Impure Longings

"No," she cried, wanting more. He couldn't leave her yet.

#### **Chapter Four**

No!

The word echoed in the room and he froze, his cock twitching within her body.

Dear God, Tremayne thought, watching Thea tremble in fear. When she put her hand between their bodies to push him away, he felt like the lowliest cad. No matter how welcoming she sounded downstairs, she must still fear intimacy on some level. Or perhaps she specifically feared him, which was infinitely worse.

Her heart-wrenching cry still ringing in his ears, he tried to withdraw but her legs were wrapped around his waist, locking him in place. Reflexively, his hips jerked against her again.

No.

Goddammit! Why hadn't he taken more time with her? Roused her body to the fever pitch of his own? Thea wasn't yet trained in the arts of love. He couldn't expect her to receive him at a moment's notice, despite her words to the contrary.

Reveling in the tight, hot warmth of her cunny, his rod refused to still but kept reaching forward, seeking her innermost depths. Blast his body's impatience.

"Thea," he said raggedly. "Let me—"

She squealed, squirming upon the bed. Her feet pressed against his buttocks and the action forced his cock deeper into her moist sheath. Defying his noble intentions, his unruly bodkin responded to the pressure and lunged into her once more, where he spent his seed in one fierce rush.

A languorous feeling of relaxation swept over him at the release. The wild tide of passion that rode him so recently gentled to a small wave of desire, one he could more easily control. Now that he was no longer pummeling into her, Thea's legs slackened and her bare feet dropped from his ass.

"Thea," he whispered, ready to return her hips to the bed and ease himself from her.

From where she'd burrowed her face into the coverlet, she turned and opened her eyes. They were full of tears.

Oh, God. "Thea, I humbly apologize."

"There is no need, my lord. Truly." Her quietly spoken words met his eardrums but they didn't affect him as deeply as the look on her face.

Stunned. Shocked. Dismayed?

She relaxed her hold on the bedcovers and wiped the tears off her cheeks before speaking again. "I don't mean to be so emotional, my lord. But, ah, sexual congress with you is different." She sniffed, attempting a weak smile. "Different from what I expected. What I'm used to."

Her determination to absolve him only increased the guilt he harbored over the past few minutes. She didn't sound traumatized or afraid. Only subdued.

At the same moment he felt her feminine muscles clench around his cock, her eyes widened, betraying her calm acceptance of what had just occurred. The motion of her vaginal walls drew his attention to her pelvis. He still held her aloft, his thumbs rhythmically caressing the prominent bones of her hips, edging closer to her core where her body held his. He remained firm, despite the fact he had ejaculated only moments before.

The bones in her pelvis were so delicate and fragile, especially when seen against the strength of his hands. It was apparent she hadn't been getting enough to eat for some time. Her skin was so very pale, except for the flushed deep pink color of her quim. The moist folds surrounded the perimeter of his cock, squeezing the muscle sporadically and exciting him anew.

Knowing he couldn't be so callous as to use her again, he stepped back and eased out of her, carefully lowering her hips to the bed. The slow movement caused excruciating sensations to erupt along his flesh.

To distract himself, he tugged up his trousers and focused on the fastenings. "You're much too thin," he commented into the silence.

"I'm sorry I displease you, my lord."

Damn his hasty words! He swung his gaze to her face.

Her teeth had sunk into her bottom lip and the wounded look in her eyes pierced his heart. He pulled the gown over her knees and braced himself on the bed, hovering above her.

"That was not my intended meaning." He spoke slowly, making sure she paid attention.

She gazed at him, her misty green eyes searching his features. In his stomach, a vaunted Vauxhall fireworks display commenced.

After a moment, she said, "Very well."

He still wasn't sure she believed him. It had never been his intention to thoughtlessly insult her. Frustrated with himself, he concentrated on his words. "I only want you to nourish yourself sufficiently."

She nodded, staring at his mouth. His lips tingled in response. When had such an innocent glance ever affected him so deeply?

"May I...kiss you?" Gad. Now he'd taken to asking? Blast it, Thea had reduced him to the veriest schoolboy.

When she nodded again, every thought escaped him save one. He had to taste her. His heart pounding erratically, he lowered his head until their lips touched. Mindful of

how she pulled away the last time he'd kissed her, he stayed thus, giving her the opportunity to become accustomed to his kiss.

She shifted beneath him, bringing her lips in firmer contact with his. In response, he moved a fraction, nibbling first her bottom lip, then the top. When she didn't shrink from his touch, he allowed his tongue to trace the seam of her lips.

This evening, instead of jerking away, her lips parted, granting him entrance. Cautiously, like one would approach a newborn foal, he advanced, sliding his tongue into the mysterious cavern of her mouth to glide against her own.

Her wet heat welcomed him and he craved more, longing to plunge both his tongue and his cock into the deep recesses of her body simultaneously. Beneath him, she tensed. Rather than wait for her to back away, he withdrew, the action almost more difficult than vacating from between her thighs moments before.

Tremayne stood and reached for his shirt, slipping it over his head and stuffing the long tail into his trousers with abrupt movements. His rod was rigid to the point of pain. How had that happened so damn soon? He grabbed his waistcoat, shoved his arms in the holes and paid inordinate attention to the fastenings on the front.

"Will you return tomorrow?" she asked from the bed.

Good. His kiss hadn't scared her off tonight. "That was my intention."

She gave him a hesitant smile, her lips glistening in the candlelight. "Very well, my lord. I will await your pleasure tomorrow evening."

He nodded and let himself out of her room, descending the staircase with care. His cock so hard and his heart so full, he could scarcely bring himself to leave. How he hoped the intervening hours passed with haste.

\* \* \* \* \*

By the following night, Tremayne had resolved to stay longer at Thea's, to spend more time in her company and more time in her bed. She almost behaved as an innocent at times, instead of a long-married widow but they seemed to be making progress together. Or so he hoped.

Thinking of the look on her face when he'd left last night, he could almost convince himself Thea had wanted him to stay. Perhaps she had wanted his company, or even his body, again.

At the time, though, he'd been so filled with desire, the raging lust running through him unlike any he'd ever known and he hadn't trusted himself to linger a moment longer without taking her again, exactly in the manner he longed to, her supposed missish fears and concerns be damned.

Gad. He was all worked up now, just thinking about her. His cock was so heavy he could scarcely believe he'd already palmed himself today, hoping to take the edge off his desire before seeing her again.

He groaned, running his hand down the front of his trousers. Good God. His loins had never been this full.

Never had he felt this intense longing for Louise, not even in the beginning of their liaison. In the months before he ended their association, she'd had to expend considerable effort to get any rise out of him at all. His fingers settled upon the hard ridge and he became sorely tempted to take himself in hand again.

