

# **Lady Barrington**

**By  
Katy O'Reilly**

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## **Julianna**

### **Chapter One**

"Maisie, put down that sewing now! I want you to take a ride with me." Julianna Pritchard was growing impatient with her cousin and best friend.

"You know very well that your father said he wanted you to stay in today. So we can't go riding." Maisie clucked in disapproval at her cousin. Julianna not noted for her patience grabbed the embroidery from Maisie and threw it on the floor. "You know very well that I never do what he says. There is no good reason for me not to take a ride. He is being silly. I don't care to meet whoever this Earl of Barrington is, most likely some old fuddy duddy friend of his. Now come and change and let's be off."

Maisie found herself being propelled upstairs to change into her riding habit. Julianna was never going to change. Her mother had passed away when she was just a little girl and her only other sibling was a brother that was much older and off at serving in the King's navy. Her father tried to raise her and make her obey, but his duties as Earl of Pritchard kept him far too busy. Plus he was now elderly and hadn't the patience to cope with a young spirited girl. Maisie's upbringing was quite different. Her mother was Julianna's father's sister and as easy going as her brother. However, her father was very strict and Maisie and her brothers and sisters were taught obedience and the consequence of disobedience at an early age. Maisie was currently spending the summer with Julianna, while her parents traveled.

As soon as Maisie was changed she went to Julianna's room to fetch her. Nancy the head housekeeper and governess for Julianna was there scolding her. "Miss Julianna, you know very well your father wishes your presence this afternoon for

tea with Lord Barrington. Now you will change back into proper clothes at once."

"No I will not! Maisie and I are going riding and will take tea in town. Now you may tell father whatever you like, but I won't be here." Julianna flounced past her and linking arms with Maisie headed for the stables. Both girls could hear the frustrated scolds from Nancy all the way down the stairs.

At the stable the lads quickly went about their business. They knew that Julianna was no one to disagree with. The ladies were mounted and out quickly. Julianna took the lead and galloped to the far hill. She was far more accomplished a horsewoman than Maisie.

When Maisie finally caught up. Julianna was laughing.

"Oh Maisie, you really have to lighten up. Your parents are traveling and you will never be in trouble here. Papa threatens and scolds, but is powerless to do a thing. My brother who is lorded over me will never be home in years. Let's just enjoy ourselves and have fun. We can shop in town and have tea and return home when we please. By that time the stuffy Lord Barrington will be snoring himself away."

At that very time there was a lone horseman observing the two ladies alone in the meadow. His thoughts were directed to the letter he had received from Lord Pritchard. Yes this must be his daughter and niece. One of which was the object of his visit.

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Maisie was quiet as they rode along, her thoughts centered on her cousin. "Julianna, have you ever thought about the future?"

"Of course I have, who doesn't silly. It will be just as happy and carefree as now. Eventually I suppose Edward will come home some day and take over from Father, perhaps even marry and have a

family, but it doesn't affect me. I will still do as I please."

"I don't know. We are both of marriageable age and I remember Papa arranging marriages for my older sisters at this age. Have you not thought perhaps your father has the same thing in mind for you?" Maisie was pleased to see that her cousin didn't have a ready answer.

Julianna was truly taken aback. The notion of being married hadn't entered her mind. She liked to flirt with the different men at the few balls she had attended and was even mildly attracted to some, but the thought of marriage hadn't occurred to her. "Surely, Father would say if that was what he had in mind. He would never make me wed a man I didn't love or wish to. He knows I wouldn't hear of it."

"But you don't have a choice in the matter. You have to wed whomever he makes a contract with. It is nice if you like them or even love them, but you don't get a choice. My sister's never did. They learned to love and that is enough."

"Stop this nonsense right now, or I will be cross with you the rest of the day!" Julianna didn't want to hear anymore about it. The thought was truly troubling.

Maisie shrugged and lapsed into silence as they rode along. There was no conversation between them for several minutes. Finally Julianna broke the silence, "I think it is time we head into town. I feel like we should have new dresses made for the Longworth's ball that is coming soon. That and some other things should cheer us up immensely." She kicked her horse into a gallop and left poor Maisie trying to catch up. When the village was in sight she slowed and waited for Maisie.

"I think we shall start with the dressmaker." Not waiting for an answer she rode over to the shop and dismounted. She was already in the shop before Maisie caught up with her. The dressmaker was fawning over her and showing her all kinds of materials. All the shop keeps knew Julianna and her

spending habits. There was never a complaint from the old Earl when the bills were presented and they were paid promptly

"Oh Maisie look at this beautiful brocade, I can just see you in this at the ball." Julianna was holding up a rose colored brocade. It was indeed beautiful and would complement Maisie's brunette hair and fair features.

"Oh Julianna, that is so beautiful, but do you not think it is a bit expensive? Won't your father complain about the cost for his niece?"

"Posh, he never will say a thing. Trust me, I do what I want. Now, how is this for me?" Julianna held up a sapphire blue silk. "Do you think this will do? I think it matches my eyes and will set off my blonde hair."

The dressmaker oohed and ahed over both their choices. "Oh yes, both of you will look lovely in those colors. Shall we look at designs now?"

"Yes, but I wish to pick out a few more things for everyday wear, and Maisie needs some extra gowns also." Julianna started rummaging through the fabrics and soon had quite a pile. "I think we will each need the ball gown, and three new daily gowns."

"Julianna! Are you mad? Your father will be furious with the cost." Maisie was shocked beyond words

"No he won't pay a bit of attention. Enjoy this while you can Maisie, remember I can do anything and it is fine. Now, dressmaker I like these two patterns for our ball gowns and you know what to do for everyday dresses. I would like them as soon as possible. Is a fortnight too soon?"

"Oh no, My Lady, they will be done by then special for you. Of course there is a bit of a charge for such a large order on a rush." The dressmaker looked carefully at Julianna for a reaction.

"Oh whatever, I care not. Just get them done and delivered."



Leaving the dress shop, Julianna next pulled Maisie into the local jewel smith. "I think we need a few new trinkets to go with our ball gowns and dresses don't you?"

"Julianna! You are pushing this way too far. I will be skinned alive when my Papa finds out about these charges. He would never permit this." Maisie was trembling from fear.

Seeing her discomfort Julianna put her arms around her and hugged her close. "Maisie my dear, never fear you will never get in trouble. All these purchases are in my name. Father just shakes his head and pays them. Don't worry about this at all."

After picking out several expensive baubles Julianna next headed for the shoemaker. Both had ordered several new pairs of shoes before Maisie knew it.

"Well Maisie, that has been productive and I think it is now time for some tea. Shall we indulge ourselves in Madame Karen's Tea Shoppe? It is new but I hear it is the best."

"Whatever you say Julianna." Maisie was in a daze from the shopping.

The ladies headed to Madame Karen's, one with a light heart, and one worried. What they didn't know was what was happening back home. The meeting with Lord Barrington and the Earl of Pritchard, was very interesting and would affect both ladies soon.

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Contrary to what Julianna thought. Jonathan Barrington, Earl of Barrington, was no old fuddy duddy. He was 29 and very handsome, with dark brown hair and hazel eyes that twinkled with merriment most of the time. His father had passed away several years prior leaving him the sole heir to his estate. He had come to visit Alex Pritchard at the Earl's invitation. The purpose of which was to discuss the possibilities of a betrothal of his daughter Julianna. There had been several letters

exchanged and he wished to actually meet the young lady. Rumors had reached him that she was extremely spoiled and would need a strong man to control her. Jonathan wished to verify that himself.

Upon his arrival at the estate, Jonathan turned his horse over to the stable lad. "Could you tell me if that was Miss Julianna and her cousin I saw riding as I approached?"

"Yes Sir, they left in rather a hurry, we were not expecting her to go riding today." The lad led his horse away to unsaddle and groom it. Jonathan continued on to the house and was met at the door by the butler.

"Good day Sir, the Earl is expecting you. I shall take you to him at once." He led Jonathan to a lavishly appointed study. Alex Pritchard was sitting in a chair and rose immediately when Jonathan entered. "Jonathan, it is good of you to come. I am so pleased to have you here. We will discuss a few things and then have Julianna and Maisie join us for a bit before tea. I shall send for her governess to have her tell the girls you are here." The Earl rang a bell on the table and asked the butler to summon Nancy.

Nancy was dreading this moment. She had not said anything immediately to the Earl, in hopes that Julianna would return. However she had not done so yet. Her only hope is that Maisie might prevail on her to return for tea. She walked slowly to the Earl's study and knocked on the heavy mahogany door.

"Come in."

Nancy entered and curtsied to the two Earls. "You sent for me, Sir?"

"Yes Nancy, please tell Julianna and Maisie that the Earl of Barrington is here. I will expect them to join us in about an hour and then have tea with us as well." The Earl turned back to Jonathan expecting Nancy to leave.

Jonathan was trying to suppress a smile. He could tell she was extremely nervous and about to

have to tell Alex his daughter and niece were not on the premises, but out riding.

"Sir, excuse me but there is a slight problem. Julianna insisted on going riding and took Maisie with her. She said she wouldn't return for tea. I tried but I couldn't stop her."

The Earl's face turned crimson. "Very well Nancy, when she does return tell her I want to see her immediately!" Nancy nodded and quickly left the room.

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"I do believe I caught sight of them galloping across the meadow when on was on my way here. Does she often ride that recklessly?" Jonathan was beginning to get the picture of one very spoilt child. "Was she not expecting my arrival?"

Alex exhaled. "Yes, she was told of your arrival. I have not told her of my discussions with you as yet though. You may as well know the truth about her. She was born to me late in life and my dear wife died when she was a small child. I am sorry to say I have spoiled her and never called her on her misdeeds. She is quite willful and has everyone terrified to say no to her. Poor Nancy has tried, but has no control over her at all. If you decide you want to proceed no further I would understand. However, my niece Maisie is a sweet and obedient girl and will make a wonderful wife for someone."

"I do believe, that it is never too late to take a lady in hand. I had heard some of the rumors regarding Julianna and that would not stop me. I do believe I could teach her to be sweet and obedient. I would like to proceed with our discussions and look forward to meeting her in person."

"Good, I am glad of that. Maisie's father is looking for someone for her as well. It isn't good for girls to be single too long." Alex motioned for Jonathan to join him at the table.

They reviewed the proposal for the betrothal and agreed on the amount of the dowry. The only item

remaining was for Jonathan Barrington to agree. "Alex, I find the terms of the agreement quite fair, the only other thing I require is to actually meet Julianna and be permitted to court her. I want to learn more about her personally before any commitment is made. If you wish to add a time limit or courting period I am prepared to go ahead. There is one stipulation however, during this courting period I will see to her discipline."

The old Earl smiled. "I find that perfectly acceptable. I doubt Julianna will take this well, but she is truly a good girl and quite gifted and bright. I think the two of you will suit each other quite well."

The adjustments were made to the agreement and both Earls signed the paper. If everything went as planned Julianna would become Lady Barrington in 3 months time.

Alex again rang the bell and asked for tea to be served. When the maids delivered the tea the Earl once again inquired about Julianna and Maisie.

"No Sir, they have not returned. Do you require anything else?"

"Thank you, No." Jonathan could see that Alex was clearly upset with his daughter and her behavior.

"What do you intend to do when she returns?" Jonathan sipped his tea while waiting for an answer

"I will definitely scold her, I am afraid at this point in my life, it is the only option I have. I am sure she will stay away till well after tea, and in several weeks time I will be presented with large bills for items she purchased today." The old Earl shook his head sadly. "I know I have not done her a favor by being so lenient."

"The hour is getting late, and I wish to be home before nightfall. May I suggest that you talk to her when she returns and I will return on Friday and spend the weekend? That should give us some time to start becoming acquainted. I must ask that you fully inform her of the terms of our agreement."

"I find that satisfactory. I will make sure she is here, if I have to lock her in her room." Alex chuckled but thought the possibility likely.

"Then I will take my leave and see you on Friday, sometime in the afternoon." Jonathan shook hands with the Earl and took his copies of the agreement and left.

He had not gotten too far beyond the estate before Julianna and Maise arrived home. The stable boys took their horses and watched as they walked into the house. The only thing they heard was the Earl bellowing, "Julianna! Come here this instant!"

Julianna was laughing and happy when she came into the house. Nancy was waiting for her. "Julianna, your father wishes to see you immediately! His is very upset that you were not here."

Julianna rolled her eyes and looked at Maisie. "I am tired tell him I will see him later after I rest." She had just put her foot on the first step when she heard her Father bellowing. "Oh poop, why can't he just relax. I will join you in a minute Maisie, I best get my lecture over with." Flouncing her hair she walked to his study and entered without knocking.

"I am here Father, you needn't bellow like a common goat herd!" Julianna plunked herself down in a chair.

Alex Pritchard was furious, he almost summoned the strength and nerve to turn her over his knee and give her the thrashing she so richly deserved, but he knew he could never do it. "Julianna, did I not specifically ask you to be present at tea this afternoon?"

"Yes I see to recall you wanted me to have tea with you and some old fuddy-duddy friend of yours. Sorry, but I had better things to do with my time." Julianna sighed. "Is there anything else? I need to rest, I am quite tired from my afternoon."

"Yes there is a lot else. Today is Wednesday. Jonathan Barrington, the new Earl of Barrington is returning here on Friday to spend the weekend and

start getting acquainted with you. We have made an agreement for your marriage to him." Alex was pleased to see the shock on Julianna's face. She had turned white.

"Father, you CAN'T....." The Earl had quite enough for one day from his daughter.

Slamming his hand down on the desk to get her attention, he continued, "YES I CAN Julianna, and I have. He has requested a courting period so that both of you can become better acquainted and more comfortable with each other. He will also be responsible for your conduct during this period. I do think you will like him. He is not old and is quite young and handsome. A most desired and sought after man."

Julianna jumped up in tears. "I don't wish to be married now! I want to make my own choice. I won't stand for this."

"You do not have a choice in the matter. For once in your life Julianna, you will do as you are told. I dearly love you and would never do something to harm you. You will have to trust me in this matter. You will be here and on your best behavior Friday. If necessary, I will lock you in your room. I have instructed the stable lads, that you are not to be given a horse under any circumstances." Alex shook his head sadly. He hated that things had gotten this out of control.

Julianna did not answer him but turned and ran from the room in tears. She fled past Nancy up the stairs and into her room. Flinging herself on her bed, she dissolved in tears.

Maisie had heard some of the commotion from downstairs and tentatively knocked on Julianna's door. She heard no response but opened it anyway and went in. She was shocked at how upset her cousin was. She could guess what conversation she had with her father.

Julianna sat up when she realized Maisie was there. "You won't believe this, he is marrying me off to that Lord Barrington! He is coming back Friday

for the weekend to start getting to know me. I won't stand for this!" She once more dissolved in tears.

Maisie sat next to her and put her arms around her. "Shhhh, it will be all right. He may be a wonderful man. You might fall in love with him and be wonderfully happy. He is very rich and you won't want for anything."

Slowly Julianna's sobs quieted. "Father says he is handsome and young, and yes wealthy, but I don't know. How can he say he loves me and do this?"

Maisie sighed. "I told you today that it is customary for them to do this when girls reach marriageable age. We have. I am sure my father is looking for a husband for me as well. It will be fine Julianna, you just have to be agreeable and you can be as happy as you are now."

Julianna thought for a moment. "I suppose. As long as he is wealthy I can still do what I want. He probably will be like Father and much too busy with things to bother much. Plus, if I can make him love me, he will let me do anything. I don't intend to be a sniveling obedient wife, hanging on his every command."

"I am sure it will all work out for you. Don't get upset until you see what he's like." Maisie got up from the bed. "Come wash your face and let's have some tea and a snack before bed. We can plan tomorrow what we wish to do on the weekend."

Julianna agreed and a short time later they were enjoying tea and scones. Nancy joined them.

"Julianna, tomorrow we must check your wardrobe and find your most becoming dresses, so Lord Barrington will be impressed. Also work on your social skills so he will find you charming. Maisie you may amuse yourself tomorrow and for most of the weekend. Julianna will be occupied with Lord Barrington."

Maisie looked surprised at this news, she thought they would be together for most of the

weekend. Julianna was equally shocked and angry that Nancy would be ordering her around.

"Nancy, I will do no such thing! I will dress as I wish and be myself. If he does not like it he can find someone else. Maisie is my friend and will be with me whenever I wish. Now go to bed and leave me alone!" Julianna was working herself into quite a temper.

Nancy knew better than to argue with her. The girl was truly impossible. "Very well, but your father will not be pleased." She turned on her heel and left the room.

When the door slammed Julianna started laughing. "She is so stuffy. Don't worry Maisie this weekend will be fine. Now, I think it is time for bed. I will see you in the morning at breakfast, and then we can plan our weekend. Have a nice rest." The girls parted company for the night.

Julianna was bright and chipper at breakfast the next morning. She hugged and kissed her father on the cheek and hugged Maisie good morning. She pointedly did not acknowledge Nancy, which did not go unnoticed by anyone at the table.

As he was leaving the table, the Earl stopped by Julianna's chair. "You do remember our discussion last evening don't you?"

"Yes Father, I remember. Don't worry, I will not go anywhere; it isn't necessary to lock me in my room. Maisie and I will amuse ourselves around the estate today and plan the weekend." She smiled sweetly at him

He patted her cheek and left for his study. Why did he have this uneasy feeling that Julianna was up to something. Nancy left soon after him. "I still expect to see you regarding your wardrobe this morning miss! I will see you in your room in one hour."

As soon as Nancy left the table Julianna turned to Maisie, "Shall we stroll in the garden? I have some special plans for this weekend. Lord Barrington will be more than happy to leave and



find another bride by Sunday." With a giggle both girls left for the garden.

Maisie and Julianna strolled peacefully through the gardens till they reached the gazebo. Checking carefully to make sure no gardeners or anyone else was around to listen, Julianna pulled Maisie into the gazebo and sat down on a bench. "Now this is what I have been thinking. There is no way I can avoid this weekend, the only thing to do is make sure he wants nothing to do with me. I can be sweet and gentle, but stupid. Spill food on myself and trip and be clumsy. Should he try and carry on a conversation with me, I will make silly comments and giggle. That should take care of him don't you think?"

Maisie shook her head. "He has probably already heard about you from others and may have even seen you at a ball. I think your father would stop that behavior immediately. I doubt that would work."

"Then we must think of something else." Julianna sat deep in thought for a long period of time. "I know, I will be most charming to him on Friday night. Then on Saturday turn into a real brat and disagree with everything he says. If he wants to take a ride, I will say no, and suggest he take me shopping instead. Maybe we will take a walk by the lake and I'll slip and knock him in. He will be glad to be rid of me by Sunday. That is for sure."

Maisie thought that perhaps her cousin was going to be surprised at how much Lord Barrington would take. "Didn't your Father say he was responsible for your conduct during this time or something like that?"

"Yes but I mean really what can he do? Don't worry about such nonsense. Your Father was just overly strict. We are adults now and nothing can happen." Julianna was very pleased with her plans.

"Let's go taunt Nancy now. Make her crazy about my clothes." Juliana took Maisie's arm and headed back to the house.

It was well past the hour that Nancy had told her to meet her in her room, but in Julianna's mind that was even better. When she and Maisie entered the room Nancy was flustered and had maids pulling dresses and under things from everywhere and piling them on the bed for review.

"Julianna! Where have you been? You were instructed to meet me here an hour ago. You must learn to be prompt if you are going to be running your own estate soon. Now I want you to try some of these on and see if any alterations or pressing is needed." Nancy handed Julianna a dress and then noticed Maisie standing there. "Young lady, I told you to amuse yourself, leave at once, your presence is not required."

Before Maisie could leave Julianna spoke up. "Her presence is requested and required by me, and stay she shall. She will give me her opinion on what I wish to wear this weekend. Plus, I am not going to try on all of these dresses. I know they fit, you can press them if you wish, but try them on I will not. Now Maisie, what do you think about this one for dinner on Friday?" Julianna held up the oldest, plainest dress she owned. Nancy gasped in horror. "That was there to be disposed of, you can not wear that dress."

Maisie was beginning to enjoy this game. "I think it would be lovely, nice and simple. You wouldn't want him to think you pretentious."

Nancy was furious. "I can see you are bent on vexing me. Be off both of you. I shall go through this with the maids." She grabbed the dress from Julianna and handed it to the maid. "See that this is disposed of."

Julianna and Maisie retired to the parlor with their sewing, giggling the entire time. "Oh Julianna, she is so easy to vex. Did you see her look of horror when I agreed with you? She will probably have the most elaborate dress picked out for you,"

"Yes, I imagine she will, but I will wear what I wish. I intend to thoroughly enjoy this weekend."

While Julianna was plotting her weekend, Lord Barrington was also planning his. He had visited in the past with some of his neighbors who were somewhat acquainted with Julianna Pritchard. He had asked many questions since the Earl had first approached him months before. At the last ball he attended he had observed her closely. She was indeed beautiful and seemed bright, but a flirt and very self-centered. That was a trait he absolutely did not like.

On Thursday, he rode over to his closest neighbor and best friend. Jonathan knew that Richard Eastbrooke had actually danced with and spent some time with both Julianna and her cousin. His intention was to find out a little more about Julianna and inform him of his betrothal. Also, let him know that they were searching for a husband for Maisie. If he guessed correctly Richard would be interested in hearing that.

The Earl of Eastbrooke was happy to see his friend. "Jonathan how nice to see you, I have been wondering what you were up to."

They settled in Richard's study with glasses of port. Richard listened intently as Jonathan explained about the marriage agreement with Julianna Pritchard. "You have taken on a handful there she is quite willful and spoiled."

Jonathan laughed. "Yes, I realize that, and can cure her of those traits I am sure. But I have the impression that she is self-centered as well. Thinks of no one else but herself. That is something I do not like and could not abide."

"No, she isn't self-centered though it might appear that way on the surface, she is quite kind. She looks out for her cousin and is always giving away things to the poor in town. Not many know of it because she wishes it not to be known. But self-centered is not one of her vices. But I don't know how you can change the rest of her behavior that easily."

"I have an agreement with the Earl of Pritchard that during our courting period I will be responsible for her conduct and discipline. I think a few sessions over my knee will be most enlightening for Miss Pritchard. I seem to remember my Father advising me that it worked wonders. Seems my mother may have been a bit like Julianna in her youth. I know she fought against marrying him, but by the time they married they were both deeply in love. That is the marriage I desire." Jonathan sat back and sipped his port.

"I wish you luck then, I do think she is a desirable woman, but I would not have the patience to deal with her, nor would many others. Her cousin is much more amenable and quite desirable herself." Richard poured a little more port into their glasses.

"That brings me to the second reason for my visit. They are actively seeking a marriage for her as well. I am to be there tomorrow and could express your interest to the Earl."

Richard was silent for a moment. "Yes, I think that would be acceptable. It is time I think about finding a wife. Please do and I will follow up with you on your return."

The men finished their drinks, and then Jonathan bid his friend goodbye and left for home. He wanted to get an early start in the morning. He planned on taking his valet and using the carriage, so it would take a bit longer than traveling by horse overland. He was most anxious to see what would happen this weekend. He was sure that Julianna would have some cunning plan to dissuade him. He had his own plans for her.

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The journey to the Earl of Pritchard's estate was not as comfortable via carriage as it was overland on horseback. The roads were rutted and needed

repair, but due to the baggage and valet there was no other choice. It was nearing teatime before the house came into view. The carriage was pulled to the front door and Jonathan jumped out and knocked on the door.

"Welcome Lord Barrington, we have been expecting you." The butler called to a servant to take Lord Barrington's bags. "I'll show you to your room and let the Earl know you have arrived. Tea will be served in the parlor in half an hour Sir." Jonathan and his valet followed the butler upstairs to a spacious room. His valet ordered water for Jonathan to wash up with and unpacked the bags.

After he washed up, Jonathan changed out of his travel clothes and was ready to go down for tea. He entered the parlor and greeted Alex. "Good day Sir, I trust you are well?"

"Jonathan, nice to see you again. Yes, I am well. Tea will be served shortly and the ladies will be joining us momentarily. After tea we can talk a bit, then rest before dinner."

Jonathan sat on the sofa and chatted with the Earl until the ladies arrived.

Julianna and Maisie were in the process of changing for tea. Julianna immediately rejected the dress Nancy had laid out for her. It was far too fancy for tea. Perhaps she would wear it for dinner, but not for tea. She picked out a print dress with tiny blue flowers. It was one of her favorites and would be fine for tea. Maisie knocked and entered the room; both girls were ready to go down.

"Are you nervous Julianna?" Maisie looked at her cousin with a smile.

"No, I'm not at all. I intend to have fun getting rid of the Earl of Barrington."

"What though if you should find him attractive. That could happen you know." Maisie knew Julianna never once considered that possibility.

Julianna stopped in her tracks. "I don't know, but I am sure I won't. If I do, then I will have to

think of something else. Come, we will be late and I don't want to put up with Nancy scolding."

When the two girls entered the room Jonathan and Alex both stood. The Earl called Julianna over to him. "Julianna, this is Jonathan Barrington, the Earl of Barrington whom I told you about." Julianna curtsied and extended her hand. "A pleasure to meet you, Sir."

Jonathan took her hand and kissed it. "I am most pleased to meet you Julianna."

Alex then introduced Maisie to Jonathan. Maisie was in awe. He was positively the most handsome man she had ever seen. Julianna would have to be nuts to drive him off. She took a quick look at her cousin to see her reaction. Julianna's face was blank she couldn't read anything from her expression.

The tea arrived and Julianna poured. The talk was light and happy. Alex had been holding his breath he didn't know what to expect from Julianna, but so far she was behaving admirably. When tea was finished Julianna excused herself. "I will see you at dinner, I hope you are able to rest before then." She floated out of the room with Maisie at her heels. When they were out of sight and earshot she pulled Maisie over. "He is quite handsome isn't he? So far I can't find anything very objectionable about him, but I am sure I will."

"Are you still intending to continue your plan?"

"Yes, for now. I am curious to see what kind of man he is. Come let's rest before dinner." The two girls ascended to their chambers.

Julianna allowed her hair to be piled on top of her head for dinner. She even relented and wore the dress that Nancy had selected. She wanted to look spectacular so he would be really caught off guard tomorrow. Maisie had to agree that she did indeed look spectacular.

After tea Jonathan had spoken to Alex briefly. "I think this will be a very agreeable contract. We may wish to up the date, but I will let you know further. I will warn you that I am not totally fooled by her

perfect behavior this afternoon. I have heard much about her and feel I have a surprise coming. She is aware of the codicil regarding discipline is she not?"

Alex laughed. "Yes I expect some mischief myself and she is very aware of it. I don't think she really believes anyone would ever dare discipline her though."

"Then Miss Julianna may have a real surprise in store for herself. I also have another piece of news for you. I have spoken with my neighbor and good friend the Earl of Eastbrooke. Richard has met both Maisie and Julianna, and is quite interested in Maisie. Whom would he contact regarding this interest? Her father or yourself?"

"That is good to know. I will contact him myself; since her father is unavailable and has given me permission to arrange a contract should something arise before he returns. He is not scheduled to return for the best part of a year." Both men shook hands and left to prepare for dinner.

Dinner was a very festive affair. The cook had outdone herself on the meal. As with tea Julianna exhibited her most charming behavior. Jonathan and she engaged in light conversation. When dinner was over, the ladies retired to the parlor while Alex and Jonathan enjoyed a cigar and port.

Nancy was smiling broadly at Julianna as they sipped tea. "I knew you would like him, he is the perfect gentleman isn't he? You are very fortunate. It is time you realized it. Your behavior has been perfect." Julianna sighed and said nothing, but smiled at Maisie.

It was about 45 minutes later that Alex and Jonathan joined them. Jonathan stood in front of Julianna. "Would you like to take a walk in the garden with me?" He held his hand out to her. It was actually more of an order than a request. Julianna wanted to say no just for spite, but her plan was to be good tonight.

"Yes, that would be wonderful. I will get my wrap and meet you in the hall." Julianna left for her

shawl and shortly they were walking in the garden. Jonathan had tucked her arm into his and talked softly as they walked commenting on the beauty of the garden. When they reached the gazebo he entered and motioned for her to sit next to him.

"I want to make sure you understand the purpose of my visit. That you fully understand the contract that your Father and I have signed." Jonathan smiled kindly at her.

Julianna couldn't help blushing. "Yes, I know of it, my father talked to me at length about it."

"I understand that you are accustomed to doing most anything you want and answer to no one. I am not one who will tolerate that. It is best if you know from the onset, that if you don't obey me you will be punished. I would hope that would never happen." Jonathan wasn't surprised at the audible gasp that escaped Julianna's lips.

Julianna didn't know what to say. Her plan wouldn't allow for her to slap him and storm off but that was her first instinct. She sat silently for a minute before replying. "Thank you for informing me of your ways." She couldn't trust herself to say more, but she had no intention of ever letting this man discipline her in anyway.

Jonathan sat back and held her hand. It was just as well that she couldn't see the smile on his face. He continued with light conversation for a while. "It is getting late, we best head back. Is there something special you would like to do tomorrow? I have to spend some time with your father, but we can do anything you would like."

Now was the time to start her plan. "I think a nice ride would be lovely."

"Then a ride it will be. I shall see to it right after breakfast." Jonathan kissed her hand lightly. "Good night Julianna, sleep well."



## Chapter Two

Jonathan lay in bed reviewing the day's events. He was positive that Julianna would be over his knee before the weekend was over. From what he knew of her, she could not go all day tomorrow sweet and amiable as she had this evening. She was lovely as he had heard and he was very attracted to her. She had a bright mind and a good sense of humor, she just needed some taming, and he was more than up for that. He felt that she had some attraction to him but was fighting it. He fell asleep looking forward to the morrow.

Julianna went to see Maisie as soon as she got upstairs. "You won't believe what he told me. He is an oaf!"

Maisie waited until Julianna had told her the story and calmed down. "But don't you find him attractive? If you behave then there won't be an issue. It is common for men to correct their wives you know."

Plunking down in a chair Julianna sighed. "Yes, unfortunately I do. He is quite handsome and really charming and fun to be with. I have to get him to do things my way is all. I will not let him discipline me."

"Julianna, I don't think you will have a choice. You best just abandon your plans and go along with him. I would be happy if I had a man that wonderful, picked as a husband for me."

"Hmmmppf, well he will have to learn to do things my way. Good night, I will see you tomorrow, my plans are still in effect." Julianna left for her own room.

Instead of dressing in her riding habit the next morning, Julianna put on one of her everyday dresses. She brushed her hair out and left it hang down her back. She intentionally made sure she was the last one to enter the dining room for breakfast.

Jonathan stood and greeted her and held her chair out for her, but frowned at her costume. He said nothing waiting to see what she was going to do. Her father inquired what they had planned for the day. Jonathan replied. "Julianna and I are taking a leisurely ride this morning. I will meet with you before tea when we return." Julianna yawned and looked right at Jonathan. "Oh, I have changed my mind. I wish to go shopping in town. You may take Maisie and I, if you wish."

"No, I do not wish." Jonathan leveled a glare at her. Julianna was oblivious to the intent behind the glare, but it was not lost on her father or Maisie.

"Fine then, Maisie and I will go alone, you can spend your time however you wish. Come Maisie, I think we shall take the carriage today." Julianna rose to leave the room. She had not yet reached the door when Jonathan was there and took her by the arm to the morning room. "Young Lady, you have five minutes to go and change into your riding habit. I wish to take a leisurely ride as we discussed last night. You are not going shopping. Maisie will be able to amuse herself this morning. Do you understand me?" Jonathan held on to her waiting for her answer.

Struggling to pull her arm loose, Julianna spit her words out in anger. "Un-hand me you oaf. I am not going for a ride. I do not wish too. If you wish my company, you will have to do what I want, and that is to go shopping in town." Her efforts to free herself were to no avail. He was far stronger than she.

Jonathan was not backing down. Her easily tucked her under his arm and swatted her bottom five times. It was not as hard as he could have, but she screeched through each one. Setting her back on her feet he looked right in her eyes. "Now, you have five minutes to change. If you are not back here, you will find yourself over my knee for a real spanking, then you will change and the ride will not

be so comfortable. Now go!" He turned her to the door and swatted her twice more.

Julianna was too stunned to say a word. She ran to her room and slammed the door as hard as she could. The sound echoed through the house. She was furious. How dare he treat her like a child? Her father never treated her that way. Her brother had smacked her several times when she was a child, but he had been gone for a long time and she was too old for this type of treatment. She got up and locked the door. "Let him rot waiting. I am not going with him." Julianna flung herself on her bed.

Five minutes passed and Jonathan sent Maisie up to fetch Julianna. "Please tell Julianna that I am waiting her appearance, her time is up."

Maisie hurried up the stairs. She and the Earl had heard the exchange and the spanking. She knew that Julianna would be in a temper. She tried the door and realized it was locked. "Julianna, this is Maisie, Jonathan is waiting for you. He wants you downstairs now. He said your time was up."

This infuriated Julianna even more. "Tell the bastard he can wait in Hell. I am not coming down and not doing a thing more with him." Julianna had yelled loud enough to be heard downstairs.

Maisie was shocked. "Julianna, you best watch your language you are pledged to this man."

"Maisie, tell him to Go to Hell and rot! I will never let him near me. His wife I may be forced to become, but he will never touch me again!" Julianna punctuated her words by throwing anything she could grasp at the door.

Maisie was ashen faced as she turned from the door. She had never heard Julianna so upset and angry. She hurried to the top of the stairs only to be met by Jonathan and the Earl. "I am sorry Sir, but she doesn't wish to come out."

"Maisie, I heard and don't worry, now go along and amuse yourself I will handle this problem." Jonathan patted Maisie's cheek.

"Alex, you have a key to her room?" Jonathan looked at the Earl questioningly.

"Yes of course, but please Jonathan, this is a shock to her, she just needs a bit of time."

"She has had her time and her spoiled days are over. I will not hurt her permanently only teach her what she should have learned as a child. I care for her Alex and I will be kind." Jonathan took the proffered key from the Earl's shaking hands. "Maybe you should retire to another place and not hear the results of this encounter. But I guarantee you, Julianna shall be riding with me today and will be pleasant."

Alex knew it was for the best but regretted he hadn't taken firmer measures earlier. He was grateful for Jonathan though as he was firm but kind and seemed to have a genuine like for Julianna. He quickly descended the stairs and hid himself in his study.

Jonathan knocked on the door. "Julianna, please open this door at once!"

"I will not open it for you, you bastard. Go to Hell!" Julianna's temper was out of control.

Jonathan wasted no more words. He inserted the key into the lock and opened the door.

Julianna sprung from the bed alarmed to see him there. "GET OUT! You can't be here!" As Jonathan approached her she backed up till she was cornered. It was then she raised her hand to strike him.

Jonathan deftly grabbed her arm. "That was a mistake Julianna, that you will regret. I meant what I said. You will be disciplined for disobeying and misbehavior. Now is your first lesson."

Jonathan pulled Julianna to him and sat on the end of the bed. Juliana was terrified and struggled to get away and screamed loud oaths at Jonathan. It absolutely did her no good, no one came to her rescue and he was far too strong to escape from. She was thrown over his lap and her skirts lifted before she knew it.

Holding her firmly in place Jonathan lectured her punctuating his words with slaps to fully get her attention. "I told you last night that I expected to be obeyed. You were given a chance this morning to change your mind, but you chose to have a temper tantrum instead. I will not tolerate that type of behavior. Before we are finished here this morning you will apologize and be on your best behavior from now on." Jonathan started spanking her harder.

Julianna was still furious. "You idiot bastard, you let me up! You can't treat me this way! I will see you in Hell, before I apologize to you. Ouch! That hurts! Stop it! Ouch, ouch." Julianna squirmed and kicked her legs and put her hands back to stop his assault on her bottom.

Jonathan deftly grabbed her hands and pinned them to her back. "This is only the beginning Julianna, I suggest you take your punishment like a lady and stop the foul language and threats, or you will find a mouth washing will follow." Jonathan stopped long enough to untie her knickers and lower them. Julianna screamed in embarrassment. "You can't do this! It is indecent."

"Julianna, stop this instant. I will punish you how I see fit. Spankings are always given on the bare." Jonathan trapped her legs with his and shifted her to raise her bottom even higher. His hand came down again and again, until her bottom was bright red and she was sobbing. "Do you have anything to say to me?" Jonathan rested his hand for a moment on her bottom.

Julianna was silent and Jonathan started spanking her even harder on her thighs this time. That elicited shrieks from her. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I will behave, please stop!" Jonathan continued for a few more minutes until he could tell her sobs and apology were heartfelt. He stopped spanking and pulled up her knickers. She was still sobbing as he lifted her up onto his lap and held her tight to his chest. He rubbed her back till she quieted a bit.

"I don't want to have to repeat that spanking Julianna, but I will. Don't test me. Now I want you to change your dress and meet me in the hall and we will go for a ride." Jonathan hugged her tighter and placed soft kissed on her head. "Are you ready to change?"

Julianna had finally quieted. She was enjoying the feel of his arms around her and the soft kisses and rubs; still there was a rebellious streak in her. "Yes, I will change, but please Jonathan, can we walk somewhere; riding will not be comfortable?"

Jonathan lifted her chin to look right into her eyes. "Julianna, I told you that we were going for a ride at your request. I know it will not be that comfortable, but that was your choice. Now I will meet you in the hall in five minutes." Jonathan set her on her feet and kissed her lips lightly. "Please be on time."

Once she heard the door close, Julianna took her dress off and examined her bottom in the mirror. It was so red and sore when she touched it. She couldn't believe he had really spanked her. Never in her life had she been spanked and could not believe how much it hurt. "I will have to show him I am strong and not show my discomfort." Julianna mumbled to herself as she quickly changed and dabbed her eyes with water. She brushed her hair and arranged it in a knot at the base of her neck. Checking herself in the mirror once more she walked downstairs to meet Jonathan.

"You look lovely Julianna, are you ready? The horses are saddled and waiting for us." Jonathan smiled down at her and took her arm and led her outside to the waiting horses. A groom was waiting and helped Julianna mount. Jonathan had to chuckle and the wince and small ooh that escaped as her bottom came in contact with the saddle. Jonathan mounted his horse and led the way out to the fields. "Is there any place you would like to ride to? It is a beautiful morning."

Julianna was really in discomfort but didn't want to let Jonathan know. "I like riding along the stream and there are several places that are nice to rest the horses and walk." She prayed he would go along with her suggestion, so she could have a chance to rest her bottom.

"That sounds nice, I saw the place you are referring to when I was here earlier this week. In fact I believe I saw you and Maisie galloping rather recklessly in the same area." Jonathan slowed and pulled up next to her so he could see her face.

Julianna blushed, something she rarely did. What was it about this blasted man that affected her so? "It may have been, but I don't think we were reckless. I know how to handle a horse well."

"From now on Julianna, I don't want you riding that fast, unless I am with you." Jonathan was amused at her mumbled. "Yes Jonathan." She may be learning all ready.

They rode quietly along the stream until Jonathan saw a spot that would be a good resting place. He pulled his horse over and dismounted and helped Julianna down. He secured the horses and sat down on a grassy mound near a tree. "Come join me." He patted the spot next to him.

Julianna hesitated. "Would you not like to take a walk?" She was secretly praying he would answer yes.

Jonathan laughed. "The grass is soft and will give your bottom no trouble. It is like sitting on a pillow."

Julianna blushed red to the roots of her hair once again and gingerly sat next to him. She was not sure for once in her life quite what to say. Her plans had so far not exactly worked the way she wanted them to. She also found herself attracted to him and even though he had punished her, she felt secure and safe in his arms. "I just have to rid myself of these thoughts and stick with my plans. I do not wish to marry!"

Jonathan talked gently and quietly and slowly elicited information from her about her life and likes and dislikes. Despite her resolve not to like him Julianna found herself enjoying his company. When he pulled her closer and kissed her on her lips she didn't resist. She didn't understand the shock and thrill that ran through her body.

Jonathan felt her shiver and knew he was slowly winning the battle. He held her close and undid her hair. "Please leave it down for the rest of our ride. I like to see it stream behind you." He stood and pulled her to her feet.

"I think it is time we return. If you would like we can gallop hard for a bit. But you must stay with me and not go ahead." Jonathan helped her mount her horse.

Julianna wanted nothing more than to test him and race him back, but her bottom advised against it. They galloped hard and Jonathan let her get just a bit ahead. He did enjoy seeing her long blonde hair blowing free behind her.

When they reached home, he turned the horses over to the groom. "I have business to discuss with your father. I will see you at tea." He gently pulled her to him and was pleased to feel her response as he kissed her once again lightly.

Julianna hurried up to her room and lay on her bed. "Damn, now what am I to do?"

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Jonathan knocked on Alex's door and was bid enter. The Earl looked up hesitantly he didn't know what to expect after this morning. "How did the ride go?"

Jonathan sat and smiled. "I think things are going quite well. There will be no problem with going forward with our agreement. I am sure Julianna will spend a bit of time over my knee from time to time, but her first experience seemed to have the desired effect on her already."



Alex shook his head and smiled. "I am glad it is going well and I am glad to finalize our agreement, but be careful cause Julianna is an expert at altering her behavior to gain her own way and quickly reverting back to her old ways."

"I fully expect a bit of trouble from her still. But, I am confident she knows I won't put up with it and what the consequences will be. I can also tell she is attracted to me as well, but not quite ready to admit it."

"I received a missive from the Earl of Eastbrooke today, he apparently didn't want to wait for your return for an answer. I have sent him a reply and hope things will go well there also. Since he is already acquainted with Maisie the agreement should be easy to reach. I don't think Maisie will be as stubborn as Julianna has been."

"There is just one more thing I would like to see. I assure you it will not affect my decision, but I need to see her monthly spending. I feel from what you have said that there is some control and budgeting needed in that area."

The Earl got a ledger out of his desk and handed it to Jonathan. It didn't take Jonathan long to see her spending was totally out of control. "What could she possibly do with all of this? Is this solely her expenditures?"

"I think since Maisie has been here, some are things she has purchased for her, but she buys on whim and probably never uses or wears, half of what she buys more than once."

Alex took the journal back from Jonathan. The two continued discussing the dowry and signed the final papers just in time for tea. The wedding would take place in 1 month's time. Jonathan would spend as much time as possible here in the intervening time.

Julianna sought out Maisie to tell her of her quandary. Maisie however was nowhere to be found. She finally wandered into the kitchen and asked if they knew where she was.

"The last time I saw her she was sitting in the garden reading." The kitchen maid told her.

Julianna went to the garden and finally found her in a remote corner. "I have been looking all over for you. You should have left me word where you were."

Maisie put her book down. "You were busy and I had no clue as to when you would return. Sit, and tell me about this morning."

Julianna gingerly sat down; her bottom still was smarting from her spanking that morning. "I suppose you heard what happened this morning?"

"Yes, I imagine the entire house heard it Julianna, you were not exactly quiet and he did leave the door open. Did it hurt much?"

"Maisie, how can you even ask that? Of course it hurt, why do you think I was screaming? Jonathan has a very hard hand." Maisie couldn't help but giggle.

"I don't find getting treated like a child funny Maisie." Julianna huffed at her.

"I wasn't laughing at that but at the look on your face when you said his name. I do believe you like him Julianna."

Sighing deeply Julianna stood and gazed out over the garden. "I think so Maisie and I don't know what to do. I still don't wish to marry yet. He is fun to be with though, but I don't want to go through life having to obey his every whim. That would not be fun."

"I am sure it wouldn't be that bad as long as you were pleasant and not rude like this morning. He is wealthy, so you could still have everything you wished. Plus, if you like him, you will soon love him and it will be fine. I am hoping I am as lucky as you." Maisie gathered her book up. "I do think we should get ready for tea. What do you plan to do?"

"I am going to be pleasant tonight and see if he will kiss me again. He did twice lightly today and I liked it. But tomorrow I may have to test him some more. I am thinking of a picnic at the pond. He

could just accidentally fall in. That would hardly be my fault if he were clumsy. Then he will be leaving. The wedding may not be for many months so I will have plenty of time to think about it. I suppose ultimately there is nothing I could do."

Tea was once again served in the parlor and was a pleasant affair. After tea Jonathan took Julianna aside. "Would you like to take a walk in the gardens. It is still nice outside."

"That would be fine." Julianna took his arm and they strolled out to the gazebo once again.

Jonathan pulled her close to him and put his arm around her once they were in the gazebo. "Did you enjoy your day?"

Julianna's heart was pounding. What was it about this man that so confused her? "Yes, well most of it anyway." The words were no sooner out of her mouth than she blushed. "I ....I mean yes."

"I wasn't including the spanking, I didn't think you enjoyed that." Jonathan hugged her a bit tighter and chuckled.

They chatted for a bit more then it was almost time to prepare for dinner. Jonathan had some other things to talk to her about before he left on Monday morning, but he needed to find out a few other things first. For now, he wanted her to become at ease with him. She also needed to know that he was serious about her behavior. "What would you like to do tomorrow? I think it should be another pleasant day."

Julianna was confused. She knew what she had planned but she felt so safe and secure sitting here with his arms around her. 'Maybe I should just give in and not go ahead with my plan. But then how will I ever know if I can charm him to let me do what I wish?' She was silent for a moment too long.

"Did you hear me Julianna? I am waiting for an answer." Jonathan turned to look her in the face.

"I was just thinking!" Julianna's voice had a certain snippy tone that wasn't pleasing to Jonathan.

"Watch your tone, Young Lady! I asked a question and am waiting for your answer."

Julianna bowed her head; she really would have to learn to watch herself. "I'm sorry, I was trying to decide. His sharp correction of her had made up her mind. "I think it would be lovely to take the carriage to the lake and have a picnic lunch. You haven't seen it and it is lovely there."

Jonathan agreed at once. "I will arrange for the carriage, you can make arrangements with the kitchen. We shall go in late morning. Now I think it is time to go in and prepare for dinner." Jonathan rose and took her arm and walked them back to the house. Julianna went upstairs immediately. Jonathan sought out Nancy.

He found her still sitting in the parlor sewing. "May I have a word with you Nancy?"

She put her sewing down "Yes, please sit, what can I help you with?"

"I wish to discuss Julianna's behavior in the past and in the future, before we are wed. I will need you to describe to me in as much detail as you can her past behavior and I will want a report each time I come on how she has behaved. If you are not aware of the arrangement, I am in charge of her discipline and I will not have her misbehaving or acting the shrew, when I am not here."

Nancy smiled and started to chuckle. "Oh Sir, there is much to tell."

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Nancy smiled broadly when she heard what the Earl of Barrington had to say. Miss Julianna was no longer going to be able to treat her and the other servants the way she had in the past without paying a heavy price for it.

"Sir, there is much to tell." Nancy launched into a long discussion of Julianna's behavior since the Earl had hired her. She had been here for 8 years and if anything her behavior had deteriorated as she grew up.

Jonathan knew that Julianna was a spoilt brat, but this list of behaviors far exceeded his imagination. "Is she still this way, as of late?"

"Why yes sir, the first time you came to visit, she was specifically instructed to be here for tea. I did my best to stop her from riding out, but she ignored me totally and told me to my face she wasn't going to listen to her father or me. Then for this weekend when I requested that she work with me on her wardrobe, she was intentionally an hour late and wouldn't cooperate at all. She wore whatever she pleased and in some cases not what would have been a more fitting choice. She basically has decided she will do what she pleases, when she pleases. She has all of the staff terrified to go against her." Nancy finished and waited to see Jonathan's reaction.

"Thank you for telling me this Nancy. I do not wish Julianna to know that we have spoken or that you will be reporting her conduct to me. But I do want to know of each and every incident of misbehavior when I am not here."

"I will be more than happy to keep a log for you Sir."

"Thank you Nancy." Jonathan rose and left the room, pondering what he was going to tell Julianna.

While Jonathan had been talking to Nancy, Julianna was in the kitchen discussing picnic plans. The cook was clearly frustrated at the instructions Julianna was giving. "Miss Julianna, I am more than happy to provide a picnic basket, but with company and a big meal planned for tomorrow night you are asking a lot."

"I care not what trouble you have to go to, I wish fresh roasted beef, sliced, fresh bread, three cheeses and roast potatoes, along with assorted pastries and wine. It must all be freshly made. I will have nothing less. See to it or else." Julianna stormed out of the kitchen leaving the cook and maids muttering under their breath.

After dinner was over the men joined the ladies in the parlor and conversed among themselves. Shortly the Earl excused himself and Nancy soon followed making sure Maisie left with her. When they were alone Jonathan sat on the couch and pulled Julianna close to him again. "Have you spoken to the kitchen regarding our picnic in the morning?"

"Yes Jonathan, I have. It will be a lovely picnic. I have given specific instructions and they best be obeyed."

Jonathan didn't like the sound of that. "I do hope you didn't request a lot of extra work on our behalf. They do have a normal schedule to follow and I understand your father has invited other guests to dinner tomorrow night to announce our betrothal."

"They are well equipped to handle the request, it should not be a problem." Jonathan made a mental note to check this with the kitchen himself.

"Your father and I signed the final agreement this afternoon, our wedding will be held in one months time. I will try and spend as much time here as I can, but I do have to arrange things at my own estate as well." Jonathan felt her stiffen a bit, the timing of the wedding was scaring her a bit it seemed. He turned her to face him and lowered his lips firmly over hers. He kissed her harder and deeper than he had before. Julianna was first shocked then pressed herself into his arms and returned the kiss.

When Jonathan felt her responded he kissed her more passionately. Julianna had feelings coursing through her body that she had never felt before. As he continued to kiss her she could feel certain warmth where she had never felt it before. Jonathan was well aware of her feelings and knew he best stop. Holding her against him he whispered to her. "Julianna, I know this has been short, but I find myself truly falling in love with you. I only hope that you can feel somewhat the same toward me."

We will truly have a wonderful life together and you will never want for anything."

Julianna was shaken with her feelings and his words. "I do feel a strong attraction to you Jonathan, but I have never been even courted before, so I am not sure if it is love or not."

"It matters not at this time, I am sure we will love each other for a long time. Now it is best we retire for the evening, tomorrow is going to be busy." Jonathan walked her to the stairs and pulled her tightly in an embrace and once more passionately kissed her.

Julianna fairly floated up the stairs. She lost no time in finding Maisie to tell her of the turn of events. "Maisie, he says he feels he is falling in love with me and that I shall never want for anything. I think I may love him, too. Tomorrow we will see how much I can get away with."

The kitchen was still busy preparing Julianna's picnic requests. The cook was not happy, but at last it was finished. She was surprised to see Jonathan when he entered the kitchen. Wiping her hands on her apron she looked at him. "Is there something you desire, Sir? I was just finished with your picnic preparations."

"I was wondering how much extra effort Miss Julianna required of you for this picnic." Jonathan could sense the anger and weariness in her voice.

"Nothing more than she usually does ,Sir. I have managed to fulfill all her requests."

"Please tell me what those requests were?" Jonathan was astounded when he heard. "And you have stayed up late to prepare that? The picnic was to be simple. Your patience is to be rewarded." Jonathan took a large coin from his pocket and handed it to her. In the future you aren't to do anything out of the ordinary for her, unless she is kind and patient and you have the time."

"Oh thank you Sir, but if one argues with her she becomes surly and will yell and slap you." The cook pocketed the coin quickly.

Jonathan was appalled. "If she should ever strike someone again, I expect to hear about it when I next come. That is not something I will tolerate. I want to know."

The cook smiled a sly smile. "Thank you Lord Barrington, be sure I shall report anything that may happen. You are a truly good Lord."

Jonathan bid her goodnight and took his leave. As he lay in bed his thoughts were in turmoil thinking about the next day. A picnic they would have, but Julianna was going to be told of some new rules in her life. Hopefully, she was ready to listen and heed him. As he drifted off to sleep though he had doubts that his struggle with her was over.

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Sunday dawned warm and sunny, it was a perfect day for a picnic. Julianna greeted everyone warmly at breakfast; she was in a good mood and planned on really testing Jonathan today.

As one of the maids was serving her breakfast she tripped and spilled some tea on the table next to Julianna. The poor maid turned scarlet and hurried to wipe up the spill. "I am so sorry Miss Julianna, please forgive me, my foot got caught in the rug." Julianna looked at her with disdain. "That is no excuse! You are a stupid person! You could have ruined my dress; if you can't do your job properly, have cook send someone else. Now get back to the kitchen."

Jonathan raised an eyebrow and looked at the Earl. No one said anything and continued finishing their breakfast. When they were finished and left the table Jonathan stayed seated and asked Julianna to remain also.

"I do not approve of treating servants that way Julianna. She made an honest mistake and apologized for it. I don't want to ever hear you talk that way to a servant again. I also had a discussion with the cook last night. You caused a great deal of



extra work for them to prepare an elaborate picnic, when a simpler one would have sufficed. We will now go to the kitchen and you will apologize to both Cook and the serving girl." Jonathan stood and pulled her up next to him.

Julianna was in shock; she had never apologized to anyone in her life. "Jonathan! That is preposterous! They are servants and are here to serve me. They are well paid to do so also."

"Julianna, you can either go now and apologize or we can retire to your room and have a repeat lesson from yesterday morning and then you will apologize. Which shall it be?"

Julianna looked at his face. She could tell he was serious. "I will apologize now." She sighed in resignation.

"Oh and it better sound sincere or we will still have that lesson." Jonathan took her by the hand and led her into the kitchen. As they entered all the activity and chatter ceased. Julianna was blushing more than she ever had in her life. She didn't know what to do and stood there speechless.

Jonathan prompted her. "Miss Julianna has something she would like to say to you. Julianna?"

"I am sorry I was rude and yelled at you at breakfast. I shall not do it again, I realize it was a mistake and not your fault." Sighing she turned to the cook. "Thank you for taking care of my picnic request. I should not have asked for so much and put you to extra work. Please forgive me." Julianna turned and fled from the kitchen leaving them standing in stunned silence. Jonathan nodded to them and went after Julianna. He caught her in the hall and pulled her aside into the study. She was crying and he held her against him. "You did that very nicely. Now if you treat them well, you will not have to repeat that." When she quieted he lifted her chin and kissed her. "If you do have to repeat it you will do so after a spanking, is that understood?"

Julianna looked up at him through tear stained eyes. This man just kept confusing her. "Yes Sir."

"Good, now I will meet you back here in one hour for our outing. Remember, I don't like to be kept waiting. I will have the picnic baskets and blankets in the carriage waiting." Jonathan hugged and kissed her and went upstairs to prepare himself.

In exactly one hour Julianna came down the stairs ready to go. She wore a simple cotton frock with tiny red roses on it. She had a matching red cape and parasol. Jonathan was waiting. "You look lovely my dear, are you ready?" He held his arm out for her and smiled down at her

She smiled shyly. "Yes, I am ready." They walked out and he assisted her into the carriage. It was a lovely ride to the lake and they fell into easy conversation. When they arrived Jonathan lifted her down. The driver unloaded the blankets and spread them under a tree and set the basket near by. "Will there be anything else Sir?"

"No, you may return for us in three hours. Thank you." Jonathan took Julianna's hand and led her to the blanket. "Let's sit and talk a bit, then we can walk about."

They lowered themselves to the blanket and sat quietly for a few moments. Julianna broke the silence. "Jonathan you haven't told me anything about your estate or your likes and dislikes, we have only talked about me. I would like to know something more about you also."

Jonathan smiled. He was pleased that she had finally asked it showed she was truly not self-centered and did think of others. The next half hour was spent talking about his estate and his parents. "I would say the majority of my time is taken with running the estate. We do breeding of cattle and horses and that takes a bit of extra work. But I always will have time to spend evenings and meals with you. There are balls in season and I do enjoy dancing as you do. I think we shall be well entertained when you first arrive also."

Julianna was pleased to hear all of this. It sounded beautiful and she did love horses. "Will I be able to ride? I do love horses and riding."

"Yes, but at first I will insist on riding with you or sending a groom until you learn your way about. I do not want you lost." Jonathan smiled at her. "Now we do need to talk a bit about some things more serious."

Julianna was not prepared for the next part of the conversation. Jonathan held her to him and talked softly. "You know I expect you to behave and obey me. I think I made that perfectly clear yesterday. I also expect you to treat others with respect, including servants and shopkeepers and anyone you encounter. Starting now I want you to listen to your father and Nancy and obey them also. You need to treat them with more respect than I have witnessed."

Julianna started to protest but Jonathan hushed her. "Wait, there is more and then we can discuss it. I also will be placing you on an allowance. I have looked over your expenditures and they are out of line. If you need to spend more than I have allotted you, then you are to ask me first and explain the need. It will be more than generous to attend to anything you should need or want."

Julianna spluttered. She really couldn't comprehend this at all. "Jonathan, I am used to buying what I wish when I want. I cannot live on an allowance! You are mean!" She stood up and started walking away from him along the shore of the lake.

Jonathan had expected a reaction, but not quite this one. "Julianna, come back here!" She kept walking totally ignoring him. When she was almost out of sight, Jonathan stood and started after her. "She is going to learn to obey."

When he found her he grabbed her arm and stopped her. She had been hoping he would do this, with a little twist and push she could get him off balance and in the lake. "Unhand me!" Julianna

twisted and pushed lightly. It did make Jonathan lose his balance a bit, but only succeeded in having only one foot slip in the water. His years of swordsmanship were paying off. "That's it, Young Lady! That was intentional and not an accident." Jonathan pulled her over to a nearby fallen log "You my sweet are going to learn the consequences of your actions." He quickly flipped her over his knee and lifted dress and petticoats. "When I am finished your bottom will match your cape perfectly." He wasted no time in baring her and raised his hand high and landed it with great force on her bottom. She was squealing and crying from the fifth blow on.

"Please, Oh Please Jonathan, stop! I am sorry. Please ow, Ouch. Please." Her cries fell on deaf ears and he kept on paddling her ever reddening rear. Finally when she was sobbing and limp, he stopped and pulled her onto his lap. "What do you have to say for your self Julianna?" His face was still stern and his eyes blazing.

Julianna wiped her eyes and hung her head. "I am sorry, I shouldn't have tried to push you into the lake."

"No, you shouldn't have, and what else do you have to say?"

"Uh, I shouldn't have run from you?" Julianna wasn't sure exactly what to say. "I am sorry Jonathan, but I don't want to live on an allowance."

"Julianna, you have been spoiled all your life. You are going to obey me. You are going to live on your allowance. You are going to treat others with respect. You are not going to want for anything, but your extravagances will stop now." He lifted her chin and looked her in the eyes. "Do you understand Julianna? I don't want to spank you everyday, but I will till you learn, if I have to."

"I understand Jonathan." Julianna bowed her head, tears still streaming down her cheeks.

"Good, because next time I will use your hairbrush or a paddle on your bottom, and I

guarantee you that will hurt much more." Jonathan stood her up and rose himself.

"Now go back to the blanket and stand with your nose to the tree, till I return." Jonathan turned her and swatted her bottom in the right direction. Julianna did as she was told. When she was standing there she wondered. "What could he be doing?"

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It seemed to Julianna that she had been standing by the tree for a very long time before she heard Jonathan approach. When he was very near he called her. "Julianna, please come here!" Julianna turned and started to walk towards him, she stopped and gasped when she saw what he held in his hand. "Surely, you don't intend that to be used on me?"

Jonathan held a long supple switch in his right hand. "Yes, as a matter of fact I do. You behaved very childishly and this is the way spoiled little girls are punished. You are going to get a taste of the switch to remind you what happens when you behave as a child and run when I call you. Now come here."

Julianna stood rooted to the ground. She had heard the servant's children switched and knew it must hurt terribly. Maisie told her she had been switched once and was sore for days.

"Come here, Julianna, right NOW!" Jonathan still had a stern look and hard edge to his voice. "If I come and get you, it will be doubled."