This had to stop. His erection was about to break the damn fastenings on his trousers.

Tremayne banged the hood of the carriage with his cane. Before he arrived at Thea's, he needed to walk off his excess energy, calm his throbbing shaft, soothe the tension he felt clawing at his neck and throat and relax his thundering heart. He needed to compose himself in a manner more befitting a mature man.

Tonight, he deliberately planned to engage her in conversation, regardless of the strain to himself.

He wanted to know more of her...her background and her future dreams. He wanted to kiss her. He wanted to *seduce* the dainty Miss Thea right upstairs to her bed

where he had full intention of giving in to his pure need and lustful thoughts. And he was determined that she would enjoy it. Nay, he thought, his loins pulsing, excited beyond memory, she was going to crave it.

And even more importantly, she was going to crave him.

\* \* \* \* \*

When she heard Samuels open the great door to admit Lord Tremayne, Thea breathed a sigh of relief. The hour had grown quite late and now that he'd arrived, she could finally stop fretting.

She waited upstairs on the chaise lounge, hopeful that in her new dress he might find her appealing. The dress had arrived that afternoon with a note from Ellen stating that Dorothea deserved a new outfit to commemorate her new station.

In the past, she'd always refused her friend's gracious offers of clothing, saying anything too nice would only draw unwanted attention to her person. Since she no longer resided in a part of town where that need be a consideration, Dorothea had gratefully attired herself in the beautiful pale green gown, feeling much like a fairy tale princess.

The gown's high waistline tied just beneath her breasts, leaving the long skirt to flow past her hips and down the length of her limbs. Short sleeves capped just beneath her shoulders and the rounded neckline gently emphasized her slight bosom. Being clothed thus bolstered her confidence tenfold and she thought she did a commendable job hiding her nervous anticipation behind a relaxed demeanor.

Even if he thought her unattractive, she was determined to please Lord Tremayne fully this evening. She knew when it came to men slaking their animal lusts, any woman would do but she wanted him to want *her*. She couldn't help her thinness at the moment but with time and the wonderful food Mrs. Samuels prepared daily, Dorothea was confident her form would eventually fill out. For now though, she wanted to take her own pleasure tonight.

His footsteps neared the closed door and she tamped down the anxious excitement thrumming through her loins. She wanted to spend additional time with Lord Tremayne, conversing as they had last night, before they retired to her bedchamber where she hoped to touch his body and explore the hard contours she'd glimpsed so briefly the two evenings before.

She needed to be an active participant and not simply a receptacle for his desires, for that was what she'd been the previous evenings and the whole of her marriage. They might not be on equal footing but Dorothea vowed to have equal pleasure. A hint of what her body was capable of feeling had teased her last evening. Tonight, she would experience it fully.

Firm in her resolve to change the foundation of their interactions, Dorothea stood when Mrs. Samuels showed Lord Tremayne in before retreating with a knowing smile and closing the door.

"You look splendid, my lord." And he did. The burgundy tailcoat, striped forest green waistcoat, buff pantaloons and snowy white cuffs and cravat set off his dark coloring to perfection. Now that she knew what he looked like beneath the clothes, she could barely keep herself from divesting his form of them.

"Thank you, Thea." He bowed, keeping his gaze on hers. "And might I return the favor? Your attire is very fetching. The...d-delightful color you're wearing matches your eyes. You look lovely."

She flushed beneath his appraisal, secretly thrilled at the compliment. It was nice to know that she affected the smoothness of his tongue as he often did hers. Gesturing to the sofa, she said, "Would you care to be seated? I can ring for refreshments."

"You're sounding more at home." He smiled and took the seat she indicated.

Covered in beige upholstery, the sofa wasn't nearly as exciting as the crimson chaise but Dorothea had spun too many fantasies around the chaise to remain near it now that he was present.

She joined him on the sofa, sitting closer than she had the night before. Oh, how she wanted to trace the outline of the side whiskers that so clearly defined his face and jaw.

Would he kiss her again tonight? Remembering her resolve, she decided if he didn't, she'd kiss him. "Yes. In the short time I've been here, it already feels like home. Thank you for that. For these lovely accommodations. And for the security they represent. I am quite honored by the generosity you have shown me."

"You are very welcome."

His voice washed over her and warm flutters twitched in her stomach. Their shoulders were almost touching. Should she lean over and kiss him now? His lips were so close.

"Ellen said you were new...to, ah, how..."

She sensed his hesitation to ask her something so personal. "How did I come to need a protector?"

"Yes." He seemed relieved at not having to finish his question.

"Without Mr. Harper's salary as a solicitor's clerk, I soon had to leave our home. We had very little saved." She shifted and looked at the opposite wall, unable to face him while sharing her darkest moments. But he had a right to know. "I've been renting a room in Seven Dials." The rough area of London had been her home the past two years. "Until recently, I managed well enough."

"What changed?" he asked, the caring timbre of his voice reaching into her heart and warming its lonely recesses, whether he realized it or not.

"The landlord, my lord." She attempted a smile at the unintentional rhyme. "A new man began collecting the rents. And he wanted more than just money, you see." She gathered her courage and raised her eyes to his, relieved at the compassion and understanding she read in his face, instead of the disgust she feared might be present. She rushed to explain. "I couldn't barter my body like that. Not to someone like him. Someone..."

Her words trailed off when she realized what she was saying. She faced him squarely and waited for his response.

He studied her with an intensity that pinned her in place and stilled her very breathing. "Thea." He sighed. "How am I any..."

Different? She heard his question, even though he didn't fully voice it.

"For one thing, you have all of your teeth."

He laughed. "Anything else?"

"I find your voice very intriguing," she confessed.

His eyebrows shot up. "My voice?"

She nodded, yearning to place her hand upon his thigh. Covered in fine merino, the buff fabric showcased the thick muscles directly beneath. The heat from it seared her own limb and she had to fight her awareness of him and recall what she was saying. "Yes. The tone of your voice is very compelling. Your words are spoken very deliberately and with control. Quite unlike the high-pitched plaintive whine I've endured these past weeks from the landlord. Or the harsh threats he's delivered of late."

Believing she'd said too much, Dorothea glanced away. Idly, she noticed that several of the candles had burned low. She really should ring Mrs. Samuels to replenish them. The last time Dorothea had completed a household task for herself, Mrs. Samuels had chastised her. By the same token, she was mistress of this establishment. If she wanted to replace candles or—

"Thea." Lord Tremayne placed his fingers on her jaw and turned her to face him. She felt his touch clear to her toes.

"Have you a fear of him still?"

She shook her head, the slight motion increasing the pressure of his fingers. Her heart thumped in her chest. "Not anymore."