Tears streaming down her face, Julianna finally walked over to him. Jonathan placed his leg on a rock and flipped her over his knee. Lifting her dress and baring her once again, he brought the switch down six times on her bottom. He didn't use full force but enough so she could feel the effect. She was howling and sobbing when he finished. He threw the switch down and carried her back to the blanket. Pulling her down with him, he held her in

his arms and soothed her. "Julianna, I don't like doing this. I love you and would much rather do loving things, but you must learn to listen and obey."

Julianna's sobs quieted and Jonathan raised her chin to look her in the eye. "I do love you Julianna, please don't keep fighting me." He lowered his head and claimed her lips in as passionate a kiss as he had given her yet.

Julianna's bottom was sore and smarting from the spanking and the switching, but his kiss sent thrills through her body. 'Why does he confuse me so?' she wondered.

"Jonathan, I will try and be better. I think I love you also, but I don't really know what love is, but I know I like being with you and feel wonderful things when you kiss me."

"That's fine Julianna, you will know great love, I promise." Jonathan hugged her to him hard. "Now I think it time we investigate this wonderful basket the cook prepared. Julianna undid the basket and laid out the food. She handed the wine to Jonathan to open and pour. The cook had really out done herself. It was a delicious picnic.

When they were finished, Julianna packed the leavings away, and sat back watching Jonathan sip his wine. "Jonathan, are you sure I have to live on an allowance? I don't really spend much now."

Jonathan chuckled. "It is a wonder the Earl, your father has any money left when he gets through paying for your purchases. Yes Julianna, you are going to live on an allowance. I told you though you will have plenty to buy whatever you need."

Julianna sat and pouted staring at the lake and not looking at Jonathan. She was planning one final splurge for her wedding that would take care of her for a long time. He would have nothing to say about that.

"I don't like pouting either Julianna, come sit with me." Jonathan held his hand out to her. With a

sigh Julianna sat next to him. "Would you like to hear more about your new home and neighbors?"

Julianna nodded and Jonathan spent the rest of the time telling her stories about where they were going to live and tales from his childhood. Neither one thought three hours had passed when the coach returned.

The ride back to the estate seemed quick and soon Jonathan was helping Julianna down. "I will see you at dinner. It is past tea time and you should rest some."

Julianna lay on her bed trying to sort things out in her head. Her whole world was changing and a few days ago she thought she would be miserable, but somehow she wasn't. She must truly be in love with Jonathan. "I just wish he weren't so stern. Maybe in time I can bend him some."

She fell asleep thinking of all the things she would need to buy for her wedding and trousseau. Julianna woke startled when the maid came to help her dress for dinner. She had slept longer than she intended. The first thought that entered her mind was to snap at the girl, but she remembered her lesson from this morning and decided it would be wiser to wait till Jonathan was no longer here. As soon as she could she dismissed the maid and went in search of Maisie.

"Maisie!" Julianna almost shouted as she entered her cousin's room. "I think I am in love, but you won't believe what he is making me do. I have to live on an allowance and he spanked me and switched me this afternoon and made me apologize to cook and the serving girl, but he kisses so divinely. What am I going to do?" Julianna sat down in a chair and waited for her response.

Maisie couldn't help but laugh. "Julianna, I have never seen you so excited. You talked so fast I could barely keep up. I think you are just going to have to learn to behave like the lady he wants you to be. Everyone else has to live on an allowance, you know. It won't kill you. I think it is wonderful

though that you are in love. I told you it would work out. He is charming and as handsome as can be."

"I am hoping that perhaps after a bit of time I can maybe bend him a bit to my ways. Be good for a while and then see after we are married if he is still so strict. When he has to run his estate, he won't have as much time to watch me all the time." Julianna smiled thinking of her newest plan.

"You better put that thought right out of your head. You know he won't bend; he isn't that type of man. You will have one sore bottom Julianna if you don't learn now." Maisie shook her head at her cousin.

"I could hardly wait for you to return today though. I have news for you. You really aren't going to believe this." Maisie's eyes danced and sparkled waiting to tell Julianna her news.



## Chapter Three

"Well hurry and tell me your news, we must leave for dinner here shortly." Julianna was not very patient.

"Your father has been seeking a husband for me also. Apparently my father gave him permission in his absence, to make a contract and even hold the marriage, if it would be before they return next year. The Earl of Eastbrooke has contacted him regarding me."

Maisie could barely contain her excitement.

Julianna was puzzled. "He sounds familiar, have we met him?"

"Yes at the last ball, we both danced with him. He is actually a neighbor of Jonathan's.

His name is Richard Eastbrooke. Wouldn't that be exciting to live so close?"

Julianna hugged her cousin. "Yes it would, but you haven't even really met him, why are you so excited? He could be mean and beat you. Not give you any money or allow you to see anyone."

"Julianna, don't be so dramatic. Jonathan is nothing like that and he wouldn't have a friend who was. I remember him as being very polite and soft-spoken. He is coming next week to meet with your father to discuss the terms and meet me."

Julianna took her cousin's arm. "We best get downstairs now. Jonathan hates it when I am late, and I don't want any more lessons today. I hope things work out for you. It would be nice having you close by."

Dinner that night was a lavish affair. Guests from neighboring estates had been invited to celebrate with Jonathan and Julianna. The meal was delicious and toasts to the couple were plentiful. Jonathan beamed proudly at Julianna during the entire dinner. She was the model of a lady and on her best behavior. Julianna enjoyed parties, so behavior was not a problem for her at all.

When the last of the dishes were removed, the ladies retired to the parlor and the gentlemen remained and had their cigars and port. Jonathan was subjected to a lot of questions on how he planned on taming Julianna. "I see she has quite a reputation. I have already started teaching her that she is going to do things my way. The lessons may be a bit hard, but she seems to be responding. We do care for each other, so it makes it easier. I daresay within a year you will not recognize her."

Alex Pritchard laughed. "He certainly has made a lot of progress in the last few days."

The conversation then turned to other matters of estates and politics.

The ladies were subjecting Julianna to much the same examination. All agreed he was very handsome and an eligible bachelor to be sure. Eventually the talk turned to the wedding and plans for it. "It will be in one month, so I don't have a lot of time to plan. I thought perhaps Maisie and I could go into the city and shop for gowns and other items I will need." They were still discussing the trip when the men joined them. Jonathan and Alex both heard the comments about traveling to the city for shopping. They exchanged glances and Jonathan whispered to Alex, "I will handle this. They will not be traveling to the city just now. It isn't safe; there are too many bandits on the road. And one driver is not enough protection. Until they clear the road of the thieves, they won't be going any further than town. She can arrange things with local seamstresses just as well." Alex nodded in agreement. "You may have the privilege of informing her."

The rest of the evening was spent playing parlor games and talking. By the time the last guest had gone it was very late. Jonathan needed to get an early start the next morning, before breakfast, so he needed to talk to Julianna tonight. The Earl, Maisie and Nancy immediately retired so Jonathan and Julianna would have some privacy.

Jonathan pulled her to him instantly and kissed her. "Julianna, I was so proud of you tonight. You are a wonderful beautiful hostess."

Julianna sighed and snuggled against his chest. She loved having his arms around her. "Thank you Sir, I am glad you were pleased."

"Come sit for a minute, Julianna. I will be leaving very early tomorrow, most likely before you rise. There is something I need to tell you." Jonathan led her to the sofa and sat down and pulled her onto his lap. "I overheard you talking with the ladies about traveling to the city to shop for your wedding gown. I understand your desire to have something special and normally it would be fine. However, there are bands of thieves and bandits loose on the roads between here and there. It would not be safe. You will have to make do with local seamstresses. Neither your father nor I have the time to take neither you, nor the necessary men to mount a guard. As soon as they have cleared the roads, I will take you to the city myself for a special trip. But until then, you must stay here."

Julianna felt like crying. She had her heart set on going there shopping. "Jonathan, father can spare a man to ride along. It isn't fair! I need to go to the city to shop, the locals just won't do."

"Julianna, the answer is no. That is final; now please don't argue with me. If it were at all possible, I would let you. The locals will be fine. When I return in ten days, I will see if it is any better at that time. Now I want you to be good and behave while I am gone. Remember, you must still stay within the allowance your father will give you for the wedding." Jonathan knew she was upset and disappointed but it was for her own good, it was far too risky now.

"I think it is time for us to retire." Jonathan pulled her into a deep kiss before taking her arm and escorting her upstairs. At her door he once again kissed and held her. "I will be back soon. I will miss you."

Julianna was surprised but she knew she would miss him too. "I too shall miss you Jonathan. Have a safe journey."

Once in her room she prepared for bed and then lay under the covers contemplating her wedding plans. The thought of living within an allowance for her wedding was preposterous. She was certainly glad she and Maisie had ordered the dresses and things they did earlier. But her final thoughts were of how she would manage to get into the city for shopping. Jonathan would be gone and if she worked it right, she should be able to arrange it. Her father would never stop her. Yes, somehow she and Maisie would be shopping in the city in the next few days.

The next morning seemed lonely and quiet without Jonathan there. Maisie and Julianna were discussing the upcoming visit of the Earl of Eastbrooke and wedding plans when Nancy came upon them.

"Maisie, your uncle wishes to talk to you in his study." Maisie rose at once to go. Nancy looked at Julianna and continued. "You and I need to start reviewing the basics of managing a household, so lets get started. I have laid out some things in the library for us to go over."

Julianna did not want to study anything. She felt she already knew enough of that. "I don't think so Nancy. I am going to stay here and sew. You go study if you want. Seems this household could be run a bit better."

"Julianna! I am not asking you, I am telling you. Now come with me this instant!" Nancy was standing with her hands on her hips.

"NO! So just be off, I will do what I please." Julianna resumed sewing and totally ignored Nancy.

"I see that Jonathan has done nothing toward improving your obedience. If he were here I doubt you would be so cheeky. Have you forgotten his lessons from this weekend?"

Julianna blushed at the reminder. "You are a witch! No, I haven't forgotten, and I also haven't forgotten that he isn't here either. Get out now!"

Nancy stormed from the room and sought her ledger. Her first entry for Jonathan was complete in no time at all. At this rate the pages would fill fast before he returned.

Maisie returned from her talk with the Earl all a flutter. "Oh Julianna, the Earl of Eastbrooke will be here this weekend. He is most anxious to meet again and finalize the contract. I think we shall both be brides soon."

"That is wonderful news! Come let's see if we can talk father into the carriage for a trip to the city on Thursday. We can bring back some material for the local seamstresses to work on, that way we will only be gone for the day. We will travel in daylight and all Jonathan's concerns will be pointless." Julianna grabbed Maisie's hand and headed for her father's study.

Maisie balked. "Julianna, I heard Jonathan say quite clearly that you could not go to the city, it was dangerous. He said your father agreed."

"Well you know father can't really deny me anything, he will see to it that it works." Julianna barged into her father's study without knocking. It was a habit that irritated the Earl to no end.

"Julianna! Can't you learn to knock? What is it that is of such import?" Alex Pritchard was a bit put out at the interruption. He was heavy into his ledgers.

"Father, since it seems that Maisie is also to be married soon, we are going to need the carriage and a man to take us to the city for a day of shopping. We shall leave at first light and be home well before dusk. Thursday would be a good day, as we will have all the local seamstresses prepare their schedules to accommodate the sewing tasks. Plus I have many other things to attend to also, so Thursday is fine. Tell them to be ready at first

light." Julianna hugged and kissed her father on the top of his head and headed for the door.

"Julianna! Stop this instant. Both of you come here and sit down." Alex knew Jonathan had told her she could not go to the city that both men were far too busy and could not spare anyone to ride with them. "I know that Jonathan discussed this with you, Julianna. He and I talked at length about this. You are not to go to the city, either of you. That is final! And you have a budget to adhere to for this wedding. He handed each of them a slip with an amount on it. That is more than plenty to provide whatever clothing you will need. The actual wedding feast will be taken care of by me. Now, I want to hear nothing more about this. Julianna, you would be wise to study a bit more on the running of a proper household and budgeting yourself. I am busy and have no more time to discuss this." He waved them out of the study.

Maisie was pleased with the amount of the allowance, it seemed huge to her. Julianna, on the other hand, was not. She stormed from the study, slamming the door as hard as she could on the way out. Alex shook his head. "Jonathan is going to have his hands full. She may have behaved when he was here, but she hasn't learned much at all. Oh well, it is his problem now."

"I can't believe that father is being so stubborn! This is ridiculous. How can one plan a proper wedding and trousseau on this paltry sum." Julianna tore the paper in pieces and threw them on the floor.

"I think it is quite generous. You can use some of mine Julianna, I am sure I could never spend this much." Maisie was trying to placate her cousin. If you lose your temper like this Jonathan is sure to hear of it and you know he will not take kindly to it.

"I don't care." Julianna plunked down in her chair and picked up her sewing. "They can all go to bloody hell as far as I am concerned." Hot tears were pricking the corner of her eyes. Maisie had

never seen her so upset. She had a very uneasy feeling though that there would be trouble before this was over.

The rest of the week went smoothly enough. Julianna was a bit more amenable, but still very stiff and formal with her father and down right nasty to Nancy. She was sure Nancy had something to do with all of this. All of Jonathan's warnings about treating them better had completely fled her brain. She did miss him though, she was sure she was in love with him and that eventually when they were alone and didn't have anyone watching her, she would be able to do much more than he thought. He would slowly give in to her; she just knew it.

Friday came and so did Richard of Eastbrooke. He was handsome, almost as handsome as Jonathan. Maisie and he hit it off beautifully. Julianna was trying to be on her best behavior, but slipped a few times in front of him. Jonathan had visited him when he returned and told him of his disciplinary measures. He felt Julianna was truly turning around. Richard smiled to himself. Jonathan would be surprised to hear she wasn't as reformed as he thought.

The last night he was there, Nancy asked him if he would be so kind as to deliver a note to Jonathan. "Of course, I will pass by his estate on my way home. It would be no problem." Nancy handed him a bulky sealed envelope. It was her report so far of Julianna's behavior to her and her father and everyone in general.

The contract for Maisie was signed and their date set for two months hence. Since her parents would not be returning for at least a year and he did not wish to wait that long, Alex had no problem with taking responsibility for his niece's wedding. Maisie was extremely happy.

Richard was sitting in the garden with Maisie discussing the wedding and their future in general. He knew she was an obedient and gentle girl, but he didn't want any of Julianna's antics to rub off on

her. "Maisie, you know I love you, but I do expect you to obey me. I don't want you to act like your cousin. I have no doubt you won't do that, but you will have a budget to follow."

"Richard, that is no problem, I am used to an allowance and wouldn't disobey you." Maisie lowered her eyes.

Richard lifted her chin so he could look in her eyes. "I know Maisie, but I want you to know that if you do, I will not hesitate to discipline you. I would hope that won't happen, but I know Jonathan has already had to attend to Julianna, more than once and probably will in the future. I also won't hesitate, if it becomes necessary." He lowered his lips and kissed her passionately.

Maisie was in shock. "Oh Richard, I will be good I promise."

"Good, because I have heard some talk from Julianna, regarding shopping in the city. I know Jonathan and her father have forbidden it. It is very dangerous and I want you to know that I also am forbidding it. Do you understand?"

"Yes Richard, I understand." Maisie leaned into his shoulder.

"Good." Richard hugged her to him and the rest of their evening was spent cuddling and talking.

Soon after he left the next morning Julianna pulled Maisie aside. "Guess what? Father is going to visit the Winston's estate for two days. They have to settle some livestock deal. He isn't taking the carriage, but is taking Nancy with him to visit her sister. We will be alone and able to sneak into the city easily. I am so excited."

"Oh Julianna, Jonathan, your father and now Richard, have expressly forbidden it. We can't disobey them."

"Maisie, don't be a cow, they won't know. Jonathan isn't due here for three days and neither is Richard. Remember they are both coming for the Hunt Ball. This is perfect."



Maisie was not sure but after the Earl and Nancy left the next day, Julianna hurriedly issued orders for the carriage and one man to ride guard for the next morning. They would be back before nightfall and her father would never know.

Maisie slept very uneasily that night, but was up and ready, when Julianna knocked on her door the next morning. "Come let's be off, I am so excited. I have had the cook prepare a little something for us to eat on the way."

They climbed in the carriage and the driver hurried off. They had past the town and were about an hour from the city, when two riders on a hill above them spotted the lone carriage. They exchanged glances and rode hard down the hill to the carriage and surrounded it. The driver stopped alarmed and the boy riding guard had no time to even draw a weapon.

Julianna was put out at the stop. She was not aware of the horsemen in front that had halted the carriage. She opened the door and yelled to the driver. "What is the meaning of this you dolt, continue on we are in a hurry!" She gasped and sank quickly back in the carriage when she saw the horseman.

"Oh Maisie, I think we are in trouble"

Maisie was pale. "Julianna, what is it? Why have we stopped?"

"Be calm, there are two horsemen that stopped the carriage. I didn't get a very good look, but I don't think they are highwaymen. Maisie, I think it is Jonathan and Richard." Julianna tried to sink further into the cushions.

Before Maisie had time to answer her, the door of the carriage flew open and Jonathan and Richard entered. Each man took a seat next to his intended. Jonathan spoke first.

"Where were you going, Julianna?"

Julianna was speechless; she didn't know what to say. She looked helplessly at Maisie who had her

eyes down with tears starting to form. "We were going shopping, Jonathan."

"I sensed that, but you were going shopping where you were told expressly not to go. How is it that your father has let you do this?" Jonathan had a very stern expression on his face.

Richard turned to face Maisie. "Did you forget my instructions on this Maisie? It was less than a week ago. Does the Earl of Pritchard know of your whereabouts?"

Both girls looked at each other and before Julianna could say a word, Maisie started crying softly. "I am sorry Richard, but he is away and took Nancy with him. Julianna said we would be fine and back tonight before dusk fell. No one was to know."

"Maisie! You have disobeyed your uncle and me already as well, and intended on lying to us about your whereabouts. I want you to go immediately to your room when we return. I will meet with you there. You know what to expect. I am ashamed you are swayed so easily." Richard glared at her and left the carriage to return to his horse.

Jonathan pulled Julianna to him. "I believe you should do the same. You and I have much to discuss young lady, including this missive from Nancy on your recent behavior. I wish you to change into your night clothes and be standing in the corner holding your hairbrush when I come to you, and you best be ready when I get there." He also left the carriage and returned to his horse. The carriage was turned around and headed back to the Pritchard Estate. Richard and Jonathan both shared a laugh about the shocked looks on the girls' faces when they realized they had been caught.

"I am sorry that Julianna has swayed Maisie so easily, Richard. I don't think she would ever have done this on her own. Julianna is about to learn her harshest lesson to date."

"You are probably right Jonathan, but Maisie must also learn not to be swayed. She could have

refused to go. She will also learn but I feel far faster than Julianna."

It was a quiet, miserable carriage ride for Julianna and Maisie. Maisie sniffled the entire ride. Julianna herself was quiet and worried. Jonathan did indeed seem rather angry with her. He had not even given her a hug or kiss.

When the carriage pulled into the estate grounds. Jonathan and Richard helped the girls down. Maisie immediately ran to her room. Julianna tried to say something to Jonathan.

"Not one word, Julianna, I will do all the talking and then you may answer. Now off to your room." He turned her and swatted her bottom hard. Julianna wasted no more time, but fled to her room.

The grooms took the gentlemen's horses and the butler saw to their bags and showed them their rooms. They conferred briefly before going to freshen up.

"Richard, you may do as you wish of course, but I am having Julianna stay in her room till tomorrow morning. I think she needs time to reflect on her misbehavior. She can see what happens when she acts like a spoiled child. She will be sent to bed without her dinner."

Richard laughed, "I was contemplating the same for Maisie. I do think that this will be one of the rare times I have to discipline her though. Julianna, I fear is a much slower learner in the ways of discipline and obedience."

Jonathan shrugged and shook his head. "I fear you are right, but there will be some fun in teaching her too after we are married."

Richard arrived at Maisie's door and knocked once and entered. Maisie was sitting on her bed looking very worried and sad. Richard pulled up a chair and sat in front of her. He took both her hands in his and looked at her. "Would you care to explain to me, why you chose to disobey me?"

Maisie barely could talk. "I am so sorry Richard, but Julianna insisted and she said it would be okay.

I knew I shouldn't have gone. I deserve your punishment."

"Yes Maisie, you do. I don't like having to start our visit this way, but it is for your own good. There were highwaymen all throughout those woods. They could have stopped you as easily and Jonathan and I did. You had no protection whatsoever. I am only glad that Jonathan decided to come early because of Nancy's letter. I decided that I may as well accompany him, as come later alone. I am now extremely grateful we did."

"I am so sorry Richard, please don't punish me. I won't do it again. I promise." Maisie looked at him pleadingly.

Richard hugged her and kissed her on the forehead. "I know my love that you are sorry, but you are going to be punished. You promised less than a week ago that you would obey me, and now I find this. No, you will be punished and I hope your apologies are sincere and this won't happen again. Now stand please."

Maisie stood on trembling legs and Richard pulled her over his waiting lap. He quickly pulled up her skirt and petticoats and loosened her knickers. Maisie tried not to wriggle but was most embarrassed when he bared her. All she did though was whimper. She had been punished many times as a child by her father and knew what to expect. Richard was pleased with her behavior so far. He raised his hand and quickly brought it down on her upturned rump. Maisie tried to be stoic but his hand soon set her bottom on fire. She was crying freely and apologizing when he picked up her hairbrush from the dresser.

"Maisie, I am sorry to have to be so severe, but I don't want you ever to risk your safety again. Understand?"

Maisie sobbed out, "Yes Richard, oh please don't use the brush!"

Before she had time to think he brought the brush down on each cheek and thigh 5 times. Maisie

was sobbing fiercely when he finished. He pulled her knickers back up and pulled her upright into his arms. "Sshhh, it is over. You are forgiven, but please do not ever do that again."

Maisie sobbed into his shoulder. "I am so sorry Richard. I will obey and behave I am very sorry."

Richard held her till she quieted then kissed her gently. "I want you to get ready for bed and go to bed now. Naughty girls do not get their dinner. You spend the time thinking about your misdeeds today. I will see you in the morning. You might also be thinking of the apology you owe your uncle and will give him first thing in the morning." Richard set her on her feet and hugged her tightly. "I love you, now go to bed." He kissed her and left the room.

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As soon as she reached her room Julianna wasted no time in getting undressed and in her nightclothes. She was still in a state of shock that Jonathan and Richard had caught them.

"Damn it! He wasn't supposed to be here for three days. And what note did Nancy send him." These thoughts were rolling through her head as she picked up her hairbrush and stood in the corner. When Jonathan entered the room she shivered, she still wasn't quite sure what he would do. It felt like she had been standing in the corner for hours. Perhaps he had calmed down and would not punish her with the hairbrush.

Jonathan had taken his time freshening up. He wanted Julianna to wait as long as possible. He was now ready to face her. His anger had somewhat abated. He did not wish to punish her when he was as angry as he had been. Knocking on her door he entered to find her standing in the corner as he instructed in her nightclothes. At least she could obey sometimes.

He pulled a chair to the center of the room and called to her. "Julianna! Come here!"

When she heard, "Julianna! Come here!" in his sternest tone those thoughts vanished.

She hesitated for one second before walking over to where he sat. "Julianna, I can't tell you how disappointed in you and angry I am. You knew what you were told and you blatantly disobeyed me. Also, your behavior in my absence has been abominable. Now, I am done talking for the moment." Jonathan pulled her over his lap and immediately raised her nightdress. She wore no undergarment, so she was bare. Julianna tried to squirm away, but his arm held her tight.

"Jonathan please, don't spank me! I am sorry, I will behave I promise." The only answer was from Jonathan raising his hand high and bringing it down hard on her bottom. He kept spanking from one side to the other and down to her thighs, without saying a word. Julianna was sobbing and begging him to stop. After 10 minutes he stopped and stood her on her feet. "Now back to the corner with your hairbrush. Keep your dress raised and do not rub. We will now discuss your behavior, before I finish your punishment."

Julianna hesitated and was turned and swatted several times and escorted to the corner. "When I tell you to do something Julianna, I expect you to do so immediately."

Julianna stood sobbing in the corner as he had instructed. She was humiliated that her bottom that she knew was red and throbbing, was on display. Jonathan sat back down in the chair and took Nancy's note from his pocket. "I think we will start with this report from Nancy." Jonathan read the entire report to Julianna. "Was this the way I instructed you to behave?"

Sniffing Julianna answered. "No, but she was being a witch and mean. She deserved it."

"Did your father deserve to be ignored and disobeyed and called names?"

"I don't think he minded or cared."

Jonathan had a grim look on his face. "Julianna, it seems you are not at all sorry for your behavior, even though I told you it was not acceptable. You will answer all further questions with a Yes Sir or No Sir, is that clear?"

Julianna dared to turn around. "Why?"

Jonathan stood up and walked over to her, turning her into the corner once again. He took the brush from her and swatted her thighs several times each. "You are not to turn around until I tell you, and you will answer that way, because I said so. Is it clear now?"

Julianna felt like her thighs were on fire. She sobbed out a "Yes Sir."

"Good, then we can finish this discussion." Jonathan sat back down and looked at Julianna. He had to smile because she was looking very pitiful, but not repentant enough yet.

"Why did you disobey your father and I and try and go to the city? Did you not remember being told specifically not to go?"

"Yes Sir." Julianna sniffled loudly.

Then why did you risk your safety and that of Maisie's? I want a full explanation on this, Julianna." Jonathan taped the brush against his hand waiting for her answer.

"I...I didn't think it was dangerous, and I wanted special things from the city." Julianna shifted her feet trying to get some relief from the sting in her bottom.

"Then it is apparent you need to learn how to trust me as well. You are also responsible for Maisie's disobedience. I know Richard is punishing her, but I am also going to punish you for that as well. Now come back over here.

Julianna turned around and walked to him on trembling legs. She stood next to him and waited. Jonathan looked up at her. "You are to hand me your hairbrush and ask me to spank you with it for your disobedience and misbehaviors."

Julianna cringed. She felt she could never get the words out. "Sir.. Sir please spank me for disobeying and misbehaving." Julianna handed Jonathan the hairbrush.

"Thank you Julianna, I will be happy to." Jonathan pulled her back over his knee and locked her legs with his. He knew she would never lie still once she felt the impact the brush would have. "I want you to keep your hands in front of you. You are not to try and cover yourself in any way." Jonathan pulled her close to him and held her. Julianna was trembling and already sobbing softly. Jonathan tapped her bottom with the brush and then raised it and brought it down with a loud crack, followed by a screech from Julianna.

He continued till her entire bottom had been covered with fiery red imprints from the brush.

"Now I will punish you for leading Maisie astray." Jonathan once again raised the brush and brought it down on her thighs. This time Julianna tried to squirm away and raised her hand to cover her thighs. Jonathan grabbed it and pinned it on her back. "That will cost you two extra for not obeying my orders." Jonathan continued to smack her thighs until they matched her bottom. By this time Julianna had totally given up the fight and lay limp and sobbing. Jonathan put the brush down and lifted her up, sitting her on his lap.

Julianna gasped at the sting when her bottom made contact with his lap. He held her tight and let her cry until she quieted. He rubbed her back but said nothing. Julianna finally looked up at him. "I am sorry, Jonathan. If you no longer love me or wish to marry me, I will understand." She started sobbing again.

Jonathan shook her gently. "Julianna, if I didn't love you, I would not have punished you. I know you are sorry, but that was very foolish. You and Maisie could have been beaten or killed or both. That is not worth of piece of cloth that you like better than one here. I do love you and we will be



married. However, if you ever do something like this again, you will feel my belt."

Jonathan held her and rubbed her back till she finally quieted. "Now, I want you to go to bed. Since you behaved as a very naughty little girl, you are being sent to bed with no dinner. In the morning we will discuss your apology to your father and Nancy as well. Also, your schedule for the next few weeks." Jonathan picked her up and put her under the covers on the bed. He kissed her good night and noticed on his way out that she quickly turned on her stomach.

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Jonathan joined Richard in the parlor. The Earl was not due back until dinnertime. It was a bit late for tea, but the butler made sure they had some light refreshment until the Earl returned.

Richard sat back in the chair by the fire enjoying its warmth. "I am grateful, I decided to come early with you. I think it was a good idea to come ahead on horseback and have our luggage sent by carriage, if we hadn't come across them, who knows what might have happened. Maisie had no idea that it was really dangerous, she just went along with Julianna. I hated having to spank her, but maybe next time she will think about it and resist. She just looks up to Julianna so much."

Jonathan sipped his tea and listened to Richard. "Yes, I know what you mean. I don't enjoy punishing Julianna either, but her behavior must change. When she can't sit well for the next few days, perhaps it will start sinking in that she must behave. She is really quite delightful and very smart. It is a shame that the Earl never disciplined her. But I am up to seeing to her behavior. It will be interesting to hear how the Earl feels about this escape."

The two men talked about their upcoming marriages and estate matters for quite some time. It was well after dark before the Earl and Nancy

returned. Alex was quite surprised to find Jonathan and Richard both there. "Gentlemen, to what do I owe this unexpected pleasure?" Alex sat down to join them.

Before either one could explain, Nancy entered. "Good evening Sirs! How nice to see you again. Where are Julianna and Maisie?"

Jonathan and Richard exchanged glances. Jonathan spoke up. "They are both in their rooms until morning."

Alex looked quizzically at them. "Was there a problem?"

"Yes I am afraid there was. I received a letter from Nancy telling me about Julianna's behavior. I decided to come a few days early and address it with her. Richard decided to join me. We rode overland and had our luggage sent by carriage. We were halfway between the city and here when we spotted your carriage on the road to the city. We had already spied several highwaymen and since there were no riders with the carriage, we felt there were probably one, if not two young ladies in there on their way to the city."

Alex's face turned bright red. "I expressly told them both that they were not allowed to go under any circumstances. The first chance they had, they blatantly disobeyed me!"

"I am afraid so, Sir. But they disobeyed us as well." Richard added.

Jonathan continued. "Julianna was mainly at fault. Maisie didn't really want to go, but was swayed by Julianna. Neither one felt they really were in danger. A misconception, that I can assure you, has been well discussed with both of them. Julianna has also answered for her behavior and for leading Maisie astray."

"I told you she would be up to something while we were gone." Nancy shook her head in disbelief. "I however didn't think even Julianna would do something this foolish."

At this point a maid interrupted announcing dinner. They had barely been seated and served when a maid entered and asked Alex if a tray were to be taken to the two misses.

Alex started to answer, but Jonathan and Richard answered in unison. "No, they are to be left totally alone till morning!"

Nancy was somewhat shocked. "You mean they are not allowed food?"

"No, they behaved as very spoiled naughty children and sent to bed without dinner." Jonathan smiled at Nancy. "I guarantee you that you will have two very attentive pupils tomorrow."

Alex laughed. "I never thought of that when she was a child. I like it though."

"Sir, both girls will be apologizing to you tomorrow. I feel it would be appropriate for you to add some form of punishment yourself." Jonathan looked at Richard.

Richard concurred. "I agree, I feel it would make the lesson much more powerful."

"Well I don't intend to start spanking either of them now, but I do know a way to get their attention. I think both could use some humility and work for an hour a day in the kitchen for the next week. See what real work is like. It would also let them see first hand how a kitchen should be run." Alex sat back satisfied with the thought.

"After they are done there, I would like them for several hours to go over training and wedding plans. There is much to be done and not a lot of time to plan for Julianna's wedding." Nancy looked at the men waiting for an answer.

"I don't think any of us have a problem with that. Since Julianna has much to make up for and little time as you said, she will be yours until tea time if you like." Jonathan smiled at Nancy's delighted expression. "I will inform her in the morning after she speaks to her father. I also will tell her if she doesn't fully cooperate she will not be

attending the Hunt Ball and will be spanked every day till I leave. That should guarantee her cooperation."

"Thank you sir, I doubt I will need her until tea time, but I am glad for your cooperation in this." Nancy rose from the table. "If you will excuse me, I am very tired from the trip and will retire now."

The men enjoyed their port and cigars and themselves retired early.

Jonathan chuckled thinking of how Julianna would react to the news of her new regime tomorrow. He doubted she would accept it well, but she best cooperate or he would keep his promise regarding the Hunt Ball. He knew she was looking forward to it and had purchased a new gown long ago. He fell asleep praying she would be good; he really looked forward to taking her to the ball himself.

Julianna woke early the next morning. The sun was shining brightly in her window. She rolled over and winced. Her bottom was still very sore and her stomach was rumbling with hunger. The light snack in the carriage yesterday morning had been the only food she had all day. Getting up quickly, she dressed and fixed her hair. Breakfast was foremost on her mind.

Maisie was also awake and dressed; she was trying to think of what to say in the way of apology to the Earl and to Richard. She felt very sorry that she had disobeyed and put herself at such risk. She promised herself she would be good and never give Richard a cause to spank her again. When there was a knock at her door, she hoped it would be Richard. "Come in."

"Oh good you are up! Come lets go to breakfast and plan our day. We need to get going on wedding dresses soon." Julianna pulled at her cousin's arm to hurry her along.

"Julianna, are you not sorry for what we did yesterday? I am sure Jonathan punished you

severely for that and Nancy's letter. What will we say to your father?"

"I haven't thought about that. I guess just sorry and be done with it. He never does more than scold anyway. Yes, Jonathan did punish me, but I will get back at that old witch Nancy somehow. Just wait until Jonathan leaves, she will never know what happened to her and on the surface I will as sweet as sugar." She had just finished speaking when they entered the dining room. They were both surprised to see the three Earl's already there. Nancy had not as yet arrived, but it was quite early and they thought they would be alone.

The three men stood and greeted the ladies. Jonathan pulled out a chair for Julianna. He bent close to her ear and whispered. "Should I send for a soft pillow for you?"

Julianna blushed and whispered back. "No Sir, I shall be fine." She sat down trying hard not to wince, but Jonathan could tell she was in some discomfort. Both girls were served and ate heartily not stopping for conversation at all.

Richard and Jonathan exchanged smiles. "I guess we have two hungry young ladies here." Richard chuckled at the blush that covered both girls' faces.

Alex Pritchard had said not one word other than good morning to either girl. "If you ladies are finished with your breakfast, I will see you in my study. Jonathan and Richard, I would appreciate it if you would also join us. I feel it is important you hear what I have to say."

Alex rose and walked to his study. Maisie and Julianna exchanged looks of puzzlement. Maisie jumped up at once and started to follow her uncle. Richard took her hand and walked with her. Julianna however lingered sipping her tea.

"Did you not hear your father, Julianna?" Jonathan stood behind her to pull her chair back for her.

"Yes, but I wish to finish my tea first."

Jonathan took the cup and set it down and pulled Julianna from the chair. "I think young lady you are done with your tea and are due in your father's study. You aren't starting the day off very well miss." Jonathan turned her and swatted her bottom several times. Even through her dress it hurt on top of last night.

"Ouch, Jonathan, I am sorry. I will behave." Julianna had tears in her eyes. Jonathan took her hand and started walking toward the study. "You best. And you better have a sincere apology ready for your father or we will have another lesson. Understand?"

"Yes Jonathan." Julianna started to think madly of what she would say. She didn't want to earn another trip over Jonathan's knee.

When Julianna and Jonathan joined the others in the study. Alex cleared his throat and looked at the two girls. "I would like an explanation regarding your abysmal behavior from yesterday. Julianna?"

"I'm sorry father. I never realized there was really danger out there. I got carried away and in my stubbornness forced Maisie to go along with me. I'm truly sorry, and promise you I will never do anything like it again." Julianna hung her head hoping she had made a sincere enough apology for Jonathan.

Alex looked at her and wasn't sure if she meant it or not, but it did sound contrite. "Very well I will accept your apology. Maisie?"

"I can't begin to tell you how sorry I am that we did that. It was very foolish and not at all worth the price of finding better cloth. I have thought about it all night and I am very ashamed that I disobeyed both you and Richard. I will never disobey either of you again." Maisie waited to hear what her uncle would say.

"Thank you Maisie, your apology is also accepted. I am prepared to forgive both of you for your transgression, however even though I have heard that Jonathan and Richard punished you

themselves, I feel the need in light of the seriousness of the offense to add to it." Alex sat back and waited to see the reaction from the girls.

Maisie had tears in her eyes. She was sure they were to be spanked again. Julianna had a shocked expression on hers. "Surely you don't intend to spank us again?" She blurted out.

"No, I don't. I think you acted childishly and out of boredom. You have not performed one thing you have been asked to do to prepare for your wedding. Therefore, I have decided that both of you need a schedule. You will both report to the cook in the kitchen each morning after breakfast and work for one hour at whatever task she assigns for the next week. After that, you will report to Nancy and will do whatever she has prepared for you. If you are finished before tea, the rest of the day is yours. If not, after tea, you will finish your assignments before you have any free time. Is that clearly understood by both of you?"

Julianna was in shock. This was much harder on her than Maisie, who was used to having to help out on occasion at home. Julianna wanted to protest but one look at Jonathan and she knew better. "Yes father."

Maisie likewise agreed. She was pleased that this was the only punishment they were receiving.

"Good, then you are to go to the kitchen now and report to the cook. She is waiting for you. Nancy will fetch you when your time is up. You are dismissed."

"Sir, if you don't mind, I need to have a short chat with Julianna before she goes," Jonathan addressed Alex.

"Of course, I am going for a ride. Maisie you run along. Richard would you care to join me? And Jonathan you also, we will wait for you in the stable." Everyone left the room except Jonathan and Julianna. When they had left and shut the door, Jonathan pulled Julianna into his lap. "Now, I hope you were sincere in what you promised. But I will

tell you that if you step out of line with anyone in the next three days, you will not be going to the Hunt Ball and will receive a spanking you do not wish to receive. Am I understood?"

Julianna looked at him with tears in her eyes. "Not go to the Ball? Oh Jonathan, please I have waited all year for this."

"I said, if you misbehave. I too have looked forward to holding you in my arms and dancing at the ball, so please be good. But I will stick to my word if you misbehave. Now you best report to the kitchen. Be good. I love you." Jonathan kissed her hard and stood her on her feet. "I will see you at tea."

Julianna walked to the kitchen with dread. She hated all of this, but felt Jonathan was really sincere. "I will have to think of some way to make this tolerable. Maybe if I am clumsy enough the cook will not have me do much." Her mood brightened a bit at that thought. "Jonathan, could not be mad at me for that at all."



## Chapter Four

The cook was delighted, when the Earl informed her that the two girls would be with her for an hour a day, for the next week. Julianna would have the worst of chores to perform and would have no choice but to perform them. Maybe now, her attitude would change.

Julianna walked into the kitchen and saw Maisie already at work drying dishes. The cook called Julianna over to her, "Miss, there are a stack of pans there that need to be scrubbed and polished. That should keep you busy for the next hour. I want them spotless."

Julianna looked in amazement at the pans. They were crusted with grease and dried food. Her hands would be a mess by the time she finished those. She wanted to protest but Jonathan's words echoed in her mind. "No Hunt Ball."

It was a long hour later that Julianna and Maisie, were called by Nancy for their lessons. Julianna's hands were red and sore. Nancy was enjoying this punishment, but took pity on Julianna. It would not look well at the ball, or her wedding, to have red chapped hands.

"Please, both of you start reading the pages I have prepared, I will be back shortly." Nancy left and went and got some cream for Julianna. She stopped in the kitchen and talked to the cook. "I know the girls are being punished for their misbehavior yesterday, but I don't want Julianna or Maisie, to have raw red hands. Please, have them do something other than pans and dishes. I am sure there are many other suitable tasks they can do." The cook agreed and was already considering some other chores.

Nancy returned and was surprised to see that Julianna was actually behaving and reading the material. "Here, put this on your hands. It will soothe and heal them. I have asked the cook not to have either of you washing dishes or pans again. It

would not do to have chapped hands at the ball or wedding."

Julianna looked up at her and smiled gratefully. "Thank you Nancy, I appreciate that."

She quickly rubbed the lotion into her hands. It burned at first but then soothed the skin.

Nancy returned to the lessons. "Now after you finish reading those papers, we shall practice putting together a meal plan for a normal day."

Time flew and it was almost teatime, when Nancy announced. "I believe that is enough for today. You have both done well, you are dismissed and I will see you at tea."

Julianna and Maisie left the room and hurried to Julianna's room. Maisie looked at Julianna's hands. "Oh your poor hands, I didn't think the cook would be so mean. She looked positively gleeful, when she saw how raw your hands were."

Julianna had tears in her eyes. "I know. I just don't see how I am going to get through this. Jonathan said that if I did one thing out of line, I would not be allowed to go to the Hunt Ball. I have to be pleasant and nice to everyone and do everything cook tells me. I think I shall die." She lay on her bed and sobbed.

"I will let you rest and see you at tea. It won't be so bad, I will help you." Maisie hugged her cousin and went back downstairs. She wanted to get some fresh air.

She put on her cloak and was walking toward the gardens when Richard and Jonathan approached. Richard hugged her. "So you are finished for today?"

"Yes, Nancy released us early. We had covered all the material." Maisie looked lovingly at Richard.

"Where is Julianna?" Jonathan was surprised she wasn't with Maisie.

Maisie looked down. "She is in her room, very upset and crying. Cook made her scrub all the pots and pans from yesterday. Her hands are red and

raw and hurt. Nancy gave her some lotion, but it isn't really helping yet."

Jonathan looked disturbed at this news. "I guess I shall have to have a word with the cook. She was not to be this harsh."

"Nancy already talked to her. We aren't to wash dishes or scrub anymore. But Julianna is still upset. She did very well today, Jonathan."

"I am glad. I will leave you two and see you at tea." Jonathan walked back to the house. He sought out Nancy.

"How was Julianna today?" Jonathan wanted to hear from her regarding her behavior.

Nancy smiled. "She was positively wonderful. Very subdued though, she did everything well." She then related again about her hands and the talk with the cook. "I gave her some lotion, but it didn't help much. I hope her hands will heal by the Ball."

Jonathan thanked her and walked to his room. As he passed Julianna's door, he thought he heard sobs and stopped to listen. The sound seemed to stop, and he continued on his way to his room. At tea, he would talk to her and try and cheer her up.

Teatime came and everyone was assembled, but Julianna. Alex was perplexed because this was one of Julianna's favorite things. She never missed tea. They waited for 10 minutes and then started without her. Jonathan was worried. "I think I shall go check on her. We will be back in a minute."

Julianna had sobbed herself to sleep and when she woke and saw the redness of her eyes and hands, she started crying again. "There is no way I can go to tea looking like this. I shall have to stay in my room, except for kitchen and lessons."

She was about to ring for a maid to bring her some tea, when Jonathan knocked on the door. She opened it and was surprised to see him standing there. Tears were still streaming down her face.

Jonathan shut the door and picked her and carried her to the bed. He sat down and held her tight rocking her. "Julianna, what is wrong?"

Slowly she stopped crying and just showed him her hands. "I can't be seen like this, they are so awful and they hurt so bad."

Jonathan grimaced when he saw them. They were indeed raw. "I am sorry Julianna, your punishment was not meant to be that harsh. But you can't hide in your room. Come wash your face and come downstairs with me." He kissed her lightly and stood her up.

"Jonathan, I look awful." Julianna pleaded with him.

"You are beautiful and you look fine to me. Come have your tea and then we can spend some time together before dinner." He kissed her once more and waited while she dabbed some cold water on her eyes. They were indeed red and swollen, but he wanted Alex to see her and her hands. He felt sure that he would lessen the punishment, when he saw her hands.

Julianna came and took Jonathan's hand and together they went down to tea. Everyone was talking and laughing and having a good time. Jonathan seated Julianna on the couch and sat down next to her. Alex looked at his daughter in dismay; he had never seen her looking so upset as she was now.

"Julianna, what is wrong?" Alex came over and knelt in front of her. Jonathan took one of Julianna's hands that she was trying to hide under her skirts, and showed it to Alex. "It appears the cook was a bit harsh on her today."

"Oh my dear Julianna, I am so sorry. This was not my intention at all. This will not do at all. You are relieved from the kitchen. Report to my study, both of you, tomorrow and I will think of something else for you to do." Alex hugged and kissed his daughter.

Julianna softly thanked him. Jonathan handed her a cup of tea. "It will be fine."

Julianna was thankful that she didn't have to report to the kitchen but she would find a way to get even with the cook and Nancy yet.

After tea, Jonathan took Julianna to the gazebo. It was a bit chilly but wrapped in her cloak and his arms she was plenty warm. Jonathan pulled her to him tightly and kissed her.

"I am so proud of the way you acted today. I am sorry about your hands and how upset you got. Please, come tell me next time instead of crying alone. I want to know when you are hurting, so I can help." Jonathan held her close to him. He was glad the wedding was only a few weeks away as his desire for her was building each time they were together.

Julianna snuggled tight into his shoulder and returned his kisses with equal passion. She really did love him. "Jonathan, thank you, I shall try and behave better all the time now."

In her own mind she meant it, but still intended to seek her revenge in such a way, that Jonathan would never know. She would attend that Hunt Ball, that much she knew.

The rest of the evening was spent pleasantly. Even Nancy was fussing over Julianna's hands and making sure she kept lotion on them. By bedtime, Julianna was glowing with all of the attention. Jonathan walked her to her room and pulled her to him. "Sleep well and I will see you tomorrow at breakfast." He lowered his lips to her and they kissed for what seemed minutes.

Julianna slept well and rose in a cheery mood. Immediately after breakfast Maisie and Julianna reported to her father's study. They sat meekly waiting for what their punishment would be. Alex pondered both of them. He hadn't fully decided what to do with either of them. Actually, punishments were his definite weak point.

"I have decided, that each of you will spend an hour in your rooms each morning after breakfast, praying for your past sins. You will be down on your

knees. Then when you are done, you may go see Nancy. I will cut the time however to the next two days. Do you think you can accomplish this and stay out of trouble?"

Julianna and Maise both blurted out their thanks at the same time. Julianna got up and hugged her father. "I love you, and I will be good." The two girls left to go to their rooms. Julianna was ecstatic. "I can take some sore knees for two days. He is really being kind."

"Yes, he is and he didn't say we couldn't kneel on a pillow either." Maisie smiled at Julianna.

"Maisie! You surprise me, you do have a bit of devilment in you after all." Julianna, hugged her cousin and each went to their room. Both decided after a few minutes that a pillow was indeed a good idea.

Once again both girls did exactly what Nancy asked of them. They were finished very early, so Nancy suggested they go into town and see how the dressmakers were progressing, and order what other things they would need. That pleased both girls very much. A carriage was ordered and soon they were shopping. Nancy did remind both of them of their budgets and made sure Julianna was keeping track and not exceeding it.

They were back in time for tea, and Julianna was in far better spirits than the day before.

Jonathan and Richard greeted them warmly. Jonathan already had his report from Nancy and was very pleased. It seemed that Julianna had really turned over a new leaf.

During tea, Nancy mentioned that the cook was very upset with her. She felt that it was all Nancy's doing, that the girls were relieved of kitchen duty and that the Earl had scolded her severely.

Hearing this a thought popped into Julianna's head. She now knew exactly how she would get even with both of them at one time and no one would ever know. She almost giggled out loud; she was so pleased with herself. After this, she cold

definitely be good, at least till they were married and Jonathan mellowed out a bit.

Jonathan noticed the joyfulness in Julianna and wondered a bit, but put it down to her happiness with the shopping trip.

The next day was the day before the Hunt Ball. Julianna and Maisie were once again on their best behavior. Julianna's plan would be hatched that evening. She could hardly contain herself all day.

Before dinner, she pulled Maisie aside. "Do you remember what happened the last time Nancy had some ginger in something?"

Maisie thought for a bit and admitted she didn't. "Well she is allergic to it and it gave her a bad stomach ache and problems for two days. She couldn't get off the chamber pot."

Maisie looked shocked at Julianna. "You aren't going to do that are you? Jonathan will come down on you like lightening."

"He won't know. I am going to slip some into the cinnamon she has in her night tea. I know where it is in the kitchen. They keep a special little pot just for her. She won't taste it at all. Everyone will assume that cook did it out of spite. I get back at both of them at one time." Julianna clapped her hands, she was so happy.

Maisie was a bit skeptical. "Are you sure it won't really harm her? We don't want to do that."

Julianna looked at her and smiled. "Oh so you are game for it too? No, it will only put her out of commission for tomorrow and perhaps some of Sunday. But she will be fine."

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After dinner, Julianna and Maisie excused themselves. They left Nancy in the parlor and the men at the table, and hurried into the kitchen. Maisie distracted the cook. "We just wanted to tell you that we are sorry, you got in trouble. Neither of us, complained at all."

Julianna was quick and had put a dash of ginger on top of the cinnamon, and lightly stirred it. She then turned around in time to hear the cook say. "I'm glad that you have told me that. I know it was that Nancy. Thinks she is so high and mighty. Well the mighty can fall too."

The girls hurried back to the parlor, before the men arrived. Nancy looked at both of them with a puzzled frown. "Where were you two off to? You haven't been in mischief have you?"

Maisie answered, "No ma'am, I wanted to show Julianna something Richard gave me that's all." Fortunately Richard had given her a brooch that day and she had shown it to

Julianna. They were talking about it when the men joined them. They spent the evening pleasantly and soon Nancy rang for a maid. "I am retiring now. Would you please bring me a glass of warm milk instead of tea tonight?"

Julianna cringed, but then Nancy added, "Oh yes and my cinnamon too. I quite like it in warm milk." She rose and bade everyone goodnight. "Seeing as tomorrow is the Ball, we shall only have lessons for an hour after breakfast."

Julianna and Maisie smiled and thanked her. Jonathan and Richard exchanged glances. They had talked earlier and both commented on how good Julianna was being. Jonathan had never heard Julianna thank Nancy for anything before. Soon they all dispersed for the evening.

The next morning they were all seated for breakfast when a very bedraggled Nancy joined them. "I am somewhat ill this morning. Fortunately, I had some tonic left from my last bout. There was ginger in my cinnamon last night. I started to feel strange and tasted it. There is only one person who could have done that and I intend to have strong words with her."



Alex was not happy with this news at all. "I shall join you. Come to my study and we shall see about this." He stood and stormed out of the room."

"Girls, you are excused today, I am not up to lessons." Nancy went to the kitchen to fetch the cook.

Jonathan and Richard both had errands planned, so the girls were left on their own. As soon as they could they rushed to Alex's study and listened at the door. Cook was of course denying that she would ever do such a thing. Nancy was calling her names and yelling at her. Alex finally pounded on the desk to stop them. "Enough. I don't want anything like this happening in my home. Cook, you are docked a days pay and that is final. Now both of you off."

The girls flew into the parlor and were sitting there chatting innocently when they passed through. Nancy was sick and ran up the stairs. Cook was red faced and stormed muttering under her breath back to the kitchen. Both girls giggled. The plan had worked perfectly.

The day flew by and it was time to prepare for the Ball. Jonathan and Richard were waiting at the bottom of the stairs for them. Maisie was beautiful in the dark rose-colored gown, and Julianna radiant in the sapphire.

Both men surprised the girls with beautiful pendants to match their gowns, a ruby and diamond for Maisie, and a sapphire and diamond for Julianna.

It was in a jubilant mood that they entered the carriage for the trip to the Ball. Once there, Julianna whispered to Maisie. "See it all came out fine." Maisie agreed. Little did either one know, Richard heard the comment.

Richard wasn't quite sure what it meant, but felt there was something amiss with the two young ladies. He sought out Jonathan. "I just overheard Julianna and Maisie whispering in the coat room. Julianna told Maisie, 'See it came out all right', and Maisie agreed and they both giggled. I have no idea

what it means, but I think we best be on our toes. I think they are up to mischief."

Jonathan listened to Richard and thought back. "Either they are, or were, and didn't get caught. Yet. But it sounds like whatever it is, bears watching. I am beginning to think Maisie may not be quite the innocent you think."

"Yes I agree. I have seen some streaks of devilment lately. Well hidden, but there nonetheless. That will be taken care of as it arises." Richard shook his head.

Jonathan and Richard were deep in conversation when Julianna and Maisie joined them. Richard took Maisie's arm and led her into the ballroom. Jonathan stood and looked at Julianna for a minute. "You do look very beautiful my love, I am so glad you behaved so we could attend." He watched her face closely for any reaction.

Julianna felt a twinge of guilt when he said that. She looked down and then back up quickly. "Thank you, Jonathan. I too am glad to be here with you."

"Then shall we enter?" Jonathan took her arm and led her into the ballroom. Had he seen the slightest bit of a guilty look cross her face? Suspicions were forming in his mind that he didn't like at all.

Friends of both Jonathan and Julianna, immediately upon entering engulfed them. The news of their engagement was known and everyone wanted to know all about the wedding.

The music started and Jonathan pulled Julianna into his arms and danced around the room. It was heavenly holding her and she was a delightful dancer. They danced several dances and then sat to rest a bit. Maisie and Richard joined them and the men left to get refreshments for the ladies.

Jonathan told Richard of his suspicions. Richard was appalled, "I would never have thought either of them would do such a thing. Especially Maisie. If it is true, I can guarantee you, someone will feel my belt."

"Yes so will Julianna, and not in private either." Jonathan was not happy with his thoughts. "However, we do not know for sure, it is only a thought on my part, but nothing else has happened in the last few days. I do think the remark was made regarding something in the past, they feel they got away with."

When they returned, there was a group of young women chatting with both Julianna and Maisie. When they saw Jonathan and Richard, they giggled and left. Neither man let on that they were at all suspicious of the girls. Jonathan was positive that somehow Julianna or Maisie would trip up and they would find out. Both he and Richard were on the alert for the smallest sign.

Jonathan sat next to Julianna and handed her a cup of punch. "It is a shame that Nancy had to miss the ball. Doesn't she usually accompany you?"

Julianna smiled briefly, and then somberly replied to Jonathan. "Yes, she is usually here as our chaperone, as father doesn't like to go out often anymore. But I would much rather be here with you."

"Yes, but normally she would still be here and able to enjoy the festivities. I think it terrible that cook did that to her. Why it might have killed her." Jonathan looked closely for a reaction.

Julianna tried to change the subject by saying something to Maisie about another girl's dress. Richard picked back up on it, "Yes, it was appalling. I heard of a person once who had an allergy to fish, and every time he got a bit of fish it got worse. He got just a small bit of the fish by mistake on his plate, not even a spoonful and he died. Allergies are nothing to fool around with. It is a good thing Nancy had some medicine to take."

Maisie stole a side-glance at Julianna to see what her reaction was. Julianna had a grim look on her face. "Oh dear, I would never have known that. I am glad cook was punished, she deserved to be for that."

Maisie sighed and agreed. "Yes that was terrible. Poor Nancy."

Before the men could pursue it further, the music started up and they were off dancing again. Several men asked to cut in and Richard and Jonathan again were together on the side of the floor.

"I don't know Richard, but I swear they are the culprits. Maisie was looking for a reaction from Julianna, and I felt Julianna stiffen a bit. I think they are doing their best not to give it away. Plus Julianna was most uncomfortable discussing it."

Richard sighed, "Yes, I agree, but I don't know how to get more out of them, without confronting them and accusing them. We really don't have enough to go on, to do that."

"No we don't, but the evening is young."

The ball was almost at a conclusion and once again the couples were taking a break. Jonathan and Richard were standing slightly away from the ladies, talking to some other gentlemen. The girls were chatting with friends. It seemed the evening's excitement and a bit of champagne had made them careless. They didn't realize that both Richard and Jonathan were in earshot and could hear their conversation.

One of their friends was complaining about her governess and chaperone for the evening, "She is nothing but an old crone! I am never allowed any fun. The first little thing I do that she doesn't like, she runs to my father and tells him. I hate her, and now she wants to leave before the end of the ball. I want to get back at her so badly."

Maisie looked at Julianna, "Should we tell how we took care of our problem?"

Julianna giggled. "I guess it could be adapted to apply to anyone."

Jonathan heard it and so did Richard. They excused themselves from their conversation and moved a bit closer.

Maisie started in and Julianna joined her, telling the whole story of how they got back at cook and Nancy both. "Just look at my hands. They are almost healed now, but they were red and raw and hurt for days." The girls were commenting on her hands when Jonathan and Richard strode over to them. Jonathan grabbed Julianna's hand. "I think young lady, you will have something else red and raw yet tonight. Say goodnight we are leaving. And ladies, I would not suggest you try anything like this." Jonathan addressed the other ladies as they scurried away.

Richard already had Maisie's hand and was leading her to the coatroom. Maisie tried to say something but Richard stopped and looked at her. She was amazed at the look of anger on his face. "You will have plenty of time to talk soon. Just get your cloak and meet me on the porch. And do not tarry."

Julianna was trying to persuade Jonathan to stay, as he dragged her across the room. "Jonathan, what's wrong? We don't have to leave."

Jonathan stopped in front of the coatroom and grabbed her arms and looked right in her face. "I heard what was said Julianna. Do not add lying to it. Now, get your cloak and be quick about it." He turned her and swatted her hard toward the coatroom.

Jonathan paced outside waiting for them. Maisie was still in there when Julianna entered.

"Oh Julianna, whatever are we going to do? They heard us and know." Maisie was already sobbing.

"I think we have to worry more about what they are going to do. We should have never said anything. I think we are in big trouble."

Jonathan took Maisie and Julianna by their arms and led them to where Richard was waiting in the coach. When they were all inside, Julianna tried to start explaining. Jonathan turned to her. "I suggest you stop talking and start thinking about what is

coming. I am far too angry now to discuss this. But when we reach home, discuss it we shall."

Both Maisie and Julianna sat quietly huddled in a corner of the carriage. The ride home seemed much too fast, far faster than the ride to the Ball had been. Before they knew it they were home and being helped down from the carriage. Richard and Jonathan both held on to them until they reached the parlor. Due to the lateness the Earl and Nancy, had both retired for the night.

"Sit down! I want to hear the whole story from each of you. The truth!" Jonathan was pacing in front of them.

"Maisie, I want you to start." Richard was standing glaring down at her.

Maisie looked at Julianna for some help. Richard lowered his face to Maisie's and looked her in the eye. "I said NOW, Maisie and don't look to Julianna for help. Her turn is coming. The longer I have to wait the worse your punishment is going to be."

"Cook was so mean to us, and Nancy was wrong for telling Jonathan. She was just being a witch with the lessons and things. We wanted to get even with them. Julianna thought of the plan and I helped her do it."

"I am totally ashamed of you Maisie. You are going to be severely punished for this. You willingly took part in this and were not led astray by Julianna. You are equally guilty. I will not stand for this." Richard's voice was raised and the look on his face was thunderous.

Jonathan had calmed down a bit. "Julianna, is that correct? How did you put the ginger in without anyone in the kitchen seeing you?"

Julianna was feeling guilty and concerned about how angry both men were. "Maisie talked to the cook and kept her busy, while I did it. Everyone else was busy and didn't see me."

"Do you realize that cook could have lost her job? Nancy could have been seriously ill and maybe died?" Jonathan's voice had a sharp hard edge to it.

Julianna was beginning to get tears in her eyes and Maisie was already whimpering. "No, I didn't think of that. I'm sorry Jonathan, we didn't think it was that serious."

Jonathan pulled her up and held her at arms length. "No, that's right you didn't think at all. Well I guarantee you, before I leave here tomorrow, you will have plenty to think about. Go to your room and get ready for bed. I will be there shortly. I need to confer with Richard." He released Julianna and she fled up the stairs.

Richard pulled Maisie up also. "You too, Young Lady and I expect to see your nose in the corner as well." He swatted her and sent her flying up the stairs.

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Jonathan walked over to a cabinet in the corner and poured each one a glass of port. "I am very disturbed that neither one of them seemed to think anything through before they acted. I am very disappointed, and think a very strong lesson is needed here. You, of course are free to do as you see fit with Maisie, but as for Julianna, I intend to give her a strong lesson tonight with my belt. I hoped I would never have to do that. But this is very serious and warrants it. I just can't believe they could be so stupid and unthinking. But obviously they are."

"I agree, that this is most serious. I intend to also use my belt on Maisie, though it grieves me to do so, but what of the repentance for Nancy and Cook? Do they not deserve some retribution?" Richard waited for Jonathan to respond.