"Is he the reason you were overset yesterday?"

She hadn't known he was aware of that. "Yes, my lord. When I returned to gather the remainder of my personal effects, he accosted me."

Releasing her jaw, Lord Tremayne dug his hands into her shoulders and turned her more fully toward him. "Were you hurt?"

"No." She shook her head. The severe look on his face gave her pause. He was such a very fine specimen of a man. She wanted to satisfy her physical longings this evening, not discuss her former landlord, nor give Lord Tremayne an aversion to her by bringing up her past. She needed to lighten the moment.

She untangled her fingers from her lap and grasped both of his wrists with her hands. The fine hair on his arms tickled her palms. "Please do not worry. There is no need. Before he could act upon his threats, I cuffed him on the nose with my spare Wellington."

He didn't laugh as she had hoped but the tension in his face, as well his hold upon her shoulders, eased a fraction. "You, ah, house a general at your former lodgings?"

"Now wouldn't that be something, my lord?" she asked, smiling. "No, I have a spare boot of Mr. Harper's. I don't know what became of the other but they were his pride and joy."

He started to laugh and his hands rotated until his palms met hers. "You k-keep a single b-boot? Whatever for?"

"It's very useful, I'll have you know." Of their own accord, her fingers tightened around his and their clasped hands slowly drifted from her shoulders to rest upon his thigh, making her concentration falter. "I, um, found it worked admirably to transport the mice that frequented my prior accommodations."

"You are a b-brave woman, Thea." Still laughing, he smiled, warming her with his admiration.

She looked at their intertwined fingers. It was odd, how he could touch her hand but she felt the pressure in her chest...and lower. Lower, where she had a hollow space. One she suspected that only he could fill.

Returning to his original question, she said, "So you see, my lord, you are nothing like my former landlord. Why, look around. There is nary a mouse in sight. I wouldn't put it past that wretched man to have dumped them in my room just to hear me scream."

He raised one of her hands to his lips and splayed her ungloved fingers to press a kiss to the center of her palm. The action sent an electrical charge straight to her quim. She parted her lips to make another lighthearted comment but his tongue against her sensitive skin halted her words. Humor no longer seemed appropriate.

She stared into his eyes. He gazed at her, mysterious and tempting. Days ago someone like him had been so far beyond her realm, she could never have imagined the affinity she would now feel for him.

The very air in the room was charged. Her breathing deepened and became erratic. The casual moment of seconds ago was long past and her recent confessions were swept away. Her attraction for Lord Tremayne tugged at her heart and sparked in her belly. Wicked sensations ignited in her breasts and core.

His dark gaze demanded nothing short of complete honesty. Her own moral code, warped though it might be, could supply no less.

He may not desire her as she did him but Dorothea knew she wanted things different between them tonight. Keeping that in mind, she said, "I couldn't stomach the thought of bartering myself like that, of lying with him. He only wanted to take. I needed to be in a position to give. In a position where I had some say, some choice. I feel that way still but…"

At the fire in his eyes, her words burned to cinders but the ashes in her being flared to life, bringing such a rush of heat to her loins, she half expected she'd go up in smoke if he didn't touch her. And soon.

He released her hands and stood, rolling his shoulders and stretching his neck. His fingers flexed by his side, much like a man about to engage in fisticuffs. When he spoke,

#### Impure Longings

the slow rumble of his words vibrated across her skin. "And what is your choice now, Thea?"

There was only one possible answer. "To go upstairs. With you, my lord."

He gestured toward the door and she preceded him out of the room, heading to her bedchamber.

## **Chapter Five**

When they reached her bedroom, Dorothea motioned for Lord Tremayne to enter before her. He did, looking a bit puzzled.

She waited for him to strike the flint and light the candles near the bed, then she followed and shut the door behind her. Locking it, she left her hands upon the knob for a moment, drawing a fortifying breath of air into her lungs. She exhaled in a whoosh and turned to face him, leaning against the door for support.

"Lord Tremayne, I wish to alter our..."

Goodness. This was harder than she'd expected.

He stood in the middle of the room. At her silence, his hands curled into fists. "Thea? Is something wrong? Would you rather we not...?"

"No!" The word ripped from her throat and she made an effort to moderate her tone. "No, not that. But I would that we..." Her gaze flicked to the bed behind him, then back to his face. "Can things not be different between us tonight?"

"In what way?"

He was so fierce, so attractive, such a masculine presence in this surprisingly simple, feminine room.

Striving to respirate normally, she placed a hand against her heart to calm its rapid beating and finished in a rush. "I am not accustomed to being in this position, so please forgive me if I speak wholly out of turn, my lord. I would that we..."

When her words faltered again, he strode forward and placed his hands upon her shoulders. Inches away, his eyes refused to release hers. "Thea. Are things not to your liking? Have I...taken inappropriate liberties?"

"No, my lord. On the contrary, I desire you to take more." She held her breath, waiting for his response.

His fingers tightened upon her shoulders. "More." He sighed, contemplating her words. "I would hear from your lips the things..." He paused, his face inscrutable, his lips tense. "You would have me...take."

Looking over his shoulder, Dorothea answered honestly. "My attire, for one. I would have it removed completely tonight."

"Starting now?"

Could one faint from longing? Her breath escaped her mouth in light pants. She ran her tongue over dry lips before responding. "Yes."

Lord Tremayne released her shoulders and stepped back. "Will you..." He swallowed, the action moving the muscles in his throat. "D-disrobe before me now?"

She nodded, her stomach giddy with excitement. Using the door for balance, she bent down and removed her slippers, lightly tossing them to the side. Her legs were exposed, for her last pair of stockings had long since become so threadbare, she'd taken to going without. Grasping the hem of her dress, she stood and pulled the fabric over her head.

Emerging from the neckline, she faced him again, standing tall in her thin chemise.

With one finger, Lord Tremayne traced the tattered, lacy edge that gently rested upon her modest bosom. He removed his hand and looked in her eyes. "And the rest?"

Never before had she been completely unclothed in the presence of a man. For a moment, she vacillated between sheer exhilaration and nervous terror. What if he found her undernourished form not to his liking? He'd referred to her thinness previously but it couldn't be helped. Less than a week of regular meals had only made a slight difference in the amount of flesh padding her bones.

Biting her cheek, she whipped the worn undergarment off and stood beneath his intense regard. Unwilling to wait more than a moment for his reaction, she said, "I desire to have you remove your clothing, as well."

One eyebrow rose at that. "Indeed?"

Gathering her courage, she nodded. "Yes. I would see all of your body tonight and..." Her heart pumped so fast, she feared it might jump from her chest. Curling her fingernails into her palms, she finished her request. "If it is not so wicked of me to suggest, I would have both of us lie upon the bed. Together," she added, when he failed to respond.