"Hmmm, I hadn't thought about that, but yes you are right. Of course, the Earl will restore Cook's wages when he hears, but they need to make this right also." Jonathan pondered for a minute as he sipped his port. "I have an idea, see if you agree."

Jonathan and Richard conferred and agreed that the plan was reasonable. First thing in the morning they would consult the Earl. He was an early riser

and they would make sure they were up to meet him. They had to leave the next morning and planned on leaving early, but things needed to be settled.

Both men drained their glasses and headed to their fiancées room. It was something they both hated having to do, but knew was necessary. With firm resolve they ascended the staircase.

Jonathan knocked and entered Julianna's room not waiting for an answer. "Julianna, I am so disappointed in you. I can't believe you did this. I have heard what you had to say and still find no reason for mercy here. You have behaved like the worst of spoiled brats. I cannot tolerate that behavior. Nancy is trying to help you. I asked her to report on your behavior. Cook was told to put you to work. True it was too much but that was forgiven. Your penchant for revenge is not warranted. I intend to make sure such nonsense never enters your mind again." Jonathan proceeded to the bed and moved her pillows to the end of the bed. "Please come here and bend over the pillows."

Julianna looked at him with a great deal of trepidation. She hesitated a bit. Jonathan took her arm and marched her over to the bed. "I want you over those pillows, now."

Julianna reluctantly laid herself over the pillows. "Jonathan, I am sorry! Please don't spank me."

Jonathan pushed her down over the pillows and removed his belt. "Julianna, I hate having to do this, but you have been very wrong, and wronged two people terribly, you have to learn to take responsibility for those actions. I am going to spank you with my belt. You deserve a harsh punishment. This is but the first step. When I am done, we will discuss the remainder of your punishment. So far, I have not seen any real contrition for your actions. You best think about that."

Jonathan held her down with one hand and raised his belt with the other as high as he could. It fell many times, till she was sobbing uncontrollably



and apologizing. Her bottom was mottled and bruised. Jonathan threw the belt down and sat and gathered her into his arms. "Julianna? Do you understand how serious this was?"

Julianna was choking on sobs. Her bottom felt like it was on fire. She never dreamed that her actions could have this result. "I am so sorry, Jonathan. I didn't want to really hurt anyone. I'mmmmmmm sorrrrrry."

Jonathan held her tightly to him. "I know my love, but it did have serious consequences. I love you, but there is more to your punishment than this spanking." Softly he spoke into her ear of what was to come.

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Richard entered Maisie's room to find her as he ordered in the corner. He pulled her dressing stool into the center of the room and sat on it. "Maisie, come here."

Since she had first heard him open the door, Maisie's heart had been pounding. Her knees trembled as she walked over to him. She gasped when she saw the belt lying next to him.

"Young Lady, you have really earned a serious punishment. I am totally befuddled as to what you thought you were doing. Obviously, you are not as innocent as you seem. There is no excuse for what you did. Now, over my knee." Richard pulled her over his lap and lifted her nightgown. He clamped her legs tight with one leg. Without saying another word, he raised his hand and brought it down hard. He continued until her whole bottom and thighs were bright red and she was sobbing. He stood her on her feet and led her to the bed. "Lay down here and put your hands under your body. I want you to stay down. If you rise I will add more. I know this is harsh, and I sincerely hope I will never have to do this again. But you have earned this and more." Richard picked up the belt and brought it down hard on her bottom twenty times. When he was done, he

sat on the bed next to her and rubbed her back till she quieted, then drew her into his arms.

"Oh Richard, I am sorry. I know it was wrong. I will never ever do anything bad like this again." Maisie hid her face in his chest and quietly sobbed.

Richard waited a bit and then lifted her chin to look at him. "I forgive you Maisie, but there are two other people who you need to seek forgiveness from. That will happen tomorrow before I leave." Richard told her what was expected from her the next day and what was to happen. Maisie paled, when he told her, but she knew better than to say a word about it. Richard kissed her and tucked her in bed. "I will see you in the morning. Good Night."

Julianna however didn't take the news of the next day well at all. "Jonathan! You can't be serious, are you?" She was trembling.

"Yes Julianna, I am. You and Maisie are to be spanked again in front of Cook and Nancy. Each one will select an implement to be used. You will sincerely apologize before hand and ask me to spank you for them. Then, you will go to your father and apologize, and tell him to give Cook two days wages from your allowance. I am not wavering on this at all." Jonathan saw her trembling.

He hugged her tight and kissed her. "Remember, all will be cleared afterward. I wish I did not have to leave tomorrow like this, but I must get back and prepare for your arrival. The wedding is only two weeks away. I shall miss you terribly, but your actions to Nancy and Cook cannot go un-addressed. Now get some sleep and think about your apologies." Jonathan kissed her passionately and left.

Julianna rubbed her bottom to try and ease the sting, but nothing helped. Finally she fell asleep, sorrier than she had ever been in her life before. Her last thoughts were of really trying to keep out of trouble for a long time.

Jonathan and Richard met the Earl as he was coming down the stairs. Alex was surprised to see

them up so early after the Ball the night before. "Gentlemen, I am surprised to see you up so early. Could you not sleep after all the excitement?"

Jonathan laughed. "No I slept fine, but we have something to discuss with you, before the girls or Nancy are up."

Alex led the way into his study, and rang for some tea. "Now what is so urgent that you are up this early?"

Richard explained to him what they had learned the night before. "We have punished both girls quite severely, but think they also need to make amends to Cook and Nancy."

Jonathan outlined their plan to him. Alex was speechless when he heard. "I find it hard to believe that those two would do this. Yes, I agree wholeheartedly with your plans. I also intend to confine them to their rooms for two days. Maybe they will think twice before ever doing such a thing again."

When Julianna woke, she dressed carefully. Her bottom was still so sore; she couldn't imagine another long spanking on it. "I wonder if maybe he will take pity on me this morning and change his mind?" Once she was dressed she went and knocked on Maisie's door. Maisie herself was dressed and trying to adjust her hair while standing. Sitting was something she didn't favor doing. Julianna helped her with it. "Did Richard tell you what is to happen to us this morning?"

Maisie looked at her cousin sadly. "Yes and I am so scared. I imagine both will pick the worst things possible."

"I imagine so, but we must get through this and be forgiven. But it will make a huge dent in our allowances. I don't think I shall be able to spend much more at all." Julianna felt like crying.

It was too very sober and glum young ladies that joined the gentlemen for breakfast. Before they sat down, Alex stood. "Ladies, I wish to let you know that I have been informed of your behavior and the outlined punishments. I agree whole-

heartedly with them. I also, am adding something to it."

Before he could finish both girls paled and Maisie almost cried. "You will be confined to your rooms for the next two days. As this is Sunday, I do not expect to see either of you till Tuesday morning. At that time, I want a written apology and your pledge to never again do anything like this. Now you may be seated."

Alex sat down and both Maisie and Julianna did so as gingerly as they could. Neither had much of an appetite and picked at their food. Nancy had not come down for breakfast. It was her custom on Sunday to have a tray in her room. When Jonathan and Richard were finished they asked Alex if he would summon Nancy and Cook and meet them in the parlor. He left to do so. Jonathan called Julianna to him and Richard took Maisie's arm and led her to the parlor.

Jonathan hugged Julianna and kissed her. "I know you are hating this, but please take it well and then it will be done."

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Julianna just nodded and accepted his hand as he led her to the parlor. Alex was there and Nancy and Cook joined them a few minutes later. Both looked a bit shocked to see everyone gathered there.

Jonathan stood up. "Ladies, would you please be seated, there is something you need to know."

Nancy and Cook both looked puzzled but said nothing. Richard continued, "Julianna and Maisie, please stand and tell them what it is they need to know."

While Jonathan had been speaking Richard lay out several items on the table. This only confused Nancy and Cook more.

Julianna and Maisie stood and looked at each other. Julianna squeezed Maisie's hand. "I will explain it."

Julianna was trembling, as she started talking. "I am very sorry Nancy, but it was Maisie and I who put the ginger in your cinnamon. We wanted to get back at you for telling Jonathan on me. And Cook, we wanted to make you pay for making us work so hard. We never thought about what might have happened to either of you because of our actions. It was very wrong and horrid of us to do this. We are very sorry for our actions. We have been punished quite severely by Jonathan and Richard but we need you to punish us also."

Maisie then looked up and spoke. "Please, do not think that I was misled by Julianna. I willingly went along with the plan and helped her. I too, beg your forgiveness. We were extremely foolish and spiteful and didn't think of the consequences."

Both girls started to sit. Richard stopped them. "I think you best stay standing. Ladies, Jonathan and I have corrected both Maisie and Julianna, but have decided since this is so serious; they are each to receive another spanking from us for each of you. It is your decision to select the method and length. Also Cook your wages will be paid and you will receive an additional two days from each of the girls from their allowances. Now Nancy, you may select first. Please choose from what is laid on the table or if you prefer we will use our hand. Nancy stood and examined the contents. There was a large wooden hairbrush, a tawse, a wooden spoon, and a cane.

She smiled and picked up the cane. She remembered vividly her school days and the teacher applying a cane to many errant bottoms. She handed it to Richard. "I think 6 with this should do nicely, since they have already been punished."

Richard called Maisie to him. "I think you shall go first on this round. Please bend over the arm of the chair here." He pointed to a large chair. Maisie was small and when bent over her feet barely touched the floor. Tears were already flowing from

her eyes as Richard lifted her gown and bared her. She was totally humiliated to be chastised in public.

Richard held her down with one hand in the middle of her back. "I don't want you to get up or it will not count. I want you to count each one and apologize again to Nancy."

Richard lifted the cane and brought it down hard against Maisie's bottom. "OUUUUUCCH , One, I am sorry Nancy!"

The scene was repeated till all six stripes were in place. Maisie was barely able to say six and apologize. Richard let her lay there for a minute then pulled her up and held her. He passed the cane to Jonathan.

"Julianna assume the same position as Maisie." Jonathan tapped the cane on the arm of the chair. Julianna was visibly trembling as she walked over. Jonathan helped her over the chair and quickly bared her.

"Now you needn't count, but I want to hear a promise after each one never to do this again." Jonathan raised the cane and laid the first stripe on Julianna's already bruised bottom.

She screamed in pain and almost tried to stand. Jonathan held her down. "Now what do you have to say?"

Julianna sobbed out, "I am sorry and I will never do anything like this again."

Jonathan again raised the cane and left another stripe below the first. Again Julianna screamed in agony. "I ..I won't do it again. I am sorry."

For the last four Jonathan did not strike as hard but Julianna was beyond knowing. All she knew is her bottom felt like it had been hit by lightning. When the final blow landed she almost unintelligibly yelled out, "Sorry, I'm sorry, I won't do it again." Nancy began to feel a bit sorry for her. Julianna rose and stood with tears streaming down her face and sobbing uncontrollably.

Nancy rose. "Gentlemen, would it be all right if we take a short break here. I think the girls need to

calm down a bit. I would like to get them some water."

"Yes, that is fine Nancy, thank you. You are being most kind under the circumstances." Jonathan was trying to calm Julianna down.

Cook left with Nancy to get the water. When they were in the kitchen she turned to Nancy. "I am sorry for what has happened. I never would have done anything to harm you, but I also feel sorry for the girls. It is evident that they were severely punished, especially Julianna. She is not used to any discipline, so this is doubly hard on her. I was going to choose the spoon, but I think now I will let them use their hands. It will be easier on them."

Nancy thought for a minute. "Well maybe a few with the spoon wouldn't be a bad idea. It will remind them of the kitchen and what they did. But that is up to you of course. I must also apologize for thinking you would do that to me."

They returned with the water and both girls were visibly calmer. Jonathan turned to Cook. "What is your choice?"

Cook walked over to the table and picked up the spoon and handed it to Jonathan. "I feel that you should give a hand spanking of 25 then six on the thighs with the spoon."

"As you wish." Jonathan sat down and pulled Julianna over his lap. She was totally limp and worn out and didn't resist in the least. He once again bared her and applied his hand 25 times to her sore bottom. He was almost gentle in his smacks, for he knew she was well punished. Then he picked up the spoon and laid three quick smacks on each thigh.

Julianna screamed with each one. "Oh Please, I am sorry I am sorry, Please I can't take anymore." Jonathan handed the spoon to Richard and pulled Julianna into his arms and comforted her. The sounds of her sobs were filling the room. Alex had not stayed to witness the punishments; he could not bear to see it, and the sound of their sobs alone upset him.

Richard made Maisie's last punishment as fast and gentle as he could, but did put his force behind the smacks of the spoon on her thighs. When she was cradled in his arms, he turned to Nancy and Cook. "Thank you ladies, and I do apologize for their actions. They are also to be confined to their rooms until Tuesday morning. If you would arrange for meals to be delivered to their rooms, Jonathan and I would appreciate it. We will be leaving shortly and will speak to you before we go."

After Nancy and Cook had left Jonathan picked up Julianna. "I think you have had enough for today. Your written apology to your father, should be sufficient." Jonathan carried Julianna up stairs. He laid her on her stomach on the bed and sat down next to her. "Julianna, I am truly sorry, I had to be so severe, but you must realize the consequences your actions could have had. Will you please behave for the next two weeks? I wish to have a wonderful time after our marriage, with nothing hanging over our heads."

Julianna sat up and winced but put her arms around him. "Jonathan, I am sorry and I promise I will behave. I love you." Julianna reached up and kissed him gently. Jonathan pulled her tight against him in a passionate embrace. "I do have to go. I will be back the day before the wedding."

As he left to gather his luggage, he could hear Richard talking softly to Maisie. He would be returning also for the wedding.

Both men met in the stables and saw that their luggage was loaded in the carriage. As they rode away, Richard chuckled and turned to Jonathan. "Well that visit surely was not what I expected it to be."

Jonathan shook his head. "No, not really. I do hope Julianna really keeps her promise this time though. I would hate to have to introduce her to marriage with a spanking."



## Chapter Five

The rest of the morning Julianna lay on her stomach with her bottom exposed trying to get rid of the fire in it. The cool air offered some relief, but not much. By noon she was bored. When there was a knock on the door she called "Come in" eagerly.

Nancy came in followed by a maid with a tray. "This is your lunch and I have brought you some study materials. While you are here, I want you to start going through your clothing and decide what you are taking with you and what you feel you will no longer need. We will need to separate out what you wish for the next two weeks and pack the remainder." Nancy set some papers and a tablet on her dresser.

Julianna could barely look at her, she felt so ashamed. Nancy knew Julianna was truly contrite. She sat down on the bed next to Julianna. "I know you are sorry, and I have forgiven you. You have paid for your misdeed and now must go forward. I do hope you have learned that it isn't possible to always have your own way. Jonathan is a fine and decent man and fair, but won't tolerate your misbehaving. Now, I need to go and talk to Maisie. I will bring you some tea later." She rose and left the room.

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Julianna felt like crying all over. Nancy really was being quit nice. Though she had hardly touched her breakfast, she wasn't sure she was hungry. She ate some of the food and then lay back down on the bed. She fell asleep and was still sleeping when Nancy returned later with tea. Nancy gently shook her awake.

"Julianna, it is tea time. You have hardly eaten today and I don't want you getting ill. Now have your tea, and I will bring dinner later." Nancy picked up the old tray and started out the door.

"How is Maisie? May I have tea with her?" Julianna asked softly.

"She is feeling as badly as you are, but both of you will be fine. No, you are to be alone to think for the next day. Now have your tea, then start working on the assignment your father gave you." Nancy left the room.

Julianna sighed and rose and placed two pillows on the chair at her table. She sipped on her tea and ate the cakes. When she was done, she picked up the pen and tablet and started on her apology to her father. She apologized for everything she could think of that she had ever done wrong. She ended it thanking him for his patience and kindness and begging his forgiveness.

A maid brought dinner and Julianna gave her the completed letter and asked that it be given to her father. Once she had finished dinner, Julianna sewed for a bit and then got ready for bed.

Maisie had spent her day similar to Julianna's. She also finished her apology and sent it to the Earl. She missed Richard, and could barely wait for him to return. This time, there would be no mischief to get in their way. She was lonesome and wished she could see Julianna, but knew that was not to be.

Julianna slept fitfully. She was still quite sore and she missed Jonathan. She hoped she could behave as she had promised. She really wanted to have a glorious wedding and start out right. Finally at dawn, she rose and looked through the papers that Nancy had brought her. She started blushing as she read. They were papers telling her what to expect on her wedding night. Being around horses and animals she knew what happened but this was quite detailed and in some ways thrilling. Some of the same feelings that went through her when Jonathan kissed her happened as she read. "Oh, I wonder if she gave Maisie the same thing. I would love to talk to her about this."

The day passed rather quickly for having not much to do. Julianna did get through her clothing,

and select what she would need for the next two weeks and her travel dress for after the wedding. She put them to one side; the others could be packed and taken along with the new linens and things, to the Barrington Estate.

It was teatime and there was a knock on the door. Julianna bade them enter. She expected it would be her tea tray. Instead it was her father. Julianna rose and ran and hugged him. "Oh father, please forgive me for being such a terrible daughter. I will try and be good from now on."

"I do forgive you Julianna, and because you and Maisie have written such good apologies and done everything Nancy has asked of you, I am giving you a slight reprieve. You may come out of your rooms now for tea. Your confinements are over. Now get Maisie and join me for tea. I have missed your company." Alex hugged her and walked back down the hall.

Julianna felt like jumping for joy. She hurried to Maisie's room and found her waiting for her. "Oh Julianna, uncle was just here and we are free!"

"Yes, come let's go for tea, I have so much to talk to you about afterward." The girls held hands and hurried down the stairs.

Tea was a festive affair that night. As soon as it was over, Julianna and Maisie disappeared to Maisie's room. Julianna sat and in an excited tone asked her if she received some papers from Nancy regarding the wedding night.

"Yes I did, Oh Julianna, it was almost embarrassing, but somewhat thrilling too wasn't it?"

They giggled and discussed it all once again among themselves. Nancy passed by and heard part of the conversation. She shook her head. "I should chide them, but I expected they would discuss it. At least they will not be surprised as some young brides are."

The next week was filled with lessons from Nancy and endless fittings and preparations. Julianna was getting nervous and several times

almost snapped but remembered in time and was good.

Her trunks were packed and sent off to the Earl of Barrington's estate. There was only three days left till the wedding. Jonathan would be here in two. Julianna could barely contain herself. But good she had been. Nancy had sent a report on exactly that to Jonathan.

While Julianna had been busy preparing for the wedding, Jonathan had been busy preparing for Julianna's arrival. His housekeeper Becky had been with the family since he was a small boy. She didn't seem happy about the prospect of having a new mistress, since for many years she had been in full charge of running the house. She could be rather crusty at times, and never hesitated to speak her mind. His big fear was a clash between her and Julianna, at the start of their relationship. Becky was wonderful at her job and could teach Julianna many things, but she needed to be a bit patient with the young headstrong Julianna. Jonathan sat back in his study contemplating how best to handle the situation. He rang for Becky and waited for her arrival.

"Have a seat Becky, I think we need to get some planning done for Julianna's arrival." Jonathan indicated a seat in front of his desk. Becky sat and looked over at Jonathan, a crusty frown on her face.

"Julianna is very young and has no experience in managing a household. I am looking for you to guide her in her learning. I value all your years with my family and hope that you and Julianna will work together as a team."

"Hmmpf, I have heard that she is a very spoiled young lady. I don't know that I will have the patience to deal with that. I am very happy to let her go about her business; I will continue to manage as I have done." Becky sat resolute with her arms crossed.

Jonathan cleared his throat. "Becky, Julianna's behavior is my problem. I can assure you she is not

a spoiled young lady and will be most cooperative with you. As Lady of the house, she will need to know of all arrangements. I am asking you to work together nicely. If you encounter any problems, you may come to me, but I want you to keep an open mind and accept her. She is going to be my wife and Lady of this house. Will you give me your word that you will try?" Jonathan smiled at Becky.

"I will try, but I'm too old to put up with any nonsense." Becky rose and left the room.

Jonathan sat and thought. He was really going to have to convince Julianna to give Becky a chance and be sweet with her. It was easy to see a storm brewing, but he was not going to give in.

When his parents had died, he never moved into the master suite. He had stayed in his own suite of rooms. Now it was time to move. He had the entire suite cleaned and polished and new linens placed on the bed. He moved his belongings to his dressing room and his personal affects from his sitting room to the master sitting room as well.

The ladies dressing room he made sure was spotless and waiting for Julianna. Her morning room was stocked with a fresh supply of stationery bearing the Barrington family crest and calling cards bearing her name.

As the trunks arrived, a maid was assigned to unpack and put away Julianna's things. Jonathan knew that Julianna would need a personal maid, but decided she would be able to decide whom she preferred, once she was there. All seemed to be in readiness for her arrival. He knew some of her favorite meals and preferences and asked Becky to see to it that they were served the first week she was there, along with a selection of his. After that it would be up to Julianna and Becky to decide on the menus for the day.

Jonathan knew of Julianna's love of horses and animals. He purchased a gray mare from a neighbor and picked out a new spaniel puppy for her. He also had made several purchases of jewels, to surprise

her with. His only underlying fear was that she was not behaving. It was with some relief that he read Nancy's note. "Thank goodness. I am so glad. Now if she can just hold on for a few more days." Jonathan said a silent prayer.

Finally it was the day to leave for the Pritchard Estate. Richard joined him and the two rode overland and sent the carriage ahead with their bags. Julianna and Jonathan would return in the carriage and Richard would see to Jonathan's horse. As they traveled Richard inquired if Jonathan had heard anything regarding the outcome of the punishments and the girls behavior.

"I received a note from Nancy, that Julianna has been on her best behavior. I would imagine if she is, then Maisie is also. I am so anxious to see her. It is hard to believe that in two days we will be wed."

"Yes time has gone by rather fast. I too, anxiously am awaiting our wedding day." Richard and Jonathan rode on in silence for a way.

Julianna was a bundle of nerves. She knew that Jonathan was expected by teatime. She was restless and unable to concentrate at all. Finally Nancy just dismissed her. "I guess you have learned all you are going to, now try and relax and amuse yourselves, till your gentlemen arrive."

Julianna tried sewing and reading and nothing worked. Finally she threw down the book and turned to Maisie. "I need some air. Let's go for a ride."

"Julianna, you know Jonathan and Richard said they didn't want us riding unescorted anymore." Maisie didn't want to get in trouble, on the very day Richard was arriving.

"Oh, I know we can get old Pete to go with us. Then we won't be unescorted." Julianna smiled at her cousin.

"Julianna! I don't know that they would consider that okay. Pete is ancient and can barely see. He wouldn't be any protection at all. You know that!"

Oh posh Maisie, we aren't going far. Just to the stream for a bit. There is no one to harm us anyway. Pete will be fine. And we won't be disobeying. Come on." Julianna raced upstairs to change into her riding outfit. Maisie trailed along after her.

Soon they were on their horses, riding out with a poor old Pete tagging after them. All he had wanted was an afternoon nap, and now he had to escort the young ladies. "Now, I don't want you galloping out of sight, you hear?"

Pete's words were lost in the wind, as Julianna and Maisie raced ahead, with Pete yelling at them and trying to keep up. Julianna and Maisie were having great fun racing.

The first sight that Jonathan and Richard saw as they crested the hill, were the two girls with their hair flying free behind them and poor old Pete trying to catch up.

Jonathan shook his head and looked at Richard. "I knew it was too good to last." They kicked their horses into a gallop, to intercept the little party.

They were having so much fun galloping across the meadow as fast as they could, that neither Julianna nor Maisie heard nor noticed the two riders approaching from the right.

Pete noticed and finally stopped shouting and trying to catch up with them. He recognized Jonathan and Richard immediately. "I hope they give those two a good licking acting like this."

Julianna was shocked when she felt her reins grabbed and her mare brought to a halt. She looked quickly over at the rider. "Jonathan! You scared me. I wasn't expecting to see you for several hours yet."

Maisie was looking equally as shocked at seeing Richard. Richard pulled her off her horse and handed the reins to Pete who finally caught up. "Miss Maisie, will be riding back with me. Could you see to it that her horse gets back?"

"Of course Sir, would be my pleasure." Pete took the reins and watched as Richard started for the estate, talking to Maisie all the way.

Jonathan looked sternly at Julianna. "I can see you weren't expecting me. I wasn't expecting to see you riding recklessly through the meadow, unescorted, for all general purposes."

"We were escorted, Pete was with us and we weren't riding recklessly." Julianna tossed her head.

Jonathan heard enough he pulled Julianna over to his horse tummy down across the saddle. He handed her horse's reins to Pete who took them smiling.

"Now Julianna, we will have a brief discussion of what I just saw and heard." Jonathan's hand fell over and over on her bottom. Even through her riding clothes she could feel the sting.

"Jonathan, please stop, let me explain." Julianna was trying to right herself. Jonathan said nothing and kept swatting her till they were at the stable. Pete was right behind them and took Jonathan's horse. Jonathan lifted Julianna down and grabbed her hand and pulled her into the house. Once inside he stopped and held her at arms length. "I didn't intend to greet my bride to be in this manner, but despite what I have heard about your behavior, it seems obedience is still a bit of a problem, Julianna."

"I didn't disobey you. We were escorted and we always ride that way through the meadow. We know it and it is safe." Julianna looked up at Jonathan pouting.

"I think you better go to your room and think about things for a bit. I will be up shortly. I want you standing with that pretty little nose in the corner. Understand? And while you are there think about the proper tone of voice to use when talking to me." Jonathan turned her and swatted her several more times. Julianna fairly flew to the staircase and up to her room.



Jonathan went into the parlor and found Richard sitting there alone. "Well this was quite a welcome wasn't it?" Richard shook his head in agreement. "The worst part is Maisie at least, can see no wrong in what they did. She feels they were fine, even though Pete told them to stay with him and was shouting at them to stop. I guess they have been closed in too long and nerves got the better of them."

"I know. Julianna told me the same thing. She doesn't feel she disobeyed and finds nothing wrong with the petulant tone she used. I guess there could have been worse things for them to do, but I can't let this go without some punishment." Jonathan was pacing the carpet.

Just then Alex came in. "I heard that you had arrived. I wasn't expecting you quite so early."

"Neither were your daughter and niece. We ran into them galloping across the meadow, with poor Pete yelling at them to stop. It wasn't quite the greeting I expected." Jonathan shook Alex's hand. Alex had to laugh. "They have been so good, I expect they just need to get some air and exercise. But I'll leave that to you."

Alex sat down and motioned for Jonathan to do likewise. "You have plenty of time before tea to talk to them. All the plans are finalized for the wedding. I take it Julianna's trunks have arrived?"

"Yes, they arrived and are already unpacked. Everyone is anxious to meet her." Jonathan thought with perhaps the exception of Becky. "Everything is in place and ready for her."

"Good, I will miss her dearly you know, but am relieved she is in good hands. Just take care of her, Jonathan." Alex was somewhat misty eyed.

"Don't worry Sir, I do love her and she me. She may need a correction every now and then, but will always be with love, I assure you." Jonathan stood, "I am afraid such a correction is needed now. I will see you at tea." He left the room and Richard followed shortly after.

Jonathan knocked on Julianna's door and entered. At least she was standing in the corner as instructed. He pulled the stool to the center of the room and sat down. "Julianna, come here." Julianna turned and walked with her head down over to him. "Jonathan, I didn't mean to speak to you crossly or disobey you. Please forgive me."

Jonathan pulled her onto his lap and put his arms around her. "Julianna, I expressly told you I didn't want you riding like that, and you were to be escorted by someone who could protect you. You know very well that Pete is way too old to be able to do that. Plus, you didn't listen to him and stay with him. Both you and Maisie were giggling at him and riding as fast as you could, away from him. That is not obeying me, Julianna." Jonathan kissed her forehead and set her on her feet. "I didn't want to have to do this, but you don't leave me any other choice."

Jonathan pulled her face down over his knee and quickly lifted her skirt and lowered her knickers baring her. Without another word he raised his hand and began spanking her all over until she was a nice deep red and sobbing. He stopped and pulled her knickers up and pulled her into his arms again. "Are you ever going to learn to obey me?"

Julianna was sniffing. This was not a hard spanking, but one she would feel for a while. "Yes Jonathan, I will. I am trying." She hid her face in his shoulder and started crying again.

"Shhhh Julianna, it is over and you are forgiven, but don't try and get around my orders. That won't work, and I will not allow you to risk your safety. If you do something like that again, you will pick a switch and get the switching of your life, do you understand?"

Julianna looked up at him with tears in her eyes. "Yes Jonathan, I promise I will be good." Jonathan hugged her tight to him and kissed her on the lips with all the passion he had been saving up. When at last they broke apart, he stood her up and stood

and pulled her into his arms. "It's time to get ready for tea. I will see you downstairs." He kissed her once more and left for his own room to change.

Julianna stood rubbing her bottom, promising herself not to get into any more trouble for a long time. She could hear muffled sobs from Maisie. Richard must have also spanked her. She washed her face and changed dresses and went and got Maisie.

"Julianna, I am not getting in any more trouble. I think we better just sit and sew for the next day." Maisie was very serious.

Julianna hugged her. "I think we can be with Richard and Jonathan and stay out of trouble. I was thinking of a picnic tomorrow. There can be no trouble in that."

With that thought brightening their faces they went down to tea.

Julianna and Jonathan, spent some time alone after tea. Julianna again apologized for disappointing him. "Are you nervous Jonathan, about our wedding at all?" Julianna was sitting in the garden with him.

"I may be a bit, but I can tell you are. Don't be nervous it will all be fine." Jonathan squeezed her hand. "What would you like to do tomorrow? I understand that we should be able to spend some time together."

"Can we go on a picnic, by the lake with Richard and Maisie? It will be my last time to do that here." Julianna looked hopefully at Jonathan.

"That would be nice, but we will have to make sure that it will be all right with Nancy and not a burden to Cook."

"I am sure it wouldn't be. I will ask them right after dinner." Julianna was getting excited.

Jonathan laughed and pulled her closer. "I think that I shall make the arrangements this time, Julianna. I really don't want any trouble before our wedding. Now calm down and behave. You are far too worked up."

Before dinner Jonathan knocked on Nancy's door. She expected it to be one of the girls. Both had been so flighty for the last few days. She was surprised to find it was Jonathan.

She stood and greeted him. "What can I do for you, Sir?"

"Please sit down, I just wanted to check a few things with you." Jonathan sat across the table from her. "I got your note and I understand that Julianna has been behaving, other than for her small slip today. She would like to go on a picnic tomorrow. Will that interfere with any plans you have for her?"

Nancy thought for a moment. "I would like her in early afternoon, perhaps an hour before tea, to go over the final fittings and her packing. But if you have an early picnic, I see no problem with it. Cook should be able to fix something simple for you."

"That's fine, we don't need anything elaborate. I will speak to her. Now there is one other thing. I know this is a delicate subject, but since she has no mother, you are the only one I can ask. Julianna is very innocent, has any one explained anything to her regarding the physical side of marriage. I need to know what to be prepared for."

Nancy smiled at the young handsome man across from her as a slight blush suffused his cheeks. "Yes, I have made sure that both girls have read material on the subject. I have overheard them discussing it, so she will be most prepared. From what I have heard perhaps even looking forward to it."

Jonathan thanked her and left the room. He sought out Richard and asked about the picnic. "Yes, Maisie mentioned it. If it is all right, I think it should be fun."

"Good then I will speak to Cook and we can tell them at dinner. It will have to be a short one though, because Nancy needs Julianna an hour before tea." Jonathan left and sought out Cook in the kitchen. She was busy seeing to dinner, but said it would be no problem to provide a simple lunch for

the four of them. Jonathan thanked her and left to prepare for dinner.

Dinner was a very festive affair, everyone was excited about the upcoming wedding. Shortly before the ladies left the table Jonathan announced their plans for the next day.

"Richard and I are taking Julianna and Maisie on a short picnic tomorrow. We need to be back an hour before tea, but will be leaving early in the morning."

Julianna looked surprised. "Why do we have to be back so early?"

Nancy interjected. "You have a final fitting and have to go over your final packing and last minute details. We will need the time."

Julianna was not happy about it at all, but one look at Jonathan and she wisely held her tongue. Once they were alone in the parlor though Julianna pestered Nancy about it. "Why can't we do that after tea? There will still be plenty of time. I wanted to spend as much time as possible with him tomorrow."

"You will have a lifetime together, and the seamstresses won't be here after tea. So just resign yourself to being here an hour before tea. You can still have a good time." Nancy picked up her needlework and continued working on it.

Julianna continued mumbling and complaining to Maisie, until the men joined them. Richard took Maisie for a walk and Jonathan sat down next to Julianna. Alex and Nancy chatted with them briefly before excusing themselves, leaving for their own rooms.

Jonathan pulled Julianna into a long embrace and kiss. "Now I don't want any complaints about the picnic. It may have to be shortened, but we will have plenty of time and have a good time."

"But Jonathan, I don't need another fitting. The dress is fine. I don't want to come back early." Julianna sat pouting.

Jonathan sighed and turned her to face him. "Julianna! I am only going to say this once, stop complaining and pouting. I don't like it. Now we will have fun and you will be back for your fitting on time. Or do we need to have another "discussion" regarding proper behavior?"

"No, Jonathan, I will behave, I just...." Jonathan put his hand over her mouth before she could finish the sentence. "I said no more! I meant no more."

Julianna wisely didn't finish her sentence, but was not happy at all. They cuddled for a bit and then Jonathan walked her to her room. He kissed her long and hard. "I will see you in the morning. We shall leave right after breakfast."

Julianna lay awake for a time thinking about the next day and the following day. She knew she didn't need another fitting. What could happen, that would be an accident and prevent them from returning on time? She had to think of something between now and morning. Suddenly it dawned on her. She knew just what to do. She only needed to get one tool and that should be easy to do, if she got up a bit earlier than normal. Smiling she fell asleep.

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Jonathan normally an early riser woke before dawn the next morning. This was far earlier than normal, but he felt too restless to sleep. He rose and dressed and decided an early morning ride would be just the thing to relax him.

Dawn was just breaking as he approached the stables. He was in the process of saddling his horse in the back stall, when the door opened and someone stealthily moved about in the front of the stable. Staying as quiet as he could, he moved forward until he could see who it was. He was stunned to see Julianna, with a knife, slashing through the reins of the carriage harness. It took him less than a minute, to figure out her plan. She intended for the horse's reins to break and leave

them stranded, thereby staying out later and missing her fitting.

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Julianna was so intent on her work that she was unaware anyone else was there. When Jonathan grabbed her arm she let out a scream. "Jonathan! You frightened me."

Jonathan's response was to sit on the nearest bench and pull her over his knee. Since she was still in nightclothes, it was no problem baring her in a second. His hand rose and fell in rhythm to her sobs and pleas. When she sounded very contrite he stopped, but held her in place. "Julianna, why do you continue to try and connive against rules? It will only lead to exactly what just happened. This is not the way I wanted to spend my time. I should cancel the picnic, but I also am looking forward to it. In case you don't know, the team horses are trained to stop if their reins come loose. Your plan would not have worked. Plus the stable lads always check the harnesses before they put them on. Since I am not going to cancel the picnic, I am going to give you something to remember the whole day." Jonathan picked up a grooming brush lying near by and applied it firmly to the base of her bottom and thighs. Julianna was sobbing and apologizing by the time he laid it down.

"I am sorry Jonathan, I just wanted to spend more time with you." Jonathan pulled her up into his arms. She gasped when her bottom made contact with his lap.

"Julianna, I want this to be the last time I have to spank you in a long while. There are much more pleasant things I would rather do. Please behave!" Jonathan lowered his mouth over hers and kissed her deeply his tongue probing her mouth. Julianna was swept away and returned the kiss. For the first time she was aware of a hardening from Jonathan underneath her. She sighed deeply and blushed a

bit at the feelings that were coursing through her own body.

Jonathan noticed the blush. "That is only part of what I would rather be doing. Don't ever be ashamed with me, Julianna. Your feelings and mine are perfectly normal. Now I think it best you get back to the house before you are missed. I am going for a ride, but I will meet you for breakfast. I expect perfect behavior today." Jonathan stood her up and watched her rubbing her bottom as she walked back to the house.

Julianna returned to her room, resigned to the fact that she would have to obey. It seemed there was no way around it. She crawled back into bed and fell asleep. When she woke it was far later than she normally would be up. She quickly dressed and left her room.

When she entered the dining room, Jonathan was the only one there. "Well sleepy head, I was about to send someone to get you up." He pulled out her chair for her and laughed when she gingerly lowered herself wincing. "I see my reminder is working." He kissed her on the forehead. "The others have all eaten and left. Hurry and eat; then we can be off."

Julianna ate her breakfast as fast as she could. She was anxious to be off on their picnic too. Finally pushing her plate aside she arose. "I need to get my cloak and I will be right back." She hugged Jonathan as she left. "I am sorry about this morning. I will behave."

"You best, or you will be getting a spanking right in front of everyone."

Julianna hurried out and got her cloak and returned. Richard, Maisie and Jonathan were waiting for her. The lunch and blankets were packed in the carriage and once they were all in, the driver started off toward the lake.

It was a beautiful sunny day and just delightful for a picnic. Jonathan sent the carriage back and



gave him a time to return, which would assure Julianna would be on time for her fitting.

They found a nice lovely spot under a tree, where they could see the lake. After spreading the blankets they sat down and admired the view. Richard had never been here before and found it enchanting. "Come Maisie, let's take a walk along the lake, it is very pretty."

"Do you want to take a walk, Jonathan?" Julianna looked at him questioningly.

"No, I think I would rather just sit here and hold you and talk." Jonathan pulled her over next to him and put his arm around her. They sat in silence for a minute and then Jonathan smiled down at her. "Just think, tomorrow at this time we shall be married. I can hardly wait."

"I know, I wish it were tomorrow now." Julianna sighed and leaned against him. He turned and kissed her like he had that morning, but this time let his hand wander over her breast.

Julianna could feel her nipples harden and stirrings from this morning start all over again. Jonathan continued for several minutes and then stopped. "I think we best go for a walk, or things may go further than I wish them to. I do love you so, Julianna."

Julianna kissed him once more and then he pulled her to her feet and taking her hand wandered off toward the lake. Julianna picked up some stones and threw them in the water watching the ripples expand outward.

"Do you remember the last time we came here?" She looked over at Jonathan.

"Yes very well. I believe some young lady tried her best to push me in the lake and was justly rewarded for doing so."

They both laughed and continued walking for some time. When they got back to the blankets Maisie and Richard were already there. "There you two are. I think it's time for us to eat, the carriage

will be returning shortly." Richard brought the basket closer and Maisie started unpacking it.

Julianna had been so happy but the thought of having to leave put a pout on her face. She helped Maisie but didn't say much. When everyone was served and wine poured, Richard proposed a toast. "Here's to a wonderful day and the special day coming tomorrow."

Julianna toasted and then commented. "Well, it would have been even nicer if we didn't have to leave so soon for a stupid fitting." She set her glass down and picked up her plate pouting the entire time.

Jonathan cleared his throat. "Julianna! Remember what I told you."

One look at Jonathan's face and Julianna remembered. "Yes Sir, I won't pout about it anymore." She smiled even though she didn't really feel like it. The lunch was finished and cleared away just as the carriage came into sight.

They arrived home in time for Julianna to make her fitting. She kissed Jonathan goodbye and headed upstairs. Nancy and the seamstress were waiting. The fitting went well, everything was fine as Julianna was sure it would be. When they were finished, Nancy sat down and motioned for Julianna to also. "Now tomorrow your things will be moved into Jonathan's chamber for the night. All the rest of your things except for your travel outfit will be packed. The rest of your clothes will be packed that morning. Do you have any last questions you wish to ask me? I know you read the material I left, and if there is anything you need to ask, please do."

Julianna blushed to the roots of her hair. "No, I think I understood it all quite well. Thank you."

"Then lets go down to tea." Nancy rose and Julianna followed her down.

The rest of the afternoon and evening seemed to fly by. Before she knew it she was saying goodnight to Jonathan for the last time as his fiancée. Tomorrow night she would be in his arms in his bed.

Jonathan held her tight and kissed her hard, "Good night Julianna, sleep well. Tomorrow we shall be joined forever."

The next morning dawned bright and clear. Julianna had slept well despite the butterflies in her stomach. She was just about to get up, when Nancy knocked and entered with a tray.

"Good morning, I hope you slept well, I have brought your breakfast to you." Nancy set the tray on the table.

Julianna was puzzled. "I was just going to get dressed and go downstairs."

Nancy smiled. "Not today, the bride and groom don't see each other until the wedding. You will eat here and shortly we will begin dressing you. I have ordered a nice hot tub and after breakfast you can relax in the tub till dressing time."

"But surely Jonathan will see me when we ride to the church? So what difference should it make? I want to see him this morning." Her voice had a tone Nancy hadn't heard in a while.

"Julianna, you are not going to see him and that is final. You will see him in a few short hours in church. Now eat." Nancy started laying out the wedding linens that Julianna would be wearing under her dress.

When Julianna finished her breakfast Nancy opened the door and told the maid to have the tub brought up. As soon as it arrived Nancy directed Julianna into the tub. "I will be back in 30 minutes to help you dress."

Julianna sighed and took off her nightdress and climbed into the tub. It was filled with wonderful scented oil and was very relaxing. She had almost drifted off to sleep when Nancy knocked on the door. Julianna climbed out of the tub and wrapped herself in a towel.

Nancy and several maids entered and began bustling around Julianna. Before she knew it she was dressed and her hair arranged. All that was left was placing the veil on her head.

Jonathan has also risen early and taken a ride to quiet his nerves. He was aware that he wouldn't see Julianna until the ceremony, but missed having her at breakfast. It was a busy morning and everyone ate hurriedly to dress and prepare for the wedding.

The party after would be held in the ballroom. It hadn't been used in years. Alex had seen personally to the arrangements and had not let either Jonathan or Julianna see or know about any of it. As everyone else was bustling around, Alex made one final check on all the preparations. He and Cook stood in the doorway looking around. Alex smiled. "Yes it is indeed perfect Thank you! You did an excellent job." Cook was beaming as she left for the kitchen to finish the last minute preparations.

Jonathan carefully dressed and when it was time for him to leave he and Richard met in the hall and left in the carriage together. It was a short trip and the carriage would then return to pick up Julianna and Maisie and Alex.

Once they were alone in the church Jonathan showed Richard the ring he had selected. It was a beautiful band of gold with rubies and diamonds. "Julianna is fond of rubies I learned, so I am hoping she will love this."

"Jonathan that is magnificent! I am sure she will be thrilled." Richard admired the ring. He would have to find something equally suitable for Maisie.

"I will be thrilled if we can get through this day with her behaving for a change. I know she is improving, but she is still a handful. I fear things are going to be a bit tense when we get to my home too." Jonathan was pacing nervously.

"Why would that be? You will have her to yourself. You should be able to keep her out of trouble on a more consistent basis. As you said she has improved a lot."

"The problem is Becky, the housekeeper, she has been handling everything herself for so long, she resents that Julianna will be the Lady of the Estate. She is as stubborn as Julianna, so I can see

some clashes coming. I have talked to Becky and asked for her cooperation, but it will only take the slightest thing from Julianna to have all out warfare. I am going to have to talk to Julianna about it tomorrow on the way home."

Jonathan has just finished speaking when the pastor informed him that the bride had arrived and the guests were seated. They would be starting the ceremony very shortly. He and Richard were to take their places at the side of the altar.

They were just in place when the music started when Maisie started down the aisle followed by Julianna on her father's arm. Jonathan's breath was taken away looking at how beautiful she was. She was a vision in white satin and lace, with pearl beads adorning the bodice.

Julianna was so nervous her hands were shaking. When the Earl placed her hand in Jonathan's and officially gave her away she smiled up at Jonathan. He whispered quietly to her. "Don't be nervous. I love you."

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The service was mostly a blur to her, except when it came to her vows. When the pastor asked, "Do you take Jonathan, Earl of Barrington as your husband, and promise to love, honor and obey?" Julianna hesitated for a second. That meant she really would have to obey him forever. She blushed slightly as she answered, "I do!"

Jonathan lifted her veil and kissed her. "I love you Lady Barrington. You are beautiful!"

The music started and arm in arm Jonathan and Julianna walked down the aisle and quickly got in the carriage for the ride back to the estate.

Julianna snuggled tightly against Jonathan the entire way. She was so happy! "Jonathan, this ring is beautiful! I shall never take it off. I love you so much." She kissed him with some of her newly learned passion. Too soon they were back at the estate and entering the ballroom.

Julianna gasped in pleasure when she saw it. There were lace covered tables and ivory candles all over. The wall sconces were filled with flowers and the buffet table was laden down with Roasts and potatoes and all of Julianna's favorite foods. She hugged her father tightly. "Oh Father, this is so wonderful. Thank you!"

Alex beamed at her. "Well my dear, you deserve the best. I wish you all the happiness in the world."

As the guests arrived Jonathan and Julianna greeted them. Everyone was having a wonderful time, eating and dancing. However, Julianna was wishing they would all leave, as she wanted to be alone with Jonathan. Her temper was beginning to grow shorter as the day grew longer.

Jonathan was talking to a group of men, when Julianna went over to him and interrupted. "Jonathan I need to speak to you!" He gave her a look, but excused himself from the men. "Julianna that was rather rude, what is so important?"

"I don't care! I am tired and want them all to leave. I wish to retire to our rooms." With a little stamp of her foot she looked up at Jonathan. "NOW!"

"You really wouldn't want to retire to our room now, young lady, as you are behaving like a brat. We must stay till the guests leave. When we do retire, we will have a discussion out this little outburst. Now I suggest you behave, they will all leave soon enough." Jonathan turned and left her standing there as he returned to his conversation.

Julianna was livid. She stormed over to a table and sat down. Maisie joined her. "Julianna, whatever is wrong? You have a terrible scowl on your face."

"Jonathan is being mean. I want to go our room, and he won't until everyone leaves. He has even threatened me with a spanking. On our wedding night of all things!" Julianna was in a full-blown pout.

Maisie was just about to try and calm her down when Jonathan appeared and sat down next to Julianna. Maisie left in search of Richard. She didn't like the look on Jonathan's face at all. "Julianna! I want this to stop now. We shall be alone soon enough. Now come dance with me."

Julianna rose and danced but was very quiet. Jonathan was quickly losing his patience with her. He had warned her but it looked like their wedding night celebration would also include a spanking. Soon enough, the last of the guests had left and Jonathan took Julianna's arm and bade goodnight to all.

Once in their room, Julianna became very shy. Jonathan took off his coat and looked at her. "You know you behaved badly a bit ago, don't you?"

"I just wanted to leave. I was tired." Julianna sat down on a dressing stool.

"Julianna, you were the hostess, it doesn't matter how tired you are, you must stay and be polite till everyone leaves. We shall have plenty of time together, but first you are getting a reminder in manners." Jonathan pulled her up and took her place and flipped her over his knee. It didn't take him long to bare her. He raised his hand and applied it firmly to her bottom till she was red and crying.

"Now are you ever going to throw a tantrum in public again?" Jonathan held her in place and started rubbing her bottom.

"No Sir, I'm sorry." Julianna was softly crying. It wasn't that hard of a spanking but she felt bad.

Gently Jonathan lifted her up and began unbuttoning her dress. "Now, I will show you what I have been wanting to do for a long time. I am sorry it had to start with a spanking, but you know I do keep my word."

Soon Jonathan had all of Julianna's clothes off and picked her up and placed her on the bed. She was blushing slightly from embarrassment but the kisses and rubs he had given her as he undressed

her were making her feel very excited. She was ready to experience more.

Jonathan undressed and lay down next to her. He started kissing her passionately and nibbling on her breasts. Julianna felt that she was about to explode. She was aware that Jonathan had grown very erect. She had never imagined what a man looked like in this condition.

Jonathan separated her legs and rubbed her in her private part. She was wet and ready. Slowly, he inserted himself into her. "Julianna, this may hurt a bit, but I promise you will enjoy it as much as I." He pushed all the way in. Julianna felt a sharp pain, but soon felt something else. She was soon moaning with desire and Jonathan pumped harder and harder. It was moments later that they both exploded in ecstasy.

"Oh Jonathan, I never imagined anything could be so wonderful." Julianna was holding tightly to him.

Jonathan answered by kissing her deeply and holding her to him. They once more climbed to the peak and crashed over. Julianna was limp in his arms. "I think we best get some sleep, we have a long journey ahead of us tomorrow." Jonathan held her against him. "Sleep well, my love." Julianna cuddled next to him and they both fell asleep, dreaming of their wonderful future together.



## **Lady Barrington**

### **Chapter One**

Julianna woke early the next morning and snuggled close to Jonathan. She couldn't believe how wonderful the evening before had been. Even though he had spanked her, the loving after was more wonderful than she ever could have imagined.

Jonathan woke and pulled Julianna close to him and kissed her. "How is my bride this morning?"

Julianna snuggled as close to him as she could. "I love you Jonathan, I think we should stay here the entire day." She kissed him with more passion than she was even aware she had.

"I would love nothing better, but we do have a long journey ahead of us. I wish us to arrive home before dark. We best be up and dressing for breakfast." Jonathan pulled her in for another kiss, then rose and dressed. Julianna lay there watching him. When he was finished he turned back and saw her still laying there. "Come Julianna, time to get up and dress."

Julianna pulled the covers up to her chin. "I don't want to get up Jonathan, another hour won't hurt anything."

Jonathan sighed and sat down next to her. "Julianna, I don't want to start our first day with an argument and a pout from you. We have tomorrow to sleep in, but not today." Jonathan took her hand and pulled her from the bed.

Julianna said nothing but was still pouting. Jonathan grabbed her around the waist and propping his foot on the dressing table chair, put her over his knee and swatted her five times. "Unless you wish for a full fledged spanking, this will stop now!"

Julianna was back on her feet. The swats hadn't hurt much but her pride. "I'm sorry Jonathan. I'll behave." She threw her arms around him.

"I love you Julianna, now get dressed and we can go to breakfast. Julianna hurriedly dressed and was sitting brushing her hair while Jonathan watched her. When she started to pin it up, he stopped her. "Please leave it down, I love to see it hanging loose."

Smiling at him, Julianna left it down and turned around. "I'm ready Jonathan."

They walked hand in hand down to breakfast. As the meal came to a close Julianna became very quiet. It suddenly had hit her; she wouldn't be eating here anymore. Jonathan was busy talking to Richard and Alex and didn't notice her quietness. Maisie noticed and leaned over and squeezed her hand. "Don't worry Julianna, you will be back for my wedding and then we shall be neighbors and visit each day if we wish. You should be happy."

Julianna managed a weak smile. "I am, but I am suddenly sad at the thought of leaving home. I shall miss Father and everyone, even Nancy."

Jonathan finished his conversation and rose from the table. "If you are finished with your breakfast Julianna we should be on our way."

"I...I'm ready Jonathan." Julianna rose with tears streaming down her face. Jonathan turned and saw her. He pulled her to him and hugged her. "I'm sorry Julianna I know this is hard, but I'll be with you and we will be back shortly. Say goodbye and we will be off."

Julianna ran to Alex and hugged him tight. "I will miss you so much. I love you."

Alex hugged her and kissed her forehead. "I shall miss you also, but will visit you often and you'll be back her shortly for Maisie's wedding. Go and be a good wife for Jonathan. He'll take good care of you." Alex would indeed miss Julianna; things would be very quiet here without her.

Nancy was next and Julianna hugged her and thanked her for all her help. When she was finished she went and stood by Jonathan. "I'm ready now."

Their luggage had been loaded into the carriage so all was ready for them. Jonathan lifted Julianna into the carriage and they were on the way to their new home. Julianna was overcome with sadness as she watched the familiar landscape pass by. She was facing out the window so Jonathan couldn't see her tears.

Jonathan knew that she was sad and pulled her close to him. "It's okay Julianna, I know this is hard for you. You don't need to hide your tears from me." He held her and rubbed her back until she quieted. "Would you like me to tell you more about your new home and neighbors?"

"Yes, I would like that. I never have been away from home before and it's scary." Julianna rested her head on Jonathan's shoulder and he started telling her about her new home. It wasn't long before he felt her fall asleep. He stopped talking and just held her.

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They had been traveling for a while and it was time for lunch. Jonathan knew the next village had an Inn that was better than most and would provide a good meal and resting place.

"George!" Jonathan called to the driver. "Please stop at the Inn in the next village. We will be able to have a meal and you can attend to the horses as well."

When they entered the village Jonathan, gently shook Julianna awake. "Wake up Julianna, we are going to stop for a meal and rest."

"Oh Jonathan, I'm sorry I fell asleep on you." Julianna yawned and rubbed her eyes.

"You were tired, it was quite all right."

As soon as the carriage stopped in front of the Inn, Jonathan jumped down and lifted Julianna down after him.

They were seated at a table in quiet corner of the inn. The maid served them a thick stew and fresh baked bread. They were both hungry and ate

well. As they ate Julianna looked around. She had never been in an Inn before. "Jonathan, do people really stay here and sleep?"

"Yes they do. There are rooms for that purpose upstairs. If our journey were longer we would stop in a place like this to rest for the night."

"It sounds interesting, I've never seen a place like this before."

Jonathan smiled and patted her hand. "When I take you to the city, we shall stay in an Inn. There are many of them there. The one I like is much larger than this and has much nicer eating areas. The rooms are large and roomy and have all the comforts of home."

Julianna looked dreamily at him. "That sounds like so much fun. Could we do that next week?"

"Not next week, but soon. If you are ready we should be on our way again."

Jonathan settled the bill with the innkeeper and lifted Julianna back into the carriage.

"I'm sorry we couldn't rest longer, but it will be best to get us home soon." Jonathan settled back in the carriage and Julianna resumed looking at the scenery and asking endless questions. She was indeed getting bored. Finally she could stand it no longer.

"Jonathan, this is very tiresome, when will we be there? I don't like all the bumps."

Jonathan had wondered how long her patience would hold. "Soon, perhaps another hour. Just relax, Julianna."

"I want to stop and walk around a bit, why can't we stop for an hour and rest." Julianna was scowling at Jonathan. "I'm tired of this."

"Julianna, the more stops we make the later it will be when we arrive. It isn't that far, now just relax, we are not stopping." His patience was wearing a bit thin with her.

"That isn't fair Jonathan, I'm uncomfortable. If you cared about me, you would let us stop and

rest." Julianna crossed her arms and pulled to the farthest side of the carriage away from him.

"Julianna, stop this right now. You know I care, and you also know I won't put up with your temper. If you want to spend the remainder of the trip over my knee, it can be arranged." Jonathan pulled her back to him. Gently kissing her on the lips he whispered in her ear. "Which shall it be? Kisses or spanks?"

"Jonathan, I don't want to be spanked but I'm bored." Julianna tried not to pout.

"I know you are, just sit here and talk to me and time will go faster. Tell me about your older brother."

That distracted Julianna sufficiently to fill the remainder of the trip. It was just beginning to turn dusky, when the carriage pulled into the long drive leading to the Barrington estate. Julianna was speechless. "Oh Jonathan, this is beautiful! It is even larger than my home."

"I'm glad you like it Lady Barrington, since it is your home now." Jonathan held her close to him and kissed her. He jumped from the carriage and lifted Julianna down. "Shall we go investigate your new home Lady Barrington?"

Julianna took Jonathan's arm as they walked up to the front door. Servants had come swiftly to unload their baggage. Becky was standing in the front hall waiting to greet them. She wasn't looking forward to meeting Julianna. As far as she was concerned, Jonathan could have done much better than marry a spoiled brat, for that was what she had heard from everyone. Plus, she didn't relish having another woman in the house telling her how to do things. She had run this house all alone for many years.

"Good afternoon Lord and Lady Barrington. I shall have tea ready for you anytime you wish to have it."

"Thank you Becky, this is my bride, Lady Julianna Barrington. From now on I will leave those

decisions to her, but for today, I think we would like tea in my sitting room in half an hour. It will give us time to freshen up."

"As you wish, Sir. Welcome, Lady Julianna, to our home." Becky turned and left for the kitchen.

"She was awfully cold Jonathan, I don't think I shall like her much." Julianna commented as they climbed the stairs to their rooms.

"Give her time Julianna, she has been here for many years and has taken care of me and this house for as long as I can remember. Just be patient and you'll win her affection." Jonathan stopped in front of a large oak paneled door. He opened it and swept Julianna into his arms. "This, my dear, is our rooms."

Julianna was placed on her feet and looked in awe at the large sitting room. "Oh Jonathan, this is wonderful. She immediately started to investigate opening doors to the other rooms. "Hold on Julianna, I shall show you where everything is."

Jonathan opened a door on the right side. "This is our bedroom."

Julianna looked and gasped. It was large, larger than her room at home had been. There was a huge four-poster bed and a beautiful quilt covered it. On one wall there was a chaise lounge and on the other was two chairs with a table between them. There were another door to the hall and one door that led to her dressing room. Julianna was surprised to find her trunks had all been unpacked and the clothes brushed and hung nicely. A lovely dressing table contained perfume containers and boxes just waiting for her to fill.

"Jonathan this is perfect, I just love it, but where are your clothes?"

"Come I'll show you." Jonathan led her back out to the sitting room and opened a door off of this. There was a large room with a small bed at one end and closets with his clothes neatly hung in them at the other end.

"Why do you have a bed here?"

"It's customary, in case the lady of the house is someway indisposed and can't be disturbed." Jonathan slightly blushed.

Julianna didn't quite understand but decided not to ask any more questions. Perhaps it would be something she could ask Nancy when they visited.

Jonathan steered her back to the sitting room. "Tea will be here shortly, why don't you freshen up and I'll meet you back here." He pulled her close and hugged and kissed her.

Julianna went to her dressing room and found that the trunks from the carriage had been brought up and a maid was busy unpacking them. When Julianna walked in she curtseyed. "Good afternoon, Lady Barrington, my name is Josie, I have brought you some fresh water and towels. Would you like help changing out of your travel clothes?"

Julianna liked the sweet smile on Josie's face and her friendly manner. "Yes, thank you."

Soon Julianna had washed her face and brushed her hair and had on a fresh dress. She felt much better than she had before. "Thank you, Josie. Are you my maid?"

"Yes Madam, unless you would like someone else?" Josie stood politely waiting for her answer.

"No, you will be fine. Thank you. I'll see you before dinner." Julianna smiled and went to join Jonathan.

He was waiting for her when she arrived. He stood and greeted her. "Julianna, you look rested and refreshed. Come sit with me, the tea should be here shortly."

Julianna sat next to him on the sofa and she had barely settled when there was a knock on the door and the butler arrived carrying the tea tray. He placed it on the table in front of them. "Will there be anything else, Sir?"

"No, William, that is fine." Jonathan dismissed him and watched as Julianna poured their tea.

"Jonathan, how did they know to fix my favorites for tea?"

"Hmmm, must have been a good fairy told them." Jonathan enjoyed seeing her happy. "From now on, you can order what ever you wish for tea. You know what you like and what I like, so those decisions will be yours." They leisurely ate and drank their tea.

When they were done Julianna turned to Jonathan. "When are you going to show me the rest of the house?" Julianna was anxious to learn her way around.

"Do you wish to nap before dinner?" Jonathan looked at her inquiringly.

"No, I napped in the carriage, I think I would rather see the house."

Jonathan hugged her to him. "That's fine, but I don't want you to be tired and crabby tonight."

Julianna blushed. "Jonathan, I never am."

"Come, I'll show you the rest of your new home." Jonathan took her hand chuckling at her statement.

By the time they had toured the other bedrooms and preceded to the first floor, Julianna's head was spinning. "Jonathan, this is so huge, I don't think I'll ever learn my way around."

"You will in no time at all." Jonathan proceeded to show her the dining room and his study, her morning room, the parlor and main sitting room. The gardens would have to wait until morning, as it was now dark. The last thing he showed her was the kitchen and Becky's office. "This is where you will find her when you need her, or when you need something from the kitchen."

Julianna was familiar with this and felt somewhat more at ease. "Jonathan, I've never had my own morning room before. It is lovely. Do you spend all your days in your study?"

"Not all day, I have the animals to check over, and of course I now have a certain Lady who will need to be entertained sometimes." Jonathan pulled her into a deep kiss.



There was still over an hour before dinner. "Maybe we should rest some before dinner. Julianna looked shyly up at Jonathan."

"I think that's an excellent idea." Jonathan took her arm and led her back upstairs.

Once they were in their bedroom, Julianna became a bit shy. "Come here, Julianna." Jonathan held out his arms to her. Slowly she walked over and fell into his arms and embrace.

Deftly he undid her laces and slipped her dress and then her under things off. He then placed her on the bed and undressed himself. The next half hour was spent in ecstasy as he slowly brought both of them to climax. "Hmmm Jonathan, maybe we should just skip dinner tonight." Julianna rolled into his arms and snuggled down.

"No, just rest a bit, remember we have all night too." Jonathan pulled her close and let her sleep for a bit, then woke her. "Wake up Julianna, time for dinner."

Julianna wrapped herself in a robe and picked up her clothes and took them to her dressing room. Josie was waiting and in short order she was dressed and ready for dinner.

Jonathan was waiting at the bottom of the steps and smiled broadly when he saw her wearing his favorite gown.

They walked arm and arm into the dining room. Julianna was somewhat surprised to see Becky there. However, Nancy had always dined with them, so this probably wasn't so unusual. Jonathan however, felt her tense and hoped there would be no clashes between them this evening.

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Becky greeted Jonathan warmly and in a cold civil voice turned to Julianna. "I trust you have found everything to your liking? I'm sure you aren't used to such lavishness, but anyone of the staff will be more than happy to assist you." Before Julianna

could respond, Becky turned to Jonathan. "What are your plans tomorrow, so I may alert the staff."

Julianna sat quietly fuming, she didn't want to start a disagreement so soon after arriving, but this woman was ruining her dinner. Jonathan had glanced at Julianna and could see her struggling to maintain her composure. Just as she was about to answer, Jonathan spoke up.

"I believe we will ride out for a picnic tomorrow. Julianna will let you know the arrangements in the morning." Becky's face grew hot. "Very well, whatever you say."

The rest of the meal passed with strained conversation and an undertone of hostility building between the two women. Finally when the dishes were cleared, Jonathan took Julianna's arm. "Shall we retire to my sitting room, for the rest of the evening?"

"Yes, that would be lovely." Julianna barely nodded good evening to Becky as they left the room.

Jonathan had barely shut the door when Julianna exploded. "She is a witch! I think she is so rude and mean. I will not work with her."

Jonathan took a deep breath. "Julianna, come here." He held out his arms and Julianna rested against him, still stiff with anger.

"I know she was difficult tonight. Give her time and try and be patient. She is an old woman and this has been her home for so long. It will take her some time to get to know you and accept the fact that she is no longer totally in charge. Please do this for me?"

Jonathan picked her up and sat on the sofa and held her on his lap.

Julianna was still angry, but trying to control herself. "Jonathan, she hurt my feelings. Do her feelings matter more than mine?" Tears started to trickle down her face as hard as she tried to stop them

"You know that isn't true Julianna. I love you more than life. However, I want you to try and be the patient and kind person I know you are and help her come to terms with things. I admire the restraint you showed tonight." Jonathan held her as she cried, wiping away the tears with his thumb as he softly kissed her neck and cheek.

Slowly Julianna quieted and gave into his gentle ministrations. "I can order the luncheon, tea and dinner for tomorrow can't I?"

"Yes Julianna, but remember most of the menus have most likely already been prepared. It would be nice if you didn't change them too drastically and just approve them. Next week you will have to make them up yourself, that is now your duty. Try and let her have some say?" Jonathan didn't want all out war in his home.

Julianna looked at him and finally smiled. "I shall try and be nice, even though she isn't."

Jonathan kissed her and set her on the sofa next to him. He stood and poured a port for himself and a sherry for her.

"I have more surprises for you tomorrow, so please be good, so we don't ruin the day. Just ignore Becky's jibes. If you try and draw her out and talk to her at dinner it may help." Jonathan pulled Julianna against him.

The word surprises finally hit Julianna. "What surprises Jonathan? What do you have for me?"

"Tomorrow my dear you will find out. Sit here and talk to me." Jonathan once more pulled her close. They talked about what things she would like to do and see in the next week.

"Jonathan, should we be calling on neighbors?" Julianna didn't want to breach etiquette and start off on the wrong foot.

"I think that can wait a week, we are allowed a week alone together. I will only be spending a minimal time in my office each day and then we can do whatever you wish."

Soon it was time for bed. Julianna was more than ready for him tonight. Their lovemaking was a slower and more intense than it had been the night before or even that afternoon. It was well into the early hours of the morning before they fell asleep.

When Julianna awoke the next morning it took her a moment to get her bearings. The sun was just beginning to stream in the window and Jonathan was awake and watching her. "Good morning my love." He pulled her into a deep kiss. Julianna responded and soon the time of morning was forgotten

When they once again awoke the sun was higher in the sky. Several hours had passed. Jonathan kissed her and held her close. "I think we best get up and face the day. We have lots to do today, and we did sleep in."

Julianna smiled at him. "Oh, what are my surprises Jonathan?" She was like a child on Christmas morning.

"Get dressed and meet me in the dining room and you shall see the first one." Jonathan rose and left for his dressing room.

Julianna threw the covers back and headed for hers as well. Josie was there waiting. "Good Morning Lady Barrington. I trust you slept well?"

Julianna smiled at her. "Yes I did, but please call me Julianna. I am not used to the formality. At least when we are alone."

Josie blushed a bit. "If you are sure it is all right?"

"Yes, it is fine, my maid at home, always called me Julianna."

"I heard you planned a picnic today and a ride, so I have laid out your riding clothes, if you would like something different, I will change them. There is fresh water in the basin." Josie busied herself handing Julianna towels.

"The clothes are perfect, thank you." Julianna washed up and brushed her hair. She remembered

Jonathan saying he liked it down so she left it down and pulled it back in a ribbon.

When she entered the dining room, Jonathan hadn't arrived yet. Becky was already there waiting for her.

"Good morning Lady Barrington. I trust you had a good sleep? It was long enough."

Julianna bit her tongue and replied. "Yes, we both slept well, we were tired from our journey. How are you today Becky?"

Becky was taken aback. "I'm fine. Do you know what you wish to take on your picnic, Lady Barrington, the staff needs a bit of time to prepare it?"

"Please call me Julianna. I would prefer we not be so formal. Jonathan has told me how much you have done for him and his family." In one of her more generous moods, Julianna made a quick decision. "I understand that most of the menus have already been decided for this week. I would like to see them, but don't intend to make any changes. For the picnic I will let you decide what the kitchen staff can handle on short notice. Perhaps tomorrow or the next day we could discuss the menus for next week and the daily schedule of the house."

Jonathan had been standing at the door and heard the whole conversation. His heart swelled with pride at Julianna. Becky looked a bit startled and just grunted. "Fine, Julianna, whatever you say. I'll see to your lunch." She left barely greeting Jonathan.

Jonathan walked in a few long strides and pulled Julianna to him. "That was the nicest thing you could have done. Thank you my love." He kissed her passionately until her knees were weak.

"Jonathan, I think we best have breakfast." Julianna smiled at him. "I did listen last night and decided to try and make her a friend."

They sat down to breakfast and a maid served them right away. They were almost done when

Julianna could stand it no more. "Jonathan, what is my surprise? You said this morning I would get it."

Jonathan laughed at her and pulled a box from his pocket. "Here Julianna is your first surprise of the day."

The box was fairly small and Julianna opened it carefully. Inside was a gold chain and locket bearing the Barrington crest. "Oh Jonathan it is lovely! I shall cherish it always."

"It has been in the family for a long time and always passes to the oldest son. I'm pleased that you like it." He stood and fastened it around her neck.

Becky returned and informed them that their lunch would be packed and ready to go in one hour. Her eyes flew to the locket and her face froze in a frown. "I hope you approve Jonathan, I tried to include your favorites." She left without saying anything to Julianna.

"See Jonathan even though I was nice to her, she doesn't like me! She acts like I don't exist."

"Be patient Julianna, she will come around. We have an hour and I think I'll show you the stables while we are waiting." Jonathan took her arm and led her out. Julianna had no idea that there were two more surprises in store for her that morning.

The stables were not too far from the house and were well maintained. The horses were all in clean stalls and had shiny coats. "Jonathan, this is one of the nicest stables I have ever seen."

Jonathan smiled down at her and called to one of the stable boys. "Could you bring me the mare please?"

The boy hurried to the end of the row of stalls, he knew exactly which horse Jonathan wanted. He led the gray mare to where Jonathan and Julianna were standing.

"This is your second surprise Julianna, she is yours." Jonathan handed her the reins.

Her mouth flew open in surprise. "She's mine? Really mine?" Julianna had tears forming in her

eyes. "Thank you Jonathan, she is beautiful. Can I ride her to our picnic?"

"Yes, she is yours and we will take her on the picnic. But remember, until you are a lot more familiar with the area, you are not to ride alone."

"I'm a good rider Jonathan, I would never get lost." Julianna rubbed the muzzle of the horse, and talked to her.

"Nevertheless, you are to mind me on this. No riding alone until I say you may." Jonathan gave her a stern look.

"Yes Jonathan." Julianna softly spoke to the mare, "You and I shall have many fun adventures I know."

Jonathan had walked away and didn't hear her comment to the horse.

"Come here Julianna!" Jonathan was standing by an empty stall. Julianna handed the reins to the stable boy and walked over to Jonathan. "This is your next surprise." He moved out of the way and a frisky spaniel pup ran over to Julianna. She squealed in delight. "It's mine? Really mine?"

"Yes dear, it is really yours." Jonathan was beaming at the delight on her face.

"Oh what should I call you pup? And I must name my horse also. Jonathan, what should I name them?" Julianna had knelt down and the pup was all over her kissing and nipping at her.

"You don't have to decide right now Julianna, you can get to know them better and then decide."

"Oh we must make a bed for it in our room Jonathan so it is always near. I'll tell Becky to see to it." Julianna picked up the pup and headed toward the stable door.

"Hold on Julianna, the pup stays here for now. Maybe when it is trained and older it can be in some, but not now. Especially not in our bedroom." Jonathan gently removed the pup from her arms and put it back in the stall. It started whining and crying at once.

"See Jonathan, it wants to be with me. It will be fine in the house." Julianna started once more toward the stall.

"JULIANNA!" Jonathan bellowed. Frightened at his tone she stopped and turned around. Jonathan swiftly walked over and took her arm and whispered in her ear. "I do not like being disobeyed in front of our staff. I suggest you do as I say, or they may witness a spanking."

Julianna's face turned crimson. Meekly she held onto Jonathan's arm. He turned to the amused stable boy. "Please have our horses saddled and at the front door in half an hour."

Jonathan swiftly led Julianna back to the house and into his office. "Now young lady, don't you ever defy me in front of any of employees again. Is that clear?"

Julianna hung her head. "Yes Jonathan, I'm sorry." Tears were forming in her eyes and she no longer had the happy feeling of just a short time ago.

"Please excuse me." Julianna turned and fled from the room and up the stairs to their room as fast as she could. She threw herself on the chaise and sobbed into her pillow, so no one could hear her.

Jonathan had followed her as soon as she left his office. He waited outside the door for a minute and then quietly entered. His heart went out to the miserable bundle curled up on the chaise. Julianna was not aware that he had come into the room.

"Shhhh, I didn't mean to be so harsh and scare you." Jonathan picked her up and held her rocking her. "Hush, or your eyes will be very red." He kissed her cheek and waited until she quieted.

"I wasn't trying to defy you, I was just so happy and excited. I never had a puppy before." Julianna looked at Jonathan miserably.

"I know Julianna, but if you don't agree with something wait until we are alone. You can have the puppy in sometimes to play with, but it can't stay in



the house all the time. It has to be trained and older first." Jonathan continued rubbing her back and rocking her until she fully quieted.

"It's time for us to go, are you ready?" Jonathan asked her quietly.

"Yes I'm fine. I'm sorry Jonathan, I didn't mean to ruin your morning." Julianna sat with her head down.

"You haven't ruined anything. Smile now, everything is fine. We shall have a lovely picnic and ride." Jonathan kissed her and took her hand pulling her up.

Julianna smiled at him and they walked back downstairs. Neither saw Becky nearby shaking her head. She whispered to a servant nearby. "I just knew she was going to be trouble. He will be sorry he married her within a month's time. He won't be able to put up with her selfish ways."

The horses were ready and the basket had been fastened to Jonathan's horse. Jonathan helped Julianna mount her horse and they slowly rode out over the field. "I'll show you the best places to ride and where our property ends. Each day we can investigate a different area."

They rode slowly chatting. Julianna was taking it all in. "This is such a pretty area Jonathan, where are we going to picnic?"

"You'll see shortly, it's another surprise for you; just be patient."

Patience wasn't one of Julianna's virtues, but she decided to hold her tongue. She didn't want any more problems today. After a few more minutes they crested a hill and Jonathan stopped. At the bottom of the hill was a gorgeous lake.

"Is this yours?" Julianna was amazed.

"Yes, it's on our property. It's always been one of my favorite places, but it's yours now too."

"Oh! Let's hurry down there. I want to see it close up." Julianna was ready to bolt down the hill when Jonathan grabbed the reins.

"Whoa there! We'll go down slowly. Your horse isn't used to this terrain yet." Julianna sighed but did as she was told.

"It is beautiful Jonathan, oh can we wade in it? Where shall we put the blanket? Are you hungry?" Julianna was running from spot to spot.

Laughing at her Jonathan caught her as she passed by and pulled her to him. "Calm down, we have all day and many other days to come here."

He undid the basket and carried it to a grassy spot under a tree with a perfect view of the lake. Julianna spread the blanket and was about to go back to the lake when Jonathan pulled her down with him. Nibbling on her ear, he whispered to her. "Do you like your ride so far Julianna?"

"Hmmm yes, Jonathan, this whole day is special." Julianna sank into his arms and kiss. Jonathan deepened the kiss and let his hands play with the laces on her bodice. Julianna moaned in pleasure but suddenly stopped him.

"Jonathan, we are out in the open. Anyone can see." She tried to lace her bodice back up.

"No one is around except you and me. It is perfectly isolated." He undid her bodice fully and removed it. He slowly suckled one nipple then the other and interspersed with kisses until Julianna was fully aroused. Slowly Jonathan removed the rest of her clothing and his. Quickly he entered her and both of them fell into the rhythm, which was now becoming so familiar to Julianna.

When they both were sated and limp Jonathan rose on one elbow and played with Julianna's hair. "Ready for a swim?"

"Now? Like this?" Julianna wasn't sure if he were serious or not.

"Yes, just like this." Jonathan picked her up and ran to the edge of the water. Before Julianna could protest, they were both in the water. "It's cold!" She squealed and splashed Jonathan.

"Ah still trying to get me wet are you?" Jonathan splashed her back and swam away from her." Julianna stood where she was.

"Come out here and join me." Jonathan held out his hand to her. Tentatively Julianna started walking out and suddenly was under water. She rose and spluttered and grasp at the water but sunk under again.

"Oh God, she can't swim!" Jonathan lost no time in closing the distance between them and dragging her to safe ground.

"Are you all right?" Jonathan was trembling with fear at the thought that he could have lost her. Julianna coughed and spluttered but shook her head. "Yes, I.... I'm fine. I was so scared."

Jonathan picked her up and carried her to the blanket. He had towels in his saddlebag and wrapped Julianna in them and held her till she stopped shivering. "You don't know how to swim do you?"

"No.... no I never had a necessity to learn." Julianna was still shivering a bit.

"We shall remedy that as soon as we can. You must be able to swim in case you fall into a lake or stream." Jonathan rubbed her with the towels until she was warm and dry. After they were dressed again Julianna opened the basket and laid out the lunch.

Jonathan poured some wine and they ate without talking much. The episode in the lake had left both of them more upset than they were willing to admit. When they were finished and the basket had been packed up again, Jonathan leaned back against the tree and called Julianna to him.

She cuddled into his arms and as he rubbed her arms fell into a soft sleep. Jonathan held her and watched her sleep. It was soon time to head back, and he woke her with a kiss. "Time to go back Julianna, can you ride or would you rather ride with me?"

"I'm not hurt Jonathan but I would like to ride some with you. I do feel a bit weak."

Jonathan put her on his horse and mounted behind her holding her. He tied her horse's reins to his saddle and they started back. Julianna actually slept some more on the way back, feeling safe in his arms. They were almost home when she woke again. Jonathan smiled at her. "We will start teaching you to swim this week. I don't want you to have an accident like today again."

Julianna panicked at the thought and stiffened in his arms. "Oh Jonathan, please, I don't want to learn, I'm scared."

"You will learn Julianna."

By then they were home and Jonathan helped her down and turned the horses over to the grooms. He didn't hear them mutter as they went in. "Becky's right, life around here will never be the same. His mind will be on her and not the estate, until it's too late."

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Becky greeted Jonathan and Julianna when they entered the front hall. She made a point of looking at the disheveled state of Julianna's hair, and then addressed Jonathan. "I hope there wasn't a problem. Julianna looks a bit distraught."

Julianna stiffened and turned red. "I am quite all right, thank you." Jonathan took her arm and started up stairs. He turned to Becky. "Could you see that a warm bath is prepared for Julianna?"

When they entered their room Julianna sank down on the chaise. "Jonathan, I'm trying to be nice and see what is has gotten me? She just delights in the fact that I may be upset or harmed."

"I shall speak with her, take your bath and rest some, I'll fetch you in time for tea." Jonathan kissed her and left the room.

Julianna sat and fumed some, then went to her dressing room. Josie was waiting there for her with

the bath. "What happened on your picnic? Becky said you looked ill or upset?"

"Nothing really happened, we went into the lake and Jonathan found out that I can't swim. I was really scared and went under and swallowed water a few times before Jonathan rescued me. Now he says I have to learn to swim. I really don't want to."

By the time Julianna had explained all this she was undressed and relaxing in the tub. When she was finished She wrapped herself in a robe and lay down on the chaise to rest.

Jonathan was upset with Becky; he didn't like the tone in her voice and her blatant rudeness to Julianna. He waited until he calmed down and summoned her to his office.

"You wanted to see me Jonathan?" Becky entered his office and sat down.

Jonathan leaned back in his chair and looked at Becky. "I'm not pleased with the way you are treating Julianna. She has been nice to you and you have only responded with rudeness and contempt. She is my wife and nothing is going to change that. I won't tolerate this type of behavior."

Becky said nothing in reply to Jonathan at all. She rose and turned to leave. "Is that all Sir?"

"Yes Becky, that is all. I know this is your home too, but it is also now Julianna's and I would like the two of you to get along. I want you to try for my sake."

Becky turned and left the room without saying a word. Jonathan shook his head and sat in thought. This was not going to go anywhere near as easy as he had hoped. He still had a bit of time before tea, so he spent it doing some of the paperwork he normally would do in the morning. He wanted to spend early tomorrow morning on the first swimming lesson, whether Julianna wished to or not.

Julianna was still napping when Jonathan quietly entered their room. He sat down on the chaise and gently pulled her into his arms. Julianna stirred and then opened her eyes. "Oh, did I sleep too long?"

Jonathan kissed her tenderly. "No my love, but it is time to get ready for tea. Where would you like it served today?"

"We can have it in the parlor, I will dress and meet you down there." Julianna wanted to ask him about Becky, but decided not to. She would wait and see for herself how she was treated. If it didn't improve though, she would get even her own way.

Julianna dressed and fixed her hair and joined Jonathan just as the tea tray was carried in.

"Will Becky be joining us? Julianna asked in as nice a tone as she could.

"She normally does, but I don't know if she will today or not." Jonathan said no more. They finished tea without seeing Becky. Julianna was secretly pleased. She hoped that Jonathan had really scolded her and her feelings were as hurt as Julianna's had been.

"I would like to go down and see the pup again for a bit Jonathan, would that be all right?"

"We can bring it to the garden and play with it there if you would like. I think it would be more comfortable than playing in the stable." Jonathan rose and took Julianna's hand.

The pup started whining and crying as soon as it saw Julianna. "Oh see Jonathan, he remembers me." She scooped up the wriggly mass of fur, and carried it to the garden cooing to it the entire way. Jonathan picked up a ball and tossed it. The pup scampered after it and nipped at it but it was too big for him to pick up. He pushed it with his nose into a bush and then scampered back to Julianna. "No, you're supposed to bring it back." She got up and retrieved the ball and threw it for the pup again. After several more tries he succeeded in finally picking it up and bringing it back. "Oh you are so smart." Julianna rubbed his fur. "I'm going to call you Sebastian. That sounds like a smart name for a dog doesn't it Jonathan?"

"I guess I'll have to think of another name for our first born son then." Jonathan said in mock seriousness.

"Oh! I never thought...I never dreamed....I can call it something else." Julianna was about to start rattling off other names when Jonathan stopped her. "I was teasing you Julianna, I have no name picked out. Sebastian is a fine name."

Soon it was time to dress for dinner. Sebastian was returned to the stables and Julianna and Jonathan went to change for dinner. Julianna was somewhat hoping that Becky wouldn't join them for dinner, but her hopes were dashed when they entered the dining room to find her already seated and waiting.

Julianna smiled charmingly at her as she was seated. "How are you this evening Becky? We missed you at tea, I was hoping you weren't ill."

Becky was sure that wasn't sincere at all. "I'm fine Lady..." she broke off at a glare from Jonathan, "Julianna, I decided to let you and Jonathan have some quiet time together after your misfortune this morning.

Julianna smiled at her once again and spoke in her sweetest voice. "That was most kind and generous of you, however there was no need, since there was nothing to recover from."

Jonathan looked sharply at Julianna, he guessed what game she was playing and this was not going to help the problem at all. Fortunately, dinner was served at that time and the repartee between the two ladies was halted. Jonathan made a mental note to speak to Julianna about it later that evening.

The remainder of the dinner hour was spent pleasantly enough with very few jibes between the two ladies. Immediately after dinner, Becky excused herself leaving them alone.

"Since Becky is not joining us, let's retire to my sitting room." Jonathan took Julianna's hand and led her upstairs. Julianna sensed that Jonathan was not

pleased with something; hopefully it was Becky's jibes at her during dinner.

As soon as Jonathan had closed the door, Julianna turned and hugged him. "Are you upset with the way Becky spoke to me this evening? I sense you are upset about something." Julianna smiled up at him and wrapped her arms tighter around him.

Jonathan smiled at her and unwound himself from her and led her to the sofa. Julianna sat and he poured himself a port and her a wine. Julianna was becoming a bit nervous, as he still hadn't answered her question. "Jonathan, you never did answer me?"

Jonathan turned to face her and took her hands in his. "Julianna, I didn't like either of your antics at dinner tonight. I talked with Becky today and told her how I expected you to be treated. However, you were doing your best to be rude to her under the guise of kindness. I wasn't fooled and neither was Becky. I want this to stop now! Do I make myself clear?"

"I don't know what you are talking about!" Julianna pulled away from him.

"That attitude young lady, will only end with you over my knee. Now do you understand?"

Julianna sat still and said nothing. She was livid and intended to show Jonathan just how angry with him she was.

Jonathan was growing impatient with her; she was behaving like a spoiled brat. He sighed and reached out and pulled her next to him. "Julianna, in about one minute you are going to receive a spanking and be sent to bed. You are not going to behave this way. It's your choice."

"Fine, if you don't care about my feelings, then I shall retire now and you may make use of the bed in your dressing room." Julianna started to rise and was quickly pulled down over Jonathan's knee. He said nothing and wasted no time in baring her and bringing his hand down hard several times on her



upturned bottom. "Now young lady, you are going to learn that I will not tolerate the behavior you showed at dinner and here tonight. Furthermore I will never tolerate you withholding or using our love as a weapon." Jonathan proceeded to spank her till she was sobbing. "Now, go and get ready for bed and when you are finished bring me your hairbrush. We are not done this evening."

He stood Julianna on her feet and swatted her several times before she ran from the room. It was a half hour later that a very subdued Julianna returned with her hairbrush. "I'm sorry Jonathan, please don't spank me, anymore, I really didn't mean it."

Jonathan took the brush from her and pulled her over his knee again. "I don't think you are sorry enough Julianna. You have a hard lesson to learn here." Her nightgown was pushed up on her back baring her bottom. Jonathan pinned her legs with his and pushed her forward so her bottom was higher. Julianna tensed when she felt him raise his arm. "Please Jonathan, I'm sorry, I won't behave that way again." A sob escaped as the brush fell the first time on her already sore bottom. Time and time again it fell on her bottom and thighs until she was limp and sobbing.

Jonathan set the brush down and rubbed the hot crimson flesh. "I don't like doing that Julianna, but you can't behave this way and threaten me. I love you too much to allow that to happen."

Julianna sobbed in his arms for a while as he rubbed her back. "I love you Julianna, but I want you to go to bed. I'll be in later, but you are to think about what happened today." Jonathan kissed her and stood her up.

"I am sorry, Jonathan." Julianna still had tears running down her cheeks as she went into the bedroom. The covers had been turned down on the bed and she crawled in lying on her stomach. All she wanted was Jonathan's arms around her, but she knew he wouldn't be in until much later.

Miserable and angry with herself, she cried herself to sleep.

Jonathan downed his port after Julianna left, and then paced the room. Her sobs were audible to him through the closed door. More than anything he wanted to go and hold her and soothe her, but her lesson would not be learned if he gave in. Finally he poured another port and sat back down and picked up a book.

When it was time for him to retire, he put the book down and prepared for bed. Julianna was quiet when he came into the room. Although she was sleeping her face was streaked with tears and her eyes swollen. Jonathan lay next to her and pulled her gently into his arms. Julianna whimpered in her sleep. "Shhhh Julianna, I'm here and it's fine. You're forgiven and I love you."

Julianna woke the next morning still in Jonathan's arms. She lay still not wishing to wake him, but her tears started to fall again. Jonathan woke at the sound of her gentle sobs.

"Julianna, please stop, you're forgiven and I love you. I hate punishing you, but when you won't listen to me and act like you did last night, you leave me no other choice." Jonathan kissed her gently, and Julianna hugged him tight and broke into fresh tears.

"I...I'm so sorry Jonathan, I know I was so wrong and bad. I will try and be better, I will. I love you so much and missed you so last night." Julianna snuggled as close as she could.

"I will hold you to that, now lets see if we can make up for last night." Jonathan started kissing her while his hands probed and aroused her. Some time later Jonathan reluctantly sat up. "We must rise and get started on our day, we need to have a swimming lesson and then show you more of the estate and I believe you need to review menus with Becky."

Julianna didn't want to hear about swimming lessons. "Jonathan, I don't feel well enough today to have swim lessons. I think I should rest longer."

Jonathan sat on the bed and pulled her into his lap. "Why are you so afraid of swimming lessons?"

"I'm afraid I won't be able to learn and you will be disappointed in me. What if someone should come by and see us in the water?"

"You won't disappoint me, you will learn easily. If you are worried about being seen we can bring you a change of under things and you can swim in those, but I would never have you do something that would compromise your modesty. Now come, rise, you have had extra sleep and I would miss you if you didn't spend the day with me."

Julianna sighed and rose and went to her dressing room. Josie was waiting for her as usual. "We are going to be riding to the lake again, I have to learn to swim." Julianna sighed and turned to Josie. "Do you know how to swim?"

"Yes, we all learned to as children, it really is fun and you will love it. You'll learn easily don't worry about it. It is not hard if you relax." Josie pulled out her clothes as Julianna washed her face. The sleep had done a good job of repairing the damage the tears had done the night before. Sleep however did not repair the damage the spanking had wreaked on her bottom. Josie noticed but wisely said nothing, and if questioned by any others would say nothing either. She liked Julianna and knew that Becky was trying to poison the staff against her and wanted nothing to do with it.

As she dressed Julianna thought about the coming day and the evening before. As a sign of trust in Jonathan, she would not take extra under things; she would trust him. Also, though it would require her to choke all the pride she had, she would be nice to Becky.

Jonathan was already in the dining room when she came in. He rose and pulled her chair for her, kissing her on the cheek as she gingerly sat down.

Becky was also there, grinning at Julianna's obvious discomfort. It hadn't taken long for word to spread about the sounds coming from Jonathan's sitting room the night before.

Julianna noticed the sneer but ignored it. "Good morning Becky."

Becky waited for another snide comment, but Julianna disappointed her. "We will be gone most of the morning Becky, but perhaps sometime this afternoon we could briefly review the menus."

Becky was taken aback at Julianna's attitude and merely agreed. Julianna didn't dare a peek at Jonathan to see what he thought, she continued eating her breakfast and carried on light conversation.

"Did you have some work you wanted to before we leave Jonathan?"

"No, if you are finished with your breakfast we can go right away. The horses were saddled and waiting for them. Julianna greeted her horse and promised a treat when they returned. She tried to hide her discomfort when her bottom hit the saddle. This ride was not going to be as pleasant as the day before.

Jonathan noticed but said nothing. They chatted as they rode the lake. Julianna was very glad when they reached it and she could dismount.

"The cold water will help ease a lot of your soreness." Jonathan held her close for a minute. "Did you bring a change of clothing?"

Julianna blushed. "No, I'll trust you that no one can see us."

Jonathan smiled and held her tighter. "Do you want to get yourself ready, or do you want me to help you?"

"I could probably use some help." Julianna smiled back at him. As Jonathan helped her prepare for her swim lesson he couldn't help but take his time and shower her with as many kisses as he could. When they were both undressed he took her hand and walked her to the water. "Wade in till you

are at waist level." He watched her and noticed how red her bottom still was. He certainly hoped he would not have to punish her again anytime soon.

Jonathan joined her and took her around the waist and had her lay in the water. "I'm supporting you so lay still, you will naturally float if you don't fight it. Relax."

"You won't let me go will you?" Julianna was scared.

"Relax, I'm right here." Jonathan was lightly supporting her. When Julianna was fully relaxed he slowly removed his support. "Now move your arms slowly like I did yesterday."

Julianna remembered how he had moved his arms and tried to copy it. She was surprised when she moved forward slightly. As soon as she realized it she stopped and started to sink. "Don't panic, you can put your feet down and stand up." Jonathan was grinning at her. "You were swimming!"

Julianna smiled back. "I was?"

"Yes you were now try it without me holding you. Watch me and move your feet and arms like I do." Jonathan swam a few feet away from her and then back.

"Like this?" Julianna tried to relax and mimic Jonathan. She was shocked when she actually swam away. She stopped and stood up. "I did it!"

"Yes you did, now swim back to me." Jonathan held his arms open for her. Julianna managed to swim back.

Jonathan picked her up and carried her to the blanket. He got the towels and dried her off and then himself and wrapped them in the blanket. "Now that wasn't too hard was it?"

"No, it wasn't, but do we have to do this everyday?" Julianna snuggled up close to Jonathan.

"I think we can take a break for a few days, but I don't want you coming here without me, until I am positive you are sure of yourself in the water." Jonathan picked up her hairbrush and started

brushing her hair. Julianna shuddered when he first picked it up.

"Don't worry, I'm just brushing your hair, but if you come here alone, it will be more than the brush you will have to worry about."

When the sun had dried Julianna's hair and they were both dressed they headed back home for lunch. Jonathan had been right about one thing; the cold water had certainly relieved a lot of the ache in her bottom.

After lunch Jonathan excused himself. "If you are going to review menus with Becky, I will do some paperwork, I'll see you at tea."

Julianna kissed him and went to her morning room. She asked one of the maids to have Becky join her with the week's menus and schedule for the house. Julianna intended to be nice, unless Becky provoked her, then she would wield her new power as mistress of the house.

Julianna spent the time waiting for Becky to arrive, examining the contents of her desk. She had not had an opportunity to do so before. The stationery and calling cards pleased her immensely. When Becky arrived she was smiling and humming happily.

Becky had intended to be as friendly as she could, but the sight of Julianna happily humming irritated her. "You wish to review the week's schedule?" Becky placed a paper in front of Julianna.

Julianna picked up on the tone in Becky's voice. "Yes Becky, also the menus. Did you bring them?"

"I thought you intended no changes and they would not be necessary."

Julianna smiled sweetly. "I do wish to see them Becky, would you please get them?"

"Very well, Julianna." Becky stormed from the room muttering under her breath.

Julianna leaned back in her chair and said to no one in particular. "This is going to be fun, and there

is nothing that Jonathan will be able to find fault with.

She was still smiling and humming when a very agitated Becky returned.

## Chapter Two

Becky was trying to hold in her temper. "Here are the menus, if you have no further wishes, I have work to do."

"Please sit down and explain them to me. I want to review them with you and get an idea of how things run on a daily basis. I intend to start getting to know the staff better and want to know what they do." Julianna smiled her sweet smile and patted Becky's hand. "Then you will be able to relax some after all your years of hard work."

Becky pulled her hand away at Julianna's touch. Jonathan's mother used to do the same thing. She wondered if Julianna somehow knew. Becky loved Jonathan's mother more than anyone else in her life, Julianna would never replace her no matter what Jonathan thought.

Julianna noted Becky's reaction and stored away that information for future reference if needed. "Now Becky, explain this morning routine to me. For instance, Josie my maid has to do kitchen duty before reporting to my dressing room, and then has cleaning duties on the lower floor?"

"Yes Julianna, everyone is kept busy all day. That is the routine that has been established for some time." Becky was almost hissing through her teeth, she wanted to be away from Julianna as fast as possible.

"I would like to make a change there. I'd like Josie available more often; perhaps she could be in charge of cleaning our rooms and taking care of my clothing and be relieved of the other chores. I suppose her kitchen duties in the morning would be fine. Could you make that change?" Julianna noted it next to Josie's name on the schedule.

"Do you have any preferences as to who should assume her chores?" Becky's voice was tight and strained.

"No, none at all, you can handle that."



Julianna turned to the menu. "I think these are fine, I would like more fruit at breakfast though. We can discuss some other basic changes next week."

"Will that be all?" Becky stood.

"Yes, Becky, that's all. Why don't you try and rest some this afternoon, you look tired."

Becky strode from the room as fast as she could. Julianna smiled and filed away the schedule and menu. She did indeed intend to make some changes, but would do it very slowly until things were running her way.

There was still time left until tea, so Julianna made her way out to the stables. Sebastian was jumping at his pen wanting out, so Julianna opened the door and he came running to her. She picked him up and carried him to the garden. Sebastian was running around and playing. Julianna was so busy cooing and calling him; she never heard the footsteps come up behind her. "Well M'Lady, you seem to be having a good time without your husband. I don't know if he likes that or not."

Julianna jumped up startled and bumped right into Jonathan. "You scared me! I didn't hear you coming."

Jonathan hugged her and they both sat back down. "I know, you were so preoccupied with the pup, you didn't hear me. He does seem to be learning some already. He comes when you call him. Soon I'll be able to start hunting lessons with him."

Julianna looked shocked. "Jonathan, you won't take him hunting and let him get hurt will you?"

"Don't worry Julianna, he's a natural born hunter. He won't be harmed, but yes he needs to learn to accompany me on hunts."

"Oh, than I shall also. I have always wanted to go on a hunt." Julianna smiled brightly at Jonathan.

"No Julianna, you will stay home. A hunt is for men, not ladies."

Julianna felt a frown and pout cross her face but one look at Jonathan and she smiled. "Yes sir, I shall stay home and wait for your return."

"Good, now come its time for tea. If you like we can have Sebastian join us for a bit."

"Oh Jonathan that would be wonderful." She bent to scoop him up, but Jonathan stopped her. "Let him walk with us. He needs to learn his way around a bit and he won't do it being carried, plus he will get too big soon for you to be carrying him everywhere."

Once again Becky declined to join them for tea. Julianna could hold her curiosity in no longer. "Jonathan, why is Becky not joining us at tea? Have I offended her more than I know?"

"No Julianna, I think she is a bit put out, and wishes to keep her distance. When she is ready she will rejoin us." He picked up his cup and was sipping when there was a noise from the courtyard and the butler hurried in with a message for Jonathan.

"Sir, the Earl of Eastbrooke is here and wishes to see you."

Jonathan and Julianna looked at each other in surprise. "Show him in."

Richard strode into the room smiling. He took Julianna's outstretched hands and kissed them. "Lady Barrington, you look wonderful. Marriage is apparently agreeing with you."

He turned to Jonathan and shook hands, "You are looking well yourself. I hope I'm not intruding, but Maisie insisted I stop and deliver this letter." Richard handed an envelope to Julianna.

"Oh thank you Richard. Please join us for tea, and rest some from your journey."

"Thank you, I was hoping I was in time." Richard sat down as Julianna poured him a cup of tea and passed the tray. Richard was suddenly aware of the pup nipping at his heels. "And who is this little fellow?"

"Sebastian, come here!" Julianna called to him. The pup was far more interested in Richard than

responding to Julianna. With a sigh she explained to Richard, "He is a present from Jonathan, my very own dog. I have never had one before."

"He is a beauty. We shall have a hunter here Jonathan." Richard reached down and petted the clumsy pup. "Once he grows into his legs, that is."

Jonathan laughed at the frown on Julianna's face. "Yes, if we can pry him away from Julianna." The pup had scampered back to Julianna and was lolling at her feet.

Julianna smiled back and ruffled Sebastian's fur as he scampered back to see Richard. "I think he is more interested right now in our visitor."

Sebastian was indeed interested in playing with Richard and was getting quite excited. Jonathan rang for the butler. "I think Sebastian needs to go back to the stable, if you would be so kind."

"Certainly Sir!" He scooped him up and whisked him away. Julianna really didn't want him to leave, but wisely said nothing.

"Richard, please tell me all about home. How are my father and Maisie and even Nancy?"

"They are all fine, but missing you. They say the house has never been so quiet and peaceful." Richard looked for a reaction from Julianna.

"Hmmmppf, I was not that much trouble that it should be quiet."

"Maisie is getting very nervous and I know she wishes you were there with her. Nancy is keeping her busy, but tempers are beginning to fray on both sides. I think a lot of you rubbed off on her, Julianna."

Jonathan shook his head. "Then you shall have your work cut out for you Richard."

The men fell into talk about the estates and horses, so Julianna opened her letter from Maisie and read. Maisie was indeed lonely and Nancy was even more overbearing than she had been with Julianna. The last sentence of the letter made Julianna smile. 'I hope you have found out how to get away with things, for we shall need to have an

adventure together as soon as we can. Richard has become a bit stricter than I thought and I'll need all the help and advice I can get. I miss you. Love, Your Dear Cousin, Maisie.'

Julianna giggled and was suddenly aware of both men looking at her. She blushed. "Oh I'm sorry! I didn't mean to ignore you; I was just caught up in the letter from Maisie. Let me refresh your tea." She reached for the pot and poured them both more tea.

Jonathan laughed. "It's quite all right Julianna, we were busy discussing other things, but you were quite enthralled with the letter. How is everyone?"

"Oh just fine, Nancy is being a beast again. Richard I think you should let Maisie have more time away from her."

"Is that what my love wrote to ask you to do? Beseech me on her behalf?" Richard was trying to maintain a stern look.

"Oh No! She did nothing of the sort, I just think it would be a nice thing to do." Julianna held her ground. "You know Maisie is a sweet angel and would never do the least thing wrong."

At this bit of news both Jonathan and Richard laughed heartily. "Oh yes, just like her cousin."

Julianna had to laugh herself at this comment. Tea was over and Julianna excused herself. "Richard would you like to stay for dinner and finish your journey tomorrow? I'm sure we could make arrangements?"

"Thank you Julianna, but I'm expected at home and it is but a short distance. It was nice to see you again. I will be returning next Friday to see Maisie, if you wish I'll stop and pick up a note for her."

"Oh yes, thank you, that would be very kind." Julianna left the room.

"Well Jonathan, it seems that marriage has settled her a bit. I hope things go as smoothly for Maisie and I."

"I hardly would call her settled, but she is learning. If I could just find a way to make peace

between her and Becky things would be far better. They are both alike, but don't realize it, and are at each other's throats. Julianna tried a bit and Becky resisted. I have to find a way to get Julianna to give her time."

Richard clapped his friend on the shoulder. "Good luck, I know that must be a real trial. Hopefully something will happen to bond them together."

"Yes, before they scratch each other's eyes out. Have a good journey Richard and we will see you Friday next." Jonathan shook hands with his friend and watched him ride away.

Julianna retired to their room to rest a bit before dinner. She was napping on the chaise when Jonathan came in. He stood and looked down on her, she was so innocent and beautiful; he hoped she would always be that way. "Julianna, come lay with me." Jonathan picked her up and carried her to the bed.

"Hmmm Jonathan, this is heavenly." Julianna cuddled into the crook of his arm and returned to sleep almost immediately. Jonathan himself fell asleep and woke just in time to dress for dinner.

Julianna was awake but enjoying lying in his arms. Reluctantly she rose and went to dress. "I'll meet you in the parlor Jonathan."

Josie was waiting for her and very agitated. "What's wrong Josie?" Julianna was concerned about the girl.

"It's nothing Ma'am, Becky is upset with me. She has told everyone I'm using my influence with you to shirk duties."

Julianna immediately grew angry. "Thank is not true Josie, I just asked that you be assigned totally to our rooms. That is not shirking your duties at all."

"It's all right, I don't think the rest will stay mad at me. I still plan on helping them in the morning though Becky has said I may as well just sleep in for all the help I'll be." Josie sighed and handed

Julianna her dress. Julianna slipped it over her head, and turned so Josie could fasten it. Her mind was racing and she was determined Becky wasn't going to get away with this.

"You pay no attention to Becky. She has no right treating you this way." Julianna patted Josie's arm and left to meet Jonathan. He was in the parlor waiting for her and to her utter disappointment so was Becky.

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"Good evening Becky, I trust you had a nice nap today after rearranging Josie's schedule. I'm so happy that you were able to adjust it that fast." Julianna took the glass of wine from Jonathan and tried to ignore the look on his face.

Becky had a sour look on her face and refused wine. "Your happiness is of course my first and only concern, so I'm glad to oblige."

Jonathan knew there was something going on behind the forced kindness from both of them. Julianna had red blotches in her cheeks, which was a sure sign of temper. As long as she held it, things would be fine. Wisely he decided not to inquire about the staff changes.

Dinner was a bit strained with little conversation from Becky. At best she spoke in a civil tone and answered Julianna with as few words as possible. Jonathan took up the slack and talked about some of the horses he hoped to acquire from one of the local breeders. Richard had informed him today that they would be ready for purchase in a few weeks time.

"Are they young ones Jonathan?" Julianna was very interested.

"They are yearlings, they will need to be trained but should be good racers."

"Oh that is so exciting, I can hardly wait until they get here."

"These horses aren't going to be for normal riding. I'm planning to start a line of racers. They

are high strung and take an experienced man to handle them. You won't be able to be anywhere near them." Jonathan wanted to make that perfectly clear from the start.

"Surely, I can just see them being trained? Julianna wasn't about ready to give up.

Becky smiled as innocently as she could. "I'm sure Jonathan will let you, after all he wants to satisfy your every whim so you will be happy all the time. Not too many people get maimed or killed in accidents."

Julianna's face grew red. Before she could say a word, Jonathan interjected. "That is quite enough Becky. Julianna, you may not watch them training unless I'm with you, now that subject is closed." Jonathan glared at Becky.

Fortunately dinner was over shortly thereafter and Becky immediately excused herself. Julianna turned to Jonathan. "Do you think we could walk in the garden for a bit?"

"Yes, that should be fine. Get your wrap and I'll wait in the hall." Jonathan was thoughtful as he watched her run up the stairs. Something had happened between her and Becky and was about to explode if he wasn't mistaken.

They strolled through the garden for a bit then sat on one of the benches in the middle. Jonathan pulled Julianna close and nuzzled her cheek, "Tell me how did your review of things with Becky go?"

Julianna stiffened a bit and Jonathan knew he was close to an answer to the comments made at dinner. "I thought it went admirably well, but Becky seemed to resent even the slightest question or suggestion I made. She was forcing herself to be civil."

"At least she was civil though, in time it should be better."

"Jonathan, that woman doesn't like me and wishes I weren't here. How much harder do I have to try?" Julianna was exasperated with Jonathan's attitude.

"Would you have me send her away, when this is the only home she has known for most of her life? She came here with my mother when she first married." Jonathan rubbed Julianna's arm, trying to soothe her.

"You heard her tonight, she was rude. I merely asked her to have more fruit at breakfast and to assign Josie to our rooms only. That should not have been upsetting, yet she yelled at poor Josie and accused her of shirking her duties. The rest of the staff thinks I am an ogre and it is all her fault." Julianna brushed off Jonathan's hand and sat with her arms folded.

"I did hear her comment tonight and if you recall I stopped her. I understand how you feel Julianna, but as Lady of the House, I'm asking you to please be a bit more patient. If she continues to fight you and be rude, I shall intervene and think of a solution." Jonathan gathered her once more into his arms.

Julianna sighed and relaxed a bit. Happy she was not, but this was one battle she would win. "Jonathan? Can I watch the new horses being trained some day with you?"

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"When I am with you, yes you may watch them. But, I don't want you going near them alone. They are thoroughbred horses used only for racing and are very high strung. Our riding horses are calmer and more docile."

"I understand. I won't go near them unless you are with me. What are we going to do tomorrow? Could you show me the town? So I can know where to shop?" Julianna snuggled even closer.

"Yes, I think we can do that, but we shall take the carriage."

"Is it too far to ride? I like riding and it is no problem."

"I prefer that when you shop, you use the carriage, I really don't want you out on the roads



alone. We are further from town than you were used to and the roads aren't as safe." Jonathan could feel Julianna shivering next to him.

"We best go in. You're chilled and I don't want you taking ill." Jonathan took her arm and they walked back into the house.

"I need to get some papers from my study, go up to our sitting room and I'll join you there." Jonathan kissed her lightly and sent her on her way.

Jonathan really didn't need papers but penned a quick note to Becky expressing his displeasure with her comment at dinner.

*'Dear Becky,*

*You know I have always held you in high regard, as did my parents. I'm not pleased with the attitude you are showing towards Julianna. I ask you again to please refrain from rude conduct.*

*This is your home, but it is also Julianna's now and she is the Lady of the House. If you wish to discuss anything specific with me regarding any changes you feel are inappropriate you may do so. I ask that you not berate Julianna to the staff and try your best to get to know her.*

*Jonathan'*

He sealed it and gave it to the butler to be delivered. He then gathered the papers on the horses and went to join Julianna.

She was sitting on the couch working on some needlework when he came in. She looked up at him and smiled. "Do you have work to do, or would you like to talk?"

Jonathan sat down next to her. "I just want to look at these papers a bit, so we can spend more time in town tomorrow. I think also perhaps tomorrow afternoon we should have another swimming lesson before tea. I don't want you to forget what you've learned."

Julianna sighed. "Yes Jonathan, but it isn't my favorite thing." She picked up her sewing and sat quietly while he reviewed his papers. A short time later he put them down and pulled her to him. "I'm

thinking that perhaps we should retire a bit early tonight." He kissed her neck lightly and ran his fingers over her chin and shoulders and down to her breasts.

Julianna smiled shyly at him. "Why Sir, I think that would be an excellent idea. I asked Josie to have a bath ready, as soon as I'm finished I'll join you in the bedroom."

When Julianna entered the bedroom, he was waiting in bed for her. "Come here Julianna!" Jonathan held out his hands to her. She quickly joined him and all cares of the day vanished as they explored each other's bodies and once again climbed to a mutual ecstasy and release.

Julianna was asleep cuddled in his arms as Jonathan laid thinking. He silently prayed that the feud between Becky and Julianna would not escalate any further, but deep in his bones he had a feeling it would get worse before it got better.

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Becky received Jonathan's note and read it at once. Her face turned scarlet with anger as she read his words. 'Does he not see the spoiled brat he has married? She intends to see that I'm turned out of this house. I will not allow it. She will find she is not capable of running this house without my help and that help she will not receive, nor any from the staff if I have my say about it.' With those bitter thoughts she tore up Jonathan's letter and went to bed angry and full of hate.

Julianna woke early the next morning and started planning her day. It would be so much fun, except for the swimming part. Perhaps Jonathan would forget all about it. She wondered what type of shops they had in town and what she could buy today. It had been quite some time since she had shopped and it was one of her favorite pastimes. A thought went through her mind about menus for the following week. What was it Nancy had said? They were usually prepared by midweek so the staff had

time to shop and plan? It left her mind as quick as it arrived. Surely Becky would remind her.

Jonathan woke to see her wide-awake. "You are an early bird today, I guess retiring early suits you." He kissed her gently and pulled her close to him.

"I was just thinking of the fun we shall have today. I will miss riding Princess though. Are you sure we have to take the bumpy carriage?"

Jonathan laughed. "So Princess is the mare's name?"

"Oh yes, it just came to me, she is so regal that she just must be a princess."

"Then Princess it shall be. I'll have a plaque made for her stall so everyone will know her name."

"Thank you Jonathan, that would be lovely, I know she will feel special too." Julianna was beaming.

Jonathan smiled at her and continued. "Yes, we do have to take the carriage to town. I explained that last night. But when we come home you may ride Princess to the lake for your swimming lesson." He chuckled at Julianna's deep sigh.

"You didn't think I'd forget did you?" Jonathan tickled her till she was laughing and begging him to stop.

An hour later they were dressed and in the dining room.

"Jonathan let's hurry I can hardly wait to see the town." Julianna was urging Jonathan to finish his breakfast faster.

"You have hardly eaten a thing, Julianna. Eat more and then we will be ready to leave. The carriage isn't even ready yet."

Julianna ate another muffin and a serving of fruit. "I'm really quite finished Jonathan."

Jonathan rose from the table and pulled her chair out for her. "Get your wrap and I'll see if the carriage is ready."

Julianna ran up the stairs and was almost breathless when she reached her dressing room. Josie was not there, but her cape was ready for her.

She put it on and tied a bonnet on and was ready to leave. Her mood was light and happy, made even more so by the fact that Becky had been absent from breakfast that morning.

As she passed through the hall she could hear voices coming from Jonathan's dressing room. She stopped to listen. It was Becky loudly berating Josie for something. "You should be beaten for this. Just wait until Lord Barrington finds out that you have broken that vase. It was his mother's favorite and he will be livid. You best be prepared to find employment elsewhere. His darling little Julianna will be without her favorite pet soon." Becky opened the door and stormed into the hall. She was shocked when she saw Julianna standing there. "Now you will pay for choosing so unwisely."

Julianna went into the room where Josie was dissolved in tears. "I didn't break it Julianna, really I didn't. I came in here to see what needed to be done and it was already on the floor in pieces. I was just sweeping it up."

"Shush Josie, I will speak to Jonathan. I believe you, but who could have broken it and why?"

"I don't know but I was told this morning that Becky was going to see to it that I was fired." Josie started sobbing even more. "I have only been here for a short time and if I'm fired with no references I will have to take a lowly job in a common bar, or sell myself to live. I have no family to go to."

Julianna was trying her best to comfort her when Jonathan walked in. "What is going on here? What is this about firings?"

"Jonathan, there something terrible has happened." Julianna left the prostrate Josie and went to Jonathan.

"I was wondering what was taking you so long. Becky suggested that I should see for myself, now I'll ask again. What is going on? Josie stand up. Why are you crying so?"

Both Josie and Julianna started talking at once. Jonathan's mind was spinning. "Stop, please both of

you." He walked over and looked at the broken vase on the floor. "You found this on the floor broken when you came in?" He looked directly at Josie.

"Yes Sir, I was just starting to sweep it up when Becky came in. Please beat me if you wish, but don't let me go." Josie dissolved in tears once again.

Julianna started to speak, but Jonathan put up his hand and motioned for her to be silent. "Josie, I have never beaten a servant and don't intend to now. I have no reason to fire you, either. I don't know how this was broken since it was not even in this room. It has been in one of the other rooms for years now. I do believe you have nothing to do with this. Continue your chores and don't worry, I'll investigate this further when I am back."

Jonathan turned and walked to the door. "Come Julianna, we must be going." He strode out the door and down the stairs with Julianna straggling behind him. Nothing was said until they were in the carriage and on their way.

"I think Becky is trying to get her in trouble. When she came out of the room, she was very nasty to me and said I'd pay for choosing so unwisely. But why would she break your mother's favorite vase?" Julianna looked over at Jonathan. His face was dark and clouded with anger.

"I don't know Julianna. It wasn't my mother's favorite vase at all. It was one that I was fond of, but nothing to create such a stir over. I want you to stay totally away from this and not question Becky on anything about it. I will handle it in my own way." Jonathan sat back and looked out the window.

Julianna sat back fuming. Becky had managed to ruin her entire day. Regardless of what Jonathan thought, she was going to get to the bottom of this. Becky was plotting against her and using Josie as a pawn. Such unfairness would not go unpunished as far as Julianna was concerned. The rest of the ride

was spent in silence with Jonathan deep in thought and Julianna pouting and in a bad mood.

When they entered the town, the carriage driver called back to Jonathan, "Where would you like me to take you Sir?"

Jonathan snapped out of his reverie and looked at Julianna, immediately noticing the signs of anger on her face. "Just stop at the Inn. We can walk from there and shop. You may pick us up there at 2:00."

The driver pulled to a stop and Jonathan opened the door and helped Julianna down. The driver took the carriage to the livery to refresh the horses.

"What is wrong Julianna, you are pouting and angry?" Jonathan took her aside and sat on a bench near the inn.

"Nothing, I don't think I feel like shopping after all." Julianna turned away from him.

Jonathan was confused, and then it came to him. "Are you upset about what happened this morning?"

"I'm upset that you seem to blame me somehow and wouldn't talk about it or about anything else the entire trip. I wanted to have a good time today, and once again Becky has seen to it that it's ruined. I hate her!" Julianna was close to tears.

"Julianna! Stop this right now. I was lost in thought and have not blamed you for anything at all. I just don't want you getting in the middle of this. If you continue in this mood, you shall be in trouble. I can call the carriage back, and you may spend the rest of the day in your room, with a sore bottom. Now what shall it be?" Jonathan waited for her answer.

"I'll stay out of it and behave." Julianna wiped a few stray tears away and stood up.

Jonathan tucked her arm in his and smiled down at her. "We shall still have a fun day Julianna, please cheer up."

The town was much larger than what Julianna was used to. Slowly she cheered up as she saw the variety of stores available. Jonathan steered her

into the seamstress first. The owner of the shop ran to greet them as soon as she saw them enter. "Good day Lord Barrington. What may I do for you today?"

"This is my wife Lady Julianna Barrington. I'm sure she would like to pick out some material for a new dress." Jonathan turned Julianna over to the seamstress and sat down to wait.

Julianna looked at various patterns and materials. Her mood was definitely improving. She had picked out several materials and called Jonathan over to ask his opinion.

Slowly he looked them over and then pointed to one. "I think this is the nicest."

"But, I could have them all made up." Julianna waited expectantly for his answer.

"No, I think one will be fine for now. Remember you have a lot more stores to look at and you do have a budget."

This day was not going as Julianna wished it to at all. "But Jonathan, they are all so lovely and who knows how long it will be before we come back."

"Julianna, I said ONE, and one it is." Jonathan stood firm.

"Very well, I'll take this one then." Julianna sighed deeply and took it over to the seamstress.

"Please step back here Madam so I may take your measurements. Have you decided on your pattern yet?" The seamstress showed Julianna into a back room.

Jonathan sat down chuckling. This was certainly going to be an interesting day. He would be very surprised if Julianna didn't wind up over his knee by the end of it.

When she was safely in the back room, Julianna turned to the seamstress. "Do you think you could make up all three of the materials?"

"Why yes I can, but I heard Lord Barrington clearly say only one."

"I shall pay you for the extra ones now, if you would hold them and send them to me after the one

is made, maybe a week later." Julianna still had money left from before her wedding. She took out the required coins and slightly more and handed them to the woman.

The seamstress was a bit uneasy, but she was paid, and it really wasn't her problem. She finished measuring Julianna and wrote up the bill for the one dress. Jonathan cheerfully paid and noticed that Julianna was now in a much better mood.

"I'm glad to see you smiling again. We shall have a lovely day today." Jonathan next took her to the hat maker and let her select a new bonnet. They investigated every store and by noon Julianna had new ribbons and slippers as well.

"I think it's time we have some lunch." Jonathan took her arm and they walked back toward the Inn. On the way Julianna spotted a small lacquered box in a window. "Oh Jonathan, do you think I could get that for Josie? It would make her feel so much better."

"Yes, I think that would be fine. I shall present it to her with you so she knows there are no bad feelings on my part. You are very sweet to think of that Julianna."

The carriage was waiting for them when they emerged from the Inn. This time Julianna cuddled next to Jonathan and was lulled into sleep with the motion from the buggy. Jonathan spent his time thinking about what he would do about this latest crisis. Becky was certainly not cooperating, and if she intentionally broke the vase to make it look like Josie did it, then he must take some strong action. It was apparent that she wasn't going to cooperate with Julianna in the least right now. They were approaching home when he remembered that tomorrow was normally the day the cook did the shopping for the meals for the following week and planned out her schedule. He didn't recall Julianna saying anything about working with Becky on the next week's meals.



Julianna woke up shortly before they arrived home. She yawned and sat up straight. "I'm sorry Jonathan, I always seem to fall asleep on you in the carriage."

"That's fine, it gave me time to think about some things. Have you worked on the menus and schedules for the next week? Was that one of the things you reviewed with Becky yesterday?"

"No, she didn't mention it and I wasn't sure when that should be done. Surely she will let me know when we need to do that."

"The cook will be seeing me tomorrow for the money for shopping. Normally the menus and schedules are completed by then. If you haven't completed that, you best do it this afternoon. We will have to delay our ride and swim lesson until tomorrow."

The carriage had stopped in front of the house and Jonathan lifted Julianna down. She was definitely not happy at all. "I think she is doing this intentionally Jonathan. I shall make up the menus and schedule myself. I will not ask for her help."

Jonathan stopped Julianna as she started to storm off. "If you think you can do it alone, then go ahead. I need to speak to Becky anyway. I'll meet you in the parlor at tea time." He kissed her cheek and Julianna went upstairs to put her cape and bonnet away. One of the maids followed with her purchases.

Josie was nowhere to be seen when Julianna entered their rooms. The maid cleared her throat, "Ma'am where would you like me to set these?"

"Oh put them on the table there. Do you know where Josie is?"

The little maid blushed. "Miss Becky sent her to her room after her punishment. She isn't supposed to leave her room today."

"What punishment?" Julianna was growing angrier by the minute.

"Miss Becky had the butler cane her for breaking the vase." The maid turned to leave, but Julianna

stopped her. "Please go and have Josie come here at once. Thank you." Julianna took her cape and bonnet off and waited for Josie to appear.

Josie appeared shortly with red swollen eyes and just stood meekly in front of Julianna.

"Josie, whatever happened? I heard Jonathan say he didn't allow his servants to be beaten."

"Becky asked me what he had said when he came up. She expected me to be fired. When I told her she was livid. She said, 'He may not beat servants, but I do. You deliberately lied to him, and why he believed you I don't know.'" She then summoned the butler who took me to the kitchen and caned me in front of everyone.

Julianna was furious. "Oh Josie, I'm so sorry. Stay here and rest, I'll see to this. You are not confined to your room." She stormed out of the room and went in search of Jonathan.

He was in his study deciding what to say to Becky when she arrived. He had sent for her immediately on their return. When the door to his office burst open without a knock he looked up shocked. Instead of Becky standing there it was one irate Julianna.

"What's wrong Julianna?" Jonathan went to her and took her in his arms.

"You must do something, or I shall myself!" Julianna was furious and her voice was raised.

"Calm down, what are you upset about?"

Before she could explain, there was a knock and Becky entered the room. Julianna started toward her but Jonathan pulled her back.