"Very well." He spoke softly and retreated to the bed where he sat upon the mattress. Without taking his gaze from hers, he pulled off his boots, which landed on the floor with audible thumps.

She flinched slightly, the sound affecting her hypersensitive nerve endings. His fingers moved to the fastenings on his trousers and quickly dispensed with them.

Standing, he stared into her eyes and worked the buttons on his tailcoat and waistcoat, then he shrugged out of both in one swift motion. They dropped to the floor near his boots. He untied his cravat, making short work of the intricate design, then quickly pulled his shirt over his head, mussing his wavy hair.

From several feet away, his eyes drew her. Drowning in their depths, she took a breath, then released it. With effort, she tore her gaze from his and watched him kick off his trousers. Then he promptly removed his stockings and straightened.

Gracious.

He was naked. His body as bare as her own but there the similarity ended.

Where she was smooth, with not-quite scrawny angles, his muscles were attractively rounded and fine hair covered his torso and legs. The skin above one nipple twitched, as if the muscle jumped involuntarily. She looked her fill. The contours of his body were well-defined, the strength in each tendon and sinew apparent even to her inexperienced eyes.

Among the thatch of thick hair below his abdomen, his man-part jutted toward the ceiling, its length and width more imposing than she remembered from last night.

"I would..." Her voice sounded like rusty nails scraping against a hinge. She swallowed thickly, then raised one hand to her rapidly beating heart and tried again. "I would touch you tonight."

"And where would you have me?"

It was small consolation but his normally soothing tones sounded rusty as well.

"I know not," she whispered, her confidence wavering. "I fear we are far beyond my experience." She closed her eyes, embarrassed.

"Come here."

His voice compelled her to look at him but her feet remained mired in place, her heart thundering against her ribs.

"Walk...to me Thea." He held out a hand as, once again, the deep pitch of his words flowed over her like molasses.

Obeying, she let herself be pulled forward by the invisible thread connecting them. When she touched his hand, he hauled her against his frame and lowered his mouth to hers. "Have you any further requests?"

Up close, she could almost count his eyelashes. Speechless, she shook her head, causing their lips to connect briefly.

"Then shall I orchestrate the remainder of our evening?" His warm breath flowed over her face when he spoke.

"Yes," she answered. "Please. Teach me to pleasure you. But will you..."

His grip tightened against her back. "What?"

The hair on his chest singed her breasts and his rod pressed insistently into her stomach. Moisture flooded her thighs, more than she'd ever felt. She wanted, *needed* to be with him, in every way. Dorothea gathered her courage and spoke quickly. "Please touch me tonight." She bit her lip as inexplicable tears filled her eyes. "I would know

you fully this evening. Without you leaving directly after. Or before I..." She sniffed and leaned back to wipe her eyes. "The last two nights, my body has wanted for something more. I have not felt it this strongly before but I would have you fulfill the yearning. If it would please you as well, for I know that your pleasure is ultimately my sole reason for being here."

Lord Tremayne took her lips in a fierce kiss, plunging his tongue inside her mouth without preliminaries. It thrust deep, rubbing along hers and his lips sealed the perimeter of her mouth, pressing against her in gentle motions that made her crave more.

His big hands roamed her back, caressing the skin from her shoulder blades to her bottom, the light touch leaving trails of liquid fire in its wake.

It was too much to take in, to concentrate on. His mouth devoured hers, while his hands branded her. Sensation sizzled upon her every nerve ending. The fluttering in her stomach grew stronger and her hips began to undulate on their own, gently moving against his thighs without thought or control.

While his tongue speared her mouth, one of his hands grabbed her bottom and pulled her against his body. Her skin met the slightly abrasive texture of his hair-covered legs. She reveled in the rough, masterful way he held her. Her nails dug into his back and she anchored herself along his entire length, delighting in how he was finally touching her.

He leaned slightly to the side, taking her with him and she heard the coverlet and sheets rustling as he pulled them back.

Her hips rocked against him insistently and she sucked on his tongue, needing some part of him inside her, drawing it deeper into her mouth. He growled in his throat and pulled back.

With a whimper, she released her hold on his tongue and stared at his chest. The muscle was quivering again and it drew her lips. She placed a kiss upon it and he tensed. He stood taller, pulling away from her lips.

It was all so very amazing. Why must he stop now?

His breathing sounded harsh. The hand upon her bottom curved around her firmly and his fingers flexed upon her skin, reminding her of their first night together and the scandalous thoughts that had crossed her mind when he thrust atop her backside.

"D-" He paused and his breath rushed over her face. "Do you want to lie upon me?"

"Be above you?" She licked her lips, now swollen from the delightful pressure of his. "On top of you? I was unaware of that possibility, my lord. Mr. Harper always climbed upon my person when—"

He stopped her explanation by kissing her lips. Hard. His heated mouth erased all thoughts at once. Without waiting for her to decide, he lay on the bed and brought her with him.

She pulled away, slightly uncomfortable in the flickering light now that they were actually occupying the bed. "The tapers? Must they remain lit?"

He sighed, then smiled, brushing a stray strand of hair away from her face. "Extinguish them if you wish."

She scrambled over him, her breasts moving across his chest and shoulder until she could blow out the flames. The room plunged into darkness.

Before she returned to her former position, his lips closed around her breast, enveloping her nipple in the warm cavern of his mouth. "Ummm," she breathed, surprised at first but then her mind flashed to the night they'd met, when she'd wondered how it would feel to have his lips upon her breast. "Wonderful."

At her barely spoken word, he drew on her breast, suckling her with abandon. A tide of desire descended directly from her nipple straight to her abdomen and beyond...straight to the place she longed for him to fill.

Her hands floundered on the bed a moment until finding their way to his scalp. Her fingers tangled in his hair. He grasped the sides of her torso and tugged, shifting her body directly atop his so that his mouth could continue its ministrations with ease.

Never before had such attention been paid to her breasts. The divine sensation had her arching into his mouth, wanting to get closer. Her sex grew wetter and she squirmed, rubbing her core against his stomach. A growl escaped his throat when her curls touched the tip of his man-part.

His stalk. She bloomed for him, the folds between her legs filling with dew. Sliding a fraction lower, she felt the head of his penis at the mouth of her moist quim. Her hips jerked against the sensation and her muscles clenched, wanting to grip him. She whimpered and tugged at his hair.

He only increased the suction upon her breast, while his hands traveled to her bottom where they splayed on either side, gently pulling the lobes apart. The action angled her feminine entrance, allowing his rod to press inward.