"Good I'm glad she is here. Maybe she can explain to you why she had Josie caned in front of everyone after we left."

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Becky's face grew red and she stood with her hands clenched in fists. Jonathan had never seen her so angry and out of control.

"Is that true Becky, did you have Josie caned?" Jonathan spoke in a stern angry voice.

"I don't wish to discuss it in front of HER." Becky replied in almost a shout.

"You will answer my question immediately! Julianna has every right to hear your answer."

"Yes, I had her punished. She lied to you. She did break that vase and deserved to be punished. I have the authority to punish whomever I wish."

Jonathan was furious. "Julianna, please go do your menus. I wish to continue this discussion with Becky alone. I will come get you when I'm done."

"NO, I don't want to leave, she has no right to punish Josie, you told her she would not be punished." Julianna started toward Becky with her arm raised intending to slap her.

Jonathan was not in the mood to put up with any defiance. He took Julianna by the arm and led her out of the room. "You go do your menus and then go to our room. I warned you about open defiance, and I'm not in the mood to put up with it." He swatted her several times and went back into his office and closed the door.

Julianna was furious, and stomped to her morning room and furiously started making up her menus and schedules. It was a more daunting task then she realized. She has no idea what was normal, and only had last week to go by. She wrote and re-wrote them several times and was growing more frustrated as she worked.

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When Jonathan re-entered the office, Becky was seated in the chair in front of his desk and as angry as she had been before. Jonathan sat down and didn't give her a chance to say a word before he started talking.

"I can't believe you went against my wishes and caned that poor girl. I am in charge here and she did nothing wrong. That vase has not been in my dressing room for two years. Someone else brought

it there and broke it. You also know full well that was not my mother's favorite vase. I will NOT tolerate your arrogance or behavior to Julianna any longer. Why you found it necessary to be mean and spiteful to Josie I don't know. You also should have helped Julianna yesterday with next week's menus; instead you chose to deliberately not remind her. You knew that would have caused a crisis and made the kitchen staff resentful toward her. What do you have to say for yourself?"

Becky sat straight up with her hands folded in front of her. "I can see that there is nothing I can say to make you realize that Julianna is the cause of all of this trouble. You saw her start to strike me just a moment ago, yet you do nothing. We never had any problems here until she arrived."

Jonathan slammed his hand down on the desk. "You know very well that isn't true! You have not given her a chance. I'm responsible for her behavior and will address that behavior with her in private. It is your behavior that I'm addressing right now. I will not tolerate this type of shenanigans in my home. I want an answer from you Becky and I want it to be the truth."

Becky's confidence was crumbling. "This has always been my home. I don't understand why I can't continue running it. She is inexperienced and knows nothing about running a manor like this. Not once did she ask me before appointing Josie her personal maid. There are others that have been here longer and should have had that privilege. Yes, I did frame her and have her punished but they both deserved it."

Jonathan sat stunned. Never in his life could he imagine Becky behaving in this manner. "You will be punished for this Becky. I never imagined that there would ever be a reason for me to punish any of my servants, especially you, but this can't go unanswered. I'm not sure what I will do at this moment, but I will tell you this. If you don't change your ways immediately you shall be sent to live with

my cousin. I repeat---I will not tolerate this strife in my home. Go to your room until I call for you."

Jonathan sat in his office until his temper had cooled. This day was definitely not turning out the way he imagined it this morning. He and Julianna should have been at the lake enjoying themselves in the water and on the blanket. When he opened the door to their room he expected to see Julianna there. She was nowhere to be seen in either the sitting room or bedroom. He went to her dressing room and knocked on the door. Josie opened it and retreated in fear when he entered. "Josie, you have no reason to fear me. I didn't order you punished and the one responsible will be punished. Have you seen Julianna?"

"She has not been here since she left seeking you and hour or more ago."

"Thank you Josie, and please accept my apology for what has happened to you."

Jonathan left and went back down to Julianna's morning room. He almost laughed as he saw her feverishly working on her menus. Crumpled paper lay everywhere and she looked like she would cry at any moment. "Are you having a hard time?"

Julianna jumped at the sound of his voice. "I think I have it this time, but it took me much longer than I thought it would. I'm sorry Jonathan, please don't punish me."

Jonathan walked over and picked up the menus and looked at them and the schedule. "This looks fine to me. Take it to the cook and then meet me in our sitting room. I don't like having to punish you Julianna, but you know how I feel about blatant defiance. Now go and we will talk when you come upstairs."

Jonathan left the room and Julianna picked up the papers and left to see the cook. She prayed all the way to the kitchen that she wouldn't run into Becky. Julianna had not been in the kitchen since the first day here when Jonathan had showed her around. Tentatively she approached the cook. "I'm

sorry this is so late, I'll make sure it is done earlier from now on."

Margaret the cook was a large beefy woman with a gruff manner. "These appear to be in order. If I have any questions I'll let you know tomorrow," she looked over the papers in her hands, then turned back to her duties.

Julianna fled the kitchen as fast as she could. For some reason the woman intimidated her. She climbed the stairs slowly dreading the coming talk with Jonathan. He was waiting for her in his chair when she entered. Timidly Julianna sat in her chair and waited for him to say something.

"Julianna, please come here."

When she was standing in front of him, he pulled her into his lap. "I'm not happy with the way this day is going at all. I intended to have a pleasant and relaxing day with you. We only have a few days left until I must resume my normal schedule. I have talked to Becky and she has admitted she broke the vase and tried to blame it on Josie. She is full of resentment toward you and I don't know that she will be able to overcome it."

"I didn't do anything to make her feel that way Jonathan. I did try and be nice, but isn't this my home?" Julianna had tears in her eyes. "I'm hurt that she hates me so."

Jonathan hugged her to him. "I know, I am hurt myself. However, I must punish her and I'm still not sure what to do. I'd like your help on this. But first we need to address your loss of temper and defiance. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"I'm sorry Jonathan, it just made me so angry that she hurt Josie so. I wanted to hurt her back. I shouldn't have yelled at you, I'm very sorry," Julianna looked up at him pleadingly.

"I know you are, but you need something to help you remember the next time. Go fetch your hairbrush," Jonathan set her on her feet.

Julianna sobbed and ran from the room. She was back in a minute holding her brush, tears

streaming down her face. Jonathan said nothing but quickly pulled her over his knee.

"Please Jonathan, I'll never do it again, I promise."

"Julianna, I always keep my word. Now stop pleading and be good," Jonathan bared her and raised the brush and brought it down sharply on one cheek then the other. The spanking continued until her bottom and thighs were crimson.

Jonathan straightened her clothing and pulled her up into his arms. "Sshhhh Julianna, it's over now."

Sobbing softly Julianna snuggled into his arms. Finally when she was calm again Jonathan lifted her chin and kissed her. "Now, please don't make me do that again."

"I promise I won't be defiant anymore," Julianna hugged him.

Tea arrived and Julianna had the maid place the tray on the table and went to wash her face. Jonathan smiled at her and pulled her down on the couch next to him, chuckling at her small gasp when her bottom met the cushions. "We must discuss what to do with Becky. I fully intend to punish her but I don't know if a public spanking would be too humiliating for her. What are your feelings on this, since you are the object of her anger?"

"As much as I wanted to see her hurt and punished, I think a public spanking would crush her Jonathan. It will be harsh enough on her at her age to be spanked period." Julianna thought for a minute and set her cup down and turned to Jonathan, "Could you perhaps dock her pay and not spank her at all? I know she hates me, but I can't imagine that with her pride she could take a spanking and not totally crumble."

Jonathan hugged Julianna tightly and kissed her. "You have a wonderful heart Julianna. I understand what you are saying, but I feel her actions call for serious consequences. I will not punish her publicly,

but everyone will know anyway. I do feel that she will need to be sent away. I don't think she will ever be able to accept you. She feels that you are replacing her, and can't understand anything else."

"Where would she go? Does she have family somewhere that would take her in?"

"Not that I am aware of, she has never talked about them. I have a cousin that dearly loves her and that may be the place for her to go. She lives not far from here and Becky would be able to stay in touch with the friends on staff here that she has. My fear is that her resentment of you may have spread to them."

Julianna was so upset that she burst into tears. "I feel so unwelcome here Jonathan. Other than Josie, I think they all hate me."

Jonathan pulled her close into his arms. "I don't think that's the case. We shall overcome that, don't worry. Just be nice to them and they will be fine. No more tears. Why don't you take Josie her present and give it to her. I have apologized and you can present it as a gift from both of us. I will tell her later that she will have extra in this weeks pay as well to make up for this day. I want to deal with Becky and get it over with before dinner."

Julianna found the box amongst her packages and took it to her dressing room. Josie jumped up the minute Julianna came in. She noticed Julianna's tear stained face. "I'm so sorry I've cause everyone all this trouble."

"You haven't caused any trouble. I caused a bit of my own, and have paid for it. I'm the one who is sorry you were treated so poorly. When we were in town today, Jonathan and I picked this out for you. I doesn't make up for what happened at all, but I want you to have it."

Josie took the box and her face lit up with joy. "Oh Julianna, this is the nicest present I have ever received. Thank you so much!"



"You're very welcome. Would you order me a bath, and then I think I'll rest a bit before dinner. I'm very weary from this day."

Josie hurried out of the room to order the bath and Julianna changed out of her clothes into a robe to wait. It would take a while for the water to heat, so she went back and lay down on her chaise.

Josie entered the kitchen to see the staff all standing quietly with shocked looks on their faces. Before she could speak, they hushed her. The unmistakable sound of a paddle meeting flesh accompanied by Becky's voice yelping had shocked them all into silence.

"Oh my, is that Lord Barrington spanking her?" Josie was stunned. Before anyone could answer the butler hurried into the kitchen. "I don't want any of you mentioning this to Becky do you understand me?"

He noticed Josie standing there. "This is all your fault you realize that don't you? You could have kept your mouth shut."

"Lady Barrington would like a bath immediately. Please bring it to her dressing room." Josie hurriedly left the kitchen leaving them all glaring at her.

As she waited for the bath to arrive, Josie vowed that she would not say a word to Julianna about the reaction of the staff. She occupied her time looking at her new box and wondering what she might put in it. The only thing of value she had was her mother's wedding ring. It was all she had left of her family. The fever had wiped them all out when she was but 8. Since then she had been apprenticed out as a servant. Her life had not been smooth at all. The caning today was not the first beating she had ever received or the harshest. When she turned 15 her apprentice ship ended and she had felt extremely lucky to find a position here. She had been happier here than anywhere else in her life, and Becky wasn't going to ruin that. Julianna was as sweet as could be and Jonathan a fair and kind man.

Jonathan had immediately sent for Becky when he reached his office. She appeared a few minutes later, still looking as angry as when she had left. Her face paled though when she spied the paddle lying on the desk. "Surely, you don't intend to use that on me? It should be used on your sassy wife's bottom, not mine."

"Becky, your attitude hasn't improved in the least since I sent you to your room. I do indeed intend to use it on you. It is only because of Julianna's pleading for mercy for you that it isn't being carried out in front of the entire staff. I have never been more disappointed in anyone in my entire life. I expect a full apology to Josie in front of the staff. You will also have a day's wages deducted from your pay. Further, you are to write an apology to Julianna. If you find a need to complain about something she has done, you may see me, but I want no talking about her to the staff and no fights with her, do you understand me?"

"I understand that you are prejudiced in her favor, but I have little choice do I?" Becky stood her ground.

"Your choice is to behave or be sent away. Now bend over the desk please." Jonathan waited until she complied. Her pride wouldn't let her even ask for his forgiveness.

Jonathan wanted nothing more than to get this over with. Quickly he lifted her skirts and placed them over her back. Becky let out a small gasp but said nothing. "I have decided to spare your modesty, which is more than you did for Josie, I shall not bare you, but you shall feel the full strength of my disappointment."

Becky still said nothing. Jonathan placed his hand in the small of her back to hold her down. The paddle was raised as high as he could and brought crashing down on her backside. The first five met with no response but a grunt. By ten she was whimpering and by 25 sobbing and begging him to stop. When she finally apologized and promised not

to ever do anything like that again, he stopped and let her lay in place sobbing.

"Becky, you are forgiven, but I meant what I said. I will not tolerate this in my home. The choice is yours. I don't wish to see you till breakfast tomorrow at which time you will make your public apology to Josie in front of the staff. Now please return to your room."

Becky stood and without so much as a word left the room. Jonathan sat with his head in his hands. Never could he have imagined having to discipline any of his staff, let alone Becky. His thoughts drifted to Julianna, but decided to let her rest in peace. He would see her in a bit. He rang for the butler.

"Yes Sir?" the butler stood waiting for Jonathan to explain what he needed.

"I'm sure you know that I have punished Becky. I don't want this spoken about among the servants. It is over and done with. To clarify my position on this, NO servant is ever to be disciplined unless I have given my permission. Is that clear?"

"Yes Sir, quite clear. I was ordered to do so by Becky this morning and I thought you had given your permission." He was clearly agitated and waiting to be disciplined in some way himself.

"I understand that. You are not to be punished, but it must never happen again. I want you to personally apologize to Josie and see to it that the staff does not treat her ill in any way. She is now personally your responsibility to care for."

"Yes Sir!" the butler bowed and hurried away. Jonathan chuckled for the first time. Josie would be shocked at the cooperation she would soon see from the servants.

Julianna had drifted into a shallow sleep when Josie knocked on the door and announced that the bath was ready. "Thank you Josie."

The bath relaxed and eased the tensions from the day, and helped remove some of the soreness in her bottom. "I'm going to rest until its time to

dress for dinner. Why don't you rest some as well Josie, we have almost an hour until then?" Julianna returned to her chaise and fell into a nice soothing sleep.

## Chapter Three

Julianna woke just in time to dress for dinner. Jonathan was nowhere in sight, so he must be getting dressed for dinner. She went into her dressing room and found a smiling Josie. "Did you rest well?"

"Thank you I did. You seem much happier now, did something happen?" Julianna was extremely curious.

"Oh Yes, Lord Barrington summoned me to his office and told me I would receive extra pay to compensate for what happened today. When he told me the amount I almost fainted. I should be able to buy a new dress now. I have been saving best as I could for the last two years. If someday I meet a lad who wishes to court, I shall have something presentable to wear."

Julianna smiled and hugged her. "Oh that is wonderful. You may also have any of my dresses when I am finished with them. I believe we are about the same size. Now what shall I wear tonight?"

Forty-Five minutes later Julianna descended the stairs hoping that Jonathan would be in the parlor. He was standing by the fireplace leaning on the mantle waiting for her. He hugged her close and kissed her tenderly on the forehead. "Did you rest well? You look beautiful tonight."

Julianna was beaming. "Thank you Jonathan, I feel extremely rested. I also am so happy that you spoke to Josie. She is delighted with her extra pay. I have to find out more about the poor girl. It seems she has no one in her life and nothing to fall back on. Your generosity made her so happy. Can you imagine, she has been saving two years for one new dress, and I today have bought three?" Julianna didn't for one minute realize what she had just confessed to.

Jonathan heard what she said and was puzzled. How did Julianna think she bought three dresses,

when he knew he had told her only one and had paid for only one? He was about to pursue it further when dinner was announced. It would have to wait until after dinner, plus he may learn more if she didn't realize what she had said.

"Is Becky joining us tonight?" Julianna asked with a frown.

"No, she won't be joining us, she was soundly punished and sent to her room. It remains to be seen how she will behave in the future. I don't want this discussed with Josie or any of the servants." Jonathan gave Julianna a stern look.

"Of course Jonathan, I would not ever discuss that with them."

Jonathan continued, "As you already know, I gave Josie an extra amount in her pay for this week. I have also talked to Henry, the butler who caned her and informed him that was never again to take place without my express permission. He is also to watch over her and make sure she is treated well by everyone. She is young and pretty and I have caught him watching her several times, so it should be a good arrangement."

Dinner was thoroughly enjoyable for Julianna. She was glad that Becky wasn't there and that Jonathan had taken care of Josie. She chatted away about their shopping trip but said no more about the dresses.

Jonathan pulled Julianna's chair out for her when dinner was finished. "Shall we sit in the parlor for a bit?"

"That would be fine." Julianna took his arm and when they reached the parlor sat on the sofa. Jonathan sat down next to her and put his arm around her pulling her close to him. He wasn't quite sure how to broach the subject of the dresses with Julianna. He didn't want to accuse her of something if he had somehow misunderstood her.

"Are you happy, Julianna?"

"Yes Jonathan, I'm very happy. Are you happy with me? I know I angered you today and I'm really

sorry." Julianna had a funny feeling this conversation was leading to something she didn't want to hear.

"You understand what I expect and agree with the rules we talked about before we married?" Jonathan was holding her close enough to feel the shiver go through her.

"Y...Yes, why are you asking?"

"How many dresses did you buy today?"

Julianna paled; suddenly she remembered her statement before dinner. She quickly tried to think of some way to get out of this. "You bought me one, though I had asked for three. But I didn't complain."

Jonathan turned her around to face him and tilted her chin up to look him in the eyes. "Julianna, did you or did you not say earlier that you had purchased three dresses today? I can check personally with the dressmaker tomorrow."

"I...I paid for the two extra with my money I had left from my father. I just had to have them Jonathan, and you didn't have to pay for them, so you only purchased one." Julianna tried to lower her head.

"No you don't! You sat there and deliberately lied to me. You also deliberately disobeyed me and were deceitful in the process. That disappoints me terribly, Julianna. You are not wanting for anything and have just behaved like a spoiled little girl. I thought we had that behind us, but apparently not."

Julianna started tearing up. "I'm sorry Jonathan, I really didn't think."

"Yes you did. You thought you could sneak them by me, like you used to your father. It will not work Julianna. You are to go right now and write a note canceling the order. I shall have it delivered to the dressmaker tomorrow. You will have her deduct an appropriate amount for her efforts. Then you will go upstairs and prepare yourself for bed. When you are ready you will stand in the corner and think of what

you have done and wait for me." Jonathan set her on her feet in front of him and held her hands.

"Jonathan, are you going to spank me?" Julianna already had tears streaming down her face.

Jonathan had a stern angry look on his face. "You know that I am. Now go do as I told you. I don't like being deceived, disobeyed and lied to."

Julianna started to speak but Jonathan shushed her. "I don't want to hear another excuse, do as I have said."

"Jonathan, I'm sorry, please just let me return..." she had no time to finish, before she was over his knee and her skirts and petticoats over her head.

"I told you to do as you were told and not sass me. Now you can have a sample of what's coming and then do as you are told. I don't want another word from you until I come upstairs." Jonathan's hand fell hard and fast on her bottom and her tears were flowing freely. This time when he set her on her feet, she dashed immediately to her morning room to write the letter to the dressmaker. She left it unsealed in case Jonathan wished to see it and took it with her to their room.

Josie wasn't there but Julianna really needed no help. She undressed and put her nightdress on. She washed her face and brushed her hair, wondering all the while if she would be sent for the brush.

Jonathan in the meantime sat in his office deciding what he was going to do. Julianna had not been this deceitful in a long time. She had to learn that she was no longer going to be able to do whatever she wished. He waited an hour and then slowly walked up the steps to their room. He met Josie in the hall leaving Julianna's dressing room. "Good

Evening Sir, I see that Madam has already prepared for bed; do you know if she will need anything further tonight? I didn't wish to disturb her in your room."



"No Josie, she won't require you anymore this evening. You may do as you wish." Jonathan bade her good night and entered their room.

Julianna heard the door open and tensed. A moment before she was wishing he would hurry and arrive; now she wished he weren't there. She knew she had been in the corner for a long time, but was in no hurry to leave it now. Jonathan said nothing but left the bedroom and went into the sitting room. A moment later he called out to Julianna to join him.

Walking docilely with her head down Julianna approached where he sat in his chair. She stood in front of him unable to look at him.

"Julianna, look at me!"

Slowly Julianna raised her head and saw the disappointed angry look on his face. She started to say something, but one look from him was enough to keep her quiet.

"I have told you how disappointed and angry I am with your behavior today. I'm also hurt that I find it necessary to punish you again. I don't understand why you take my word so lightly. I love you Julianna, and would rather we had finished off this day far differently than we are." Jonathan paused and looked at her. "Is there any excuse you can offer for the way you behaved?"

"No Sir, I'm very sorry though and I won't ever do it again. You have already spanked me once today, please don't spank me again."

Jonathan shook his head. "No Julianna, I'm not going to let you off. I believe you are sorry, but you need to learn a harsh lesson. After tonight I hope never to have to discipline you this harshly again. Go and lean over the back of your chair and place your hands on the seat. I don't want you to move from that position, or your punishment will start all over."

Tearfully Julianna did as she was told. A grim faced Jonathan walked over to her and lifted her nightdress. "Please Jonathan forgive me?"

"You'll be forgiven, but you are going to be punished first." Jonathan picked up one of several implements he had laid out and walked back to Julianna.

Julianna tensed not knowing what to expect from Jonathan. He was as angry with her as he had been when she had poisoned Nancy. Her curiosity was satisfied quickly.

Jonathan picked up the large school paddle and went to Julianna's side. He held her down with one hand in the middle of her back. Her bottom was still red and mottled from that afternoon and he almost lost his nerve, but he had to teach her a lesson she would never forget. "I'm not going to scold you anymore, you know why you are being punished." Jonathan raised the paddle and brought it down with a sharp smack to her bottom. Julianna yelped in pain. Jonathan raised it and brought it down 20 times, before stopping. "Stay in place Julianna, we aren't finished."

Julianna was sobbing and begging him to stop, promising to be good forever. Jonathan was sure the servants were hearing the commotion but nothing was going to stop him. The razor strop was next. Julianna jerked and almost stood up when the first lash hit her low on the thighs. After ten Jonathan stopped. He rubbed Julianna's scarlet sore bottom for a second. "Julianna, you have to endure one more and then we will be finished. I never intended to use the cane on you, but your actions today leave me no choice. Since you are already well punished, you shall only receive four. But if you stand up or in anyway impede it, we will start over again."

The swish of the cane sounded more ominous than anything that Julianna ever heard. When it landed on her already sore bottom she felt like she was on fire. She yelled but managed to stay in place for the remaining three. Jonathan took pity and made them light and fast. Immediately after the fourth stroke, he threw the cane down and picked

Julianna up and sat with her in his arms and let her cry it out on his chest.

"Oh Jonathan, I'm so sorry, I will never lie to you again or disobey or anything." Julianna was sobbing so hard she could hardly catch her breath.

"Julianna you are forgiven and I know you will try. I don't want to ever have to do this again. Now hush." Jonathan rubbed her back and rocked her until she was quiet. He looked down at her and noticed she was asleep. Picking her up gently he carried her to the bedroom and tucked her under the sheets. Julianna stirred slightly but only enough to turn on her stomach.

"I'll be back in a little while," Jonathan kissed her on the forehead and left the room. On his way out of the room he noticed the note Julianna had prepared for the dressmaker. He read it, sealed it and took it to Henry for delivery first thing in the morning. He passed several maids who blushed as they greeted him and moved on quickly. He chuckled to himself realizing they had heard two sets of punishments today and wanted to be out of reach as soon as possible.

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It was still very early in the evening and Jonathan missed not having Julianna with him. He was well into planning the next few days when he was aware of a sniffing sound near him. Julianna was standing in the doorway still crying.

"Come here Julianna," Jonathan opened his arms for her.

Julianna almost flew across the room. She flung herself into Jonathan's arms. "I'm so ashamed of myself I really am, Jonathan. Are you sure I'm forgiven?"

"Yes my love, you are forgiven." Jonathan hugged her tight against him.

Julianna was quiet enjoying Jonathan holding her, but had to ask him a question. "Jonathan, would you use the cane on me again? I hated that."

"Julianna, if you ever lie to me again, yes I most definitely will. I hate deceit above all else, that is why I was so severe with you."

"What would you like to do the next two days? Sunday, I feel we should go calling and introduce you to your new neighbors." Jonathan kissed her lightly on the neck.

"I have to finish my reply to Maisie for Richard to pick up tomorrow. I haven't really thought about anything else." Julianna was just content to be held by Jonathan.

"You best finish that this evening then, if you aren't sleepy. He will be here very early in the morning. I think we need to have that swimming lesson we missed today, and explore some more of the estate. Saturday we can ride over and look at the horses I wish to purchase and perhaps have a picnic. Is that all right with you?" Jonathan waited for her reply.

"Yes, that is just fine Jonathan. I better finish that note now, before it gets much later, unless you mind?" Julianna stood up and went to fetch her letter.

"No, but bring it here and do it so we can be together. I'll read a bit while you write."

Julianna went to get her letter and Jonathan poured a port for himself and some wine for her. When she returned he kissed her soundly and pulled her against him. "I think we should retire early. I feel the need for a long loving session with my bride."

Julianna hugged him tightly and reached up and pulled him down for a long kiss. "I think that sounds wonderful!"

It was already quite a lengthy letter to Maisie detailing her first week of married life. She brought her up to date on the situation with Becky and offered her sympathy regarding Nancy. Her final sentence warned her that Maisie best behave, as Julianna was unable to get away with anything.

Julianna picked up her wine and went and sat next to Jonathan on the sofa. Jonathan laughed she winced sitting down. "A bit sore?"

"It is, yes." Julianna lowered her head; she hated it that he was making fun of her.

"Hmmm, I think I know what will help that." Jonathan pulled her over his lap and gently rubbed her bottom.

Julianna tensed at first but as he kept rubbing gently, the sting was going away and she relaxed. "MMMM, that does feel good Jonathan."

Jonathan continued rubbing for a bit, then pulled her up into his arms. "Is there anything else you would like to do differently tomorrow?"

"Do we have to have a swimming lesson?" Julianna still hated the thought of it.

"Yes, I want to make sure you remember what you learned. We will do that first as I think the cold water will make riding easier the rest of the day. Now, enough chat and time for bed." Jonathan picked her up and carried her into the bedroom.

Jonathan woke early the next morning and decided not to wake Julianna since she was sleeping so peacefully and it had been late when they finally slept. He pulled her close and snuggled against her. When she began to stir he kissed her until she woke.

"We have to get up and be ready when Richard arrives. I also want an early start on our day." Jonathan kissed her and got out of bed. "I'll meet you in the dining room."

Julianna really didn't want to get up, but knew better than to argue. It was a half hour later when she joined Jonathan in the dining room. She was surprised to see Richard there so early.

"Richard! I'm surprised you're here so early. I'll have to run and get my letter." Julianna started to leave the room.

"No need Julianna, I took it from the desk and brought it down with me. Richard already has it."

Jonathan pulled a chair out for Julianna and kissed her on the top of her head.

"Oh just think in two weeks we will be going back for your wedding Richard. Are you coming home before then?"

"No, I'm staying there until the wedding. I'm riding but sending my trunk and valet in the carriage. I know Maisie will be happy to get your letter and anxious to see you. Jonathan, do you know what day you are going to arrive?"

"I think we shall leave here on Tuesday. That will give the ladies plenty of time to chat and settle down before the wedding." Jonathan saw the happy smile on Julianna's face.

"I hope they behave as well as they did before your wedding." Richard had noticed how gingerly Julianna sat this morning.

"Don't worry Richard, we shall be angels, just wait and see." Julianna sounded so sincere that both Richard and Jonathan burst into laughter.

Julianna blushed. "We will be you will see."

Jonathan patted her arm. "I know you will try, but the word angel somehow doesn't fit the picture of you and Maisie together."

Richard stood up. "I must be on my way. I'll see you when you arrive for the wedding."

Jonathan walked Richard out to his horse while Julianna continued her breakfast, she was surprised that Becky had not joined them nor been seen all morning. When Jonathan returned Julianna was finished. "Are you finished eating Jonathan?"

"Yes, but it is time for Becky to apologize to Josie in front of the entire staff. Would you accompany me please and I will have them assembled in the front hall." Jonathan pulled her chair out for her and when they reached the front hall, asked Henry to assemble the staff and have Becky report immediately.

Becky walked into the room with her head held high. She nodded to Jonathan and Julianna but didn't say a word. The entire staff assembled and

stood nervously wringing hands and shifting from foot to foot.

"Josie, please come here." Jonathan called to her from the crowd.

She came immediately up to him, "Yes Sir, what do you need?"

"I don't require anything, but Becky has something to say to you." Jonathan nodded to Becky.

Slowly Becky walked over to Josie. "I am very sorry that I had you unjustly punished yesterday. It was I who broke the vase, and I have been corrected for it. It was wrong of me. Please forgive me." It was spoken in a loud voice but lacking any real emotion.

Josie blushed at the apology. "Thank you, of course you are forgiven. I wish it to be forgotten and we will go forward."

Jonathan addressed them; "This has not been a pleasant time for any of us. I wish things to return to normal, and never have an occasion like this again. You are dismissed." They all scurried silently back to their duties.

"Come Julianna our horses are ready so we should leave immediately." Jonathan took her arm and guided her out the door.

Julianna was dreading the ride and hoping she would remember how to swim. She mounted her horse wincing as she sat in the saddle. Jonathan was mounted and they rode out toward the lake. Neither one saw Becky watching from the window with an ugly look on her face.

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The ride was excruciatingly painful for Julianna. By the time they had gone three miles she was whimpering each time her bottom touched the saddle. Also, she was having a hard time keeping up with Jonathan. Finally after the third time she fell behind he rode back to her. "Julianna, what is wrong? You normally don't ride so slowly."

"I'm sorry Jonathan, but it hurts so, I can't go faster."

Smiling, Jonathan lifted her from her horse and settled her in front of him on his lap. It was much softer than the saddle. "Is this better? The water will make it feel much better, I promise."

"Thank you Jonathan this is indeed much better. She leaned back into his chest and they were once again off. Princess followed them without being tied to Jonathan's saddle.

"Princess is a good mare, isn't she?" Julianna sat proudly watching her horse follow her.

"Yes, a perfect horse for you. I won't have to worry that she will be too hard for you to handle."

They soon arrived at the lake and Jonathan lifted Julianna down. "Now hurry and undress and you will feel better in no time." Jonathan began taking his clothes off and after a momentary pause of embarrassment Julianna did likewise.

As soon as she was ready she ran into the water. She gasped once at the coldness but promptly sat down. It felt so good on her bottom.

"Well my lady, I see you agree with the therapeutic effects of cold water after a hard punishment. Let's see if you remember the swimming."

"Of course I do Jonathan." Julianna splashed water at him and with a surge of confidence swam away. She was so delighted that she remembered that she forgot she was in deep water and tried to stand. For a moment she panicked but quickly caught herself and swam back to Jonathan.

"Julianna, you are wonderful! I'm so proud of you." Jonathan kissed her soundly. "Now let me teach you some finer points of swimming."

They played in the water for over an hour. When they finally tired, they went to the blanket. The sun was shining and Julianna was fast losing her embarrassment at being nude in front of Jonathan. She lay and let the sun dry her as Jonathan brushed her hair.



"Jonathan, I shall miss this time together next week. With a few exceptions it has been wonderful!" Julianna rolled over on her stomach and looked at him.

"Yes, it has Julianna, and we shall still have some time together. I usually ride in the morning and you can come with me. Plus you will be kept busy training Sebastian and I'm sure you will have callers. You will also have to keep things running smoothly in the house." As he talked his hands were slowly massaging her body and awakening every nerve in it.

Julianna could take no more; she pulled him down into a deep kiss and let her hands roam his body. Jonathan quickly entered her and both enjoyed the rhythm of their bodies until they climaxed together. Julianna lay in his arms contented for a long time. "I hope you don't think I'm a hussy. I would never have believed I would behave like this."

"You are my wife and lover, and not a hussy!" Jonathan gave her bottom a gentle smack. "I love you the way you are, and wouldn't like to have a prude for a wife who didn't respond to me. But unless we want to stay here all day and not see some of the rest of the property, we best get dressed and on our way."

Julianna was starting to mount Princess when Jonathan stopped her. "Wouldn't you rather ride with me? At least for a bit."

"Oh yes, I feel much better, but I love riding with you." Julianna smiled as he lifted her onto his horse.

He took her to parts of the estate that she hadn't seen as yet. She saw the cattle and milk cows and some pigs. It was a rather large operation, much bigger than her father's had been. "The animals can be quite skittish and I don't want you riding out here without me. There are the other pretty places to ride for enjoyment," Jonathan stated rather firmly.

"No, I won't come here, I know about how skittish they can be. I do think the lake will be my favorite place."

"Yes, once I agree you can ride alone." Jonathan hugged her tight against him.

They were both starving after the morning's activity and glad to arrive just in time for lunch. Much to Julianna's disappointment Becky decided to join them for the first time in a day.

"How are you Becky? Have things run smoothly this morning?" Julianna was determined to be nice to her and try and forget all that had happened before.

Becky replied without showing any emotion at all. "I'm fine thank you, and things are running as smoothly as usual." She was trying not to reveal the contempt she couldn't help but feel for Julianna. That morning after they had left she had warned the staff that she would see them fired if any ever mentioned her punishment again. She totally refused to speak to Josie or Henry, who now was her protector. After her warning to the staff she had written to Anne Smithfield, Jonathan's cousin asking if there were any open positions for her there. She no longer had any desire to stay here. Hopefully she would hear soon and be able to leave before they returned from the wedding.

Jonathan needed to see to some paperwork after lunch, so Julianna went to get Sebastian and play with him. He was so happy to see her and delighted in being able to romp in the garden. "Sebastian, I think you have grown just this week, you are getting to be such a big boy. Do you think you could behave if I brought you in for tea?" Sebastian answered by barking and jumping around her. "Let's see what we can teach you today."

Julianna spent the remainder of the afternoon until teatime teaching him to sit and come. He was doing very well. Jonathan joined her to announce that it was time for tea. "Has he been learning anything new?" Sebastian had run over to Jonathan

and was sitting patiently while Jonathan petted his head.

"Oh yes, he can sit when I tell him and come when I call him, well most of the time anyway. I promised him he could come to tea if he learned. That's all right isn't it?" Julianna looked expectantly at Jonathan.

"Yes, I see no reason why he can't, at least for a little while. He will have to get used to behaving indoors if you intend to have him with you at times."

Jonathan stood and took Julianna's hand and started toward the house. Sebastian had stayed where he was. Julianna laughed, "Oh I forgot I taught him to stay until called too. Come Sebastian." The pup leapt up and followed them into the house.

He sat next to Julianna when she told him to sit and then lay down. Julianna and Jonathan were almost finished with tea when they noticed he was sleeping. "Oh poor pup, I wore him out." Julianna bent over and stroked his fur.

"He is still young and they do tire easily." Jonathan rang for Henry and had him return the pup to the stable. Sebastian followed him along without having to be reminded.

"Julianna, I think you are doing an admirable job of training him. He will be ready for hunting lessons in no time."

The rest of the day passed smoothly and Julianna awoke on Saturday anxiously awaiting her visit to the new horses. Jonathan was awake and all ready up and dressed. "Hurry and dress for breakfast. I ordered our picnic and we will leave soon after breakfast."

"Oh dear, that is something I should have done isn't it? I'm sorry I forgot totally about it." Julianna felt bad that she hadn't remembered.

"I almost forgot myself, I remembered this morning, so it will most likely be simple. You have plenty of time to get used to things. I know it's all

new for you." Jonathan pulled her out of bed and kissed her.

Julianna hastened through her dressing and joined Jonathan as soon as she could. Becky was once again in attendance. "Good morning Becky, I trust you slept well?"

"Yes, thank you I did." Becky managed to reply civilly without once again showing any emotion in her voice at all. Jonathan noticed but could find no fault with her. Perhaps in time she would resume her normal behavior and come to at least a truce with Julianna.

Shortly before they finished breakfast Becky turned to Julianna. "When are you leaving for the wedding and how long will you be gone? Do you have anything special you want done in your absence?"

Julianna was befuddled and looked toward Jonathan. He said nothing as this was something she would have to learn to handle. "We will be leaving a week from Wednesday and returning on Monday. What do you normally have the staff do when there is no one home?"

"That is up to you now Julianna. If you could provide the menu's for when you return and let us know if you have any plans for entertaining soon it would be appreciated."

Julianna was clearly fumbling and the slightest smile crept over Becky's face. "That's fine, I'll see to it that you have them and provide you with any plans I have."

Becky excused herself and Julianna said nothing, but her mind was racing. Jonathan announced the horses were ready and they rode out with Julianna extremely quiet and lost in thought. She wished she had paid a bit more attention to Nancy's instructions now. Clearly she could not ask for help, as this was her responsibility.

The ride was short and soon they arrived at the estate where the colts were. Jonathan dismounted and went in search of the stable master. When he

returned he helped Julianna down and introduced her.

"So you wish to see our new stock. Lord Richard said you would likely be interested in them. I think they are the best we have had in a few years." He led the way to the back of the stable and an open paddock area. There were about ten colts frisking around. They were full-grown but not fully ready to ride yet. Jonathan and the stable master walked into the pen. Jonathan turned back to Julianna, "Wait here for me."

Julianna watched as he examined all of the horses, they were still very skittish and hard to handle. She could understand why Jonathan didn't want her to get too near them. While they were doing this Julianna mulled over what instructions she should be issuing the staff for the time they were gone. She also didn't know if Jonathan would want to entertain when they got back. It was all so totally confusing.

"Aren't they wonderful?" Jonathan put his arm around Julianna.

Julianna jumped, "Oh Jonathan, you scared me! I didn't see you coming."

"You seem lost in thought, is everything all right?"

"Yes, I was just daydreaming. They are wonderful Jonathan, are you going to buy them?"

"Yes, I will come back and finalize the deal with owner next week when he returns. He's away this week. Are you ready to find our picnic spot and rest?" Jonathan smiled down on her as they walked to the horses.

"Yes, that would be nice." Julianna just couldn't muster as much enthusiasm as normal.

Jonathan knew that something was bothering her and thought back over what it might be. Then it dawned on him, it was the instructions for the staff while they were away. She didn't know what to do, and Becky it appeared wasn't going to help her. Somehow he would find a way to get her talking

about it and let her know what was normal practice. He didn't want her to think she couldn't handle it, because he knew she would do fine in time. It was unfortunate that Becky wasn't willing to be more helpful.

Soon they came upon a little creek and a nice grassy pasture. Jonathan rode over and turned to Julianna, "Does this look satisfactory for our picnic?"

"Oh yes, it is delightful" Julianna dismounted and started spreading the blanket on the ground. "And it isn't even deep enough to swim in!"

Jonathan lifted the basket down and placed it on the blanket. "No, but you can wade if you wish."

Julianna sat down on the blanket and started unpacking the basket. "Maybe later, I just want to sit for a bit now."

Jonathan leaned against the tree and pulled her close to him. "You are so quiet today, what are you so deep in thought about? Are you worried about traveling to the wedding?"

"No, I'm looking forward to that and seeing everyone again. I am just wondering what to schedule for next week. Do you often entertain, should I plan something?"

"No, I don't often and you really don't know anyone, so I think we can wait a bit for that."

After our calling tomorrow, I anticipate we will be invited to some dinners and then we can reciprocate. Don't even think about that until we are home again from Richard and Maisie's wedding."

"I thought perhaps I could give some of the staff a holiday while we are gone. Is that permissible?" Julianna was chewing on her lip.

Jonathan pulled her closer. "Don't let Becky spook you with her lack of help. You can do whatever you want. Sometimes when I was gone, Becky would have the manor thoroughly cleaned. That was just done before you arrived, and I'd hardly think it would need it again so soon."

Julianna gave the first hint of a smile. "Thank you Jonathan, I was a bit overwhelmed and didn't

want to make a mistake and have the staff think I was horrid."

"I doubt they will think that, you are doing just fine. As long as you continue to treat them with kindness and not fall back on your old spoiled ways, you will be fine. I think you know I wouldn't allow you to do that anyway. Now, no more worries and frets, you may make a few mistakes but you will learn and I will not be disappointed."

Julianna dished up the lunch and then they waded up stream a bit. "Is this stream on your property too?"

"No, this isn't. Doesn't belong to any one I know of, just free territory." Jonathan saw the gleam in Julianna's eyes.

"Young Lady, you are not to come her alone without me or a male escort, do you understand?" Jonathan looked at her sternly.

"Why Jonathan, it seems perfectly safe?" Julianna really liked it and wanted to come back more often.

"It seems that way, but it is close to the highway and there are woods around where vagabonds and thieves can hide, unescorted women are prime prey for them. So, no coming here alone or without a male escort."

Julianna sighed. "Yes Sir, I won't come here without a army of armed guards to see to my safety." She barely finished her sentence before Jonathan's hand landed firmly on her bottom.

"Sarcasm will not get you very far Julianna, I don't appreciate it at all." Jonathan stood looking quite stern.

"I'm sorry, Jonathan, I was just teasing you. I won't come here unescorted." Julianna rubbed her bottom. The soreness hadn't completely left from the day before and she didn't want to risk another spanking anytime soon.

Jonathan kissed her lightly. "Thank you Julianna, I would die if anyone harmed you. Now let's pick up our picnic and continue on our ride."

They were packed up and mounted in short order. Jonathan showed her where Richard lived and what soon would be Maisie's home too.

"Oh Jonathan, it is beautiful. Maisie will be so happy. Ummm, does Richard have a housekeeper as well?" Julianna prayed that Maisie wouldn't have a Becky to contend with.

"Yes he does, but she is far different than Becky. She is fairly young and I believe she is looking forward to Maisie arriving. It will mean less work for her."

"I'm glad. I wouldn't want Maisie to have to contend with a Becky. I don't think she could cope." Julianna yawned.

"Are you tired?" Jonathan inquired.

"A bit I guess, but it's fine."

"Come ride with me the rest of the way home and then you can rest until tea time." Jonathan pulled her over on his lap and she snuggled back against his chest.

"I really like riding this way Jonathan, it is such a comfortable place to be." Julianna yawned again and Jonathan tightened his grip to keep her from falling off. She was napping in short order.

Jonathan took the direct route home and Julianna was still sleeping when they rode into the courtyard. "Wake up Julianna, we are home." Jonathan shook her lightly.

Julianna opened her eyes and blushed seeing the groomsmen waiting for the horse. Jonathan lifted her down and took her hand and walked into the house. "I have some work to do before tea. Rest and I'll see you then."

Gratefully Julianna changed out of her riding clothes and lay down on her chaise and napped. When she woke there was still time before tea so she went to her morning room and started working on some menu's and schedules.

First she listed what she wanted to take with her on the trip. Josie would need to see that her clothes were in order and packed in her trunk. As she was



writing her list she wondered if Jonathan would be taking his valet. He always had in the past when he visited her. Perhaps she could take Josie with her, and then she would not have to worry about leaving her with Becky. Yes, she would have to be sure and ask Jonathan if that were possible.

This time making menus was much easier. She had completed a weeks worth and was already working on the schedule for while they were gone. She saw no reason why most of the staff couldn't take the time off themselves. She decided to talk to the Cook and see whom she would need or if any of them would be needed. Perhaps just a few servants to keep the house dusted and clean and watch over it. As far as she was concerned Becky wasn't needed at all during that time. Maybe some time away would be beneficial for her.

Teatime came and Julianna was excited and happy with her plans as she went to the parlor to join Jonathan. She opened the door and saw Jonathan seated in his chair. "Oh Jonathan, I have such a great idea and have made such progress on plans. You will have to tell me if some of this will be all right."

It was as she fully entered the room and Jonathan stood, that she noticed they had company. A small petite woman and a man taller than Jonathan were seated on the sofa.

"I'm sorry, I didn't realize we had company." Julianna looked at Jonathan bewildered, as the couple didn't appear happy at all.

Jonathan took Julianna's arm and introduced her, "This is my wife, Julianna. Julianna, this is my cousin Anne Smithfield and her husband Roger Smithfield. They have come to speak to me regarding a letter Anne received from Becky. I think you should be present since this does concern you."

"Welcome to our home, please let me serve you some tea." Julianna greeted them and poured tea and passed the sandwiches to the guests.

Roger cleared his throat, "This is really not a social call. Anne has been very close to Jonathan and his family all her life. She thought she knew everything about Jonathan and his morals and character. It was with some alarm that she received a letter from Becky yesterday relating her treatment here since Julianna and you were married."

Julianna stiffened and felt herself growing angry. She had not mistreated Becky in any way. "Excuse me, but Becky has not been mistreated in any way. I resent that you would accuse me of that."

"Julianna! I will handle this, please let him continue." Jonathan gave her a stern look.

Roger continued, "Apparently her authority has been taken from her and when she dared to correct a maid, she was severely beaten by Jonathan on the urging of Julianna. It is that treatment that I speak of. She wishes to leave here and live with us. Under these circumstances I am more than willing to agree to her wishes. If you will be so kind as to summon her, we will tell her she is leaving with us."

Jonathan had angry blotches on his face. "I'm appalled that you and Anne would believe all of this without so much as asking me what happened. Obviously, you feel Becky is far more reliable than I."

Jonathan rang for Henry. "Please tell Becky that Lord and Lady Smithfield are here and wish to see her."

"While we are waiting for Becky, I will tell you the truth about what has occurred here. Becky has treated Julianna with nothing but contempt since she arrived. She was asked to cooperate and give Julianna a chance to learn the routine and help her. Julianna was asked to be patience and give her time. Both had a few problems at first. I corrected Julianna in my own way and spoke to Becky directly about her attitude. She only got angry and framed Julianna's maid with a broken vase. Her reason was that she did not get to pick which girl would be Julianna's maid. She did it to make the girl appear

inept and Julianna unable to choose wisely, thereby lowering her in my eyes. Against my wishes she had the girl caned in front of the entire staff while we were gone. I did punish Becky for this yes...with a paddling privately in my office, which was only done privately at Julianna's request. I'll not stop her from leaving, under these circumstances it is the best solution."

Anne shifted uncomfortably, "Jonathan, I don't disbelieve you, but after all the time she has been with you, it seems harsh to punish her that way. After all, your wife does have a certain reputation."

Julianna wanted to speak, but Jonathan squeezed her arm in warning. "That is not like you to judge people before you know them Anne. I am disappointed that you have decided to turn against family."

Before any more discussion took place Becky entered the room. "You summoned me," she spoke curtly to Jonathan.

"Yes. Lady Southfield received a letter from you telling her of your horrid treatment at my hands and your wish to leave. You are not indentured and are free to go. We'll leave you to discuss your departure with them. I will see to it that your belongings you can't take today are forwarded immediately to you. I'm sorry that after all these years, you wish to part in this manner, but as I told you before, I will not tolerate discord in my home. Come Julianna. Good day Lord and Lady Smithfield. I wish you well in the future." Jonathan took Julianna's arm and left the room. Quietly he walked upstairs to his sitting room.

Once the door was closed he pulled Julianna close to him. "I'm sorry that was very unpleasant for you."

"It wasn't very pleasant for you either. I'm so sorry I'm such a bother. I never realized that so many people who don't even know me, dislike me." Julianna sobbed in his arms, no longer able to control her tears.

"Julianna, you are not a bother, and I don't think people dislike you. For some reason Anne has decided that Becky is telling her the truth and we are lying. The only reputation I heard about you was that you were a spoiled brat." Jonathan tilted her chin up to look her in the eyes, "and I think you would have to agree that we have made great strides in that area."

Julianna smiled at him, "Yes, I would agree that my bottom has paid dearly for my past behavior. I still feel badly that your cousin has turned against you. She is your only family Jonathan, and Becky has succeeded in turning her and her husband against you."

"Don't worry about it. It is Anne's prerogative to believe what she will. I have you and that is all I need." Jonathan summoned his valet, "Please have more tea prepared and brought to us here. Also have me informed when Lord and Lady Smithfield have departed."

"While we are waiting, tell me what you were so excited about when you first came into the parlor." Jonathan sat back and looked a bit less tense.

"I have made the menu's for the next week and was thinking about the time we shall be away. I would like to give the staff all time off. Only light duties would need to be done. I thought if I talked to Cook, she could tell me what she would need in the way of help and meal preparation. I listed what clothing I will need and then thought perhaps Josie could come with us. Are you bringing your valet?" Julianna stopped to sip her tea.

"I see you have been busy. You may do whatever you wish. I think it is a fine plan. Josie of course should accompany us. I assumed that you knew that, anytime we travel she will accompany you, as my valet does."

They continued chatting about the trip until Henry knocked and announced that Lord Smithfield wished a word in private with Jonathan.

"I'll meet him in my office." Jonathan thanked Henry and waited until he left then turned to Julianna. "I'll tell you what he has to say when I return. Try and rest some until then, but don't leave our rooms."

Roger Smithfield was pacing the office when Jonathan entered and sat down. "Please sit and have your say."

"Anne is quite upset that you are taking such a harsh stand on this. We do not wish to sever relations, as you seem to intend. I can see where they may be some truth to what you have said and what Becky has told us."

"My desire was not to sever relations, but when I am accused of being a liar and a brute and my wife's reputation is questioned, I have no other option. You yourself know that Anne was a spoiled child when you married her also. Julianna was spoiled but no longer, she has always had a kind and generous heart. Whatever relations there are to be in the future will depend solely on Anne." Jonathan had a hard look on his face.

Roger looked distinctly uncomfortable. "I think we need to have some time to cool off on both sides. Becky will be taken care of and I do believe that is your wish. She told me that you threatened her with sending her to us anyway. I will tell Anne what you have said, and I'm sorry that this had to happen so soon after your marriage." He turned and left the room.

Jonathan watched as he climbed in the carriage with Anne and Becky and ride off. He went back to his office to calm himself some before he went back to Julianna. He was far angrier than he had let her see. He always enjoyed his visits with Anne and Roger, but he could not tolerate their present attitude toward Julianna and the actions he had taken with Becky. Julianna would need to take control immediately.

Rest was the farthest thing from Julianna's mind while Jonathan was gone. She immediately started

making notes on things she would need to do, and questions she had for Nancy. When Jonathan entered the room she was feverishly at work with her head bent over her notes.

"Seems that you are very busy all ready planning things. We need to talk about what to do now that Becky is gone." Jonathan sat down in his chair. "Come sit with me, and I'll tell you what Roger had to say."

Julianna stopped her work and sat on Jonathan's lap listening as he told her what had happened. "It seems he was trying to extend an olive branch. Perhaps in the future, it will be possible to see them again as family."

"Perhaps, but not when they feel we were both so wrong in our treatment of Becky. I should have made arrangements to send her there from the start. It would have saved us a lot of trouble and heartache. Now however, we need to discuss what help you will need."

"I don't really know right now if I will need help or not. I think I should be able to handle the running of the house, but until I talk to the servants and get to know them, I won't be sure." Julianna's head was spinning at the moment.

Jonathan thought for a minute. "We can see how things go this week. Becky ran the staff with an iron hand and I don't know if that is needed or not. I don't want you running into problems and spending your entire day on staff issues. I want you to come to me though if you run into problems."

"But Jonathan, running the house is my job, you shouldn't have to concern yourself. I'll manage just fine."

"It's time to dress for dinner. I'll meet you in the parlor." Jonathan kissed her and left for his dressing room.

Josie was anxiously awaiting Julianna. "Is it true, that Becky is gone?"

"Yes Josie, it is. Unfortunately she had to cause a rift between Jonathan and his cousin doing it. I'm

going to need a lot of help from you. I'll need to know how the rest of the staff feel and who is more respected and in charge than others. Can you help me with this? I want them to like me and I need some help getting to know them." Julianna slipped her dress on as she talked.

"I can certainly try. I know some were afraid of her, and I'm not certain if she had any really close friends or not. I will see what I can find out during dinner. So far I just heard a rumor that she was gone. I don't think she said goodbye to anyone." Josie helped Julianna with her hair.

"Thank you Josie, I'll see you later. Oh, I almost forgot to tell you. You'll be accompanying me on our trip next week to the wedding. Tomorrow after breakfast if you will meet with me in my morning room, we can go over clothes and what the schedule will be." Julianna checked herself over and left to meet Jonathan.

He was reading a note when Julianna entered the parlor. She went over and kissed him lightly on the cheek.

"You look charming this evening M'Lady. Let me pour you some wine." Jonathan rose and went to get the wine and Julianna sat down on the sofa next to where he was sitting. She couldn't help noticing the note lying there. It certainly appeared to be in Becky's handwriting.

Jonathan returned and handed Julianna her wine. "Yes Becky had to leave one final parting shot. Gave it to one of the servants and asked that I be given it after she left. I don't want to have you read it. It is quite nasty toward you, and we have had enough of that."

"Don't worry Jonathan, I intend to show the entire staff that I can be kind. I want them to like me and be happy. I'll never treat them like I did the staff at home." Julianna smiled hopefully at Jonathan.

"I know you will. Things will be fine, now no more worries. Tomorrow we shall go calling and see

how many friends you will have by the end of the day."

The rest of the evening passed quietly. They were falling into a routine and hopefully would be like this most of the time. Jonathan read and Julianna did needlework and they chatted until bedtime.

The next morning they rose early for church services. Julianna was so surprised at how friendly everyone was. They all wanted a chance to meet her. She was feeling very happy when they returned home.

"I have to check over some things in the stable, as soon as we have lunch we shall go calling." Jonathan kissed her on the cheek and left for the stables.

Julianna went up to her room to find her needlework and noticed the letter from Becky lying on Jonathan's desk. She knew she shouldn't read it, Jonathan had specifically told her he didn't want her to, but curiosity got the better of her.

Jonathan,

I truly thought I would live out my days here, the home your mother brought me to when she married. How wrong I was when I thought her only child, her son, was an upright and honorable man.

You've disappointed me greatly in your choice of a wife. A pretty face obviously must sway you easily, as her character leaves me shocked that you would have entered into a marriage with her.

Your life will soon be an utter hell as she slowly robs you of your wealth and reputation. She is truly a mean spirited witch and has put you under her spell. It matters not what method of correction you use on her. She fools you and will continue to spew evil over your home. I pray that you realize this and have the decency to not bear children with her, as she will taint them.

Your parents would truly be shocked by your actions were they alive. I have taken all I want from here, you may keep whatever is left.



Becky

Julianna dropped the letter and gasped in horror. She turned to leave the room and ran into Jonathan. "I didn't want you reading that letter Julianna. I told you it was nasty. Why did you not obey me?"

"I...I saw it and was curious, I just had to read it. I'm sorry Jonathan, it was vile." Julianna was trembling and almost in tears.

Jonathan took her in his arms and held her close. "I didn't want you to see that, and I'm sorry you did. I should paddle you for not obeying me, but I understand your curiosity. I wish I had destroyed it."

"Jonathan, I'm not evil, I don't know why she said those things." Julianna could no longer hold back her tears.

"She is a bitter old woman. She felt wrongly that you would replace her and she would have no home. She wouldn't listen to reason and give you a chance. I have written to Roger, informing him of the letter and that I'm prepared to take legal action if accusations of this kind are made to anyone else. That should settle the matter. Now, unless you want a spanking, tend to your needlework. I'll meet you at lunch." Jonathan wiped away her tears and kissed her.

Julianna took her needlework and went to her morning room. She was there but a few moments when Josie knocked on the door. "Oh Josie, come in, I forgot that you were coming to see me today, please sit down."

Josie sat quite stiffly; she had never been in this room before.

"I'll ring for some tea, and we can talk." Julianna reached for the bell pull.

"Oh don't ring, I'll get it for you." Josie jumped up.

"Fine, but bring enough for you too." Julianna searched out her notes while Josie was gone. She

wanted to make her feel at ease being here with her.

"Here's the tea." Josie set it on the desk.

Julianna poured each of them a cup. "What does the staff say about Becky leaving?"

"They are apprehensive about what will happen next. They respect Jonathan, but some believed a lot of the vile things Becky said about him and you. Please don't ask me to repeat them, they were quite vile."

"She left Jonathan a letter, that I just read, that was full of awful things, so I can imagine what she told the staff. I don't need to hear it. Please continue."

"Henry has kind of taken charge in Becky's absence but they are wondering if you will be replacing her, or taking charge totally yourself. They don't know you and are only worried because of the things Becky told them. Cook said you were young and trying and everyone should give you a chance. So far she is pleased with the menus and the courtesy you have shown. I don't think it will be hard for you to gain their trust and confidence. They are wondering about what you expect of them while you are gone."

"I know, and I will have to talk to Cook. Here is the list of clothing I will take. If you think of anything more I may need, just add it to the list."

Josie took the list and thanked Julianna for the tea. The list was quite long, she was surprised Julianna was taking so many things. What she didn't know was Julianna was taking two or three dresses she intended to give to Josie. She would have to check with Nancy to see if it was proper, but she didn't want Josie wearing her maid uniform anymore.

She was quite pleased with her plans when she met Jonathan for lunch. Immediately after the carriage was ready and taking her new calling cards, Julianna joined Jonathan in the carriage. "Oh,

Jonathan, I'm so nervous. Where are we going first?"

## Chapter Four

Jonathan had to laugh at her enthusiasm. "We shall just start with the nearest neighbors and see how many we can call on. Some will be out calling themselves."

They were successful in finding most of the neighbor's home. All had known Jonathan for a long time. Julianna was floating on air as they stopped at the last home. It was the estate of an old friend of Jonathan's, George Morgan. He was newly married also and Jonathan had a feeling that Laura and Julianna would be good friends. From what he had heard from George, Laura was much like Julianna in background and temperament.

The butler showed Jonathan and Julianna into the parlor and George and Laura joined them moments later. Laura was petite like Julianna and her eyes were sparkling and happy. "Oh, I'm so glad you called. I have been wanting to meet you ever since you got here."

"Thank you so much, it is nice to meet some of my new neighbors and friends of Jonathan's." Julianna felt comfortable with Laura.

The men were chatting about estate concerns and Laura and Julianna started discussing married life. "Laura, I didn't realize you were a newly married lady yourself. Do you have trouble with your housekeeper?"

"No, not at all. She has been really helpful to me. I hear that yours is a bit of a tyrant though, been there since she was 12 or something. Some of my servants are afraid of her."

"Becky left us. Just yesterday she left and went to Jonathan's cousin. I'm sorry to say she hated me and behaved very badly. I'm without a housekeeper and wondering if I can do without. We are leaving for my cousins wedding the week after next and I won't really have time to find anyone before that." Julianna liked Laura a lot.

"Oh you poor thing, I think that would be dreadful! You seem nice to me, for someone to hate you so in such a short time. I'd say she wouldn't have liked anyone Jonathan would have married." Laura patted her hand, "Don't worry about it, when you come back we can figure out something. I'll help you find someone. Now tell me about your cousin. I hear she is marrying Richard. He and Jonathan and George have been friends forever."

The ladies chatted for a long time and when Jonathan announced it was time for them to leave they were both startled the time had past so swiftly. They said goodbye promising to get together soon.

On the way home Julianna was happier than she had been in a few days. "Oh Jonathan, this was such a nice afternoon. I really enjoyed it. I like Laura Morgan a lot. I think we shall be good friends."

"I'm glad Julianna, George and I have been friends since we were children. It is nice that you like his wife as well. However, she also has a mischievous streak, and I don't want you two getting in trouble." Jonathan pulled Julianna into a big hug.

"Oh Jonathan, what trouble could we get into?" Julianna settled into his arms for the rest of the trip home.

Several couples had called on them when they were away and left cards. There was one invitation to a dinner the coming week. Julianna was delighted. "Do you wish to go Jonathan? I will have to respond right away, and adjust my menu's accordingly."

"Yes, we shall attend, it will be fun. Perhaps you can wear your new dress?" Jonathan smiled at her.

"Oh yes, that would be perfect!" Julianna took the invitation and cards into her morning room and rejoined Jonathan in the parlor for tea.

After tea, they took Sebastian out and played with him in the garden. He was learning so fast, that Julianna decided she would bring him in with

her for a while in the morning while Jonathan was busy. He could keep her company.

"If you bring him in Julianna, you will have to be responsible for him and make sure he stays out of trouble. He is still a puppy and prone to mischief, like his mistress." Jonathan laughed at the pout on Julianna's face.

"I'm not mischievous at all!"