A sound of satisfaction escaped her throat. Then his legs changed position, shifting her pelvis. In one smooth motion, he glided inside her welcoming body. The muscles along the walls of her vagina spasmed in response. Her fingernails dug into his scalp. At the urging of his hands, her back arched, bringing the topmost part of her quim into direct contact with the dark hair surrounding his erection.

"Oh!" She clamped her body around his thick shaft and held him tight. "Mmm."

He released her breast and placed a kiss upon her chin. "Have you..." he began, breathing harshly. "Any further requests?"

Trembling, Dorothea strove for a coherent reply. "I like the weight of your hands upon my skin."

In response, his fingers twitched against her bottom, their tips burrowing slightly toward the crease. She moaned and he released her buttocks, running his palms over her back and shoulders, leaving a trail of heat everywhere he touched.

She continued to rub against his abdomen, his rough texture inciting fiery tingles that spread from the top of her quim throughout her body. "I would have..." It was hard to speak. "You touch more of me."

His measured thrusts gently rocked the bed. At her words, his hands returned to her bottom and tightened upon the fleshy mounds, pulling them apart and exposing her anus to the cooler air in the room.

"Like this?" he asked, his words a growl upon her skin.

She nodded, all of her concentration focused on the dual sensations surrounding her sex and rectum. She released her hold on his scalp and framed his head, her fingers twining in his thick hair.

The itchy, restless feeling was back in her core and her movements against his abdomen increased. He removed one hand from her backside.

"Your tongue," he commanded.

Confused, she extended her tongue slightly but instead of meeting his lips, she touched his finger. Acting on instinct, she ran the flat of her tongue along his skin and encountered his tongue doing the same. Together, they laved the digit with their saliva. Her heart thudded at the sensual act. She surged against him, wanting to be closer.

When his finger was bathed with their joint attentions, he pulled it away and pressed his lips to hers, thrusting his tongue inside her mouth.

Rotating her lower body, she gripped his bodkin and ground herself against him. His hand returned to its former place on her bottom, where he lightly caressed the crevice in the center. His moistened finger touched the puckered hole of her anus.

She craved...something...and surged up, hoping he would understand what she wanted.

He released her mouth to ask, "More?"

She made a sound of agreement and his finger entered her anus ever so gently, pushing inside the tight, virgin hole in slow degrees. The muscles in her quim

responded, opening wider and she sank down even further upon his stalk. Her anus clenched, then released, drawing him deeper as well.

"More." The ragged word escaped her throat before she pressed their lips together and aligned her tongue with his. Tasting the intimate texture of his mouth satisfied some nebulous yearning within her. But it wasn't enough. "More! Please."

Obeying her shaky command, he timed the motion of his finger with the thrusts of his rod, driving both in and out of her body in rapid succession.

Her pelvis jerked against him and the knot of tension centered above her feminine core built until she was frantically thrusting her lower body into his groin and hands. With a muffled scream, she burrowed her head into the curve of his neck and concentrated on the muscles surrounding his penis. The friction between their bodies intensified and she grew rigid, unable to breathe. A moment later, her release poured over her in waves, flowing from her center, reaching every cell of her being. Thus spent, she relaxed upon his body, her breath heaving from her lungs.

Lord Tremayne had paused his movements during her frenzied motions and now lay beneath her, his finger embedded in her bottom and his erection filling her vagina. Small spasms shook her feminine muscles, causing them to undulate along his rod.

His other hand remained splayed against one cheek of her backside. He squeezed it gently and whispered into the silence. "Thea? Might I..." His low words rumbled over her. "Take my pleasure now?"

Consciously, she constricted her muscles around his penis and lifted her torso, bracing herself on her arms. Peering at him in the darkness, she nodded. "Yes, my lord. You—"

He lurched upright, ramming his phallus into her body. He gripped her tightly, wrapping one arm around her back and holding her bottom firmly against his groin with his hand. She gripped his shoulders, moving atop him in response to his thrusts. The sphincter of her anus spasmed around his finger.

Panting lightly, she swallowed against a dry throat and focused on breathing through her nose. His masculine scent saturated the air and she reveled in it, every part of the sensuously erotic experience filling her senses.

He groaned, his shaft twitching within her sex. His pelvis heaved into her quim one last time before he too became still as his essence filled her. Her feminine muscles clutched his rod, his release satisfying her in ways completely different from her own. Beneath her breasts, his heart pounded.

Neither moved for several seconds. In the distance, a carriage rolled by, clamoring over the cobblestones. A dog barked. Tremors shook Dorothea as the physical aftermath of the intimate experience reverberated throughout her being.

Carefully, he eased his finger from her bottom and leaned over the side of the bed. He retrieved his discarded shirt from the floor. Using the fabric as a towel, he wiped it across his face, then scrubbed his hand.

Still shaking in response to her strong orgasm, Thea rose to her knees above him and his member slid from her loins.

Beneath her, he said, "You asked that I stay. Is that still your wish?" "Yes."

He tossed the shirt to the floor and rolled to his side, pulling her back against his chest.

How long would he remain? "My lord, are you going to stay the night?"

"Sleep, Thea." His quiet words drifted over her head. "Rest now." His arm tightened across her stomach, pulling her bare backside against his entire frame. His fingers curved around her waist, tucked snugly between her skin and the mattress.

The strong, musky scent of their loving permeated the bedroom. The unfamiliar weight of Lord Tremayne's forearm made her very conscious of her breathing. The hair on his chest and legs tickled her skin and the place between her legs quivered in response.

What an unexpected conclusion to their evening. What an unexpected evening! Amazed, Thea closed her eyes. How would she ever be able to sleep?

An exhilarated feeling of awareness zinged through every particle of her body. She filled her lungs fully, taking care not to dislodge his arm. She let the air escape through her nose slowly, making a conscious effort to relax.

It was strange, sleeping in a man's arms. Mr. Harper had always resided on his side of the bed when they weren't directly involved with the sexual act.

No. She didn't want to think about the past. It was over. She'd much rather contemplate whether her breathing disturbed Lord Tremayne. Did her deep inhalations jostle him at all? Did he notice when she rubbed the bottom of her foot against his leg? When she shifted her buttocks, arching into his groin ever so slightly?

When his gentle snore reached her ear, she smiled. Evidently, she was the only one analyzing their evening too energized to sleep.

She remained awake long into the night, desperately hoping he would hold her until morning.

## **Chapter Six**

Dorothea's fingers stumbled over the ivory keys.

Gracious. Would she ever recall that specific measure?

Until this week, it had been a number of years since she had played and her memory stubbornly refused to cooperate. It was gloriously occupied with images of the previous night: licking Lord Tremayne's shoulder as his body thrust into hers, his groans of pleasure wrapping around her like a cherished blanket, falling asleep in his arms, their legs intertwined.

Waking up alone.

A discordant sound rose from the instrument, for her fingers had just crashed upon the keys without care. Suddenly the pianoforte that had challenged and delighted her moments before held no appeal.

Why had he left? She'd thought he was going to remain through the night.

Obviously she'd been wrong on that account. Giving the wooden base a swift kick that did nothing more than bruise her toes, Dorothea stood and walked to the single window that provided a view of the street below. The late morning sun cast shadows from the few people traveling through the area.

Would he return tonight? Her stomach flipped with anticipation at the thought. But he hadn't said. For the first time in their acquaintance, he'd made no mention of his intent to return. Now that he'd slaked his lustful desires for several nights in a row, may he had no immediate need of her and would absent himself for a few days.

Unable to contemplate that dreadful possibility, she focused her attention on the scene below. Across the street, a couple walked arm in arm. They talked animatedly and their muted laughter floated on the air and reached Dorothea. They behaved the

way she supposed longtime friends and lovers would. The way a happily married couple might.

Oh, God, no. What if Lord Tremayne was married?

Her eyes watered and the muscles in her throat spasmed, choking on air. Was that why he hadn't remained in her bed the entire night? Did he have family waiting at home? A wife?

The possibility hadn't occurred to her before. She'd never thought to ask Ellen and the subject hadn't come up in Lord Tremayne's presence.

The very idea was unbearable.

Lightheaded, she gripped the window ledge. Could he share the intimate physical experiences he had with her if he were committed to another? Of course he could. Wasn't that how the nobility behaved? For all she knew, he already had his heir and a spare and now he and his wife had gone their separate ways. How could she tolerate the knowledge of him engaging in physical relations with someone else?

Turning from the window, she crumpled to the floor. Her breath heaved from her lungs in giant gasps. The muscles in her stomach worked convulsively and she hunched over, crying silently until she realized that certainly wouldn't do.

With the skirt of her dress, she wiped her face free of tears. Given the prospect he did plan to return this evening, she couldn't let her face become all red and splotchy.

Her reaction was ridiculous. She was being paid to receive his body. Nothing more. But Ellen hadn't cautioned her about losing her heart. And Dorothea had never thought she would feel this way about anyone, much less a man she'd known for less than a week.

But what if he was in love with another woman? If not an actual wife, then perhaps someone he was already betrothed to... No! The idea was too horrid to contemplate further. Lord Tremayne couldn't love another woman. He couldn't.

For Dorothea longed for him to be in love with her.

There. She'd finally admitted it. Admitted the unattainable, preposterous yearning that grew stronger within her every moment she spent in his presence. The impossible dream of –

Mrs. Samuels bustled into the room and stopped abruptly when she saw Dorothea huddled upon the floor. "Pardon me, Miss Dorothea." The woman's hands fluttered in front of her. "The door was open or I wouldn't have entered."

"Be at ease, Mrs. Samuels," Dorothea said, her voice thick. Rising to her feet, she pretended that it was perfectly normal to be caught weeping into her hands. "What is it?"

The woman's face expressed her concern and she hesitated, not speaking for several moments.

"Is luncheon ready?" Dorothea asked, not really caring. The last thing she wanted to do was eat.

"No, miss. I came to tell you that Lord Tremayne just arrived."

"What?" She couldn't have heard correctly.

"He awaits you in the drawing room." Mrs. Samuels shifted from one foot to the other, almost as if Dorothea's agitation had relayed itself to her.

"I can't very well refuse to receive him, can I?" she muttered under her breath, realizing that by owning the very house she stood in, he could command almost anything of her. But he hadn't, had he? Not once had he expected anything of her she wasn't willing to give.

"Do you want me to inform him that you're unavailable? Perhaps, indisposed this morning? I'm sure he would not force his attentions," Mrs. Samuels said.

Of course he wouldn't. Dorothea shook her head. "No. Tell him I will be down directly."

"Yes, miss." With a curtsy, the woman quit the room.

Dorothea sped to her bedchamber and splashed water over her face and hands. Never before had Lord Tremayne arrived until after the evening meal. What had brought him here this early? Was he ending their association before she even had an opportunity to work through her confused feelings?

Knowing he waited below, Dorothea realized the utter impossibility of sharing him with another. She couldn't do it. She wouldn't.

Even if it meant returning to Seven Dials, she'd rather eat a potato a day and fend off unwanted advances, than suffer with the knowledge that Lord Tremayne loved another. Shared his body with someone other than herself.

She knew then what course she had to follow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tremayne gingerly flexed his hand around the head of his cane as he waited impatiently for Mrs. Samuels to fetch Thea. Though his hand hurt like the devil, exhilaration filled him after his eventful morning. He now looked forward to an enjoyable few hours in Thea's company.

His horses stood in the street, waiting, no doubt restlessly, to be off. Their patience would be rewarded once he issued his invitation to Thea and request she accompany him. Tremayne didn't care if it was slightly beyond the pale to invite one's mistress for a ride. Other men had done it. And it mattered not that it was noticeably before 5 p.m., when everyone of fashion typically gathered at Hyde Park. He wanted her company, dammit and he wasn't willing to wait until this evening.

In the early hours of the morning, he'd reached a monumental decision. He was no longer satisfied with spending only a short while in her arms each night. It was time to change the tenor of their relationship, which would mean opening himself up and becoming vulnerable but Thea was worth it. Beginning today, he would strive to be more himself around her. He anticipated his efforts would result in additional nights like the one previously and his cock firmed at the thought.

Despite his resolve, a significant part of him was still apprehensive. Shrugging off the unwanted worries, he waited for her to join him. A moment later, she entered the room and he turned to greet her, joy in his heart.

It faded instantly.

She'd been crying. Her eyes were rimmed in red and swam with tears. The skin on her cheeks was mottled with irregular pink blotches. A tremulous smile curved her lips. He didn't buy it for a minute.

Dropping his cane onto the nearest table, he rushed to her. "Thea, what has happened?"

"My lord," she began, then stopped.

His earlier excitement turned to dread. "Are you hurt?"

"No, my lord." She shook her head, then hiccupped.

She was having such a difficult time speaking to him. What was wrong? He took a step closer and reached for her arm. Giving her wrist a slight squeeze with his left hand, he waited for her to confess the cause of her misery.

Her eyes looked around the room, refusing to focus on his. She licked her lips. "My lord, I..."

"D-Daniel. That is my name. I wish you to use it."

She gripped both his hands and he flinched slightly. "My lord...Daniel," she added, her words coming on shaky breaths. "I am fully aware of the great honor you do me."

"Thea-"

She shook her head when he made to interrupt and continued, her voice stronger now. "But it is no longer sufficient. I need..."