The next morning they rose early and as soon as breakfast was over went for a ride. It was a short ride as Jonathan had a lot of work to catch up on, and things to see to.

"I'll be in and out all day, but will meet you for lunch and of course for tea. Please watch Sebastian and behave yourself." Jonathan kissed her and headed for his office.

Julianna gathered Sebastian from the stable and took him to her morning room. "Now Sebastian, I want you to be a good boy. I have some work to do and then we can go romp in the garden."

Julianna wrote a note accepting the dinner invitation and made a list of those they called on the day before and those who had called on them. She remembered that she needed to talk to Cook about the schedule for when they were gone and advise her of the night they would be dining out. She had already given her that week's menu. Sebastian was sleeping, so she quietly tiptoed out and went to the kitchen.

Cook was not sure what to expect in dealing with Julianna, she had only talked to her briefly once. After she noted the change on the menu, she listed attentively as Julianna explained what she wanted to do while they were gone. "I don't want to inconvenience you or any of the staff, but I would like to have you take time off as you can. Would that work? Could you tell me what staff would be needed and how you would like to handle it? I know they all live here, but some may want to take time to visit family or such."

"Lady Barrington, that is most kind. I will talk to Henry and see what he thinks. For the most part I think we can work out a schedule amongst ourselves, and take care of what meals we need. Lord Barrington will leave me with money to purchase what we need. I think everyone will be most pleased. As soon as I know what everyone plans to do, I'll let you know." Cook smiled happily as Julianna left the kitchen. Perhaps Becky had misjudged her and not given her a proper chance.

Julianna hadn't planned on being away in the kitchen as long as she was. When she opened the door to her room she gasped. "Sebastian! What have you done?" The pup was looking up at her with a torn pillow from her chair in his mouth and feathers everywhere. He had also chewed a large chunk from the leg of her desk. "What am I going to do?" Julianna rang for a servant and started to take Sebastian back to the stable. She had just opened the door when Jonathan walked down the hall. He saw the look on her face and walked toward her. Julianna tried to pull the door shut. She didn't want him to see the room. Perhaps she could fix things before he knew.

"What are you doing Julianna?" Jonathan opened the door and glanced in at the mess. "Take him to the stables at once and then come to my office." A servant had just appeared as Jonathan finished speaking. He turned to the servant. "Please clean this up and have Henry arrange for a carpenter to see me this afternoon."

Julianna didn't wait to hear more, she took Sebastian back to the stable and saw him settled and petted him a bit. She didn't relish talking to Jonathan right now. He wasn't pleased and her bottom tingled thinking of what he might do. "Sebastian, you have gotten me in a lot of trouble. Why couldn't you behave? I probably won't be able to have you in the house again for a long time. Be good and I'll see you later."

The walk from the stable to Jonathan's office didn't take nearly enough time as she hoped. Perhaps he would be busy with George and not have time for her after all.

Jonathan himself opened the door at her knock. "Sit down Julianna." He was not smiling at all. "Would you care to tell me how the pup did all that damage while you were watching him?"

"I'm sorry Jonathan, he was sleeping and I just needed to speak to Cook for a minute. I didn't realize I was gone as long as I was. She is a very nice woman. I told her of my plans for the staff while we were gone. She thinks....." Jonathan slapping his hand on the desk silenced Julianna.

"I don't care why you left him Julianna, you were told you had to be responsible for watching him. You showed absolutely no responsibility at all. You have no excuse and have allowed him to ruin two pieces of furniture in one morning. That is why I didn't want him in the house unattended. Come here Julianna."

Julianna walked slowly over to Jonathan. Without a word he pulled her over his knee and bared her. His hand fell hard on her bottom and reddened it despite her pleas. When he finally finished he sat her in his lap. "You may not have him in again, until I say. You will have to play with him outside. You must learn to be more responsible and take care."

"I'm sorry Jonathan, I really am." Julianna sobbed.

"I know you are. Now go and empty your desk, as it shall have to be taken away to be fixed. I will have something else brought down from the attic for you to use." Jonathan sat her on her feet and rose and hugged her. "I do love you. Try and behave?"

Julianna smiled up at him with teary eyes. "I'll try, Jonathan." She walked back to her room rubbing her bottom wondering if she could ever go for more than a few days without a spanking.



Throughout the rest of the week, Julianna and Jonathan fell into a routine. They rode in the morning and Julianna played with Sebastian outside and started learning the routine in the house. It soon became clear that she could indeed use a housekeeper to run things.

Cook or Henry daily had questions and decisions for her to make, that left her with very little time to spend on her needlework or calling on neighbors. The chair and desk were repaired but Jonathan still would not let her bring Sebastian in the house. Julianna had thankfully avoided any more spankings.

Thursday morning after their ride Jonathan told Julianna, "There is a meeting in town today and luncheon I must attend. I won't be here for lunch with you, but will return in time for tea."

Julianna missed having him around. The day was quiet and she was bored. She debated going for a ride, just a short one but didn't know what instructions Jonathan had left with the stable boy. She was sitting in her morning room trying to concentrate on her needlework when Henry announced that Lady Morgan was here to see her. "She is waiting for you in the parlor."

Julianna hurried to the parlor. "Laura, it is so nice to see you, how have you been?"

"I'm fine, it was such a nice day that I decided I needed some fresh air and wanted to visit more with you."

"I didn't hear a carriage? I must have been very preoccupied." Julianna rang and asked for some tea for her guest

"I rode my horse, I didn't take the carriage." Laura accepted a cup of tea from the servant.

"Does George let you ride alone? Jonathan won't let me ride alone even on our property yet." Julianna hoped if Jonathan knew George let Laura out alone he might change his mind.

"No, he doesn't, so please don't mention it to Jonathan. But he is in town and won't be home until

teatime. On those days I can ride out and he never knows. I think it is a silly rule." Laura smiled at the shocked look on Julianna's face.

"How do you keep him from finding out? Don't the servants say anything?"

"I bribe them not to. Actually I only have to bribe the stable boys. I sneak them a bottle of wine or port from the wine cellar. George never keeps track and never knows. It works quite well."

Julianna sat thinking for a minute. "Is this meeting in town, something they do regularly? I know Jonathan is in town today also and won't be back until tea time."

"Yes, they have some sort of business meeting and men's luncheon. It is scheduled every other Thursday. That is the day I do whatever I want." Laura was enjoying watching the reactions on Julianna's face.

"That is very interesting, I think I could like that myself, I just don't know the servants well enough yet. Jonathan would be very angry if he ever found out I did something like that. I actually was so bored today, I contemplated it, but was afraid too."

"George would too, I probably wouldn't sit for days, but so far he hasn't figured it out. I think between the two of us, we could have a lot of fun. Let's plan something for the next time they go. Maybe your cousin would like to join us, Richard attends as well." Laura had a devious smile on her face.

"Oh Laura, this will be so much fun. But how do I know I can trust the stable lads?"

"Start being very nice to them. Maybe even give them a coin or two when you ride. Just slip it to them."

"Jonathan would see that, but I have a puppy that is in the stable and I could do that when I play with him." Julianna smiled. "Good, we shall ride to the lake and picnic the next time. I really don't think Cook will say anything at all. She is becoming very friendly and rarely talks to Jonathan anyway."

They chatted for a bit longer and then it was time for Laura to leave. "I must be back and ready for tea when George arrives home. I'll see you at the dinner next week and we can plan more."

After Laura left Julianna started thinking. She wondered where Jonathan's wine cellar was and what type of records he kept. After a moment she decided to seek some answers.

Cook was alone in the kitchen when Julianna entered. "How are you today? I haven't talked to you all day and was wondering how things were."

"They are fine. I was going to give you the schedule for the holidays later, but we can review it now if you'd like." Cook opened a drawer and took out some papers.

Julianna looked it over and asked a few questions and gave it back. "It is fine, I'm so glad so many will be able to go somewhere. Maybe next time the rest will be able to."

Cook smiled at Julianna, she really was a nice lady and hadn't given any of them one ounce of problem. Everyone was beginning to trust and like her.

"I have a question that I thought perhaps you might be able to answer for me. Is there a listing somewhere of the contents of the wine cellar? It could be helpful in planning meals, especially for dinners or parties." Julianna tried to make it sound business like and casual.

"I don't know if there is a formal list. I have never seen one. Henry usually checks it and lets Lord Barrington know when he needs to restock something. I never tell him when I take something to serve, so I doubt he has a list. Would you like to see the wine cellar and perhaps pick a wine for dinner tonight?"

"Yes, I would that would be wonderful. I haven't seen it as yet." Julianna followed cook out of the kitchen and toward the cellar door. The key was hanging on a hook right next to the door, so that would be no problem. They walked down the stairs

and Julianna was surprised at the quantity of wine and liquors that were available. They picked a wine for dinner and Julianna thanked Cook for the tour.

She now knew it would be easy to obtain a bribe for the stable boy. She would try giving him a coin or two tomorrow and see his reaction. If he told Jonathan she could explain that she was just thanking him for the extra care of Sebastian. If he said nothing then it would be easier the next time. He was a smart lad and would catch on quickly.

Cook she was sure would never tell Jonathan about a picnic basket prepared. She would be sure and tip her nicely too before their trip. It was just about teatime when she heard Jonathan ride into the courtyard.

"Oh I missed you so much today!" Julianna threw her arms around him in a hug when he entered the door.

Bending to kiss her he replied, "I missed you too. Did you have a good day?"

"Yes I did, Laura Morgan came to call and we had a nice visit." Julianna chatted as they walked to the parlor.

"How did you like their new carriage? George was talking about it today." Jonathan sat down on the sofa and pulled Julianna down next to him.

"I didn't see it. I said goodbye to her in here and never saw it. She didn't mention it or I would have looked." Julianna hoped she wasn't revealing her nervousness. She had learned her lesson about slipping out things she didn't want him to know.

"I was hoping you had. We need a new one and wanted your opinion on it. Maybe at the dinner next week you can get a good look at it. It is supposed to be more comfortable than the one we currently have." Jonathan wondered if it was his imagination or Julianna was just a bit nervous about something.

"Cook gave me the schedule for the time we will be gone. It seems that most are going to be able to go visit family. I'm glad it is working out so well."

"Yes, I think everything is going smoothly. Have you thought anymore about a housekeeper?"

"I think it would be a help to have one. We can figure out how to find one when we return. It wouldn't make sense to start now." Julianna thanked the maid that brought their tea tray in.

"How was your meeting and luncheon Jonathan? Laura tells me it is a regular thing." Julianna poured tea for him.

"It was good. I got caught up on all the news and the luncheon was good. It does make for a tiring day though." Jonathan pulled her closer. "I think we shall have to retire earlier this evening.

Julianna blushed and smiled at him. "That's fine with me, I'm a bit tired myself."

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The next morning after their ride, Julianna stayed in the stables to play with Sebastian, while Jonathan returned to his office. When she was certain he was long gone and no longer in sight. She sought out the stable boy.

"I wanted to tell you how much I appreciate the care you take of Sebastian for me." Julianna handed him a coin.

"Lady Barrington, this isn't necessary. It is part of my job to care for the animals."

"I know that, but I want you to have that as a token of my appreciation for the job you do. You needn't mention it to Lord Barrington. We shall just keep this between us." Julianna gave him a charming smile and the poor lad took the coin and smiled back. His thoughts were muddled, she wasn't awful, as they had been warned; she was very nice and so pretty.

Julianna took Sebastian to the garden smiling. Laura was right; this was going to work out just fine. Julianna was so busy with Sebastian that she totally lost track of time.

"Julianna, it is lunch time, I wondered where you were." Jonathan had come looking for her.

"Oh dear, I'm sorry, I lost total track of the time. I'll put Sebastian away and be right in." Julianna called Sebastian and hurriedly took him back to the stable. Jonathan was already seated in the dining room when she arrived.

"I'm sorry, I was late Jonathan." Julianna apologized as she sat down.

"I know you didn't mean to be late, but it is important to be on time. I think we need to get you a watch so you will be aware of the time." Jonathan started eating as soon as they were served. He was much quieter than normal and Julianna was worried that he was angry with her for her tardiness. Not wishing to make him angrier, she ate in silence.

Jonathan wasn't angry with her, but was preoccupied with the new horses he wished to buy and decided that he should ride over and finalize the deal this afternoon. "Julianna, I'm going to go settle the deal on the horses this afternoon. I'll be back for tea."

Julianna jumped when he called her name. "Fine Jonathan."

Jonathan took her hand as they left the dining room. "Are you all right? Why did you jump so when I called your name?"

"You were so quiet during lunch, I felt you were angry with me." Julianna had her head down not wanting to look at him.

"Julianna, I'm not angry with you at all. Sometimes when I'm thinking about something I grow quiet. It doesn't mean that I'm upset with you." Jonathan hugged and kissed her and left for the stable. Julianna said a prayer that the stable boy wouldn't say anything to Jonathan. This would be the big test.

For the rest of the afternoon, Julianna read and busied herself with her needlework. After Cook and the maids left the kitchen, she made a trip to the wine cellar. She selected several bottles of wine and port and carried them back to her room and hid them in her desk. They would come in handy later.

There was still plenty of time before tea, so Julianna went upstairs and freshened up and lay down on her chaise to rest. She was there sleeping when Jonathan came home and found her.

Sitting on the edge of the chaise he gently shook her, "Julianna, wake up."

Julianna sat up startled. "Jonathan, I didn't oversleep did I? I hope I'm not late again."

"No, I'm home earlier than I expected. I have a present for you and couldn't wait to give it to you." Jonathan handed her a package.

Julianna opened it carefully and smiled at Jonathan. "This is perfect, now I will never be late again." Jonathan had given her a watch that she could pin on as a brooch,

"I'm glad you like it. Now you just have to remember to look at it." Jonathan laughed at the look on her face. "I'm teasing you, come let's have tea."

As they sipped their tea, Julianna inquired about the horses. "Have you completed the transaction?"

"Yes, everything is set, I'll take possession of them when we return. The stable men will need time to arrange space for them and feed. I also want to be here when they arrive, so it will be for the best."

"Jonathan, do you think we could send our trunks with Josie and your valet in the carriage and we could ride our horses to the wedding? It would make it much faster and more comfortable." Julianna smiled as sweetly as she could at him. "I really am a good rider."

"I will think about it Julianna. I'm not sure what the situation is with highwaymen right now. I'll inquire tomorrow when I visit Henry Johnson. I have to discuss some cattle deal with him. I will be gone from lunch until teatime."

Julianna's heart jumped at the news. She would be able to further test the stable boy. Another coin and a request to saddle Princess, should tell her by his reactions what his orders might be. "I'm sorry to

hear that Jonathan, I always miss you, but I understand."

Julianna was deep in thought and quiet. Jonathan was amused as she usually was a bit of a chatterbox at tea. "Why so deep in thought?"

"I was just thinking of the dinner on Saturday night. My new dress came today, and I was thinking about what I would wear with it. I want to make a good impression at my first dinner."

"I'm sure you will be lovely as always. The people here are no different than your old neighbors. Be yourself and you'll do fine. Plus Laura and George will be there, so you'll have someone you know there." Jonathan squeezed her hand for reassurance.

"I will have a lot of things to arrange for early next week, before we leave. I may be very busy, but then we will have several days of rest together." Jonathan rose, "I have some business to attend to before dinner. I shall see you then." He kissed her and left the parlor.

Julianna was so excited at the prospect of tomorrow, that she could hardly contain her excitement. She didn't dare let Jonathan see how excited she was, or he would certainly ask questions. Since she had already rested, she decided a trip to see Sebastian would be in order.

Timothy the stable lad greeted her warmly when she entered. "Is there anything special you need Ma'am?"

"No thank you Timothy, I'm just going to play with Sebastian for a bit." Julianna gave him another of her charming smiles.

"Oh I'll get him for you." Timothy ran to let Sebastian out. When they returned together, Julianna smiled at him again. "You are so kind and nice Timothy. It seems you really enjoy your job."

"Oh yes Ma'am, this is a wonderful place to work. Lord Barrington never makes many demands and is not one for issuing a lot of orders either. He



let's us do our job, and as long as things are done well, he has no complaints."

Julianna thanked him again and took Sebastian to the gardens. "Oh Sebastian, I think I have him right where I want him. We shall see tomorrow."

Jonathan finished his work faster than he thought and went in search of Julianna. He found her sitting in the garden talking to Sebastian.

"Do you think he can answer you?" Jonathan laughing sat down next to her on the bench.

"Of course not, but he is intelligent, and does listen very well." Julianna laughed with Jonathan.

"Do you think I could bring him back in tomorrow? I will watch him very closely and not leave him alone for one second. Please?"

Jonathan frowned at her question. "No Julianna, not yet. Perhaps when we come home."

Julianna said nothing but was definitely pouting. "I think you best stop pouting. It will not change my mind, but could earn you a trip over my knee." Jonathan looked at her sternly.

"All right Jonathan, but I don't understand why."

"Because I said so, don't sass." Jonathan wasn't budging an inch.

Julianna rose from the bench with a surly look on her face. "I best take Sebastian back and get ready for dinner." She started walking and Jonathan grabbed her wrist and set her down on his knee. "You are still pouting and I don't like it at all."

"I'm sorry Jonathan, I'll stop." Julianna kept her eyes down.

"I'll walk with you and then we can both get ready for dinner." Jonathan set her on her feet, swatted her bottom hard and called to Sebastian. When they entered the stable, Timothy ran forward and immediately took Sebastian. "I'll take him for you. Have a nice evening."

"It seems that he is being very solicitous to you. Have you been flirting with the help?" Jonathan put his arm around Julianna.

"Of course not, I just treat him politely." Julianna laughed, but her heart was hammering in her chest. Jonathan must not become suspicious at all.

Julianna tried very hard not to show her excitement the next morning but Jonathan could sense something was different about her. "Julianna, you are positively fidgeting in your chair like a little child, what's the matter?"

"I'm just getting excited about the dinner tomorrow night and the wedding." Julianna smiled sweetly at him. "After all this will be the first dinner party as your wife, I want it to be special."

Jonathan shook his head, "You will be fine, now relax! If you are done, let's go for our ride, I have a busy day today."

Timothy was waiting for them with the horses saddled when they arrived. He smiled at Julianna. "Good morning Lord Barrington and Lady Barrington, have a nice ride."

As they rode out Jonathan couldn't help but laugh. "Julianna, that groom is positively smitten with you. I would say you have your first admirer among the staff."

Julianna blushed a deep red. "He is a sweet boy. I hope in time they will all like me."

"I'm sure of it. Things have been so much pleasanter this week with Becky gone." A frown passed across Jonathan's face but he said nothing more about it.

The ride was pleasant and when they returned to the stable Julianna told Timothy she would be back later for Sebastian and smiled at him.

Jonathan went to his office and Julianna made sure things were running smoothly before settling down with her needlework.

Julianna had requested an early lunch so Jonathan would have more time to complete his business. As soon as they were finished, he rose from the table. "I'll be back in plenty of time for tea."

I'll ask about the situation with the highwaymen also, I think it would be nice to ride overland."

Julianna kissed him goodbye and watched until he was out of sight. She took one of the small bottles of port and a coin and went to the stables. Timothy was there as usual.

"Good afternoon Lady Barrington, have you come to get Sebastian?"

"I will in a bit but I have a present for you. I thought perhaps you would enjoy some port in the evenings. I know Jonathan wouldn't mind. You do such a wonderful job of taking care of things here." Julianna handed him the bottle.

"Oh, I don't know if I should take this or not. Would Lord Barrington be angry?" Timothy was a bit nervous.

"I don't see why, and especially if we just keep this between us, he would never know. I appreciate the extra work you do so much, I feel I have to reward you." Julianna smiled sweetly at him.

"Thank you kindly." Timothy blushed a bit.

"I would like to take a short ride to get some air, and then I'll play with Sebastian. Do you think you could saddle Princess for me?" Julianna waited barely breathing to see his reaction.

"Of course, right away." Timothy rushed off and came back shortly with Princess. He helped Julianna mount. Not one word was said and Julianna rode out of the yard into the meadow. She couldn't believe how easy this was. Princess was willing to run a bit so Julianna galloped across the meadow with the wind in her face, as she had not been able to do since she came here. It felt so good to ride fast again.

Half an hour later she was back. She didn't want to push it too much the first time. Timothy helped her down and took Princess to unsaddle her. Julianna walked with him and unlatched Sebastian's pen. He was so happy to see her and frisked all around. When they were in the garden Julianna spent the next hour or so training him and throwing

a ball for him. He was beginning to tire, so she called him and returned to the stable. Timothy greeted her with a smile. "I forgot to ask, is your ride something that is to be between us too?"

Julianna almost fainted but kept her composure and smiled at him. "Yes, that would be the best thing I think, we wouldn't want to bother Lord Barrington with small details would we?"

"No ma'am he never said you couldn't go, but I know he always goes with you. I just wanted to be sure."

"Thank you Timothy this will be our secret." Julianna smiled and walked slowly back to the house. When she was safely in her parlor she wondered if Timothy was going to blackmail her. Well, if he tried, he would be in serious trouble for taking bribes as well. She made a mental note to ask Laura tomorrow night if she ever had that problem.

Julianna was rested and changed for tea when Jonathan returned. "How was your visit? Did you accomplish what you wished?"

"Yes I did, I'll tell you about it at tea, after I freshen up." Jonathan went up to their room.

Over tea Jonathan gave her good news. "Johnson says the sheriff has cleared the highwaymen from the area, so we will be able to ride overland to the wedding."

"Oh Jonathan, that is great news! I'm so happy." Julianna looked like a child at Christmas when she heard the news. "Does that mean, I'll be able to ride by myself now too?"

"No Julianna, I don't want you riding out alone yet. There will be plenty of time for that later when you are more accustomed to the property."

Julianna said nothing but gloried in her little secret adventure from the afternoon.

Jonathan thought for a moment. "Also just to be clear, you'll never be allowed to ride on the open road unaccompanied. When you visit you must use the carriage. None of the ladies are allowed to ride

unescorted on the roads. I was surprised that your father allowed you to do it."

"Yes Jonathan, I understand. Laura told me that George had told her the same thing." Julianna poured more tea and snuggled up against Jonathan. He was pleased that she wasn't sassing or pouting about this, he thought it would take longer to make her so obedient.

Since the next day was Saturday, Jonathan let them sleep in a bit later. Julianna enjoyed the late days and early morning loving. She was amazed at how fast she had become accustomed to him and how enjoyable it was. Some of her friends had told her their mothers had told them it was something to be endured for the sake of their husbands and to bear children. Another mental note was made to ask Nancy if she were depraved.

When they reached the stables Timothy had their horses ready for them. Again he smiled broadly at Julianna when he greeted her. Before they mounted the horses Jonathan stopped and turned to Julianna. "Do you think Sebastian would follow us, if we took him with us? Someday he will have to learn to run with the horses for hunting."

"He comes when I call him and stays with me, I suppose he would." Julianna wasn't really sure about taking him.

"Timothy, could you get him for us?" Jonathan asked the smiling groom.

As soon as Sebastian saw Jonathan and Julianna, he began dancing around them. Jonathan told him to quiet down and he obediently did. "I think he is more than ready Julianna, let's see how he does. We will go a bit slower to let him keep up."

Sebastian wasn't sure what he was supposed to do, until Jonathan called to him as they rode out. Each time he started to stray off, Jonathan or Julianna would call him and he always returned each time. They rode to the lake and Jonathan dismounted and lifted Julianna down.

"He needs to rest a bit and we can sit and rest as well. I want to see if he will naturally follow a trail." Julianna settled under a tree and Jonathan walked around a bit with Sebastian. Soon a rabbit sprang from a bush and Sebastian was after it in a second. When he lost sight of it, he put his nose to the ground and followed the scent. Suddenly he broke into a run. Julianna was fearful he would be lost and called to him. Reluctantly he trotted back to her. "You're a good boy." Julianna patted him as he lay panting next to her.

Jonathan sat down next to Julianna and pulled her to him. "You shouldn't have stopped him Julianna, I wanted to see if he could track the rabbit."

"I was afraid he would get lost Jonathan, he was getting so far away."

"I know, from now on I'll take care of hunting lessons alone with him." Jonathan wasn't scolding, but Julianna felt a bit angry.

"I thought he was my puppy to train? That's not fair for you to just take him away from me when you want." Julianna pulled away from Jonathan.

Jonathan pulled her back against him and talked in a quiet even voice, "Julianna, I'm not taking him away, I'm teaching him to hunt. He was meant to hunt. Sebastian is yours, but needs to do the things that come naturally to him. Now, change your attitude and stop sulking, or you won't be sitting comfortably for your first dinner party."

"I'm sorry, but I don't want him hurt." Julianna leaned back against Jonathan but her eyes were filled with tears.

Jonathan turned her face to him and kissed her. "There is no need to be upset. I'll not let him be injured, and he won't get lost."

They rode back and returned Sebastian and walked hand in hand back to the house. It wasn't quite lunchtime so Jonathan went to his office for a bit and Julianna to her morning room.

They met for lunch and Julianna's nerves were really getting the best of her. "Jonathan, I'm going to rest a while and then start getting ready for tonight. I'll order tea for our room, is that all right?"

"Yes, you need to calm down. I'll amuse myself until then." Jonathan watched her walk upstairs and then went to the stables to talk to his top stable hand about the arrangements for the new horses.

Tea was a quiet affair and as soon as it was over, both Julianna and Jonathan went to their dressing rooms to dress. Jonathan was waiting in the hall when Julianna descended the stairs.

"Julianna, you will be the star of the dinner. You look gorgeous. Shall we go?" Jonathan helped her with her shawl and led her to the carriage.

"Thank you Jonathan, I do want to make you proud of me." Julianna smiled at him.

"You always make me proud of you Julianna," Jonathan said, and then added, "when you behave."

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The closer they came to their destination the more excited Julianna became. Jonathan could feel her twitching beside him. "Julianna, you will be worn out before we get there if you don't calm down."

"Yes Jonathan, but it is so exciting!" Julianna vowed to sit still the remainder of the short distance they had left to go.

The estate was totally lit up and looked so festive when they arrived. A footman greeted their carriage and provided a footstool for Julianna to alight. Jonathan took her arm and they entered the front hall. Julianna went to the room set aside for ladies cloaks and Jonathan waited for her in the hall. The first person he saw was George, "Good evening, I'm glad you and Laura are already here. Julianna has been so excited for two days, she about drove me wild."

"Laura is upstairs too, they will probably come down together. It is a nice party, not too large and

will give her a chance to get acquainted a bit more. Laura was like that for her first dinner also." George had just finished speaking when the two ladies descended the stairs together.

Laura and Julianna were already chatting away a mile a minute with each other. Roger and Jonathan took their arms and led them to the main parlor where the guests were gathering. Lord Ashcroft their host hurried over and greeted them. Julianna had met him at church the week before so no introductions were necessary. His wife Lady Mary joined him in welcoming the two couples. "I'm so glad you were able to join us this evening. Everyone has been so interested in meeting you Julianna." She took Julianna's arm and ushered her off to introduce her to the other guests. Laura went with her to ease Julianna's nerves.

Jonathan smiled proudly at her when she returned. He handed her a glass of wine and whispered to her, "You my dear are the most beautiful woman here. I have had several gentlemen comment on your beauty.

"Oh Jonathan, you will embarrass me." Julianna was in fact blushing a bit.

They mingled among the couples and both were surprised when the last invited couple arrived. It was Anne and Roger Smithfield. "Jonathan, did you know they would be here? Julianna had a definite tenseness in her voice."

"Relax Julianna, it will be fine. I didn't know, but should have realized they would. Roger is a cousin of Maxwell Ashcroft." Jonathan squeezed her arm. "We will be gracious and polite, nothing more is required."

Before the Smithfield's had time to greet either Julianna or Jonathan dinner was announced. Jonathan took her arm and they proceeded to the dining room. Since they were the guests of honor they were seated at opposite ends of the table next to the host and hostess. To Julianna's distinct discomfort Roger Smithfield was seated next to her.



Fortunately Laura was across the table from her. Julianna took her seat and Jonathan whispered in her ear. "Now just be courteous and behave. Ignore him if you must, we don't want a scene."

Laura could immediately tell that Julianna was very uncomfortable with her seating arrangement. She would definitely have to ask her about it later. Roger Smithfield sat down and greeted Julianna. "Good Evening, I hope you enjoy your dinner." He promptly greeted Laura, and chatted her for a few minutes and then turned his attention to the lady seated on the other side of him. Julianna knew she was being stubbed and did her best to ignore it. Laura smiled at her and started a conversation that their host joined in on.

The dinner progressed well and Julianna tried to enjoy it, but was well aware that Roger Smithfield was ignoring her. During the dessert course she heard two ladies across the table whispering, "What do you suppose is wrong with Lady Barrington, that has alienated Jonathan's family?"

The other lady whispered back, "I heard from one of my servants, that she threw Becky out and treated her terrible. She is now living with the Smithfield's. It is such a shame since she was practically a mother to Jonathan. I just can't imagine, why she did that."

Julianna saw red and started to reply, but before she could Laura, who had also heard the exchange, engaged her in conversation. By the time they were finished, the ladies were retiring to the parlor and the men were having cigars and port.

Julianna held her head high and almost marched out of the room. Jonathan saw the bright red patches on her cheeks and knew she was angry. He only hoped she would hold it in, until he could join her again, and find out what happened. The snub from Roger was obvious as was Anne avoiding talking to him, but he was unaffected by it. He couldn't understand why Julianna would be so upset over a snub.

Laura sat down on the loveseat and almost pulled Julianna down next to her. "I heard what was said, but they are terrible gossips. Ignore them, everyone else does. If you say anything, it will start a scene and I don't think that's a good idea. Tell me what happened and I'll figure out a way to set them straight."

Julianna took a deep breath, and poured out the entire story to Laura. "So you see, it was Becky who really didn't want me there. I tried to make peace with her, but she wouldn't give in. She told the Smithfields, terrible things about Jonathan, and me that they believed. I felt terrible, but there was nothing I could do about it."

Laura thought for a few minutes. "Avoid them totally. I'll go over there and talk to them. I'm sure they will ask me about it and I'll set them straight, without saying too much."

Laura and Julianna both stood up and parted company. Julianna joined her hostess and a few other ladies; Laura joined the gossips. Unfortunately, Anne was with the group Julianna chose to join; she hadn't noticed it before, she walked over to them. The first thing Julianna heard Anne say when she joined them was, "Yes, I'm glad we decided to spend a few days. It will give Becky a chance to visit some of her friends in the area. She has been doing remarkably well recuperating from her ordeal."

Anne froze when she saw Julianna standing there. Saying nothing to her, she left the group, "Excuse me a moment, I have to have a word with Martha." The remainder of ladies were exceedingly uncomfortable knowing Julianna had heard what Anne said. Mary, quickly stepped in, "Tell us Julianna, how are things going for you?"

Julianna decided to hit the subject straight on, "I know you have heard that Becky left under unpleasant circumstances. I don't wish to talk about them, but there is more than one side to that story. Jonathan has requested I not elaborate, so I shall

not. Things have been going well under the circumstances and I'll be looking for a new housekeeper when I return from my cousin's wedding."

All the ladies offered her suggestions and help in finding a new housekeeper. One even offered that she had a servant that was ready to become a housekeeper and could be perfect for the job. Julianna thanked her politely. "I'll surely be in touch when we return."

Before anything more could be said the gentlemen joined them. Jonathan sought Julianna out immediately. "How are you? I noticed that things seemed tense during dinner. Anne would say nothing to me during dinner, and Roger has been avoiding me."

"Jonathan, some people are saying the worst things." Julianna told him of the conversation she overheard and what Laura was doing. "Becky is also here with Anne and Roger, they are spending a few days. Becky will most likely be in touch with our staff while we are gone. I feel very uncomfortable and angry."

"Julianna, you must hold your temper. You are doing very well and I'm proud of you. Let Laura take care of the gossips. I took Roger aside and warned him again, regarding libelous talk. He said he understood perfectly, so that should be that. Our relationship is most likely over, but that is fine Julianna, and not your fault. Now, let's enjoy the games and have fun." Jonathan took her arm and they joined in on the parlor games.

Time passed quickly and it was soon time to leave. They thanked their host and hostess and left with George and Laura. George's carriage arrived first. Jonathan quickly asked him, "Would you mind if Julianna looked at the inside of the carriage? I would like her to see what it is like. She didn't get a chance the day Laura visited."

"That's fine. I wasn't aware that Laura had visited." George gave Laura a questioning look.

Laura and Julianna exchanged a quick look. "I must have forgotten to mention it. I visited when you had your meeting in town. Just a short visit." Laura smiled and started telling Julianna about the carriage. The men stood to one side and ignored them. Julianna sighed, "That was certainly a close call."

"Yes, but no harm. I think I covered it quite well. Have you made any progress with your stable boy?"

"Yes, I think so. I'm not sure, if he is trying to blackmail me a bit, but I believe I have the upper hand." Julianna quickly explained what had happened.

"Don't worry about it. He probably knows, but also knows you have the upper hand. Mine is the same way. Believe me they have much more to lose." Laura squeezed Julianna's arm. "We best re-join the men."

"What do you think of it, Julianna?" Jonathan inquired when they returned.

"It is very nice. If you are thinking of buying one like it, it would be wonderful."

Both couples said goodnight and parted ways. Once they were in their carriage headed home, Jonathan commented idly. "Seemed odd that George didn't know of Laura's visit. I want you to always tell me of your visits, so I know where you are." He pulled Julianna close to him.

"Yes Jonathan, I will." Julianna had her fingers crossed. He must never find out what they had planned.

After church services the next day, Jonathan and Julianna stayed home, instead of calling on neighbors. This week, they would wait and see who called on them. Julianna was still a bit disturbed about the dinner the evening before and was restless and a bit moody all day.

Jonathan knew she was upset, but didn't like the moodiness. The second time she snapped at him, he pulled her close against him and swatted her

bottom twice. "That's enough Julianna! There will be no more of your attitude. Now, find something to amuse yourself. I will be in my office until you decide you are fit for company." Jonathan stormed off to his office.

Julianna stomped her foot and went and got her sewing. She had already heard from Josie that Becky had sent a message that she would like to meet with some of the staff, once Julianna and Jonathan were gone. Julianna would love to forbid them to see her, but knew she couldn't do that. Josie would be no help for information, since she was traveling with her. The whole situation was just grating on her nerves. To add to it, no one had called as yet and that was bothering her also. The morning passed and Julianna's mood didn't.

When lunch was announced Julianna sat down in her seat and awaited Jonathan's arrival. He came in and kissed her cheek. "Are you feeling any better now?"

"I don't know." Julianna greeted him with a barely civil tone. Jonathan looked at her and raised one brow. "I take that as a no."

Lunch was eaten mainly in silence. When it was over Jonathan took Julianna's arm and marched her into his office. "Now Young Lady, I have had enough. Tell me what this is about, right now!"

Julianna stood with her arms crossed. "I don't like the fact that Becky will be around here while we are gone. She will undo all the efforts I have made so far. Plus, your cousin has poisoned everyone against me. No one is calling. I will be an outcast."

Jonathan wanted to laugh at her, standing there with bright red patches of anger in her cheeks, and tears about ready to fall and a big pout on her face. She looked just like a four year old about to have a tantrum. "Julianna, now be reasonable. No one calls until afternoon. I doubt Anne can poison everyone against you. Most are reasonable and will come to see you, if for no other reason than to see if you are like she said. It is up to you to make your own

impression and friends. I for one don't care if Becky visits her friends or not. Roger knows that if there is any meanness, I will take action. I think he will make sure that Anne and Becky both remain silent." He stopped and looked at Julianna, her expression hadn't changed at all.

"I only understand one thing, my feelings don't count." Julianna stomped her foot and prepared to leave the room.

"Yes, your feelings count, as you shall surely see in one moment." Jonathan grabbed her wrist and before she knew what had happened was over his knee with her bottom bare. The ruler on his desk was slapping off her bottom fast and hard. "You may not behave like a spoiled brat, Julianna and get away with it. If you want to have your feelings hurt over nothing, than I will oblige in this manner, each and every time. Now, I suggest you stop behaving like a child, and start behaving like the lady I know you to be." Jonathan smacked several more hard times, and then set the sobbing Julianna on his knee.

"Are you ready to behave now?" Jonathan wiped away some tears from her eyes.

"I'm sorry Jonathan, I just felt out of sorts over last night." Julianna hugged him and buried her face in his shoulder. He held her until she calmed down. "I think we best go and be prepared for callers."

They hadn't been in the parlor long before they received word of a caller. The gentleman was well known to Jonathan and the lady was none other than one of the gossips from the night before. Julianna smiled sweetly and greeted them. She put up with the probing questions and felt she had answered them all as noncommittally as possible.

By the end of the afternoon Julianna was tired from all the conversation. She ordered a quiet tea upstairs for Jonathan and herself. When it was brought to them Julianna snuggled close to Jonathan. "Do you think I behaved properly this afternoon?"

"You know you did, very well. You do know how to behave properly." Jonathan held her close. "You just misbehave to vex me at times."

Julianna laughed and snuggled even closer. "No, I was just feeling tired today is all."

"Then I think an early night is called for. We have two days to prepare to leave and we shall be busy for both of them. The carriage will take longer to reach your father's house than we will, so you will need to pack whatever you may need to take with you on horseback. Just something to freshen up with when you arrive."

The next two days were a blur of activity. Finally by Tuesday afternoon, the bags were all packed and Julianna was as excited as she could be. She made one last trip to the stable to play with Sebastian. Timothy was there as usual. Julianna handed him a coin, "Please take extra special care of him for me. I shall miss him."

"Yes Lady Barrington, don't worry, he will be well cared for." Timothy smiled and pocketed the coin. He had heard that Becky was coming for a visit after they left on the morrow. He hoped it would not turn things ugly again. The staff was all just beginning to really like Julianna, and he himself intended to stick up for her at all costs.

Jonathan woke Julianna early the next morning. "Time to rise, we need to get an early start." Julianna sleepily rose and went to wash up and dress. Josie was there with everything ready for her. "I have already eaten, as soon as you are dressed we are leaving in the carriage. Your travel bag is packed and ready for you. Shall I have it sent to the stable?"

"Yes please, I'm so excited that you are going with us. You'll love it." Julianna finished dressing and hurried down to breakfast.

Jonathan was waiting for her. Julianna was picking at her food. "I think we should get started, don't you Jonathan? I had Cook make us something to have along the way."

"Julianna, you need to eat your breakfast. Now calm down and eat. We don't have to be in that big of a hurry." Jonathan sat back and sipped his tea.

Finally Julianna managed to eat what he considered a sufficient amount. Jonathan rose from the table. "Finish your tea, I will check the horses and be right back."

Julianna hurriedly finished her tea and checked with Cook to make sure the lunch had been sent to the stable and everything was in order.

"Now you just go and have a good time, don't you worry about anything here, we will be just fine. I will have your favorite dinner waiting for you, when you return." Cook shushed her on her way.

Julianna smiled and left to meet Jonathan. He was waiting in the front hall. "All ready, is everything settled?"

"Yes, I am ready and everything seems to be in order. I made sure yesterday that Timothy would exercise Sebastian and care for him." Julianna took Jonathan's arm and they walked out to the waiting horses.

"Of course, he will take care of him, that is his job, plus he has a crush on his mistress, so Sebastian will be cared for extremely well." Jonathan lifted Julianna onto her horse and laughed at the expression on her face.

After mounting his steed they headed out. Julianna looked over at him. "He doesn't have a crush on me Jonathan, I just treat him nicely."

"It's all right Julianna, I can't begrudge a young man having a crush on someone as beautiful as you." Jonathan reached over and patted her hand. "Now remember, you are not to ride ahead of me. Stay by my side."

"I will Jonathan, but when we reach the pasture, may we ride fast? I love to and we haven't in such a long time."

"I shall see what the conditions are when we get there, but until then, you stay with me. We will not



be riding that slowly, but I don't intend to gallop all the way there either."

Jonathan spurred his horse onward and Julianna did likewise. Neither of them looked back to see the carriage approaching from the other direction. Inside was Becky, determined to stir things up for Julianna. She had made a pledge to get even with her, and she intended to keep it.

## Chapter Five

They rode hard for several hours, before Jonathan stopped at a stream to refresh the horses and rest for a bit. Julianna was glad for the chance to exercise her legs a bit.

"How much farther do we have to go Jonathan?" Julianna looked at her watch and saw that it was 10:30 in the morning.

"We should be there in time for tea. The carriage should arrive in time for dinner. Since they left earlier than we did, they won't be that far behind us." Jonathan sat down on the cool grass and pulled Julianna down to him. "Are you still excited about visiting for the wedding?"

"Oh Jonathan, yes, I can hardly wait to see Maisie and see her married. It will be so nice having her close, even though it's only been a few weeks, I do miss her. She and Laura and I shall have such fun together. I just know they will get along well." Julianna was just bubbling with excitement.

Jonathan laughed and kissed her. "I hope that fun, is harmless and not full of mischief. George has told me that Laura can be as mischievous as you. Maisie follows your lead, so I can see trouble with the three of you. Just remember, your husbands will be quick to stop you, if you plan anything you're not allowed to do."

Julianna hugged and kissed Jonathan back, "Now why would we do a thing like that? We will just have fun being together and doing ladies things, and shopping."

"Good, I'm glad to hear that and I'm sure George and Richard will be too. Now, lets be on our way again." Jonathan pulled her to her feet and settled her on her horse. They rode off at a fast trot.

Julianna didn't realize she could tire of riding so much, but she was more than ready to stop for a rest and something to eat at noon. "Oh Jonathan, I don't think I have ever ridden this long before."

"No, I doubt that you have. Would you like to ride back in the carriage?" Jonathan hid a smile from her.

"No! This is fine, I've just never done it before." Julianna was quick to start putting the lunch items out for them.

Jonathan sat on the blanket and joined her. "The good news is we are only perhaps an hour from the estate. You will have plenty of time to freshen up and relax before tea."

Julianna beamed at that. "May we race through the meadow? I haven't seen one highwayman or anyone else about."

"I haven't either, but we haven't gotten to the wooded area before the road yet. We shall see when we get there." Jonathan started eating heartily. The ride had worked up quite an appetite.

They rode a bit slower through the woods as it was denser and Jonathan wanted to be sure he knew no one was about. He made Julianna stay right by his side. When they emerged onto the road, he spotted a few riders on the other side, sitting in the woods. "Look over there Julianna." Jonathan pointed to where the riders were.

"They are most likely highwaymen. We are going to avoid the road and them and ride through the edge of the woods a bit further." Jonathan slowly turned his horse and kept one hand on his gun.

"Jonathan, do you really think they would come after us, just two riders?" Julianna was a bit unnerved at the sight of the highwaymen.

"Yes they would, just to take what they could." He neglected to add and have their fun with you.

When they reached another clearing, Jonathan paused and looked around, there was no one in sight. "Come, we can ride in the clearing now it will be faster."

It wasn't long before Julianna could see the Pritchard estate in the distance. "Oh Jonathan, there it is. Can we please race now, please?"

Jonathan looked around and saw there was nothing in the way. "Yes, but I shall win." He kicked his horse into a gallop and Julianna followed. "Hurry Princess, we must beat him, she whispered in her mare's ear."

Jonathan didn't want to get too far ahead and knew his horse was much faster than her mare, so he slowed and allowed her to almost pull aside. As they reached the gates he let her win.

Julianna was smiling broadly when they entered the courtyard. "See Princess and I can beat you!"

Jonathan laughed and scooped her off her horse. "There are penalties my dear, for besting your husband." He set her on her feet and hugged her. Before she had a chance to hug back, the door flung open and Maisie came running out followed by Richard and her father.

"Oh Julianna, I'm so glad to see you! You look marvelous." Maisie hugged her tight and Julianna pulled back and looked at her cousin. "You are looking well yourself, are you excited?"

"Oh yes, I have so much to tell you." Maisie was linking arms and leading Julianna inside.

Alex Pritchard stood there grinning. "Julianna, have you forgotten your father already?"

"Oh Papa, of course not!" Julianna gave him a big hug and kiss, "I have missed all of you so much." Next she hugged Richard and then Nancy, who had joined them. "Oh Nancy, I have so many questions for you."

They all went inside and Jonathan pulled Julianna aside. "Come and lets refresh, then you can chatter with Maisie and Nancy." He took her arm and led her upstairs to the room they had shared but one evening, on their wedding night.

Fresh water and linens were brought to them and they washed up and changed out of their riding clothes. "It seems strange to be back here, in this room, instead of my old one." Julianna sat at the dressing table brushing her hair.

"Would you rather be in that room alone?" Jonathan came up behind her and rubbed her shoulders. "Oh Jonathan, no, that isn't what I mean at all. You know I would much rather be here with you."

Jonathan leaned down and kissed her passionately. "I think it best we rest before tea, you will have plenty of time to chat with Maisie and Nancy then."

"Yes, I think a nap would do both of us a world of good." Julianna pulled the covers from the bed, and quickly undressed and climbed in.

An hour later they were both snuggling in each others arms totally relaxed from their long ride. Jonathan pulled Julianna closer to him and hugged her hard. "You are planning on behaving yourself while we are here aren't you?"

"Of course Jonathan, why wouldn't I?" Julianna snuggled up closer.

"I hope so, because I really don't wish to punish you, but you know I would if I had to. It could be easy for you to fall back on some of your old habits being here. One of which is riding out alone, just you and Maisie. Either Richard or I, or both, must be with you."

"Jonathan, you know it is perfectly safe here, and we both know are way around. I have

ridden alone for years." Julianna didn't like this conversation at all. "You and Richard will get busy and not have time to take us."

"Julianna, you heard me. I will have time to take you, but you aren't to ride alone. You saw those men on the road, they could be here anytime, you wouldn't know." Jonathan pulled her into a kiss and smacked her bottom. "Now, let's dress for tea."

Julianna dressed and was waiting on Jonathan, but frowning. When Jonathan saw the frown he pulled her into a hug. "No pouting, remember, I don't like it. I will spend plenty of time with you, but I want you safe. Now smile, and let's go visit."

Julianna smiled at him and they walked hand in hand down to the parlor. Maisie was waiting there with Richard. "Whatever took you so long? I have been waiting over an hour for you to come down."

Julianna blushed and looked at Jonathan, who was at a loss for words. Richard laughed and scolded Maisie; "I don't think that is any of your business, my love. They are here now, so you can start catching up anytime."

Alex and Nancy joined them for tea and the ladies chatted among themselves while the men caught up on news with each other.

After a brief update on Maisie's wedding plans, Nancy asked Julianna, "How is running your own estate? Is your housekeeper cooperating with you?"

"Oh Nancy, you have no idea. Becky left us and went to Jonathan's cousin. She said the most horrendous things about Jonathan and I, and his cousin and her husband believed all of it. They have nothing to do with us anymore. I am trying to run things myself, but I have decided I will need help. I have to see to that as soon as I return."

"Maybe I can give you some pointers on what to look for in a housekeeper. You could sit in with Maisie and I tomorrow. It will be her last chance to ask and learn; your experience and questions could help." Nancy was pleased that Julianna was willing to ask her for help. She had changed since her marriage.

As soon as tea was over Julianna turned to Jonathan, "Do you mind if Maisie and I spend some time alone before dinner? We have so much to talk about and have barely scratched the surface."

"I think that will be fine, I have more to discuss with your father and Richard." Jonathan smiled as the two raced out of the room and up to Maisie's room for some private time.

As soon as the door was closed Julianna sat down and motioned Maisie to sit also. "Wait until I tell you all about my new friend Laura. You will like

her, she is newly married also, and has such great plans."

Maisie looked a bit skeptical. "It sounds a bit like trouble to me."

"Don't be silly, there won't be any trouble, she has it worked out perfectly." Julianna patted Maisie's hand reassuringly.

"You may as well tell me, I'm sure I'll get involved anyway." Maisie sat back and waited for Julianna to continue.

"It seems, that the husbands in the area, including Jonathan, don't permit their wives to ride unescorted off their own property. So, if you want to go anywhere or do anything alone, you must take the carriage and the driver and sometimes even a footman. They overly worry about highwaymen and robbers. Even now, Jonathan still won't let me ride anywhere without him. He thinks I need to learn the property better before I can ride alone."

Maisie was amazed. "You mean, I couldn't even ride over to see you? I'd have to either bring Richard, or take the carriage out?"

"Yes exactly! It is very tiring and impedes shopping, but that's another story. Laura knows that every other Thursday, the men have a meeting in town that goes from early morning until teatime. She has bribed the stable boy from saying anything to George. She goes wherever she wants alone at that time, except into the town where they are meeting. It works quite well for her, and she has been doing it for months now."

"Are you suggesting it will work for us? I don't even know the servants yet, or really what Richard's rules may be." Maisie was still not sure of this whole plan.

"Yes, I'm sure of it. I knew that Becky had really said terrible things about me to the servants. I continually treated them well, and since she left, I think they even like me. I gave most of them time off while we were gone. I have let Cook suggest things for menus and such and not interfered at all

with the way she runs the kitchen. Becky used to criticize all the time. I managed to get Cook to show me the wine cellar. Laura said she bribes her stable boy with port and good wines, and George never knows."

"Julianna! Don't tell me you are stealing Jonathan's wines?"

Julianna looked at Maisie very offended. "I'm not stealing, they are mine too, now. He said I had the use of anything in the house. I asked him if he kept ledgers on his wine, and he said no, they informed him when it was low, and he purchased more. I merely took a few bottles of wine and port and hid them in my room."

"But how do you know it will work? Jonathan may have instructed them to tell him if you try and ride out, or not to saddle your horse." Maisie couldn't believe Julianna really thought this would work. "Also, don't you want to obey Jonathan?"

"Oh Maisie! It has nothing to do with that. You know how I am when I feel a rule is ridiculous. I know it will work, because I have done it. I slipped the stable boy some coin once or twice for taking care of Sebastian for me. The other day Jonathan was gone all afternoon. I requested my horse and took a short ride. I gave the stable boy some port and told him how much I appreciated him and all he did. He was a bit reluctant to take it, but we decided things would be a secret just between us." Julianna smiled at Maisie, "So you see, it works, Jonathan never found out a thing."

Maisie thought for a bit. "I will have to see how things are when I get there, but if things are as you say, I guess it's worth a try."

Julianna spent the rest of the afternoon telling Maisie all about the things that had happened since she left.

"I really hope my housekeeper is nothing like Becky. I couldn't tolerate that." Maisie face was creased with a frown.



"Don't worry about it. I asked Jonathan, he said she was young and excited that she would have a mistress to help her. You will be fine."

Soon it was time for dinner, so Julianna hurried to their room to change. Josie had arrived and her bags were unpacked and dresses hung in the closet waiting for her. She was waiting for Julianna. "Which dress do you wish to wear for dinner tonight?"

"The blue one will be fine. Are your quarters all right?" Julianna let Josie slip the dress over her head and fasten it for her.

"Oh yes, they are fine." Josie started arranging Julianna's hair.

Julianna was wondering where Jonathan was. His robe and lounging clothes were here, but nothing else. "Josie, do you know where Jonathan's clothes are?"

"Yes, Jonathan is using the room across the way to dress in, as there is not enough room here, for both of your things. He said it was fine, I believe he is there now." Josie finished with Julianna. "You look beautiful, all ready for dinner. I'll be back later to help you undress if you wish."

"I think, I can handle that, by myself. I do have something for you though. I decided that you needn't wear a uniform any longer." Julianna handed Josie a handful of dresses. "I brought these for you. They are now yours. As you need more, I will see to it."

Josie had tears in her eyes, "Oh Julianna, that is so nice. How can I ever thank you? Are they really mine? I don't have to wear my uniform, even at home?"

"Yes Josie, they are yours. As my lady in waiting, you needn't bother with a uniform." Julianna hugged her and sent her on her way. As Josie opened the door, Jonathan was just coming in.

"Julianna, you look wonderful. Did you have a nice visit with Maisie?"

"Oh yes, we are almost caught up I thing. I'm so happy we could come." Julianna hugged and kissed Jonathan.

As they walked down to dinner Jonathan asked her, "Did you have some problem with your clothes on the trip? I saw the armload that Josie had when she left.'

Julianna squeezed Jonathan's arm. "No problem at all, I gave them to Josie to wear. I don't want her wearing her uniform anymore. As my lady in waiting, I think she should dress better. I also think she should have her salary increased. Would you do that?"

Jonathan stopped and pulled her around to face him. "You really gave her your own clothes?"

"Yes Jonathan, I did, do you mind?" Julianna hadn't even thought about asking Jonathan.

"No, Julianna, I don't mind, but remember you have a budget to stay within, you just can't give everything away, then run out and replace it." Jonathan hugged her to him. "I think that you did a wonderful thing. I will see to her increase when we get home. I think she is doing a wonderful job myself."

Dinner was spent in a flurry of conversation and plans. Julianna looked around contentedly. It was so nice to be with her family again. She really missed them. Jonathan saw the look on her face and reached down and squeezed her hand. He rather enjoyed being here himself. They would have to make a point to visit often.

After dinner they retired to the parlor and played games until bedtime. Julianna was yawning as she and Jonathan climbed the stairs to their room. Once they were cuddled in bed, Julianna asked Jonathan about his plans for the next day.

"Richard and I are meeting with your father in the morning while you are with Nancy. But after lunch we can take a ride or do whatever you like." Jonathan pulled her closer and kissed her.

Julianna returned the kiss and cuddled down into his shoulder. Jonathan held her close and both fell asleep together.

The next morning Julianna was back in the classroom with Maisie. Nancy went over some final things with Maisie, and then turned to Julianna, "Now, what are your questions?"

Julianna asked her about some of the things that had puzzled her in menu planning and other small things, she saved the biggest in her mind until last. "Jonathan has a bed in his dressing room, he says it is for use when he is not able to be with me. What does that mean?"

Nancy cleared her throat, "I didn't tell you about that, since I didn't know what the arrangements there were. If at certain times of the month, or after childbirth, you wish to be alone or he doesn't wish to be with you, then a gentleman sleeps in his dressing room. Whether or not he does that, is up to the two of you."

Julianna blushed deeply. "I have never thought about that. I guess I will have to bring that up soon."

Nancy patted her hand. "I'm sure at some point when it is necessary, he will ask you himself, or state his preferences. It is nothing to be ashamed about Julianna, it is perfectly normal."

Julianna thanked her, but was still a bit uneasy about it.

They were finished quite early and Nancy dismissed them. "I have a lot of last minute things to do before the wedding tomorrow. Maisie, I will need you this afternoon for a last fitting and packing. We have left it to the last minute I'm afraid, and it must be taken care of today."

Maisie and Julianna walked down to the parlor. They could hear Richard and Jonathan still in with Alex. "It is such a nice day, it is too bad you will be cooped up with fittings and packing this afternoon. You need to get some fresh air."

Maisie sighed. "I know, I wish we could take a quick ride, but Richard really has been frowning on me riding alone."

"Jonathan, told me he wanted one of them with us too, but it is so early, they are liable to be another hour or so. I don't know why we couldn't sneak in a ride. Just a quick trip to the creek and back." Julianna pulled Maisie with her toward the stables. "We can go dressed as we are, we don't have time to change."

"Julianna, we are going to get in trouble, you know it." Maisie stopped dead in her tracks. "I'm not going to get spanked the day before my wedding."

Julianna wanted to ride and was pouting. "Maisie, you are being stubborn. Fine, you go sit in the garden and I'll join you there when I get back. I'm going for a ride!"

Maisie hurried to the garden, she knew Julianna was going to get in trouble, and she wanted no part of it today.

Julianna asked for Princess to be saddled. The stable boy started to question her, but she smiled nicely and said it was with Jonathan's permission. In a few minutes she was on her way to the creek. It was a beautiful day and she thoroughly enjoyed racing across the meadow. True to her word, she only went as far as the creek and turned and raced back.

While she was racing across the meadow, the meeting had broken up and Jonathan and Richard walked out to the gardens. They were surprised to see a huffy Maisie sitting there alone. Jonathan asked her, "Where is Julianna? Have you two had a tiff?"

Maisie jumped, she didn't know what to say. "Uh, not really, she should be here soon."

Richard didn't like the look in her eyes. "Maisie, where is Julianna?"

When Maisie didn't immediately answer, Richard pulled her to her feet. "Maisie, I want a truthful answer right now, young lady!"

Maisie didn't want to tattletale but she had no choice. "She went riding. I refused to go with her, I didn't want to disobey."

Jonathan's face set in anger and he headed for the stables. Richard hugged Maisie, "I'm glad you didn't go with her, but you mustn't feel bad about telling us. She could be in danger."

Julianna came flying into the stable yard, unaware of Jonathan striding toward her. She dismounted and handed the reins to the stable boy, who saw Jonathan. His eyes were as wide as saucers. Julianna saw his look and turned to see what he was looking at.

Jonathan grabbed her arm as she turned. "Oh!" was all Julianna had time to say, before she was hauled over his shoulder and carried into the house and up to their room.

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Julianna was in a state of shock. By the time Jonathan set her down in their room, she was fuming. "How dare you carry me like a sack of flour through the house. I am a lady, and your wife, not a tavern wench. What will the servants think?"

"I don't care what they think. I care, that my wife deliberately disobeyed me, risking her safety, in the bargain. Julianna, whatever possessed you to do that? You saw the highwaymen, yesterday. I specifically told you, not to ride without Richard or I. And now, you have the audacity to question me? Yes you are my wife, but you behaved like a spoiled brat." He said not one word more, but pulled off his belt and pushed Julianna down on the bed.

"No Jonathan, please, I'm sorry. I wasn't in any danger; I didn't go far. Please don't use the belt, please." Julianna already had tears in her eyes.

"Julianna, not one more word. You know how I feel about deliberate disobedience." Jonathan had

her skirts up and panties down in a flash. He hated spanking her harshly, but she deserved it. He doubled over the belt and raised his hand and brought it crashing down hard on her bottom. Julianna yelped and after 20 was sobbing loudly. Jonathan put the belt down and gathered her in his arms. He rubbed her back and let her sob for a while. His heart was still racing from the fear he felt, when he learned where she was.

Finally settling down, Julianna looked up at him. "I'm sorry Jonathan, I will obey you."

Jonathan knew that Julianna truly didn't understand the danger she was putting herself in. He hadn't wanted to scare her, but felt it was time she fully understood. "I know you are sorry, as I am for having to punish you, but I don't think you really understand the danger."

Julianna sniffed, "There was no one about, at all. I can always race back if I see someone, they couldn't catch me and I had no money with me."

Jonathan hugged her tight and sighed. "Julianna, I want you to listen to me and pay attention. It isn't necessarily your jewels or money they would want. You know what happens between you and I, in bed. That is what they would do with you, only roughly and against your will, on the hard ground. There would be no tenderness, but crude harsh hands on you and probably beating. If they let you go after, you would be lucky. They most likely would take you with them, to use again and again, and kill you when they tired of it. That is the true danger, Julianna. I could not bear that to happen to you. That is why I will not allow you to ride without me, when I know they are around."

Julianna's face grew white with fear as he talked. "Oh, Jonathan I had no idea. But they aren't around here, there never have been any here."

"Julianna, we saw them yesterday not that far from here. Since they have been cleaned out near our estate, it only makes sense they would head south to here. That is exactly what your father and

Richard, were telling me today. There have been several robberies, and one killing. You are not safe alone." Jonathan hugged her and kissed her head. He could feel her trembling.

"I want your solemn promise, Julianna, that you will not leave this yard without me." Jonathan hated having to scare her, but it was the only way.

"I promise Jonathan, I really am sorry I scared you so, I never knew men would do things like that."

"I know you didn't, you have been very sheltered in life. Now, wash your face and let's join the others." Jonathan set her on her feet.

Julianna washed away the tears, but still was fearful and confused. She had to ask him about that bed soon, it was gnawing at her. Maybe this afternoon while Maisie was busy she would be able to talk. She no longer wanted to ride.

Maisie was afraid to look at Julianna, when they re-joined them in the garden. She knew that Jonathan was furious and undoubtedly had harshly punished Julianna.

Julianna sat down next to Maisie, "Don't be worried, I'm not upset with you. I should have listened to you."

"I'm sorry Julianna, but I had to tell them, I couldn't lie." Maisie looked as if she would cry.

"It's fine, don't worry." Julianna hugged her cousin. They chatted about the next day and when they would meet after Maisie was home with Richard. They weren't going straight home, but were going to spend a few days in the city. It sounded so exciting.

Richard and Jonathan were also discussing the day's events between them. "Do you think Julianna, really will believe there is danger in riding alone?" Richard knew that Jonathan was reluctant to explain it to her.

Jonathan ran his hand through his hair. "Yes, after I punished her, I explained in detail what would happen if they caught her. She is now afraid,

but I would rather that, than her being harmed physically."

Richard nodded and was silent for a moment. "Do you think it is safe, for us to go to the city from here, with a guard? I don't want to risk Maisie."

"Yes, I think with the two men Alex will send, you will be fine. From the city home, the roads are now clear and patrolled by the sheriff's men. Perhaps even here now, they could be beginning patrols. You should have a happy time. I now wish I had taken Julianna there and spared her the problems during the first week with Becky, it was most unpleasant. Fortunately by the time we reach home again, Becky will be back with Anne and Roger. Hopefully, that will be the end of the matter."

Jonathan was blissfully unaware, that Becky had been at his home since they rode out. She was staying in her old room, and spreading as much trouble about as she could.

Cook knew that much of what she was saying was false. Julianna had treated them all very well. She may have been spoiled in the past, but was surely not so now. Jonathan loved her and she knew Julianna loved him and was clearly trying to obey him. Others among the servants though were unsure.

Finally Cook couldn't take it any longer. "Becky, why are you so insistent on stirring things up against Julianna. She has been nothing but nice to us. I think you never gave her a proper chance. You assumed things and were mean to her."

Becky bristled and grew red in the face. The entire staff sitting in the kitchen grew silent. "I know more things than any of you about the Barrington family. Jonathan had no right to put her over me. No right at all." Becky rose and stormed from the kitchen. She stopped at the door and turned. "Some day you shall know, but mark my words, Jonathan will rue the day he turned on me."



Cook shook her head sadly. "I think that Becky has grown deranged on the subject. I don't understand her at all anymore. I have known her since she arrived here and I was but a young girl on staff. But she is not the woman I was close to for all these years, she is bitter and changed."

All the servants were uneasy as they started returning from their vacations that Becky was there. There was a sense of dread hanging over the house. No one knew for sure what Becky would do next.

Anne sent word, they were leaving on Saturday, so Becky would have to depart. She had but one day to discredit Jonathan and Julianna. She packed her bags and was in the kitchen waiting for the carriage to pick her up. Most of the staff was there, as Jonathan and Julianna would be returning on the next day. Word came from the stable that the carriage was waiting for Becky. She rose and addressed the servants. "I shall never set foot in this house again, but let it be known, you are all employed by a man who is so dishonorable, that he ejected his own mother from his home. Choosing a young spoiled child in her place. Yes, I have left him a letter acknowledging as much to him. I am his mother. His own, couldn't bear children, so I bore one for her. Jonathan may be his father's son, but he is also my child. Though he never said, his mother was to tell him when he reached manhood. I must believe she did. Farewell."

The entire staff sat in shocked silence and watched Becky depart. No one said a word; no one knew what to say. After a minute they all started talking at once. "Could it be true? Was he that type of man? He never seemed to be that callous? Had Julianna placed a spell on him? Could she be a witch?"

It would be a very strange homecoming for Jonathan and Julianna.

The rest of Friday afternoon and evening gave Julianna no chance to talk to Jonathan about what was bothering her. That afternoon Jonathan had

insisted they take a ride and Richard joined them, since Maisie was busy with Nancy all afternoon. Julianna was unsuccessful in pleading off due to her sore bottom.

"Maybe it will help remind you to obey me next time." Jonathan hugged and kissed her before helping her mount her horse. He did take some pity on her and rode slowly. Julianna eventually forgot about her discomfort. It was a beautiful day and she was enjoying being with Jonathan and Richard. Poor Maisie was stuck inside.

Everyone was very excited at dinner about the next day's events. Maisie wished to retire early and everyone else followed. Jonathan had noticed Julianna was extremely subdued and quiet all afternoon and throughout the evening. He wasn't sure if it was what he had told her that afternoon, but clearly something was bothering her.

He was most attentive to her when they climbed in bed. He rubbed some cream on her welts and made slow and passionate love to her. Julianna enjoyed it as much as he, but then again became quiet and withdrawn. Jonathan could take no more. He pulled Julianna close to him. "What is bothering you? You have been quiet and withdrawn all day, even now when you normally cuddle up to me, you are withdrawn."

Julianna didn't know how to ask him, she was very embarrassed. "I don't know Jonathan. I guess I need to talk to you, but I am embarrassed."

"Julianna! Haven't I told you, never to be embarrassed to ask me anything?" Jonathan sat up and pulled her into his lap. "Now, what is this all about?"

"I asked Nancy about the bed in your dressing room. She explained what it is normally for and I don't know what your feelings about those things are. Soon it will have to be decided. I don't know what to do. It is embarrassing."

Jonathan held her tight and tried not to laugh, but he couldn't stop. "Oh Julianna, there is nothing

to be ashamed about or embarrassed. I will defer to you on when or if you want me not in our bed. I would understand, but I will never reject being with you, if you wish me here, regardless. Now, do you feel better?"

Julianna didn't expect him to laugh, but after he explained she was so relieved that she laughed a bit herself. "Yes Jonathan, I do. I just didn't know."

"I know, but don't worry about it. Now let's get some sleep, we have a big day ahead of us tomorrow." Jonathan hugged her close and they fell asleep cuddled in each other's arms.

The next day was a flurry of activity with everyone preparing for the wedding. Richard was nervous at breakfast. Maisie of course, was in her room preparing and no one was allowed to see her. Richard excused himself after breakfast and left to dress for the wedding.

"Jonathan, were you that nervous? Richard is usually so calm, I'm surprised to see him so flustered." Julianna and Jonathan were talking a short walk in the garden before they dressed for the wedding.

"Yes Julianna, I was as nervous, if not more so. Weren't you nervous?" Jonathan sat down on a bench, and pulled her onto his lap.

"Oh yes, but women are always nervous. I didn't think men ever were." Julianna lay back against his chest. It was hard to believe it had barely been a month since they were married.

"We are all nervous on our wedding day. It's only natural. Now we best get dressed and ready to go. I'll leave with Richard and you will come with Maisie, so I need to hurry." Jonathan set her on her feet and they left for their room.

Jonathan and Richard both looked stunning when they left for the church. Julianna waited in the parlor with her father for Maisie to come down. Nancy came down first and Maisie followed; a beauty in her white lace dress.

"Oh Maisie, you look radiant! Are you nervous?" Julianna rushed over to hug her.

"I am. I feel like I'm about to fall apart. I can hardly believe the day is really here."

"We best be on our way." Alex escorted the three ladies out to the carriage.

Richard and Jonathan were pacing at the church waiting the arrival of Maisie. Richard stopped and turned to Jonathan, "How long do you think it will be, before the two of them get into some mischief together?"

"Julianna has become friends with Laura, George's wife. I would venture a guess it will be the three of them, and not long at all. Laura and Julianna are very much alike. I have warned her though of the consequences, and she knows full well that I will follow through." Jonathan had to smile at the thought of the three ladies together.

Richard shook his head. "I suppose Maisie doesn't stand a chance of resisting then. I will have to warn her also, that I won't tolerate any mischief."

There was no more time for talk, as Maisie had arrived. Richard and Jonathan stood at the front of the church waiting for Maisie to walk down the aisle. Richard's breath was taken away at the sight of her. She was absolutely beautiful. The ceremony passed quickly and they were all soon on their way back to the estate.

Julianna snuggled next to Jonathan in the carriage. "Wasn't she beautiful! It seemed so funny seeing her standing there. It felt like my wedding all over again. Only this time I don't have to wait for all the guests to leave."

"We do have to stay for quite a while though, so don't start making a fuss, you remember what happened last time." Jonathan squeezed her hand.

Maisie and Richard were enjoying a long passionate kiss in the privacy of their carriage. "I love you so much Richard. I hope we will always be this happy." Maisie leaned back for another kiss.

"I will always love you, Maisie. I can't wait to show you how much this evening." Richard held her tightly to him. "You aren't nervous about that are you?"

"No, I have talked to both Julianna and Nancy and know all about it. I don't feel nervous at all." Maisie kissed him back passionately again. It surprised Richard how passionate she could be at times.

The reception at the estate was once again a lavish affair. Alex was enjoying this one as much as Julianna's. He turned to Nancy, "This will probably be the last big party we will have here. With the girls gone, there won't be a need for any."

Nancy thought for a moment. "It will be very quiet around here. I suppose a bit lonely for a while, but we shall get used to it. I suspect when your son returns there will be a bride and family here again. We do have that to look forward to."

"Yes, and I expect him back almost any time now. I should be hearing very shortly."

Maisie was having a wonderful time at her reception, but like Julianna had, she wished the company would leave soon. She knew better than to say anything about it though.

There were just a few left when Julianna and Jonathan came to say goodnight. "We shall see you in the morning. We all have to get early starts." Julianna hugged and kissed Maisie and kissed Richard on the cheek.

As they were leaving, most of the others also started to leave. Soon Maisie and Richard were alone with Alex and Nancy. Richard and Maisie bade them goodnight and left for their room. Halfway up the stairs, Richard scooped Maisie into his arms and carried her the rest of the way to the room.

When the door was shut he put her down and began kissing her and slowly undressing her. Soon they were both disrobed and in bed. Maisie wasn't at all hesitant in her first lovemaking. Richard was

gentle and slowly covered every area of her body with kisses.

As he entered her wet softness, she moaned with pleasure and a bit of pain, when he thrust all the way in. Soon there were no thoughts other than the waves of pleasure racing through her. "Oh Richard, I love you so," she moaned as they both crashed over the peak.

Richard held her close and slowly kissed her. "I also love you Maisie, we shall have a wonderful life together." Again he started building her arousal, and soon they were both at the peak of ecstasy. This time, they fell asleep holding each other.

The next morning everyone was very somber at breakfast. Richard and Maisie had to leave very early to reach the city by late afternoon. Richard didn't want to be on the road when the day grew dusky. They finished breakfast and quickly said goodbye. Maisie hugged Alex and Nancy tightly. "Thank you, for all you've done for me. I shall miss you. I will write both of you and let you know how I'm doing in my new home."

Julianna hugged her goodbye and whispered in her ear. "We will have so much fun when you get home. I can hardly wait."

Maisie giggled and hugged her back. "Shhh, don't let them hear you."

After they left Jonathan asked Julianna, "What were you and Maisie whispering about?"

"I was just telling her to enjoy her honeymoon and I would see her when she got home." Julianna hoped she sounded convincing.

Jonathan frowned, he didn't think that was all that was said, but he knew if they were up to something he would ultimately find out. Julianna didn't realize it yet, but he would always catch her.

## Chapter Six

Once more Julianna was faced with saying goodbye to her home and father. It was somewhat easier this time than before. "Oh Papa, please come and visit soon. You can bring Nancy and we will have a wondrous time."

"I will visit soon, I promise, now be a good wife." Alex hugged Julianna and shook Jonathan's hand. "Take good care of her, I'll be in touch."

The carriage with their bags had left a long time before. Jonathan helped Julianna on her horse and they rode off. "I would like to ride this part of the trip a bit faster than before, if you are comfortable with that."

"That's fine Jonathan, I will be much better this time; I know what to expect." Julianna spurred her horse forward to match Richard's pace.

They stopped for rest and a noon break at a nice stream. Julianna laid out the meal and after they finished eating wanted to wade in the stream a bit. "No Julianna, I feel we should get back home. For some reason, I have an uneasy feeling about things."

Julianna looked at Jonathan and frowned. "I also woke with a strange feeling. I hope Becky hasn't been there causing trouble."

"I don't know what it is, but I will feel better when we are back there." Jonathan helped Julianna mount and they once again rode off at a fair pace. This time they didn't stop to rest at all. Soon the estate was in sight, and Jonathan spurred his horse on faster.

Julianna was beginning to be frightened at his urgency to be home and his sense of dread.

The carriage had arrived before Jonathan and Julianna. When James and Josie entered the house they were met with chaos. Cook was trying to settle the servants down and several had packed their bags and were prepared to depart.

"What is going on here?" James bellowed.

Cook took a deep breath and relayed to him, what Becky had been about, and her parting words the day before. After James had heard the story, he turned to the servants. "If you wish to believe a deranged and bitter old woman, then leave. We can replace you easily enough. But I think you should listen to Cook. She has been here as long as Becky and can verify that this is not the truth. Surely she would have known if Becky was with child and carried that child to birth. Now make up your minds quickly, I don't wish Lord Barrington to come to this."

It was far too late for that. Jonathan and Julianna had been standing in the entryway and heard the speech from James.

Jonathan paled and Julianna gasped, when they heard what he said. Jonathan looked at the assembled group. "I have only heard a small portion of this, but I assure you, my mother was not Becky. I have far too much a resemblance to my own mother for this to be true. If any of you believe this and wish to leave, please do so now. I will not have anyone in my home who believes such horrid tales regarding my character." Jonathan took Julianna's arm and proceeded upstairs.

On his desk in the sitting room was a note from Becky. Angrily, Jonathan ripped it open.

*Jonathan,*

*You will never see me again. I don't know why you have chosen to beat and force your own mother out of your home and life. I can only assume that the woman you married is a witch, and has placed her spell on you against me.*

*Although, you never acknowledged it, I know you knew I was your mother. The woman you thought of as your mother was to tell you when you reached manhood. I have to believe she did.*

*May you rot in hell!*



## *Becky*

Jonathan's face flushed an angry red. Julianna had never seen him so angry. "Jonathan, are you all right?" Julianna softly touched his arm.

Jonathan turned and pulled her to him. "I will be. Oh my love, I can't believe that Becky as deranged as she is. Read this."

After Julianna finished reading the note she was white. "How could she believe this? Cook was here then and surely would know if she had been carrying a child. I don't understand."

"It is true, that she practically raised me, since my mother was sickly much of the time. Perhaps somewhere in her mind she thought of herself as my mother and convinced herself, I don't know." Jonathan paced for a minute and then rang for a servant.

"Would you please ask Cook to join us here?"

Cook hurried up the stairs when she received the summons. Most of the staff had finally believed her and stayed. A few who were very close with Becky left. They would have to work extra hard until they were replaced. She assumed that was what Jonathan and Julianna wanted to talk to her about.

"Come in!" Jonathan answered the knock on the door.

"You wanted to see me Sir?"

"Please have a seat. I would like you to verify something for me, before I act on this matter of Becky. You were here when she arrived is that correct?"

"Yes, I was here but a few months, when your father and mother were married. Becky arrived with your mother."

"Then you positively know that she never bore a child?" Jonathan was barely breathing waiting for her answer.

"Absolutely, she never bore a child. She was devoted to your mother and you when you were born. She always referred to you as the son, she

never had. In fact, she never even had a man interested in her. And you know your father's character. He would never consent to an arrangement like that." Cook felt sorry for Jonathan. Becky had indeed wounded him.

Jonathan smiled at her. "Yes, I know my father's character was above reproach. I didn't believe Becky, but I had to be sure. Thank you. Do we have many staff left?"

"Only three left. The others are ashamed of themselves for believing such nonsense. We can replace the others, and until then will just have to work a bit harder."

"We'll do the best to see you have the help you need as soon as possible." Jonathan closed the door after her and sunk into his chair.

"I'll go and see if we can get something light for tea. I don't know what state things are in. I'll be back in a few minutes." Julianna was almost to the door, when Jonathan stopped her.

"Just ring, I don't think losing three servants will have stopped things. I would rather you stay with me right now."

Julianna started to ring, when there was a knock at the door. Josie was there with the tea tray. "I thought perhaps you would like tea here today, so I brought it up for you. Cook said to let you know that dinner will be at the normal time, unless you ask for something different."

"Thank you so much, Josie that was thoughtful. Tell Cook, that we will dine at the normal time." Julianna smiled at her gratefully as she set it up.

"Here Jonathan have a cup of tea, and something to eat." Julianna handed a cup to Jonathan.

"This has been some homecoming hasn't it? I'm not sure what to do about Becky. I will definitely have to contact Roger about this. The woman is not well, and may need special care."

"I'm so sorry Jonathan; I feel this is mostly my fault. Maybe I am a witch and somehow causing you this grief."

Jonathan was on his feet in a flash and pulled Julianna to hers. His eyes were flashing anger again. "If I ever hear you say such a thing again Julianna Barrington, you won't sit for a month! That is nonsense." Jonathan turned her and swatted her bottom hard a few times.

Julianna turned back to him with tears in her eyes. "I...I'm sorry, Jonathan." The swats hadn't hurt that much, but she was worn out and couldn't hold her tears back.

Jonathan sat and pulled her into his lap. "Shhh Julianna, it is all right. I won't tolerate hearing you say things like that. I love you, and you are the best thing that has happened to me. Becky would have most likely been this way no matter whom I married. But it is you that I married and love." Jonathan kissed her tenderly and then handed her, her cup of tea.

They rested until dinner and afterward decided to go to bed early. It had been a tiring and emotional day, both of them were exhausted.

Jonathan pulled Julianna close to him and whispered in her ear before falling asleep, "Tomorrow will be a much better day. I will write to Roger and the Becky situation will be over with once and for all.

Little did he know what was happening at his cousin's estate.

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Jonathan awoke early the next morning. He left Julianna sleeping and went to his desk and wrote a note to Roger, explaining what had transpired in his absence. If Roger were a man of his word, he would see to it that Becky left them alone in the future.

At the same time, Roger was launching a hunt for Becky. Sometime over night she had disappeared. Since they had returned home two

days earlier, Becky had not been the same. She was surly and withdrawn. Anne was quite worried about her, but Becky refused to talk to her.

This morning when she didn't come downstairs, Roger sent someone to make sure she wasn't ill. They reported back that she wasn't in her room but had left a note. Roger took the note and read it.

*Dear Anne and Roger,*

*I'm sorry that I've been a burden to you. I never intended for my life to end this way, but since my own son has rejected me and forced me from my home, I had no one else to turn to. Yes, Jonathan is my son, his mother was barren, so I bore a child for the Earl. Jonathan was told when he reached manhood, but chose Julianna over me.*

*During my visit at my old home, it became apparent that the witch Julianna has put a spell on my old friends. They no longer believe me; she has twisted them. Cook even refuses to remember that it was I that gave birth to Jonathan. He is my son, though no one believes me.*

*I can no longer live like this. I have decided that I will no longer be a burden on anyone.*

*Becky*

Roger was appalled. "Anne, you better read this, I think Becky is deranged."

Anne paled as she read the note. "What on earth can she be thinking of? I remember when Jonathan was born. Becky certainly was not the mother. I was very young, but I do remember that much. Oh Roger, she sounds like she intends harm to herself. We must find her."

"Yes, I agree. I will put together a search party at once." Roger left for the stables.

He came back a short time later. "They are on their way. Two parties have spread out; they should

be able to find her. The stable lad said she left only an hour ago. She isn't an experienced rider, so she shouldn't have gone far."

Anne was still in shock, but one thought had occurred to her. "Roger, Jonathan must have been telling the truth all along. I fear we are guilty of misjudging him. We must apologize, and try and make things right somehow."

"Yes, you are right. I couldn't believe it at the time, but Becky was so convincing, and we had heard many stories about Julianna being spoiled."

Several hours later the search party returned. The head groomsman came to the house to see Roger. "Sir, we did find her, however she is dead. I don't know whether it was an accident or intentional. We found her at the base of a cliff. Apparently she tried to ride off the cliff; the horse must have stopped short and thrown her. Her neck was broken in the fall. I'm sorry sir."

Roger was shocked; he really didn't think she would harm herself. The groomsman had just left when a messenger from Jonathan arrived with his note.

Roger read the note and shook his head sadly. Anne saw the groomsman and the other rider arrive and leave. Immediately she went in search of Roger and found him in his office.

"Roger, was there news of Becky?"

"Sit down Anne. They found Becky's body at the bottom of a cliff. We aren't sure if she intentionally killed herself or if it was an accident. The other rider brought a message from Jonathan. Becky apparently told everyone on staff that she was his mother and Julianna was a witch. He is asking me to keep her away from them. I must inform him of her death. I feel under the circumstances, I should do it personally and offer our sincere apologies at the same time for doubting them. I will ride there this afternoon."

"I should go with you, but I just can't face it right now." Anne broke down in tears. "I didn't

realize Becky was suffering so. She must have somewhere in her mind begun to believe she was Jonathan's mother. I'll see to arrangements while you are at Jonathan's this afternoon. I think a simple service and burial is sufficient under the circumstances. We will bury her in the family plot."

Roger rose and hugged his wife to him. "It will be fine Anne. I hope Jonathan can be the man I wasn't and forgive us. Julianna as well, we have done her a great injustice."

Early in the afternoon Roger arrived at Jonathan's. Julianna was in her morning room working on schedules and saw him ride up. She wondered if he was coming in response to Jonathan's note.

James showed Roger into the parlor and went to Jonathan's office to inform him that he had arrived.

Julianna came out of her room at the same time as Jonathan was entering the parlor. "Roger is here, and wishes to speak to us. I have no idea why. If you don't wish to meet with him, I will understand."

"I will go, I am curious as to what he could possibly have to say." Julianna took Jonathan's arm and they entered the parlor. Julianna sat down and Roger rose and offered his hand to Jonathan. Reluctantly Jonathan shook hands with him.

Roger cleared his throat and began to speak. "I bring you some distressing news, but first must offer both mine and Anne's sincere apologies for the way we have treated you."

Julianna looked at Jonathan for his reaction. Jonathan frowned. "Before we discuss apologies, what is the distressing news you have brought?"

"Becky is dead. She apparently was deranged and we believe she took her life. She left us a note and we found her body at the base of a cliff. "

"Oh that's terrible!" Julianna gasped and put her hand to her mouth.

Jonathan shook his head sadly. "I know she was, it became obvious when we returned yesterday to the mess she had stirred up here. She

for some reason got it into her head that I was her son. No one could dissuade her. I'm sorry we didn't see this and get her treatment."

Roger gave them a minute and then cleared his throat to continue. "That is why I offer our sincere apologies for what we said and the way we behaved. It was a grave injustice on our part. Obviously what you told us was correct. Can you ever forgive us?"

"You are Jonathan's family, of course we can." Julianna spoke before thinking that Jonathan might not be so ready to forgive. Quickly she looked at Jonathan and blushed.

Jonathan smiled at her. "Julianna is right, of course we will forgive you."

"Anne stayed home to make arrangements for Becky's funeral. There won't be a long formal service under the circumstances. We thought a simple service and burial in the family plot would be nice. It will be the day after tomorrow, if you would like to attend. I should be on my way back now." Roger stood to leave.

Jonathan stood and shook hands with him. "Yes, we will definitely attend, and probably some of the servants as well. I'm glad we have sorted out this difficulty, but sorry that we didn't have a chance to help Becky."

Roger walked over to Julianna, and kissed her hand. "I'm so sorry, we never did properly welcome you to the family. We shall remedy that soon."

Jonathan hugged Julianna to him, after Roger left. "I'm proud you were so fast to forgive, but what would you have done if I wasn't?"

"Oh Jonathan, I didn't even think of that. I'm sorry, I should have let you answer for us." Julianna looked as if she might cry.

"I'm not scolding you, so don't look so sad. I'm happy to see that you are so forgiving; it is a wonderful trait. We best tell the staff and make arrangements for any who wish to go to the funeral." Jonathan rang for James.

"James, could you gather all the staff here in 30 minutes please, I have an announcement for them. I would appreciate it, if you and Cook could come here right away."

Jonathan paced while he waited for James and Cook to return. When they did, he asked them both to please have a seat. Cook and James exchanged glances, they couldn't imagine what was so important, that everyone was summoned.

Jonathan cleared his throat, and began to talk. "I have just received word that Becky is dead. She was found at the bottom of a cliff, with a broken neck. We feel it was intentional but don't know for sure. There will be a brief service the day after tomorrow, and we want to enable everyone who wishes to attend an opportunity to do so. I will leave it to the two of you to secure the premises and decide who should go."

Cook turned white at the news, and began to cry softly. Julianna went to her and hugged her. "I'm sorry, I know you were very close over the years. I just wish we knew how sick she was, and could have helped her."

"I know. I should have realized when she was here, and alerted someone. But, she hasn't been happy. Perhaps this is for the better. I'll see to it that things are taken care of."

The rest of the staff began to arrive and when they were all assembled Jonathan repeated the news. There were many gasps and sobs, but few questions. James escorted them all out leaving Julianna and Jonathan alone.

Julianna turned to Jonathan once they had left. "Do you think perhaps we shall all have peace now?"

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Julianna had slept fitfully since the news of Becky's death. She woke the day of the service with a heavy heart. The sky was leaden with a foggy mist covering the ground. It had rained the day



before, but even though it stopped, the leaves on the trees hung low, soaked with water. Jonathan was quiet also as they rode to the service. There were no other mourners, except for the servants who knew her best.

The service was simple, but dignified. Jonathan took Julianna's arm to balance her as they walked through the sodden ground to the gravesite. Becky was laid to rest in the family plot, near Jonathan's mother, whom she had been with for most of her life.

The servants left to return to the Barrington estate immediately after the service, but Julianna and Jonathan were invited to lunch with Anne and George.

Julianna really only wanted to go home, and wished Jonathan had declined the invitation. She was very nervous about, and didn't quite know how to act, with Anne and George.

Jonathan knew that Julianna had been restless and abnormally quiet for the last few days. He wasn't sure what was bothering her.

"Julianna, what's wrong?" Jonathan hugged her to him.

"I'm nervous about staying for lunch. I feel awkward still and don't know what to say, or how to act."

"I know, but they are very sorry, and this has been a trying time for them as well. I'm sure everything will be fine. Anne is a very warm person naturally. You will be fine." Jonathan kissed her softly as they pulled up to the front door.

Anne hugged Julianna as soon as they walked in. "I'm so sorry for the way I treated you. It was so wrong of me. I'm so glad you have forgiven me."

"Thank you Anne, I would like us to become friends and forget how we started." Though she smiled and hugged Anne back, Julianna was trembling inside. She sincerely hoped this would work.

Lunch was a quiet subdued affair, considering the circumstances. They discussed the servants who had left the Barrington estate, and the necessity for Julianna to find a new housekeeper. Anne made a few suggestions about possible places to look.

"Thank you, I'll try that, Laura Morgan, also has some ideas. I'm hopeful that I find someone fast. It's imperative though that the person fit with Cook and James, and can work well with them. I don't need anymore upsets." Julianna was glad for Anne's help.

"I'll have my servants put the word out that you need help; they usually are the first to know of someone looking."

Jonathan and Julianna thanked them for lunch and left. Julianna was still quiet on the way home. Finally Jonathan asked her, "Lunch was fine, why are you so quiet?"

"Anne and George were very nice. I have just been thinking about things. I wonder if I had tried a lot harder to be nicer to Becky, if she would have been all right. I feel badly that she died like this." Julianna sighed and looked out the window.

"Julianna, you did nothing wrong. Perhaps there were times when you could have been nicer, but Becky didn't treat you well either. You can't dwell on this. She wasn't herself. We can't blame ourselves for her actions. I have some business to work on this afternoon. I'm a bit behind and have the meeting in town tomorrow. Are you sure you will be all right?"

"Yes Jonathan, I will be fine. I know you have things to do, and I also have to catch up on things and talk to Cook about what servants we need to hire."

As soon as they arrived home Julianna went to change clothes and decided to lie down for a minute. As she lay on her chaise she thought back over the last month and just started crying.

Jonathan came into the room and saw her. He sat down next to her and pulled her into his lap.

"Shhh, Julianna, everything will be fine. I know this has been a trying time for you. I promise things will be better from now on."

Jonathan held her until she quieted. "Are you sure, you don't want me to stay with you this afternoon?"

"No, I'm sorry, I'll be fine. I think I just needed to cry. I should go play some with Sebastian, he will think I forgot about him, but I do have to work on menus and plans." Julianna hugged Jonathan and started to get up.

Jonathan held her back. "Would you like to bring him in? Would you promise me you'll not leave him alone and watch him?"

Julianna brightened immediately. "Oh yes, thank you Jonathan, I won't let him out of my sight. Thank you so much."

Jonathan hugged and kissed her and then let her up. "I'll see you for tea. Be good."

Sebastian jumped around barking with delight when Julianna came to the stable. "Have you been a good boy?" She hugged him and let him lick her face.

"Wait until you see what I taught him while you were gone." Timothy stood there with a big smile on his face. He was so glad that things seemed to be returning to normal.

"Oh, what did he learn?" Julianna smiled sweetly at Timothy.

"I taught him to heel. Just start walking and tell him to heel, he will walk along side you. He is a very smart pup."

"Thank you so much Timothy, I'll bring him back in a little while." Julianna started walking toward the door. "Heel Sebastian."

Sebastian fell in step at her side and stayed with her all the way to the house. "Oh you are a good boy, wait until Jonathan sees what you have learned."

Julianna had a blanket placed on the floor of her office for Sebastian and found a ball of his. They

played for a bit then she sat at her desk and started viewing schedules and menus. Sebastian was good and went to sleep on his blanket. Julianna wanted to talk to Cook, but knew she didn't dare even run to the kitchen for one minute. Instead she rang and asked if Cook could meet with her if she had a free moment.

Cook came a few minutes later and Sebastian ran to greet her. "Oh what a cute little pup. You must be Sebastian that I hear Timothy talking about so much. You are a nice little fellow." Cook patted him on the head then sat down with Julianna. Sebastian lay right on the floor next to Julianna.

"I have made up some tentative schedules and menu's. I would like your advice on them. We also need to talk about replacing the servants that left. I thought perhaps you had some ideas on how to do that. I have never been in this position before, and could use your help." Julianna waited for the older woman to review what she had prepared.

"I think with a few changes this should be workable. I see you have Josie helping in the cleaning process, which is good for now. Are you sure you can spare her?"

"Yes, she is more than willing to help. I think we all need to pull together here until we are fully staffed again."

"The menus are fine. When do you expect you will entertain for the first time? I'm sure no one will be expecting you too for a while due to Becky's death. I will need as much advanced notice as possible though."

Julianna hesitated. "I thought perhaps next week, just a small dinner with Anne and Roger, the Morgans, and my cousin Maisie and Richard. I was thinking a more formal dinner in two weeks, would be fine."

"I think we can handle that just fine, especially if we have your favorite roast. That doesn't require much preparation time. I will plan on that, and you will just have to let me know the date." Cook rose

and said goodbye to Sebastian and took the menus and schedules with her.

Sebastian was growing a bit restless, so Julianna took him to the garden and threw his ball and played with him for a time. It was almost time for tea, so she returned him to the stable. Timothy called to him and he went bounding up to him.

Julianna had to laugh at his enthusiasm. The pup was just a natural outgoing dog; he liked everyone. "You did a wonderful job with him Timothy." Julianna slipped him a coin before she left.

Timothy smiled and thanked her. He really did have quite a crush on her, too bad there were no village girls that could match her.

Julianna had just settled herself in the parlor when James brought her a message from Laura.

*Dearest Julianna,  
I was so sorry to hear of Becky's death. I  
know this has not been a very happy time  
for you. Since the men will be gone  
tomorrow, I will ride over and visit with you.  
We can catch up and plan our little outing. I  
have found the most delightful little village  
we can go to."  
Laura*

Julianna smiled to herself and quickly burnt the note. It would be good to see Laura, and Maisie and Richard would be arriving home tomorrow also. On Sunday she and Jonathan could call on them.

Jonathan came into the room to see Julianna smiling. "Now that is a beautiful sight to see you smiling again. Did you have a good afternoon?"

"Oh yes, wait till you see what Sebastian has learned. Maybe after tea I can show you." Julianna hugged him tight and both settled down to wait for the tea to be brought.

After tea Jonathan and Julianna got Sebastian from the stable. Timothy was more than willing to

run and get him when he saw Julianna. Jonathan noted the smile he gave her.

It was flattering that another man thought your wife attractive and pleasant, but he may have to say something to the lad's superior. It just wouldn't do to have him become forward with Julianna, in anyway.

"Now Jonathan, see what Sebastian has learned." Julianna walked toward the door and called the dog to her. "Heel Sebastian!" He immediately walked right at Julianna's heel, until she stopped, then he sat down.

Julianna was beaming. "Timothy taught him that while we were away."

Jonathan looked at the beaming Timothy. "Very good young man, you may resume your other duties now. I can handle returning the pup."

Jonathan took Julianna's arm and they walked with Sebastian to the garden. Julianna was puzzled by Jonathan's stiffness with Timothy.

"Were you not a bit harsh with Timothy? He did take marvelous care of Sebastian while we were gone." Julianna was puzzled.

Jonathan took a breath and turned to catch Julianna's chin in his hand. "Julianna, that stable lad is becoming too fond of you. I don't want a situation to develop, where I would have to take serious action against him. I do think you should limit your time in the stables."

"Jonathan!" Julianna gasped. "I would never flirt or behave indecently toward another man. I'm hurt that you think this of me." She stood and prepared to storm off to the house, tears hot in the corners of her eyes.

"Julianna! Come back here at once." Jonathan grabbed her wrist and pulled her back to stand facing him.

"I didn't accuse you of any misbehavior at all. He is a young impressionable lad, and I wish to avoid a situation. You don't need to lose your temper or be hurt by this. I think no such bad

thoughts about you at all. Now, sit here and let's enjoy our time together." Jonathan pulled her back down on the bench beside him.

Sebastian sat with his ball in his mouth staring at them. He didn't understand what was going on. Finally he walked over to Jonathan with his tail wagging and dropped the ball at his feet and looked up at him expectantly.

"I see you're ready to play." Jonathan threw the ball and Sebastian charged after it.

Julianna sat stiffly next to him and said nothing. After several rounds of throwing the ball, Sebastian tired and began to sniff and explore the garden. He went so far as to start digging in the beds, and Julianna said nothing. Jonathan gave her a harsh glance and called the dog and scolded him.

"Julianna, I don't like your attitude at all. You have no reason to pout, but if you don't stop, I will give you a very good reason. Now play with Sebastian and keep him out of trouble, or I shall return him to the stable."

Julianna was still angry and couldn't help herself. She picked up the ball and threw it hard, then stood up and left, calling over her shoulder. "Please return him to the stable when you are ready, I wouldn't want to be there to tempt anyone." She then ran as fast as she could into the house and up to her room.

Jonathan was angry, but waited until the dog returned then called him to heel and took him back to the stable. Timothy was nowhere to be seen, so he put Sebastian in his stall and strode purposefully back to the house. He waited until he had calmed down a bit, and then climbed the stairs to their room. He didn't bother knocking but opened the door and slammed it behind him. Julianna was sitting in a chair sulking. When he slammed the door she jumped.

"Jonathan, you needn't slam doors, it is unbecoming." Julianna resumed her position of looking out the window.

Jonathan walked over to her and pulled her to her feet. He sat down on the bed and flung her over his knee, quickly lifting her skirts and baring her. "Nor is it becoming for my wife, to act like a shrew." He said nothing more but began spanking her in earnest.

Julianna was shocked and began to yell for him to stop. "I shall stop, when you decide to behave and not act like a spoiled five year old." Jonathan kept spanking until her bottom was a bright red and she was limp and sobbing over his knee. He stopped and rubbed her back until she quieted, then pulled her up. "Now, I want you in that corner with your nose against the wall, until I tell you to come out. There will be no rubbing. I want you to think about your behavior." Jonathan swatted her once and sent her scurrying to the corner.

Julianna stood in the corner very subdued. She thought about the day and realized that Jonathan hadn't said anything for her to be upset about. The only problem was she needed Timothy to be on her side, so she could ride with Laura and Maisie on Thursday's when the men had their meeting. It felt like she had been in the corner for hours, when Jonathan called her to him.

Julianna turned and meekly walked over to him. "Have you anything to say?"

"I'm sorry Jonathan, I behaved very badly, and I won't do it again. Please forgive me?" Julianna started to tear up again.

Jonathan pulled her into his lap and held her. "You are forgiven, but Julianna, you must learn to hold your tongue and temper."

"I know, but your words hurt me." Julianna sniffled against his chest.

"You misunderstood my words. I said nothing about you doing anything wrong, nor did I imply that you had, or that Timothy had. I just want to prevent there being any misunderstandings. Can you understand that?" Jonathan kissed her forehead.



"Yes, I will be very circumspect in my dealings with him. I don't wish to see him in trouble either. He is just a nice young boy trying to do a good job and please."

"I know my love, but I understand young boys, far better than you do." Jonathan laughed at the look on Julianna's face.

"Now, let's rest a bit before dinner." Jonathan helped Julianna out of her dress and they lay on the bed and cuddled till she fell asleep. Sleep wouldn't come to him, and he lay holding her thinking about the past few weeks. This was surely not how he had envisioned their first month together. Julianna was however learning fast, and hopefully would not be in any mischief when Maisie returned.

The rest of the evening was pleasant and passed quietly. Julianna enjoyed these evenings, when Jonathan would read and she could snuggle next to him and read or work on her needlework.

Right after breakfast the next morning, Jonathan prepared to leave for his meeting. "I'll be back for tea. If you want to have Sebastian in for a bit you may, just watch him." Jonathan hugged her and left.

Julianna answered some correspondence and wondered what time Laura would be stopping by. Jonathan had been gone perhaps two hours when Laura arrived.

Julianna hugged her hard. "Oh it's so good to see you, this has been an awful week."

"I figured it must be. We were shocked to hear about Becky. How is Jonathan taking it?" Laura took Julianna's arm and they sat in the parlor.

Julianna filled Laura in on the accusations, and the situation they faced when they returned home. "It was terrible, but Jonathan is taking it fine. She was deranged and he doesn't hold any grudge against her. I think he is glad to reconcile with Anne and Roger also. She was very nice to me yesterday."

It was close to lunch and Julianna insisted that Laura stay and join her. One more person was no problem at all for Cook.

As they ate Laura talked about their plans. "When does your cousin arrive home?"

"They should be arriving today. I can hardly wait to see her."

Laura grew silent for a moment. "Oh dear, I saw a carriage on the road when I rode over here. I didn't recognize it, I wonder if it was theirs?"

Julianna paled a bit. "Do you think anyone saw you?"

"No, I don't think so, I was still in the field a bit away. I shall be careful going home though. It wouldn't do to get caught now. Let's not worry about it, let's make our plans for the next meeting."

They sat chatting and planning for their next outing. "I wonder if Maisie will have time to see how the staff there are?" Julianna didn't want Maisie to ruin it on the first attempt.

Laura thought for a moment. "I know. We shall have her come in her carriage. Then we will inform the driver to leave and return at a certain time. She will then never get in trouble."

"That is perfect! No one will ever suspect a thing." Julianna smiled at the thought of the fun they would have. She only momentarily felt a twinge in her bottom at the thought of what Jonathan would do if he caught her.

"I best leave, it is getting late. I'll see you Sunday at church." Laura left hurriedly, she had stayed a bit longer than she intended.

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Maisie felt like she was in heaven. She and Richard had spent four glorious days in the city and were now returning to her new home. Richard had told her all about the house and assured her that the housekeeper was nothing like Becky, and couldn't wait to meet her.

"Richard, this is beautiful country. I really love it." Maisie was looking out the window as they got closer and closer to home.

"Just over the next hill is Jonathan and Julianna's estate. If you look to your left you will be able to see it. Our home is a few miles further down the road." Richard was very happy that Maisie was so excited.

Maisie looked out the window concentrating intently to see the estate. She saw a woman on a horse in a field away from the road. "Richard, I thought you said that none of the ladies were allowed to ride without an escort? There is a woman on horseback in the meadow."

Richard looked in time to just catch a glimpse, but not enough to recognize whom it was. The rider quickly disappeared into some trees. If Maisie weren't with him, he would have investigated further. He was only sure of one thing, it wasn't Julianna. He would have recognized her and so would Maisie.

"No, they aren't allowed to ride alone, I don't know who that was, but her husband or father would take her to task, if they caught her. I don't ever want you riding alone." Richard had let her know the rules before they returned home.

As Richard finished talking Maisie saw the Barrington estate come into view. She also saw the lone rider turn into the estate. She smiled to herself; that must be Laura coming to visit Julianna. "Richard, that is a wonderful home. No wonder Julianna loves it so."

Maisie was enthralled with the first look at her new home. She couldn't stop talking about it. Richard had to laugh at her; she was like a little child.

After they had lunch and taken a tour of the house, Maisie decided to rest a bit. "I hope you don't mind Richard, but the trip and excitement of coming home, has worn me out."

"Not at all, you rest, and I'll catch up on some things and see you for tea in the parlor." Richard kissed her and left for his office.

Maisie didn't know, but he thought the loan rider might have been Laura Morgan. He made a note to mention it to George when he saw him.

Laura arrived home barely 4 minutes before George. She had time to pick up her sewing and look bored, when he came into the house. "How was your day, Laura?" George hugged her and kissed her.

"Fine, a bit boring without you around though." Laura smiled at him.

"You smell of fresh air, were you out?"

Laura scrambled to think of something to say. "Yes, I sat in the garden for a while, I just came in a few minutes ago, it was getting a bit chilly."

"Do take care of yourself, you don't want to be sick and miss a small dinner party at the Barrington's next week. Jonathan mentioned they would probably do something to welcome Julianna's cousin."

Laura almost slipped and mentioned that Julianna hadn't said anything about it, but caught herself in time.

At the same time, Julianna was being very careful not to let Jonathan know that Laura had been there. She knew Cook would have no reason to say anything to him about it.

Jonathan asked that they have tea in their sitting room upstairs; he wanted to change and relax before dinner. "The meeting was long today, and wore me out. Plus, there were so many questions about Becky."

Julianna ordered the tea, and sat next to Jonathan and rubbed his shoulders to relax him.

"Thank you Julianna, that feels wonderful. What did you do today?"

"Not a lot, I played with Sebastian a bit in the garden, but didn't bring him in. I don't want him to

think he can come in all the time. Then I worked on notes and sewing. I missed having you around."

Jonathan was silent and Julianna let her mind wander. "Jonathan? Do you think Richard and Maisie are home yet?"

"I would think they should be." Jonathan straightened up when the maid knocked and brought in the tea.

"Perhaps I can go and see her tomorrow? Would you be able to go with me?" Julianna couldn't wait to see her.

"I think they can still use some privacy. We can call on them Sunday, but until then, they will want to be alone. You can plan a small party for them next week if you like."

"I had thought about that, just have them and the Smithsons and Morgans. Cook said she could handle that with no problem."

"Good, I'll leave that up to you. Come rest with me for a bit before dinner." Jonathan stood and pulled Julianna up to him.

The rest of the week passed uneventfully. Cook had interviewed several girls for the staff positions, but hadn't decided on anyone as yet. Julianna hoped they would find someone fast as she hated seeing the others working so hard.

Sunday morning on the way to church, Julianna was as excited as she had been going to a party. Jonathan watched her twisting and jumping about and finally couldn't take it any longer. "Julianna, what is the matter? Why are you so excited this morning?"

"I hope Maisie and Richard will be there, so I can talk to her. I want to know all about the city."

"You will have plenty of time to talk to her, now settle down." Jonathan pulled her back to sit next to him.

When the carriage stopped, Julianna almost jumped out, she was so anxious to see who was there.

"Julianna, if you don't settle down, I will take you back in the carriage and give you something to help you settle down." Jonathan had her arm.

Julianna looked at him and blushed. "Jonathan, someone may hear you! I'll behave."

"Good, I hope so." Jonathan squeezed her arm as they walked into church.

The Morgans were there but Richard and Maisie weren't there yet.

Julianna and Jonathan took their seats but Julianna kept looking to see if Richard and Maisie would arrive. Jonathan finally whispered to her. "Stop fidgeting, right now, you are behaving like a child. You know what happens when you do that."

"I'm sorry, I will truly behave." Julianna sat still and stopped fidgeting.

It was a few moments later that Richard and Maisie arrived. They sat down next to Julianna and Jonathan, however there was no time for talking, as the service was about to start.

Immediately after the service, Maisie and Julianna hugged. "Maisie, I have been dying to hear all about the city. How was it?"

Before Maisie could answer her Laura and George came over. Richard introduced Maisie to them, and they started talking about Becky. Julianna was upset that she couldn't have Maisie's full attention and was pouting, something that was not lost on Jonathan.

Julianna couldn't stand it a minute longer. "Let's talk about something else, I don't wish to talk about her anymore."

Jonathan was appalled at her lack of manners. He took her arm and announced that it was time to leave. "Richard, we shall come calling this afternoon." Julianna wasn't happy with the firm grip on her arm, but was pleased that at least she would have a chance to talk to Maisie that afternoon.

Jonathan got into the carriage and sat across from Julianna. He took her hands and started lecturing her. "You must learn to contain your

enthusiasm Julianna; you are a lady now and not a child. You were rude a moment ago, that is not like you. I should make you miss calling this afternoon, but I know you want to talk to Maisie. If you ever behave like that again, you will be spending the day in bed with a sore bottom. Is that clear, young lady?"

Julianna was very contrite. "Yes Jonathan I do understand. I just got carried away with excitement, and I really don't want to talk about Becky anymore."

"I know, but it is rude to say so to others who do. Now, settle down so we can enjoy the rest of the day." Jonathan moved over next to her and hugged her.

The day seemed to drag until it was time to visit Richard and Maisie. Julianna had done her best to not fidget and fuss until it was time to go. Jonathan was watching her, and she knew it wouldn't take much for her to wind up over his knee.

During the short ride to Richard's estate, Julianna almost held her breath in anticipation.

Jonathan couldn't understand why she was so excited. He wondered if she was up to something, but what it could be eluded him.

Maisie and Julianna hugged each other, like they hadn't seen each other in months. Richard laughed at the two of them. "I thought Maisie was going to pace a hole in the floor waiting for you to arrive."

They settled in the parlor and the men fell to talking about business and Maisie told Julianna all about the city. "That sounds wonderful Maisie, but I'm so glad you are here now."

When Julianna saw the men deep in conversation she whispered to Maisie, "Laura and I have a little adventure planned for the next time the men meet. We are having you over for a small dinner party next week and we will explain it to you then. You will be perfectly in the clear on this one. They will never know."

Julianna planned her first small dinner party with great care. Even though it was small with close friends and family, she wanted it to be a very special occasion. The invitations were sent for Friday evening.

The week was going by so fast. Julianna had not been this busy since before her wedding. Word had finally circulated enough that they had several candidates applying for the available staff positions. James and Cook interviewed them and made recommendations. The final selection and hiring decision was Jonathan's.

Julianna was sitting at her desk while Jonathan interviewed, anxiously awaiting his decision. They really were suffering the loss of staff. She heard the last person leave his office and she hurried over and knocked on the door.

"Come in." Jonathan was just about to get up when the knock came. "Julianna, I was just coming to see you."

"Did you hire anyone?" Julianna sat down hoping he had.

"Yes, I hired the three household staff that James and Cook liked, and then hired two additional stable hands as well."

Julianna was a bit alarmed to hear this. "Do we need more help in the stables?"

"With the new horses arriving tomorrow, we will." Jonathan wasn't sure why she seemed to be disturbed by this. "Does this bother you, Julianna?" Jonathan looked right at her to catch any change in expression.

"I forgot about the horses coming. I was afraid you were letting Timothy go. I didn't want to feel responsible for that."

"Julianna, I told you before that I was not upset with him, just wanted you to spend less time there. With the new horses, he too will be busy, you will have to fend for Sebastian a bit more yourself." Jonathan rose and pulled her to him for a hug.



"Let's go inform Cook and James they have new help arriving tomorrow morning."

The next morning Julianna received a note from Anne regretting that they could not attend on Friday. Roger had unexpected business in town and they wouldn't be home.

Julianna wasn't totally sorry, since it would give Laura and her more time to explain things to Maisie. Julianna was so excited, only one week till the next men's meeting in town. It would be so nice to ride as fast as she wanted and to have a special adventure

The new horses were arriving that day and Richard, George and Jonathan were riding out to meet them. He would be home for tea, but it gave Julianna time to pay a visit to the stables. She needed to be sure that Timothy was still there. Carrying a bottle of port for him, Julianna was pleased to see he was there and alone. The new stable hands were in the pasture, waiting for the horses.

Julianna got Sebastian and called for Timothy to come over. "I brought you another little present for doing such a good job with Sebastian. I know you will be extra busy now with the new horses. I just want you to know how much your efforts are appreciated."

Timothy smiled and took the bottle. "The new men will do most of the work with the horses. I will help, but I'll still be here to saddle horses when needed. The stables can't be left unattended."

Julianna left with Sebastian thankful that their plans wouldn't encounter any glitches there.

Jonathan met Richard and George, but had a bit of time to wait until the horses arrived. They sat down under a tree and discussed the future of the horses. Jonathan turned to Richard and asked, "How is Maisie? Is she behaving?"

Richard smiled. "Yes, she can be a real angel when she wants. I think she is naturally very good."  
"

Jonathan laughed. "You mean when Julianna doesn't influence her the wrong way."

George joined in laughing with them. "I can't wait to see what happens with the three of them together. Laura and Julianna are so much alike, I feel it's only a matter of time until they dream up some mischief."

Richard suddenly remembered the lone woman rider he had seen when they were arriving home last week. "Do either of you know of any woman around here, who would be allowed to ride alone?"

George answered first. "No, I don't know of any man who would allow his wife or daughter to ride alone, possibly on her own property, but not along the roads. Did you see someone?"

"When we were returning home last week, I spotted a woman near your property Jonathan. I didn't recognize her, as she was fairly far away in the meadow. She ducked into the wood as soon as she saw my carriage."

Jonathan thought for a moment. "That would be the day we were in town for our meeting. You are sure it wasn't Julianna?"

Richard laughed. "No, it was definitely not Julianna. Maisie and I would have recognized her."

George grew very quiet for a moment. "I think it will pay us to watch our ladies closely for any signs of mischief. I would not put it past Laura to try and ride out alone. I caught her once shortly after we were married. I think she learned her lesson, but we should be cautious."

"I think I have sufficiently scared Julianna. She knows the dangers, and I don't think she would do that."

Before they could discuss it any further, they spotted the horses coming. The rest of the day was spent getting them settled in. By teatime they were finished and Richard and George headed home. Jonathan went to their room to change and freshen up. As he past through the stable he noticed that Sebastian was not in his stall. When he reached the

house he found Julianna in her room with Sebastian sound asleep on his blanket.

Julianna looked up and smiled at him. "How was your day? Are the horses all settled?"

"Yes, everything is finished. I have to clean up and change, I'll be back down for tea shortly."

During tea Jonathan talked about the horses and how excited he was about his new venture. Julianna listened but her mind was really on the party the next evening.

When Jonathan stopped talking for a moment, Julianna immediately jumped in. "Do you think everyone will enjoy tomorrow night? I want to make a good impression even though it will only be The Morgans and Richard and Maisie."

"I'm sure they will and you will be a wonderful hostess, but why aren't Roger and Anne coming?" Richard hoped there wasn't bad feelings again.

"Roger was called away unexpectedly on business, so they will not be able to attend. I'm sorry they won't be here, it would be nice for Maisie to meet them." Julianna hoped she sounded sincere; she didn't want Jonathan to think she didn't want them here. She was glad they weren't coming to this one.

The next day went fast. Julianna was in a flurry all day checking and re-checking last minute arrangements. Cook finally shooed her out of the kitchen. "I'm fine and can handle everything. You go and rest and let us finish."

Julianna strolled in the garden for a bit and then wandered to the fence by the pasture. She could see the new horses in the distance and Jonathan and the men working with them. They were really very handsome horses. Jonathan saw her standing by the fence and rode over. "Did you need something Julianna?"

"No, Cook shooed me out of the kitchen and I was just watching you and the horses. I would love to see them closer."

"Not just yet, remember I told you they were skittish. I'm almost finished. Why don't you go and rest, so you won't be tired tonight. I'll join you soon." Jonathan rode back to the others.

With nothing better to do, Julianna went to their room, and found Josie in her dressing room. "Is everything ready for this evening?"

"Yes Julianna, your dress is pressed and ready. I have ordered a bath for you immediately after tea. You should have plenty of time to bath and dress. I'm so excited about the first party."

"I am too, but I think I best try and rest for a bit." Julianna took off her dress and handed it to Josie. "I'll see you before tea."

Julianna crawled into bed and fell asleep fast. Jonathan came into change for tea, and smiled when he saw her. "Julianna? Wake up, it's time for tea." Jonathan rubbed her back until she fully woke.

Julianna sat up with a start. "Oh my, I really didn't think I would sleep. I must hurry." She leapt from bed and ran to her dressing room, leaving Jonathan standing by the bed shaking his head.

During tea Jonathan hugged Julianna close to him. "I want you to relax and have a good time tonight. You are way too excited and wearing yourself out. Also, no mischief."

Julianna looked up at Jonathan with a pout. "Jonathan, of course I will behave, and I'm just nervous a bit."

"Just the same, relax." Jonathan kissed her gently.

As soon as tea was over Julianna left for her bath. She soaked for as long as the water stayed hot, then dried off and started dressing. Jonathan was dressed and downstairs long before she came down the stairs.

"Julianna, you look beautiful. This will be a wonderful party." Jonathan took her arm and they went to the parlor to await their guests.

The two couples arrived almost simultaneously. Julianna hugged Laura and Maisie and greeted Richard and George graciously.

Once they were all in the parlor with wine and drinks, the men gravitated towards one end of the room discussing the horses and the ladies were left to talk among themselves.

Maisie couldn't wait any longer to hear the details of the plans for next Thursday. "Julianna, please tell me, what are we doing?"

Her voice was a bit loud and Julianna and Laura immediately shushed her and looked to see if any of the men seemed interested. They were engrossed in their own conversation and took no notice.

Laura whispered quietly to Maisie. "Wait until after dinner when we are alone."

What they were unaware of was Jonathan looking over at them. He had heard Laura's comment. When the men were alone after dinner, he would be sure and report it.

## Chapter Seven

Cook had outdone herself on the food for the dinner. Everyone was very complimentary and Julianna was beaming. The men remained at the table for cigars and port, and the women retired to the parlor.

Once they were there and the door closed they quickly sat on the sofa and Laura began explaining the plans to Maisie.

"Next Thursday, wait an hour after Richard has left, then order your carriage and come here. I will ride over and be here to meet you. You can instruct the driver to return an hour before teatime to pick you up. We will be back in enough time not to raise suspicions. I will then ride home and you will be taken home in your carriage. We can tell the men we met for tea here. George never checks with the stable and if he does, they will know better than to say I left alone on horseback. So you see there will absolutely be no problems for you at all."

Julianna continued, "You do have to start getting the feel of the stable hands though. See if there is one special hand assigned to the day-to-day activities of saddling horses, etc. That is the one you want to start giving small gifts to and be extra kind and charming. Do be careful not to overdo it though. I almost did and Jonathan noticed that Timothy was paying too much attention to me."

"I have been paying some attention. There is a young lad in the stables, who appears to be an apprentice. He is there alone some of the time; he cares for Richard's hunting dogs. The other is an old man, who frowns constantly. I don't think I would ever be successful in bribing him, but perhaps the young lad. Everyone is very nice and deferential to me, so I don't think they would ever be a problem. I will have to find the wine cellar though." Maisie sighed, "I'm just not at good as this as you two are."

Julianna patted her cousin's hand. "You will learn, just let us teach you."

While the ladies were busy discussing their plans, the men were enjoying an interesting conversation of their own. Jonathan waited until he was sure the ladies were out of hearing range, and then told the others the comment he heard.

"I haven't a clue what they were planning, but they are certainly planning something. I don't know when this information was relayed to Maisie, but she evidently wants to know what the plans are. Do you have any ideas gentlemen?"

George and Richard thought for a moment, and Richard finally spoke up. "The only time they really would have to get into any mischief will be Thursday when we are meeting. I know it is common for some of the ladies to visit and spend time together then. But I don't know how Maisie would really have had any time to think of anything."

George agreed. "Yes, Thursday would be a perfect day, and I know Laura has visited Julianna before. Do you think perhaps we are over reacting? Perhaps they are just planning on meeting someplace."

Jonathan looked at the other two. "You may have a point. It could be we are just being a bit too suspicious. After all, they have really only had this one meeting, and not enough time to have planned any real mischief."

They finished their cigars and joined the ladies in the parlor. The ladies were sipping on sherry and welcomed the men cheerfully. Their plans were made and settled.

After their guests left, Jonathan scooped Julianna up and carried her upstairs. "Julianna, it was a wonderful party. You did a wonderful job, and were a beautiful hostess."

Jonathan began to kiss and undress Julianna. Josie had been told not to wait up for Julianna, so she had no worries about being overheard.

"Jonathan, I do love you so." Julianna returned his passionate kisses and soon they both entwined in each other's arms on the bed.

The weekend was very uneventful and Julianna tried her best to act her normal self. Finally it was Thursday morning and Jonathan was leaving for his meeting. He still had a strange feeling that the ladies were up to something. He hugged and kissed Julianna goodbye and held her to him a bit longer. "Do you have any plans for today?"

"Maisie is coming to visit, and perhaps Laura will join us. It should be a pleasant day to visit with Maisie and catch up a bit more."

"Try and behave yourself." Jonathan kissed her once more and left.

Almost exactly one hour later, Maisie arrived in her carriage. The driver was instructed to come back an hour before tea, and he left.

Laura appeared immediately after the driver had disappeared from sight. She had been waiting in the woods until he left.

When she arrived Timothy took her horse and Julianna smiled and asked him if he could saddle Princess and another horse for Maisie. Laura smiled sweetly at him and slipped him a coin. "That's for taking extra care, when I ride over."

Timothy was enchanted by the three ladies, but had learned they probably weren't really supposed to be riding alone like they were. But, he hadn't been instructed to stop them or report anything. He also, really liked Julianna, and didn't want her to get in any trouble.

Julianna had asked Cook to prepare a picnic for them. Cook was happy to do so, but knew that Jonathan probably hadn't a clue as to what she was planning. She commented to Josie about it. "It is none of our business after all, and the poor girl needs some fun after the last month. They should be totally safe with the three of them."

Josie was a bit worried about what Jonathan might think, but agreed with Cook. "Yes, she does



need some fun, and Laura and Maisie are just the ones to help her."

The three ladies rode off to the town that Laura had found. Maisie and Julianna both loved it. Julianna bought a few things for herself, but was mindful of her budget. After they shopped, Julianna announced it was time for their picnic. "Laura you can lead the way to the stream near your house. Then we can stay a bit longer and you won't have so far to ride, and we will have no problem making it back to the house."

They galloped across the meadows as fast as they could. Laura shared Maisie's and Julianna's love for speed. When they got there, they let the horses drink and tied them to a tree to rest.

The day was perfect for a picnic. The sun was out and it wasn't too hot, with a nice breeze in the air. They ate, chatted and drank their wine and had a wonderful time. Too soon it was time to leave. Hurriedly they packed everything away. Laura hugged them both goodbye and all agreed that they would do the same thing for the next meeting.

Julianna suggested that next time perhaps they could go to the lake. If it were nice enough they could swim.

Laura galloped off to home and Julianna and Maisie returned to the Barrington estate.

Timothy met them and promised to wipe down the horses. From the hard ride they were sweating. He was a bit concerned that the ladies had been riding that hard. "Ladies, do you think it was a good idea to ride so hard and fast? I would hate to see either of you hurt."

"Don't worry Timothy, we are very experienced riders, and wouldn't ride that way if we were unsure of the land. You are very sweet to worry though." Julianna smiled as sweetly as she could.