"What?" he ground out, lost. What was no longer sufficient? Him?

"I need more than..." Her eyes filled with fresh tears.

"More than I give you?" His heart was breaking in two and she wanted more? More what? Did she want a bigger residence? A larger allowance? Hell, come to think on it,

he'd never even given her a gift, not a fan or a trifling piece of jewelry, nothing to show how he felt about her. Gad. He was an ass.

Or was it more than that? Did she seek to better her station? With someone else? Did she want nothing more to do with him? *No.* Not when he'd just found her.

Eyes damp with tears, she nodded. "Yes, I need more than this. I thought I could make do. That..." She broke off, pulling her hands from his and sobbed into her sleeve.

Unable to witness her pain, he gathered her in his arms. "Thea." He ran his hand over her head, the soft texture of her pinned hair teasing him for the last time. "D-do not cry. Please."

He wanted to beg her not to leave him. Plead with her to give their association time. Knowing her these past few days had reduced him to that—to thinking he couldn't do without her. It had also filled him with such happiness unlike any he'd known before.

He couldn't let her go. Not yet. Not without attempting to convince her to stay. He'd buy her another townhouse. Shower her with jewels, if that was what she wanted. He would do whatever it took to make her happy. He just needed to be able to tell her, to explain.

He needed the words to make things right. God, what a struggle. He swallowed his pride and spoke from the heart. "Thea. I need t-"

She turned her tear-stained face to his and gripped the front of his coat. "Daniel, don't you see? I'm dying inside, losing a little of myself each time we're together."

"What?" She made no sense.

"I thought I could be a mistress, a kept woman. I thought I could live this life, that I was prepared for it. But I can't. I can't bear it any longer."

Oh God. Had what the two of them done together brought her to this? She'd wanted the things they'd shared last night. Or so he'd thought.

"Thea, I..." he began, then stopped, clueless what to say, much less how to go about it. The muscles in his throat tightened, shutting him down.

In the silence, she placed her hand against his cheek. His face instinctively nestled against her palm. The innocent touch felt so damn wonderful. His anguish must have shown in his face, for those blasted tears filled her eyes again and she said, "I'm sorry."

How in God's name could he make this right? Convey what he wanted to say, explain that he needed her? More importantly, how could he convince her to stay without sounding like an idiot?

"Lord Tremayne. *Daniel*," she added when he growled. "I've come to care for you a great deal, despite our short acquaintance. I thought I could accept what you have generously given me but it is no longer sufficient. I would have us spend more time together, not just a few moments each evening before we are intimate. I long to know more of you. How you spend your days, the remainder of your evenings but not..."

He watched her mouth form the words, he heard their sound, sensed her despair but nothing registered as much as the longing in her eyes, the desire on her face. Realization slowly dawned. She didn't just want some titled lord or well-off merchant who could keep her safe and secure. She didn't care about what he could buy her. She cared for *him*. The knowledge swept through him as surely as he knew what was in his own heart.

"They are being spent with another but..." She was still crying, tears falling from her eyes like tiny diamonds. "I realize it is not my place to stipulate how you occupy your time, for I really have no say in the matter."

He shook her slightly, commanding her attention. "Thea. Thea! Listen to me."

He took a deep breath, preparing himself but she continued. "I cannot simply be a warm body any longer, not when just any will do. I need to feel special, to be desired for myself alone. To be loved. I need your heart, not just your touch. I cannot bear the thought of sharing you with another."

In that moment, he knew it was time to lay aside the protective shield he'd kept in place since childhood, the walls he surrounded himself with when dealing with every single one of his acquaintances and to speak from the heart, hiding nothing.

"D-D-Dorothea! Listen." He shook her again, cursing his uncooperative mouth. "I d-d-do d-desire you! With all my heart. I am not a-c-customed to speaking what's in it, for fear of reje-je-jection." A tear fell down his own face and he didn't give a damn. She was too important. Reaching her was what mattered. Not his pride or his goddamn stammer. Nothing but Dorothea.

She blinked up at him, silent at last.

He swallowed a bubble of hysterical laughter. "D-d-do you not see? When I g-get excited or d-d-don't co-concentrate, I have t-tr-trouble speaking." He took a deep breath, trying to steady his heart and slow his words. "Believe. Me."

In the moment of silence, she pulled away. Her hands wiped her face free of tears, her beautiful eyes so wide, he almost glimpsed eternity in their depths.

"You stammer," she whispered the obvious, coming to grips with all that he'd shared. "*That's* why you arrive late and don't remain long each evening."

"I d-don't stay because my de-desire for you is strong. I question my c-control, d-dear Thea." He was breathing more calmly now that he'd finally admitted his shame to her. "I've harnessed my lust for you, Thea, k-kept it under tight rein so as not t-to frighten you."

Her face glowing, she leaned in and curved her hands around his neck. "Oh, Daniel." Her body pressed into his, igniting his carefully banked need at once. "I feared perhaps *I* didn't matter, that you weren't interested in me or my body specifically, that any female would have done as well. Then I wondered if you didn't linger because you were involved with another. But that isn't the way of things, is it? You hesitate to stay because it means you will have to talk."

He brought his hand between them and placed a finger against her lips, feeling at ease in a way he'd never expected, especially after exposing his soul. "Thea, d-darling. There is no other. I ad-dore *you*. In every way. More than I ever expected. Your innocence, your intellect, your b-body's intimate secrets." He pressed a brief kiss to her

mouth. "I long t-to explore with you. T-To teach and learn." He took a deep breath and concentrated on speaking clearly and slowly. "To c-converse and to pleasure. To love."

Eyes shining brightly, she smiled and the sun came out, no matter that they were inside.

"Yes," she told him, speaking with certainty. "To everything you just said. To everything you are. Yes."

Their lips met in a shockingly carnal kiss, one that satisfied every emotional longing he'd felt since meeting her. The passion he so rigidly controlled in her presence flared to life. Passion he now knew could be released fully. With Thea.

Finally, he'd found a woman who accepted him for who he was. Never again would he have to monitor his words or think out everything before speaking in her presence.

He lifted his lips from hers. "As satisfying as this kiss is, I am consumed with other d-desires, ones I long to act upon."

Her face glowing with mischievous delight, he watched her gaze shift to the side. "I must confess, since first seeing this room," she almost whispered, "my mind has been filled with images of us lying together upon the chaise lounge. It is the most wicked piece of furniture, don't you think?"

He growled deep in his throat. "Are you saying that you want t-to b-be intimate there?"

"Oh, yes," she breathed against his mouth.

While placing kisses across her cheek and down her neck, his unruly fingers fumbled against the buttons fastening his tailcoat. "I had thought t-to take you for a ride t-today."

She laughed, assisting him with the buttons and quickly divesting him of his waistcoat as well. "From what you taught me last night, there is more than one way to go riding."

\* \* \* \* \*

"I fear they may never forgive me," Tremayne said, nodding toward his matched pair. The horses drawing the sporty phaeton pranced sideways and occasionally lunged forward, their pent-up energy over the past hours evident. "Standing in the street is not their favored pastime."

Beside him, Thea laughed. "Oh, Daniel, this is grand. I've never before ridden in such a wondrous carriage. Well, not counting the evening we met."

She spoke a bit shyly, he thought, given everything they had experienced that afternoon. Her refreshing innocence captivated him.

"But it was dark and shouldn't count, I don't think," she said. "Why, look at the view we have. The further you rise above the squalor soiling London's streets, the more beautiful the city."

He nodded to the large field of green grass ahead. "Have you ever ridden in Hyde Park?"

She gasped. "That can't be our destination. Daniel. Lord Tremayne. You cannot take me there, among your peers."

"And why not?"

"It isn't done."

"I believe, Thea, you still have much to learn. When one is a lofty lord, much can be d-dared." He shot her a casual smile, softening the haughty choice of his words. Now that he wasn't analyzing them as closely, he tended to speak without thinking. Gad, what an experience. "Besides, I no longer want to keep you hidden."

"B-but," she sputtered.

Laughter bubbled up from his chest. "Watch it, my d-dear. You're starting to sound like me."

She playfully rapped him on the arm. "How dare you say such a thing? I consider you the most wondrous and esteemed man of my acquaintance. You deserve only my respect, never my ridicule."

Tremayne sat a little taller at her compliment.

"I mean it, Daniel. After my mother died when I was young, I was left in rather limited company. My father, while not unkind, was never affectionate. Mr. Harper—Well, I was saddened upon his death but ours was a marriage more for his convenience than mine. And since he's been gone, I have not met many men to recommend the species, I assure you. Until you, my lord." She leaned against his shoulder and placed her cheek upon it for a moment, before straightening in her seat.

Purposefully, he steered them away from the main part of the park, skirting the edge to keep her to himself a little longer. He shifted the reins and placed one hand across hers, which rested in her lap. "For those words, d-dear, Thea, I thank you. And it warms my heart t-to know I have restored your faith in approximately half of humanity. When we met, I never d-dreamed what a philanthropic service I'd perform."

She laughed lightly and her fingers gripped his in response.

A strong profanity issued from his lips before he could stop it.

Instantly, she peered at him, completely serious. "What is it?"

Blast! He'd hoped to keep her ignorant of this. His eyes flicked to his right hand, which rested between hers. The leather of the kid glove stretched tightly over his skin. "My hand," he said on a sigh.

Before he could further explain, she was carefully peeling back his glove. Despite her light touch, he flinched twice. When the reddened, scraped skin of his knuckles was bared to her gaze, she inhaled sharply.

Almost lovingly, she caressed the torn skin, the tips of her gloved fingers running over his chafed, swollen fingers. Cradling his hand between hers, she looked at him. "What did you do?"

He directed the horses to halt beneath the nearest tree and set the brake. The warmth from her touch heated his entire being.

"It's nothing." To prove his point, he gingerly flexed his fingers. And winced.

"Can you not tell me?" she implored him with her eyes.

Honesty. She'd been completely open with him last night and he'd reciprocated this morning. Continuing their newfound intimacy, he confessed, "I hadn't intended you tto know but this morning, I went to Seven D-Dials and located your former residence. Had a little chat with your landlord."

Her eyes grew wide. "How?" she whispered, her surprise evident. "How did you know where to go?"

"I woke Ellen at sunrise—Selby was not pleased, I assure you—and I gleaned your d-direction from her. She wasn't exact but was able t-to give me a general idea. After that, it was simply asking the right questions. And d-d-d-" He took a breath and tried again. "Dropping a few gold pieces helped move matters along."

She attempted a weak smile. "But you are hurt. Please tell me what occurred. Have you any further injuries?"

"Thea. I am fine. T-trust me." He placed his arm across her shoulders and pulled her to his side. "And I d-don't think you need fear your landlord anymore."

"I already didn't. Not since meeting you."

"Good. But now, neither shall any other unprotected female fear his threats."

"How did you know you weren't mistaken in his identity?"

"I suspected I had located the right b-building. I was positive when I met the landlord. His nose, you see. I think you and the general might have br-broken it."

A guilty smile curved her lips. "Really?"

He nodded. "And if not... Well then, it's broken now." He smiled at her, pride puffing his chest. "So b-be at ease, Thea. I cannot change the circumstances of everyone in London but I can protect those close to my heart."

She blinked up at him, joy spreading across her face. Instead of the tears that had filled her eyes earlier, they glowed with pleasure. She bent over his hand and placed kisses along every scraped, raw knuckle, healing him down to his heart.

"Have your horses been exercised sufficiently?" she asked. "I find I have a strong desire to return home."

"Oh?" He could tell by her tone he was going to like the forthcoming suggestion.

"Yes." She nodded, looking amazingly innocent. "You've shown me how very wondrously my impure longings can be satisfied." With a soft purr, she released his hand and trailed her fingers along the inside of his thigh, setting off those damn sparks again. "I believe it is now my turn to show you..."

"What?"

She leaned over and kissed him, uncaring of the others slowly filling the park. Her lips nourished his mouth, providing sustenance. Her tongue slid along his, the firm caress causing his heartbeat to quicken. He reciprocated, grinding his mouth against hers and shifting the reins so he could feel the weight of her breast within his palm. With a sigh of pleasure, she retreated and pressed kisses along his jaw and throat, creating tension of a new kind.

"I would show you how many other rooms in the townhouse have intriguing pieces of furniture."

"Is that so?" His mind marveled at the possibilities.

She nodded, looking anything but innocent. "Even more importantly, I want to be alone with you to demonstrate something very pure that has grown within me upon our acquaintance."

"And what might that be?"

"My love. For you, my lord. Daniel."

With a shout that startled his team, he released the brake and turned the horses. "Now that, d-dear Thea, is one...demonstration I...do *not* want to miss."

#### About the Author

For someone who once turned down sex with her new husband so she could watch Star Trek: TNG (what was she thinking?) Larissa Lyons has come a long way.

Now an award-winning author of erotic romance and short story erotica, Larissa spends way too much time chasing after an intellectually challenged cat who eats carpet lint (and promptly pukes) all day long.

Visit Larissa's website for plenty of free erotic reads, a gooey dessert recipe—or ten—and to learn more about her crusade to make chocolate synonymous with health.

Larissa 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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