Sebastian was barking, wanting her attention, so she let him out of the pen and let him come to the house with Maisie and her. They had just settled in the parlor after giving Cook the remnants of their

picnic, when Jonathan and Richard arrived. Julianna and Maisie exchanged a quick glance. Julianna jumped up and hugged Jonathan; Maisie did likewise with Richard.

"Jonathan, what are you doing here so early and with Richard?"

"We knew Maisie would be here, so we left a bit early to catch her before she left. I thought it would be nice to have tea together."

Richard had hugged Maisie, but then held her a bit away. "Where is the carriage and driver? How did you get here?"

"I sent him away and told him to be back before tea. He should be here at any moment. I didn't think he needed to stay here all day waiting on me." Maisie had a calm even tone in her voice. Julianna had made her practice saying that in case she was asked.

Richard looked a bit skeptical, but just then the carriage pulled into the courtyard. Richard was about to go and talk to him, when Jonathan stopped him. "Why don't you let him leave and return later, you and Maisie can stay for tea and dinner? Cook always makes plenty. It would be nice."

"Jonathan, what a wonderful idea. I never thought of that, or we could have planned it." Julianna, hurried to the kitchen to talk to Cook.

Maisie was so happy at the thought that Richard agreed. He went to talk to the carriage driver. He told him what time to return and gave instructions to inform his cook that they would not be there for dinner.

Cook was pleased to have Maisie and Richard for dinner. The meal was festive and Julianna was happier than she or any of the staff had seen her. Jonathan was aware of it himself.

When Richard and Maisie's carriage arrived, Julianna and Jonathan bid them a fond farewell. Jonathan took Julianna's arm and retired to the parlor. "I haven't seen you so happy in a long time.

I'm so glad things are going better for you now. I hated seeing you so unhappy."

"Thank you, Jonathan, I am happy, but was never really unhappy with you. It was just trying times. I enjoy having Laura and Maisie close. We had such a nice visit today."

"Yes, I can see that you did, next time perhaps we should plan on all of us meeting after the meeting for tea." Jonathan poured her a sherry and himself a port.

"That would be lovely. Does Roger ever attend your meetings?" Julianna was very curious about his business.

"No, he doesn't. His business isn't agricultural; he deals in shipping. He travels quite a bit, leaving Anne alone. They have never yet had children, but I know Anne still is hopeful that someday she will. Lately, when he travels he has been taking her with him when he can."

"That is sad. He seems so much older, is he?" Julianna suddenly felt very sorry for Anne. She was only a few years older than Jonathan, but seemed to be so prim and proper, almost like an old maid.

"Yes, he is actually quite a bit older. His first wife died in childbirth and the child with her. Anne is 12 years younger than he is. She was a lively child, growing up. I remember we had such fun when I was little. Her father was a very dour man though and since she was the youngest child and only daughter, he couldn't wait to marry her off. Roger was very taken with her liveliness and courted her steadily. Anne's father readily agreed to a marriage. I think Anne liked Roger well enough, but her lighthearted mood slowly left her."

Julianna decided then and there, that they would help Anne become lighthearted again. "That is so sad Jonathan. I will do what I can to include her and lighten her life."

Jonathan was so proud of Julianna. If only everyone could see beyond her spoiled reputation. She had a heart of gold. "Julianna, that is wonderful

of you. But remember, Roger may not find your idea of 'lighthearted' to his liking. He is very strict and circumspect."

"Hrmpf! Jonathan, I am very circumspect. I think Anne needs to have some fun, and I'm just the one to provide it. All of course very innocent fun." Julianna hugged Jonathan. She was so happy tonight, that nothing could damper her mood.

"I know what you mean Julianna, but remember I don't always find what you do to be above reproach. Roger would find it even less so."

"Has Anne ever done anything he felt the need to punish her for?" Julianna looked at Jonathan intently waiting for an answer.

"I don't think that is any of your business, or mine for that matter." Jonathan tweaked Julianna's nose. "However, Anne was raised in a strict household, but I do remember one occasion shortly after they married that Roger mentioned straightening her out."

"Good. That is helpful Jonathan, Thank you." Julianna kissed him lightly on the cheek.

Jonathan shook his head. "Julianna, my dear, you best not get Anne, or anyone else involved in any childish pranks. I won't tolerate it and neither will any of the others."

Julianna crossed her arms and pouted. "Jonathan, I was only talking about including her in teas and luncheons. You really must think me awful."

"Julianna! I said no such thing! I don't think you awful. I just know you have a penchant for mischief, which I don't think Roger would appreciate. There are some things you do, that I might overlook, but he wouldn't." Jonathan sat her on his lap. "Now, Young Lady, I don't want to hear anymore nonsense about me thinking you're awful."

Julianna sat a bit stiffly on his lap with her arms crossed, pouting. "I heard what you said Jonathan."

"I don't think you heard clearly. Perhaps you can hear better this way." Jonathan flipped her over his

knee and threw her skirts up. He didn't bare her, but let his hand fall hard several times. Julianna yelped, and started yelling, "I heard you right. I did. I heard you."

Jonathan laughed and sat her back up and pressed his lips against her and forced her mouth open with his tongue. When they finally parted, Julianna was very aware of his manhood swelling under her. "Jonathan, I think it is time we retire."

"Yes Julianna, I agree." Jonathan swept her up and carried her upstairs. Julianna hurried to her dressing room and let Josie fiddle with her nightdress and hair. Julianna was in a hurry to re-join Jonathan. "I think that is fine Josie, I don't want it braided tonight. You may go and I'll see you in the morning." Julianna hurried off, not noticing the smile Josie gave her.

Jonathan was waiting for her in the sitting area. He was in his robe with a glass of whiskey for himself and a glass of sherry for her. "Come, sit with me Julianna." Jonathan patted his knee.

"I will join you if I may remain upright." Julianna smiled coyly at him.

Jonathan grabbed for her and pulled her down on his lap. "You will always remain upright as long as you are good. Have you been good today, Julianna?"

The question took Julianna by surprise. "Why of course, I have Jonathan. We had a lovely day today."

Jonathan sensed the hesitation, and once again wondered if they had been up to something. He shook off the feeling as being silly; since there was no evidence they had done anything wrong. "Well, my wife, since you've been good, I think it is time to show you how much I appreciate you."

Before Julianna could catch her breath, she was in Jonathan's arms and carried into their bedroom. Jonathan dropped her on the bed, and proceeded to make slow love to her. Julianna responded in kind, and they continued into the wee hours of the

morning. It was well after their normal rising time when they both woke.

Julianna snuggled close to Jonathan, "Oh this is so nice, and the servants are probably thinking the worst thoughts about us." She kissed him, and then lay against his chest. "Do you really have to work today? It would be a lovely day to spend together by the lake. I may in fact need a refresher lesson on swimming."

"Julianna, though I shouldn't. I think if you can be patient and give me an hour with the horse handlers, we could manage a late picnic at the lake and a swim." Jonathan pulled her close to him and engulfed her with his kisses.

They rose and dressed and had a quick light breakfast. Jonathan was true to his word, and was back in an hour. Julianna had with the help of Cook put together a light picnic lunch. They would be back for tea, and with the late breakfast, only need a light repast.

Jonathan and Julianna rode out in one of the most lighthearted moods they had been in since they were married. Julianna looked at Jonathan with a smile in her eyes, "Do you think I can race a bit here now? I do know the ground, and so does Princess."

Jonathan frowned a bit, "I know you ride well Julianna, but are you sure you are familiar enough with the land?"

"Jonathan, we have ridden it many times in the last few weeks together, I know it well. Please?" Julianna looked at him with her most innocent smile.

"All right Julianna, but I don't want a full gallop, just a bit faster than we have been going."

"Race you, Jonathan." Julianna took off at the hardest gallop she could. Jonathan was taken by surprise but then raced after her. He knew his horse was far faster than hers, and this time he was determined to show her how easily she could be

overtaken. They were barely in sight of the lake when he pulled up next to her and caught her reins.

"Do you call that not going at full gallop?" Jonathan had that stern look in his eyes.

"Jonathan, if I were going at full gallop, you wouldn't have been able to catch me." Julianna tossed her head and smiled at him.

"Well minx, I think I shall need to show you once again, who is the Lord of the Manor here." Jonathan grabbed her from her saddle and put her face down in front of him. "Now my dear wife, you may think about how you will get out of this predicament."

Julianna was so surprised at Jonathan's actions she didn't have time to react other than a loud "OOF" when she landed face down over his saddle.

"Jonathan! Let me up, this instant!" Julianna was squirming and trying to right herself.

Jonathan answered her with a hard slap to her bottom. "You best stay still or you may find yourself on the ground." Nothing more was said the last few yards to the lake.

Jonathan pulled her down into his arms. "Now my dear, what shall I do with you? I told you not to gallop away, and that is precisely what you did. As far as being able to catch you, Princess is sweating and if you note my horse isn't tired at all. You best learn Julianna that you can't outrun a stallion. I think a reminder in obedience is indeed called for."

Julianna stood pouting in front of him. "I was only playing, and I wasn't galloping. Princess is a very fast horse. I don't need any reminders, at all." Julianna grabbed the blanket and placed it down under the tree.

Jonathan had a grim smile on his face. He hadn't been kidding when he told her she needed a reminder about obedience.

"I disagree Julianna, you need a reminder about obedience and sassing." Jonathan began to unbutton her dress and remove it. He continued

undressing her under protest until she was left with just her shift and panties.

Jonathan sat down on the blanket and pulled her down with him. Julianna still thought that he was playing. All thoughts of play left her when he flipped her over his knee and bared her bottom.

"Now Julianna, see if this will help you remember how to obey and speak to your husband." Jonathan's hand fell with a hard slap on one cheek then the other until her bottom was rosy red and hot. It wasn't the hardest or longest spanking Julianna ever had, but his point was made.

Jonathan lifted her into his arms and wiped away tears. "What do you have to say for yourself, Julianna?"

"I'm sorry, Jonathan, I didn't intend to anger you, I was just playing. I will be better."

Jonathan kissed her hard and held her close. "I love you Julianna, but you must learn to listen. Now since you are almost naked anyway, shall we have a swim before lunch?"

Julianna removed her shift while Jonathan undressed. When he was ready he picked her up and carried her to the lake. They played in the water for a long time. Julianna hadn't forgotten how to swim and was enjoying it.

When they were back on the blanket wrapped in towels, Julianna looked around. "You are sure, aren't you Jonathan, that no one comes here or can see us?"

"This is our land, no one would venture this far onto it, and no one can see us." Jonathan removed Julianna's towel and began to slowly nibble first on one breast and then the other. When she was moaning with pleasure and her nipples fully erect, he proceeded to run kisses down her belly to her soft nest of curls.

Julianna responded with kisses of her own and both moaned in pleasure when Jonathan finally entered her and began to bring them both to



climax. They laid wrapped in each other's arms in the sun for a long while.

"I think we best have our lunch Jonathan it is growing late." Julianna handed Jonathan his clothes and redressed as well.

She laid out the food and cuddled into Jonathan's arms as he poured them wine and they enjoyed the food Cook had prepared.

Jonathan held Julianna close as they finished their wine. "Have you made any progress with finding a housekeeper?"

"No, but I have been thinking about that a bit. Cook knows so much about running things already. She has some under her, who actually do much of the cooking already. Would it be all right to offer her the housekeeper position, and let her move someone into the cook's position?"

Jonathan looked at Julianna amazed. "Yes, I think that is a great idea if she would like to do that. I'll talk to her this afternoon. It would give her a raise in pay, plus I will give her a clothing allowance, since she will need to have dresses instead of uniforms."

"That is wonderful Jonathan, I do hope she will be pleased. I like working with her." Julianna started packing up the picnic and soon they were on their way home.

Jonathan sent for Cook as soon as they were home. She entered his office timidly, as she could not imagine why she was sent for. "Yes Sir, you sent for me?"

"Yes Margaret, please sit down. I have been speaking with Julianna, and she has expressed a desire to have you assume the position as housekeeper. I agree it would be a natural progression as I have observed you two work well together and you are the most experienced of the staff. Would you be willing to accept this? I will raise your pay and provide you with a generous sum to purchase appropriate dresses for this position." Jonathan waited for her answer.

Margaret didn't hesitate at all. "Yes Sir, I will be honored to take the position. I do enjoy working with Lady Barrington, she is most kind and generous."

"Thank you Margaret, you may make the announcement to the others. Let me know what changes you make in positions, so salaries may be adjusted accordingly." Jonathan walked her to the door and left for the parlor to tell Julianna.

"Wonderful, I'm so glad that she accepted. I can't wait to congratulate her. Would you excuse me for a few minutes, it isn't quite tea time yet?"

Jonathan nodded his agreement and Julianna fairly ran to the kitchen. "Oh Margaret, I'm so glad you accepted." Julianna shocked everyone in the kitchen by hugging her.

The next day Jonathan was busy all day with the horses. "Since you are going to be busy, would you mind if I called on Laura?" Julianna asked Jonathan at lunch.

"No, that would be fine. You'll be home for tea?"

"Yes of course, just a short visit this afternoon." Julianna had some plans to convey to Laura and this would be a perfect time.

Julianna left right after lunch in the carriage. Laura was surprised and pleased to see her. "Julianna, this is perfect timing. George had to ride to town to attend to something, so I'm all alone."

They settled in the parlor with cups of tea, while Julianna told her the news of Margaret becoming her new Housekeeper. "She is really thrilled. For someone who was so close to Becky for all those years, she has become one of my staunchest allies. I really do like her."

"You are a good person Julianna, there is nothing for someone to dislike. Becky just wasn't going to like anyone Jonathan married. Now, what other news do you have?" Laura just felt there was something brewing by the twinkle in Julianna's eyes.

"I was talking to Jonathan about Anne. It seems she was once a carefree and spirited young girl. Her marriage to Roger changed all that. Not only is he a lot older but also suffered the loss of wife and child. I think she needs to have some joy in her life."

"Hmmm, I don't know her well, but she does seem to be pining away about something. What do you have in mind? You know that Roger doesn't attend the meetings that our husbands do." Laura was intrigued by Julianna, and wondered what plans she may have.

"Yes, I know, but he does travel some, we can invite Laura at first to some innocent teas or luncheons. It will throw everyone off track. Then we can go for a big trip to the city. I think I heard Jonathan talking to James about an overnight trip they make to purchase livestock. He mentioned that Roger would be accompanying him, along with Richard and George. That will be the ideal time for us." Julianna was feeling so happy and confident in her plans.

"Oh yes, I have heard of that. Hmmm, do you really think we will be safe venturing that far?" Laura had a few misgivings.

"Yes I do, it is a few months from now, and we can continue our little meetings, gradually drawing Anne in, as she is available. We can each tell our respective housekeepers that we are staying overnight with the other, while the gentlemen are gone." Julianna had a wicked little grin on her face; "Perhaps we can have a luncheon next Thursday and invite her, and discuss the plan."

Laura looked at Julianna and laughed. "I see the plan. We are so good, and only have tea and luncheons, to totally throw them off guard. In the meantime the stable hands and servants will grow less alert and we will be able to get away with the big event. Julianna, you are wonderful at plots. Now, we have to have Anne and Maisie informed and on our side."

"Don't worry about that, I'll take care of it." Julianna smiled, she was so happy with her plan.

At dinner that night Julianna asked Jonathan about the luncheon. "Would you mind if I had a luncheon here next Thursday while you are in town?"

"No, that would be fine. Who are you having?" Jonathan was curious.

"For my first one, I thought Laura, Maisie and Anne. Perhaps next time I'll invite a few others. This should give me a bit of practice at planning one." Julianna smiled sweetly at him.

The next morning Julianna wrote her invitations, and consulted with Margaret on a menu. Margaret had several good menu suggestions, so Julianna left that part in her hands. It was so nice working with a housekeeper; she no longer had to make all the decisions on her own.

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The days went by peacefully and once again it was time for the men to have their meeting. Julianna was excited about the luncheon. Everyone had accepted. Roger of course wasn't attending the meeting with the other men, but it wasn't unusual for ladies to have luncheons, so Anne had no problem attending. Julianna wondered what she would think, when they finally told her their plans.

Maisie was the first to arrive, as she wanted to visit with Julianna a bit before the others arrived.

"Maisie, I'm so glad you're here, wait until I tell you what Laura and I have planned." Julianna took her arm and led her to the parlor. "You'll love it!"

Maisie was a bit tentative. "I don't know when you get that look on your face; it usually ends up with me in trouble with Richard. What have you planned? I thought we were having a luncheon and staying out of trouble this time?"

"Oh we are today. I'm talking several weeks or a month away." Julianna explained her plan to Maisie.

"You know where you stayed, and shopped, we should be able to have a grand time."

"Julianna, I don't know. I think it is a bit risky. It will take at least two hours to get there and home. I don't know about riding that long alone on the roads." Maisie bit her lip thinking about the consequences.

There will be four of us, and we won't ride, we will take a carriage. By that time, Laura feels her driver will do whatever she asks, with no questions asked. So see, we shall be perfectly safe. We just need to slowly work Anne into this." Julianna smiled at Maisie. "Don't be an old worry wart!"

Laura arrived shortly after Maisie and they again discussed the plans. They decided that they definitely would use Laura's carriage and driver.

By the time Anne arrived they were well into their plans. The primary goal now, was to make Anne feel comfortable and want to go with them. A bit of excitement in her life would do her a world of good.

Anne was a bit quiet at first, but by the end of the luncheon, she was relaxed and enjoying the other's company. "This is the most fun I've had in a long time. Julianna, if you always give luncheons like this; you will be the most popular lady around."

"Thank you Anne, I appreciate the compliment. We always try and have a bit of fun, when the men are gone all day like this. You are welcome to join us anytime."

"I would certainly love to. I think Roger is going to be gone next week also. He has been traveling quite a bit lately. I would love to get together again. We could meet at my house if you like."

Laura nudged Julianna slightly. "That would be nice; we could take turns doing different things. We needn't wait until the men are meeting. Shall we just plan on next Thursday then?"

"Wonderful. I'll check with Roger, and send you all a note."

"Anne, do you enjoy riding? I don't recall Jonathan mentioning it. He said you used to play together a lot as children." Julianna waited for her answer.

Anne got a wistful look on her face. "I used to love to ride. Roger never has much time for it. I ride a bit near the house, but it really isn't the same as riding fast through a meadow. I do miss that freedom, but the one time I tried it, Roger was most unhappy with me. All the men were fearful of the highwaymen. I would love to ride again now that they have been cleared, but haven't wanted to upset Roger with it. He is very set in his ways."

"Well, I know George has said he doesn't want me riding alone far. I can also ride a bit on our property, but if I'm not alone, I can ride where I wish." Laura had a devilish twinkle in her eye.

Maisie sat in wonder listening and watching Julianna and Laura, if she didn't know better she would swear they were sisters, or even twins. They were so much alike, especially in their plots to get around rules.

Anne thought about it for a minute. "I suppose Roger wouldn't even know, but I hesitate to incur his wrath. I try to be a good loving wife to him. I just wish he wouldn't be quite so stiff."

"Maybe one of our times together we can all go riding together. We could meet here and have your carriages return much later and take a ride. It would be lots of fun and we wouldn't be alone. Actually there is a wonderful secluded lake we could ride to and swim and picnic. Jonathan showed it to me and I just love it. there." Julianna looked at Maisie and Laura for a response. She didn't need to wait as Anne spoke first.

"Oh yes, I remember that lake well. I learned to swim there. It is wonderful. I haven't been there in years. That would be wonderful. Are you sure Jonathan wouldn't mind?"

Laura laughed. "We have a pact, what they don't know won't harm them...or us for that matter."

All of a sudden it dawned on Anne, "You mean they don't know you do things like this when they are in town?"

"No they don't. I have been riding over here alone since Julianna arrived. Before that I just rode by myself. I have bribed the stable hands with small gifts and they never would say a word. Julianna has been equally successful. Maisie is just learning. You have been married for much longer, and I would think it would be easy for you to gain their trust." Laura smiled encouragingly at Anne.

"It might at that, Roger is busy with his work, he hardly ever pays any attention to things around the estate. He leaves it all to me or his managers. Since he only has been angry at me once in our marriage, he would likely never suspect."

"I don't know how you have managed to behave so well. I don't think I go for more than a week at most without being over George's knee." Laura giggled at Anne's amazement.

"No, me either, though I must say I'm getting better at learning what I can and can't get away with. Now Maisie on the other hand, is very good like you, until she is around me." Julianna laughed with the others.

Maisie didn't want Anne to think she was an angel, so she chimed in. "I may be a bit better than Julianna and Laura, but that doesn't mean, Richard hasn't had occasion to punish me for something I did all by myself"

Anne had to finally laugh. "And here I thought I was the only one who ever displeased her husband to the point he spanked her."

"You know, perhaps if you misbehaved a bit more, he would take to noticing things and be a bit less stiff. It may bring some youthful thoughts to his head." Laura added.

"You may be right. I'm with you all the way. At least I'll have some fun while it lasts."

Too soon it was time for the ladies to leave. Anne's carriage came first and she hugged Julianna

warmly. "Thank you so much for inviting me. I'm really looking forward to next week."

Julianna made sure she was gone and then turned to Laura and Maisie. "That was far easier than we thought. She is just dying to let loose and have some fun. We will bring back that cheerful person yet."

The other's carriages arrived and soon Julianna was alone. Jonathan wouldn't be home for a while yet, so she went to the stable to get Sebastian. Timothy wasn't around, so Julianna went to get him herself. As she was in the stall with him, she heard voices from the back of the stable. It was two of the new stable hands. She knelt down next to Sebastian so they wouldn't see her.

"I tell ye, that Timothy is up ta sumthin with the Misses. I think he gets special treatment cause he's doing sumthin sneaky. If we want ta make some extra ourselves, would pay ta keep an eye on thins."

"I don't know, seems ta me, that Lord Jonathan be a bit strict. She seems a timid thin and wouldna go against anything he said. I think ye be imaginin thins. I nay want any trouble with this job. Last time ye almost got us thrown in jail. Jest keep yer nose out a thins. We'll make our money the usual way, and be off."

Julianna waited until she was sure they were gone and rose. "Come Sebastian, let's go to the garden."

When she got to the garden Julianna threw a ball for Sebastian and sat there shaking. "Oh dear Sebastian, what should I do? It sounds like they are scoundrels. But if I say something to Jonathan, they may tell him what they think."

Julianna was still sitting there with a worried frown on her face when Jonathan joined her an hour later.

"What's wrong Julianna, you look worried? " Jonathan had immediately noticed her frown and worried expression.



Julianna stood up and greeted Jonathan. "Oh I missed you so. Did you have a good day?"

Jonathan pulled her into his arms and hugged and kissed her. He was instantly aware she was trembling. "Julianna, I want to know, now what is bothering you. You don't normally tremble like this."

"Would you please take Sebastian back for me, and I'll wait in the parlor for you." Julianna didn't want to go back there alone.

"You can come with me." Jonathan called Sebastian and took Julianna's arm.

"No, please, I'll wait in the house for you." Julianna looked at him pleadingly.

"All right, but when I come in, I want a full explanation of what has happened, and why you suddenly don't want to go into the stable." Jonathan feared something terrible had happened to her.

Julianna immediately went into the house and sat in the parlor trying to think of what to tell Jonathan. She knew she couldn't keep quiet, but dreaded that all of the ladies plans may be foiled.

Jonathan had just finished putting Sebastian in his stall, when Timothy came in. "Good evening Sir, I'm sorry I wasn't here to take care of him for you."

"Timothy, were you here when Lady Barrington took him out?"

"No Sir, I was helping in the corral, I believe the two new men were here, but they didn't mention anything about her being here. Is there a problem?" Timothy was worried that something had happened.

"No Timothy, its fine. I just wanted to know who was here is all. Thank you." Jonathan strode toward the house. Something had happened here with Julianna, and he intended to find out what.

Julianna had decided to tell Jonathan everything she overheard. She knew it was for the best. If they ever said anything, at least she had been honest with Jonathan.

Jonathan sat down and pulled Julianna close to him. "What happened today? Was there something wrong at lunch?"

"No Jonathan, the luncheon was wonderful. After the ladies left, I knew it would be almost an hour before you came home, so I went to get Sebastian. Timothy wasn't there, so I went to his stall to get him myself. There were two new men in the back and they didn't see me. They scared me with what they said. I think they are up to something bad." Julianna told Jonathan what she had heard.

Jonathan held her close and hugged her. "That certainly does sound strange. I didn't check their backgrounds well, just relied on their knowledge of breaking and training horses. I certainly will have to investigate this. In the meantime, if Timothy isn't there, I don't want you to stay there at all. I don't think they would harm you, but I don't want to take any chances."

"What do you think they meant, Jonathan?" Julianna was chewing on her lip with worry.

"I don't know, but I have heard from breeders in other areas about a ring of horse thieves. Perhaps they are part of that. If so, they shall be gone from here. I intend to speak with the sheriff tomorrow."

"Does that mean you will be going into town again tomorrow?" Julianna really didn't want to be alone, with them on the premises.

"Yes, but don't worry you are safe here." Jonathan hugged her tight and kissed her. "Let's have our tea and forget this."

Julianna cheered up during tea, telling Jonathan about how excited Laura was. "She wants to have a luncheon at her estate next week. She is checking with Roger first. Is it all right for me to attend? I really think she is lonely."

"Of course it is. Are you going with Maisie and Laura?" Jonathan was pleased that Julianna and Anne were becoming friends.

"We haven't talked about it, but that would make sense, to all go in one carriage."

"Yes, it would and I'd feel better about it too." Jonathan sat back and looked at Julianna, she was once again happy and her eyes dancing.

"I thought, you said the highwaymen were gone from here?" Julianna looked a bit puzzled at Jonathan.

"Yes, they are, but you might say I'm a bit protective of you. I just would be easier if you were all three together. If it can't be arranged it will be fine." Jonathan kissed her softly. "Don't worry, leave all that to me."

Right after breakfast the next morning Jonathan prepared to go into town to talk to the sheriff. He noticed that Julianna trembling a bit, and quickly made up his mind. "Julianna, would you like to go with me? I don't want you in the jailhouse, but you could shop and I'd meet you, then we could have a nice lunch at the inn and return home."

"Jonathan, yes, I would love to go! I'll get my cloak and be ready in 5 minutes." Julianna almost ran from the room.

"Take your time, Julianna; it'll be a bit while the carriage is prepared." Jonathan laughed at her eagerness.

All the way into town, Julianna chattered a mile a minute. "Perhaps I'll see about getting Margaret some material for a dress, maybe a new one for Josie as well. I could have the seamstress come to the estate and measure them. Would that be all right? You could use some new shirts also."

"Slow down Julianna, yes it is all fine with me. I won't take anything you do for Josie or Margaret out of your allowance. Be sure if you shop for yourself, you watch your allowance. So far, you have done well. As to shirts for me, I think James and I can take care of that." Jonathan hugged her to him and held her for a bit. He was amazed more everyday about what a big heart she really had. All she ever needed was a firm guiding hand.

Jonathan lifted Julianna down from the carriage in front of the dressmaker. "I shouldn't be more than an hour. If you should finish before I return and find you, just return to the carriage. I don't want you wandering around, understand?"

"I'll be good Jonathan." Julianna kissed him on the cheek and hurried into the dressmakers. A new supply of material had arrived and Julianna was in heaven. Arrangements were made for a trip to the estate, and Julianna selected several materials for her, and picked a selection to be brought and shown to Josie and Margaret.

The next stop was the milliners. Julianna hadn't purchased a new bonnet in a long time. She selected several and then stopped, trying to think of what she had spent and her allowance. After a few seconds, she decided she really couldn't be close, so she went and picked out a few pairs of new slippers. She had just finished and was on the way back to the carriage when Jonathan appeared.

"Have you finished your shopping?"

"Yes, I just finished. It was very productive." Julianna took the offered arm and they walked to the inn. Once they were seated and had ordered their meal, Julianna asked Jonathan about his errand. "What did you find out from the sheriff?"

"I gave him the names and descriptions. He thinks they match the descriptions he has heard from some others. He is sending for a man who will recognize them if they are. In the meantime, he will watch them when they come into town, see who they meet with."

Jonathan picked up his ale and took a drink from it. "I want you to be very cautious though around the stables. I think it would be best if you sent someone to the stables and ask that Sebastian be brought to you. If I'm available I'll go with you."

"Fine Jonathan, how soon do you think the Sheriff will have the man here?" Julianna hoped this problem would be solved soon, or some of their plans would have to be altered.

"I would think within several days time. Don't worry Julianna, nothing will happen to you." Jonathan squeezed her hand.

The next few days were very uneventful. Jonathan accompanied Julianna to the stable each

morning to retrieve Sebastian on his way to work with the horses. Since he was becoming better trained all the time, Julianna could keep him with her in the house for longer periods of time.

On Saturday Jonathan was not around when it was time to return Sebastian. He had ridden to George's to discuss some business but promised to be home in time for tea. Julianna took Sebastian to the stable and called for Timothy before entering.

"Yes Julianna, do you wish me to take care of him?" Timothy smiled at her shyly.

"Yes thank you Timothy." Julianna handed him a coin. "That's for taking extra special care and being here when I need you."

She watched him take Sebastian and when he returned she made up her mind to question him a bit. "How are things coming with the horses? Are the new men working out?"

Timothy thought it a bit odd that she would ask. "Yes, they seem to be coming along well. I don't really know much about the new men though, they stick to themselves. Is there anything else I can help you with? I do have to feed Sebastian and the horses."

"No, that's all I was just curious." Julianna left and hurried back to the house. She didn't notice the very men she had been talking about approach Timothy as she left.

Timothy didn't like the look on the faces of the two men. They stood in front of him and the taller of the two questioned him. "Whatd' she want askin bout us? What didya tell her?"

Timothy pushed away from them. "What discussions I have with Lady Barrington are none of your business. Aren't you supposed to be working in the corral?"

The man was not about to be avoided; he grabbed Timothy by the shirtfront. "Ye messin with th'missus, aintcha? Either ye be tellin me what she asked, or I may jest have ta be informin his Lordship a yer antics."

Timothy pushed his hand away. "There are no 'antics' between myself and Lady Barrington. If you must know she was asking how the horses were coming along and if the new help was working out. I believe that is her right to know as Lady of the Estate. Now get out of here before I report you to Lord Barrington himself."

The men gave Timothy one last push and grabbed the coin from his hand. "I'll be taken that from ye, Looked like a bribe a some sort ta me. Ye best keep yer mouth shut, ya hear?"

They left seconds before Jonathan rode in. Timothy was still a bit shaken and pale. He held Jonathan's horse as he dismounted and prepared to lead him away.

"Timothy, are you all right? You look a bit pale." Jonathan couldn't help but notice that Timothy wasn't himself.

"I'm fine sir, just a bit of a disagreement with some of the men, nothing serious." He hurried away with Jonathan's horse before he could ask any further questions.

Jonathan was a bit concerned, as the stable hands never had disagreements. This must have something to do with the new hands. Julianna was waiting with the tea in the parlor. Jonathan quickly washed up and joined her. "How was your afternoon?"

"Fine, I played with Sebastian. He is getting so grown up." Julianna poured the tea and handed Jonathan a cup.

"Did you see Timothy at all?"

"Yes, when I returned Sebastian I called from the door to make sure he was there. He took Sebastian from me. Why do you ask?" Julianna was puzzled.

"When I came home, he looked upset and pale. He said he was fine, just a bit of a disagreement with some of the men. It's not like them to have disagreements."

"He was fine when I left and that was only shortly before you arrived. There wasn't anyone else there when I left."

"I guess it is nothing to fret about, but I wonder if those new men are making trouble. I haven't heard from the sheriff yet. I do wish he would hurry though." Jonathan was more concerned than he wanted to let Julianna know. He just didn't have a good feeling about them at all.

The next day after church, George and Laura invited them and Maisie and Richard for tea that afternoon. Julianna was thrilled, as this would give her the perfect opportunity to tell them about the men. They would also be able to make arrangements for Anne's luncheon.

After they arrived and the men were engrossed in conversation, Julianna told Laura and Maisie what had happened. "I was so scared. I haven't had a chance to talk to Timothy, but I have a feeling those men were there yesterday. Perhaps they saw the coin I gave him or heard me questioning him. I just hope they are gone before our big outing. That is only a few weeks away."

Laura was thoughtful. "I overheard George and Jonathan talking yesterday. I think he feels they are part of some band of horse thieves. I'm sure the sheriff will find out about them soon and they will be in jail, and no problem. It is for the best that we planned on leaving from here. There will be no suspicion on you, should they still be there."

The three ladies returned to talking about the luncheon coming on Thursday. Maisie was anxious to see Anne's estate. She hadn't been there yet.

"You will like it Maisie, it is quite lovely. Anne has decorated it well." Julianna loved Anne's house.

The men had finished their conversation and were listening to the end of the ladies discussion.

"Are you ladies tired of your husbands already, that you need to get together without them, when they are home?" George had a mock stern look on his face.

Julianna laughed at him. "Of course not, but we are allowed a bit of fun just for us away from you now and then."

"As long as you behave, of course you are." Jonathan had to laugh at the face Julianna was making.

The week past quickly and it was time for their luncheon. Julianna was ready and waiting for Laura to arrive for her. Jonathan came and waited with her. "I think while you are gone, I'll ride into town and see the sheriff again. I thought we would have heard something by now. I'll be home by tea time."

"Fine, Jonathan, I'll be home by then also." The carriage was pulling into the yard, so Julianna kissed him goodbye and left with Laura.

Jonathan walked to the stables as soon as Julianna left. Timothy saddled his horse for him. While he was working Jonathan questioned him a bit. "Have you settled your differences with the other men?"

Timothy was surprised that Jonathan even remembered. "I think things are fine now Sir."

"I don't mean to pry Timothy, but was it the new men, you were having trouble with?" Jonathan watched him closely for his reaction.

"Yes Sir, they are a bit different than the rest of the men, but it will be fine." Timothy was nervous talking to Jonathan about this.

"Thanks Timothy, I had thought as much, myself." Jonathan mounted and off.

The sheriff had been expecting Jonathan any day. "I'm sorry, but the man I wanted to come has been ill, and unable to travel. If you like, I'll come out and question the men, see if I can find out anything about their past."

"That would be fine. I don't want them to think I don't trust them, if they are innocent, perhaps you could say it was a general inquiry of all new hands in the area?"



"Yes Sir, I can do that. I'll come by first thing tomorrow morning." The sheriff shook Jonathan's hand.

Jonathan decided to have lunch at the Inn, before heading home. He had just been seated when Roger came in. "Come join me. Are you escaping from the ladies?"

Roger sat down with Jonathan and grunted. "Yes, I'm not used to having a busy house. Since Julianna arrived, Anne has been enjoying all the company. I must admit, she seems happier than she had been. I always worry that I bore her being older."

"Yes the four ladies do seem to get along well together. As long as they stay out of trouble it's fine." Jonathan told Roger about his visit to the sheriff and what Julianna had overheard.

"That is a problem. I would want them off my property right away. I'm sure there are others out there just as qualified."

"Yes, there probably are, but I don't want to over react if they are innocent. They are good workers." Jonathan finished his meal and rose. "I best be getting back. I want to be home when Julianna gets there."

"I have a few things to attend to, I'll see you in two weeks for our trip. I think you should be sure, that Julianna will be safe while you're gone."

"I'm sure she will be. The house will be protected and the staff wouldn't let anything happen to her." Jonathan bid him goodbye and rode off. He was thinking on the way though about Julianna being alone. It would only be for one night, and she should be fine. He would have to be sure and talk to her about safety.

The ladies were having a wonderful time at their luncheon making plans for the next two weeks. Anne was thrilled when she heard about the plans to go to the city. "Oh that will be so much fun." Maisie was still a bit reluctant about the trip to the

city, but was looking forward to the picnic and swim.

"We can all meet at my house as close to the men leaving as possible. I'll make sure we have a picnic lunch, and horses ready and we will be off. That way we will have plenty of time to be dry and home before the men return." Julianna had all the plans set in her mind. There would be absolutely no problem at all

The carriage arrived and they parted ways. They would see each other at church and make any adjustments to plans then.

Jonathan was waiting for Julianna and helped her down from the carriage. "How was your luncheon?"

"It was fine, Jonathan, Anne is a wonderful hostess." Julianna hugged Jonathan hard and walked inside with him.

During tea Jonathan told her of the sheriff's visit the next day. "I don't want you outside when he is here. I doubt there will be any trouble, but just in case, you will stay inside."

Julianna was a bit nervous about his visit. "Yes Jonathan, I'll stay in my morning room."

## Chapter Eight

The sheriff arrived early the next morning. Julianna watched as he and Jonathan walked to the stable. She was nervous about the strange men, but at the same time wanted to know what was happening.

She left her room and sought James. "Where will Jonathan and the sheriff talk to the men?"

"I believe madam, the room in the back of the stable. It would be more private there."

"Thank you James." Julianna sat and thought for a minute. The room was way at the back of the stable. She could hide in the last stall and most likely hear what was said. When they sounded like they were almost done, she would run back to the house via the garden. Jonathan would never know she was outside and she would be perfectly safe.

Once her decision was made she hurried to the stable and stealthily crept to the back. She hunched down in the last stall and waited. She was soon rewarded as Jonathan and the sheriff brought one of the men to the office.

"Wot do ye want ta talkwith me for? I aint done nuthin wrong?" The voice was that of the shorter of the two men.

The sheriff responded in a calm voice. "I just like to interview all the new workers who aren't from this region. Lord Barrington was kind enough to give his permission. I only have a few questions for you."

Julianna could barely hear what they said inside, but could tell that the man didn't like being questioned at all.

When they brought the second man in, he was much more vocal. "I resent this, ye haven't a right ta treat us like this. I don't intend ta answer any bloody questions at all."

Julianna wasn't prepared for him to storm from the office. The door was open and if she moved at

all she would be spotted. She was stuck where she was.

Jonathan and the sheriff left the office and walked to the front of the stable. Timothy arrived and took Sebastian from his stall to clean it. Unfortunately Sebastian knew where Julianna was and started barking and ran to where she was hiding. The sheriff had just left and Jonathan returned to see what was causing the commotion. When he saw Julianna hunched down in the straw, trying to hush Sebastian, his face grew stern.

Without saying a word, he pulled her up. "Timothy, please take care of Sebastian." Jonathan gripped Julianna's arm and marched her into the house and to his office.

Timothy stood there with his mouth open. He had no idea Julianna was there and it was clear that she was in deep trouble. Sebastian tried to follow her and Timothy quickly called him. "Sebastian stay!"

Reluctantly the dog stopped and returned to Timothy.

Jonathan slammed the office door and glared at Julianna. She tried to explain, but he wouldn't listen. "There is no explanation for this. It is blatant disobedience."

Jonathan sat down and pulled Julianna over his knee. "I can't believe you did this Julianna."

Before Julianna could say a word her skirts were thrown over her head and her panties were at her knees. Jonathan had pulled the ruler from the top of his desk and it fell repeatedly on her bottom and thighs till they were a dark mottled red and Julianna was sobbing.

Jonathan stopped but let her stay over his knee. "Young Lady, what possessed you to disobey me in this? It could have been extremely dangerous."

"I'm sorry Jonathan, I was curious and wanted to hear." Julianna was sniffing and sobbing.

"You will be even sorrier yet Young Lady." Jonathan stood and removed his belt. "Lay over the

desk and grab the other side. I don't want you to move, is that understood?"

"Please Jonathan, I'll never do it again. Please!" Julianna didn't want to feel the belt.

Jonathan pushed her down and held her with one hand on her back. "I hate to have to do this but you were warned. Blatant disobedience will be dealt with harshly."

He raised his hand and brought the belt down across both cheeks 25 times. Julianna was sobbing so hard; she didn't even realize he had stopped. Jonathan rubbed her back and let her stay there for a minute, then gathered her in his arms. "Julianna, please don't make me keep doing this. You must learn to obey."

"I...I'm so sorry. I...I'll obey you always, I will." Julianna sobbed harder.

"Hush Julianna, you are forgiven, but you have to learn to listen to me. It could have been very dangerous and you could have been hurt." Jonathan held her close to him.

"I want you to go to our room and stay there until tea. You need time to reflect on your behavior. I will tell you then, what the sheriff and I have decided. Now go." Jonathan set her on her feet and hugged her before she left the room.

Julianna ran upstairs as fast as she could. She knew that the servants probably heard the discipline but she didn't want to face any of them right now. When she reached the room, she threw herself down on the chaise and sobbed herself to sleep.

Jonathan stopped by the kitchen and informed them that Julianna would not be lunching today. He then proceeded back to the corral, and observed the men working with the horses, especially the two new ones. They worked along side the others and didn't act any different than usual. After lunch Jonathan worked in his office. Several times he wanted to go and see Julianna, but he forced himself to leave her alone to think, he would send Josie for her when it was time for tea.

Julianna slept for several hours but had been awake from lunchtime on. She was hungry, but knew better than to send for anything. She spent her time reading and sewing until it was finally almost teatime. Josie was just about to call her to get ready when Julianna came to the dressing room. "I fixed a bath for you, if you'd like. There is plenty of time left before tea."

"Thank you, Josie, that would be nice." Julianna disrobed and lowered herself into the warm water. It stung on her backside, but soon helped ease some of the pain. Jonathan had indeed been more upset and spanked her harder than he had in a long time.

Julianna dressed carefully for tea. She picked one of Jonathan's favorite dresses and let Josie pile her hair up on her head. Jonathan was already in the parlor waiting when she entered.

"Good afternoon, Julianna, come sit with me." Jonathan patted the cushion on the sofa next to him.

Julianna sat down very gingerly next to him. Tears were starting to well up in her eyes again. "I'm so sorry Jonathan, I really am."

Jonathan wrapped his arms around her. "Hush, I know you are. But you have been punished and forgiven. No more tears." He kissed her softly and held her a bit.

Julianna wiped away the tears and poured the tea. She couldn't wait any longer. "What did the sheriff say? Are the men the ones that are wanted for the horse thefts?"

Jonathan smiled at her. "You mean you didn't hear all of our conversation?"

Julianna blushed and shook her head. "No, I didn't hear much at all. You did say you would tell me though."

"They were for the most part very uncooperative. The first man told us a few places he had worked, but as you heard the second would say nothing. The sheriff feels they are definitely hiding

something, but with no evidence there is nothing we can do at this time. I watched them work for a while this morning and they didn't seem to be troubled at all by the visit this morning. I intend to talk to the stable master tomorrow and get his opinion. I may just let them go, and hire others."

"Will they do something bad to us if you let them go?" Julianna was clearly worried about the two.

"I hope not, they probably are expecting to be let go, since they were uncooperative anyway. Don't worry Julianna, as long as you obey and do what you're told, you are perfectly safe." Jonathan hugged her. He didn't like to see the fear in her eyes.

As they were relaxing with their tea, the two men they were talking about were making plans of their own.

"As soon as th' blokes are asleep, we move. We can have our horses saddled and ready. Since we won't have time to finish what we came fer, we can at least cause a bit a mischief. I think a nice fire in th'stable would be fine."

"Do ya think we can get away with that fine mare too? I rather fancy that horse, she will be a good un, and we still can get a nice sum, even if she be young yet."

"I think so, jest get th'bridle on her tonight, and tie her up by the fence so we can jest grab her on the way out." The two left for their meal and to prepare for their evening adventures.

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At 11:00 the two men crept quietly out of their bunks and went to the stable. Their horses were saddled and they led them outside and tied them to the fence. Quietly they slipped back in and started a fire in the back office.

"That oughta burn fer a bit, afore anyone notices. There be some nice horses here, too bad about losing them."

The one thing they hadn't counted on was Sebastian. He woke when he heard the men come in, but didn't bark until he smelled smoke. Timothy lived above the stable and was awoken by his barks and growls.

He pulled on his pants and hurried downstairs in time to see the flames and smoke from the office area. He pulled the bell to awake the others and quickly let Sebastian out of his stall, and started leading the frightened horses out. When the other hands arrived one immediately went to fetch Jonathan, while the others fought the fire and helped with the horses.

Jonathan has not yet retired for the evening. Julianna was in bed, but awake and waiting for him. The knock on the door alarmed Jonathan and he opened it at once.

"Sir, I'm sorry to disturb you, but there is a problem in the stables and they need you there at once." James left to see what assistance he could provide.

Julianna sat up in bed. "Jonathan, what is it?"

"There is some problem in the stables. I must go, but I want you to stay in the house. Is that clear?"

Julianna was already putting on her robe. "Yes, but I will go downstairs in case anything is needed."

Jonathan hurried down the stairs and Julianna followed close behind. Julianna gasped when the door was open and she saw the flames coming from the barn. "We must get the horses and Sebastian out. I have to save them."

She started toward the door and was grabbed by Jonathan. "NO, you are to stay here; the men are already removing them."

Before Julianna could react, Sebastian came flying through the door and stopped at her feet. His fur was singed a bit, but he was unharmed. Sebastian was scared and whimpering. Julianna knelt down and examined him thoroughly.



"Keep him here with you, I'll be back as soon as I can." Jonathan left and closed the door.

By this time most of the house was up. Margaret approached Julianna and told her she was making some tea and food.

"Thank you Margaret, I'm sure they will need it"

It took almost 2 hours for the flames to be extinguished. The stable was a total loss, but all of the horses and most of the tack had been saved. The carriage was not so fortunate and was destroyed.

Jonathan came in tired and dirty. "It looks like our two new men started this and fled. Some of the men chased after them and stopped them from stealing one of the horses, but they got away. I've sent someone for the sheriff. It is going to be a long night. Why don't you go back to bed? I'll be there as soon as I can. Take Sebastian with you, if you like." Jonathan kissed Julianna and hugged her tight. "Princess and all the other horses are fine. You can see what's left later, but get some rest now."

Reluctantly Julianna went upstairs calling Sebastian after her. She fell asleep almost instantly and was still sleeping soundly several hours later when Jonathan joined her.

It was mid morning before they both woke. Julianna rolled over into Jonathan's arms. He still smelled slightly of smoke, though he had bathed the soot and grime off.

"Why would they do something like this?" Julianna couldn't understand their motive.

Jonathan sat up and drew her into his arms. "They obviously were here to steal horses. When the sheriff questioned them yesterday, they spooked. I think the fire was a diversion to give them time to get away with some horses. They didn't take into consideration that Sebastian would bark and wake Timothy. If it hadn't been for Sebastian, we may have lost all the horses and Timothy."

Julianna was shocked. "Where are they now?"

"The sheriff is looking for them, but probably as far away from here as they can get. I doubt we shall see them again." Jonathan hugged Julianna tight.

"We better get up and see what the total damages look like." Jonathan rose to dress and Julianna did likewise.

They had breakfast and then both walked with Sebastian to the stable. There was only a shell left. The animals were all out in the corral grazing. The men were busy cleaning up the charred wood and remains of tack and the carriage.

"How long will it take to build a new stable Jonathan?" Julianna was in shock at the sight.

"That won't take too long. I'll have someone hired to start on it immediately. I'm glad I ordered the new carriage; it should be here any day. Until then, I'm afraid you won't be able to go anywhere without me."

While they were still in the yard looking at the remains, Richard and George rode up.

Richard shook his head in amazement. "I heard from some of my hands, what happened. This is a disaster. Was anyone hurt? Did you lose any horses?"

George just shook his head looking at what was left of the stable.

"Fortunately we only lost the structure, some tack and the carriage. Sebastian woke Timothy up shortly after it started and the men acted quickly to get all the animals and most of the tack out. It could have been much worse." Jonathan invited them in.

Julianna followed and asked one of the servants to see what refreshments they would like. She went to her morning room and sat with her head in her hands thinking about all the events of the last 24 hours.

Margaret brought her a cup of tea and sat down with her. "I know you are upset, but it is fortunate that no one was harmed. Everyone is a bit off

schedule today, would you like to skip lunch and have an earlier tea?"

"That would be a good idea Margaret, thank you for thinking of it. I have been in shock and not thinking quite clearly today. Anything you wish to do is fine with me. I'll inform Jonathan."

Julianna was still in her room sipping the tea and thinking about the horrid events when Jonathan joined her.

"How are you feeling? You look a bit pale?" He sat down on the chair and pulled her onto his lap.

"I'm just horrified at the events, I can't believe someone would be that cruel. I'm just glad they are long gone."

"George is sending over a carriage for us to use, so we won't be without until the new one arrives. I sent for some carpenters, I want to start rebuilding at once. By the time I return from our business trip, the new stable should be almost complete. I don't want you worrying about it." Jonathan hugged her and stood up.

"I do have a lot to see to, so I best get busy."

"Margaret suggested we skip lunch and have an earlier tea. Since we ate breakfast late, I agreed. Is that fine with you?"

"Yes, that is perfect. Now, you relax and I'll see you then." Jonathan kissed her and left to see what progress the men were making with cleaning up the remains of the old stable.

---

There were several hours until teatime and Julianna felt restless. She picked up her sewing and put it down. Her book didn't interest her at all, either. The sound of a carriage approaching caught her attention.

She peeked out the window and saw that it was actually two carriages. One was the loaner carriage from George and the other carriage held Laura and Maisie. Julianna ran out to greet them. "I'm so glad to see you. This is just what I needed."

They all hugged each other. Laura linked arms with Julianna. "Oh you poor thing, this is just awful. We couldn't believe it when they told us."

The three ladies sat in the parlor drinking tea and talking about what had happened and their plans for the coming Thursday.

"I have been thinking that perhaps we should change our plans for Thursday. With all the men working around it may be very noticeable. The trip is far more important, we can always swim another day." Julianna waited for their response.

"I think Julianna is right. We can just meet at my house for lunch, and finish our plans for the following week." Laura smiled at the other.

They all agreed and went back to discussing the upcoming trip to town.

"Julianna, are you sure this trip will be safe? What if those men are still around?" Maisie was still a bit concerned about the plan.

"Don't be silly, they are long gone, Jonathan said so. I just had a thought about that though. It may be easier if we ask if we can all stay at one place while they are gone. Actually, I'm not looking forward to being alone anyway."

Laura almost spilled her tea in excitement. "Yes, that is wonderful! I think they will readily agree since this has happened. Julianna, why don't you start by mentioning it to Jonathan?"

Julianna agreed and since it was time to leave, Julianna walked them to their carriage. Jonathan was just returning to the house, and stopped and talked to them for a minute before they left.

"That was nice that you had company this afternoon." Jonathan linked her arm through his.

"Jonathan, I have something to ask you, I hope you won't be upset with me."

Jonathan looked down at Julianna and frowned. "What is it, Julianna?"

"We were just talking about when the four of you leave on your business trip. I'm a bit uneasy about staying alone and it seems they are too. We

thought perhaps we could all stay in one place together? Laura suggested her house."

Jonathan thought for a minute. "I do think you'd be safe here, but that might be a safeguard, in case the men are still around and bent on making trouble. I'll speak to the others when I see them Thursday."

Their stable fire was all the talk at church on Sunday and with the afternoon callers. Jonathan and Julianna received more callers that Sunday than they had since their first week.

By teatime, Julianna was exhausted. She asked Margaret to arrange for tea in their sitting room. All she wanted was to rest and take a nap as soon as tea was over. Jonathan was also tired and in complete agreement.

During tea they talked about the coming week. "Laura, has asked us to lunch on Thursday. Anne is going to pick up Maisie and I, so I won't have to disturb any of the men's work."

"That's fine, I think I'll stop there and get you on the way home. I'd feel better if you weren't here alone this week. I talked briefly to George, Roger and Richard today. They think the idea of the four of you staying together is a good one. Anne is used to being alone, but Maisie told Richard she was a bit worried about it. In light of what happened here, I think you would be more at ease with them also. The four of you can arrange for that while you are at your luncheon. We plan on leaving Wednesday morning and returning late Friday afternoon."

"I'll miss you Jonathan." Julianna squeezed his hand.

"I'll miss you, also. Do you think that the four of you can stay out of trouble while we are gone? It will only be three days, but I know how much trouble you used to be able to get into, in that length of time."

Julianna feigned shock. "What on earth could we possibly do? We'll probably go shopping and visiting for the three days."

"Good, just stay together and out of trouble, and remember your budget."

While they were having their tea and discussing the plans for the upcoming trip, the two men responsible for the fire were discussing some plans of their own.

They had joined up with two of their compatriots, who still wanted to get their hands on some of Jonathan's horses.

"That sheriff is pretty useless, if ya ask me. He shoulda been able ta follow our trail, since we had to ride fast and couldn't take any precautions."

"I think he jest be happy we are outta his hair for now."

One of the two newcomers was a bit sharper than the others. "While you were there, what did you learn about the daily routine and their habits?"

"They guard them horses pretty well durin the day. Gotta be a night job."

"Getting them horses is one thing, I wanta get back at Lord Barrington himself. One way I know of is ta grab his Lady and ransom her. She be a might pretty little thin, we can have some fun with her whilst we're at it."

The four sat and talked long into the night planning the best way to find out what was happening at the estate. They finally decided that one of the others, that hadn't been in town, should hang out at the inn and see what information he could pick up.

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Early the next morning Clyde as he was known rode into town and managed to get work at the stable tending visitor's horses. Clyde was smarter than the others and was quick to pick up on snatches of conversation as people dropped off their horses. The main topic was the fire at the Barrington Estate.

While dining at the Inn on Wednesday he learned that the local Earls would be meeting there

the next day. He smiled to himself. It would be a perfect day to pick up a lot of information.

Early Thursday Jonathan was ready to leave for the meeting. "Julianna, remember, I'll pick you up at Laura's so wait there for me."

"Yes Jonathan, I will. Have a good day." Julianna kissed him goodbye and went upstairs to finish preparing for her day.

An hour after he left Maisie and Anne arrived for her. They chatted excitedly about their upcoming adventure all the way to Laura's.

Laura was equally excited when they arrived. "We are going to have so much fun while they are gone. I can hardly wait to get to the stores and see all the wonderful things they have. The best part of it is that the men pay no attention to the type of goods available locally, so they'll never know where we got them."

Julianna had been quiet for bit thinking. "Laura, are you sure your servants won't question the fact that we will be gone for an entire day?"

"Of course, they never question anything. I will request the carriage be ready at dawn and an early breakfast. I'll tell the cook we will require a late dinner when we return. That should give us several hours of shopping time." Laura patted Julianna's hand reassuringly. "Don't tell me you are getting worried about this?"

"No, I just want to make sure we are thinking of everything. We will have to plan some other things for the other days also. I think we can have our picnic and swim one day too. We won't even have to worry about the time. What day do we want to go into the city? I thought perhaps Thursday would be the best day. We can have our swim on Wednesday and do some visiting on Friday." Julianna was beaming at the thought of the fun they would have.

Jonathan and the others didn't even notice there was a new hand at the town stable. They chatted as they arrived and then left for the inn for their

meeting. Clyde paid attention to every scrap of information he could glean. He hoped to learn even more during their luncheon. He had arranged to fill in for the serving, in his experience that was the best time to hear things. A few tankards of ale loosened the tongues nicely.

During lunch a discussion of the recent rash of thieveries and the fire at the Barrington Estate was heavily discussed. Clyde happened to be clearing some dishes from a table next to where Jonathan and his group were dining and could hear their conversation.

Roger was explaining to one of the other men their upcoming business trip. "Yes, we have decided that the ladies are to stay together. I doubt there is really any danger, but they feel more comfortable together than alone, and we do also."

Clyde was called away before he could hear anymore about the trip. He hurried back as soon as he could to the area, hoping to hear more. The conversation was now on other business and he was out of luck. Hopefully he would hear more when they picked up their horses.

The four men walked to the stables together to get their horses after the meeting was over. They stood talking as they waited for the horses to be saddled. Clyde made sure he was where he could hear their conversation.

"Where shall we meet on Wednesday?" Roger was almost ready to leave and wanted to finalize the plans.

"I plan on taking Julianna to George's on Tuesday night. I'll leave from there on Wednesday. I can meet anywhere you like."

George thought for a minute and made a suggestion. "Why don't you all come over Tuesday evening? There is plenty of room, and we could leave even earlier that way."

Roger and Richard both agreed instantly. Roger mounted his horse, and called back on his way out. "I'll see you Tuesday evening then."



"I'm so glad this is working out this way. I really didn't like the thought of them alone till Friday." Richard's horse was there so he mounted and left.

George and Jonathan rode out together to George's house. On the way they talked about the upcoming trip. "Perhaps we can get things handled faster and arrive home early as a surprise for the ladies."

Jonathan thought for a minute. "Yes, since we will be able to leave earlier Wednesday morning, it may be possible to return late on Thursday. I like that idea and I think Roger and Richard will too."

Once the four were gone, Clyde left and rode back to the cave where his associates were hiding.

Dismounting outside he gave the coded whistle and then entered. "I have some great information to share with all of you." Clyde sat down near the fire and related what he overheard.

"So, you see we can kidnap, not only Lady Barrington, but the other three as well. The money to be made on them is worth far more than any horse ever will be."

Time seemed to fly by for the ladies. All their plans were set and they were all excited about their time together, especially the trip to the city. They were all to think of any problems they might encounter and they would be able to talk about them on Sunday.

Julianna and Laura were just getting set for tea when Jonathan and George arrived. They greeted them enthusiastically.

Jonathan hugged Julianna and then held her at arms length. "I do hope you behaved yourselves?"

"Of course we did. We just lunched and chatted."

The two couples had an enjoyable time and soon it was time for Jonathan and Julianna to leave. Jonathan sat Julianna on the horse and mounted behind her. Dusk was setting in and Julianna leaned back against Jonathan and dozed a bit.

Jonathan was always amazed at how easily she could sleep on the horse when he was holding her. She woke as they were riding into the yard. Timothy was waiting and held the horse while Jonathan dismounted and lifted Julianna down.

Julianna looked around the yard. "Where's Sebastian?"

"He is in the back corral running with the horses. He is having a wonderful time, getting all his energy out."

"Jonathan, can we go see?"

"I think we can manage that." Jonathan took Julianna's hand and they walked over to the fence. Sebastian was indeed running around with Princess. Julianna called to him and he ran barking over to the fence.

"What a good boy you are." Julianna patted his head. Sebastian danced around for a bit and then ran back after Princess.

Jonathan laughed. "I think it's time to start training him for hunting. He will be a natural."

Julianna didn't say anything but frowned.

"Julianna, you've known that I was going to train him for that, so no pouting. I think it's getting a bit late, we should go in." Jonathan took her arm and led her back to the house.

---

The four thieves sat around the fire plotting the kidnap. The dumbest one was dubious that it would work. "I think stealin horses would be easier. Ya never know what guards them ladies may have."

Clyde gnawed the last hunk of meat off the bone and threw it at him. "Don't ye be such a dunce. Them ladies are bound ta go off by themselves at some point. Even if they be in a carriage, four a us, can overtake it easy. We jest have ta wait fer th'right opportunity. Now, I'll be goin back ta town ta find out exactly where these ladies be stayin, then we can stake out th'roads around it."

Clyde mounted his horse and rode back to town. A few days of the right questions at the Inn and stable should tell him all he wanted to know.

Julianna spent the rest of the week planning for the coming adventures. By Sunday none of the ladies could think of any problems. Everything was set.

Jonathan wasn't taking James with him and Julianna decided that Josie could have the time off. She hadn't had a break since before Maisie's wedding.

By noon on Tuesday Julianna was packed and ready to go. Jonathan was packing some of his papers in his saddlebags, along with the clothing he would need, when Julianna came into the room. "When are we going? Shouldn't we be leaving soon?"

"Julianna, it is early, and I have some things to work on yet. I didn't know you were that impatient to see me gone?"

"I'm not Jonathan, I will miss you dearly, but I'm just excited and anxious to go. We shall have such a lovely evening tonight."

"Go sit and read or sew, or do something for the next hour, until I'm ready to leave. If you start pestering or sulking, you will be sitting on a sore bottom for the next few days." Jonathan hugged and kissed her and sent her out the door.

Julianna amused herself as best she could for the hour until Jonathan was ready to go.

All the way there in the carriage Jonathan lectured her. "I want you to behave and follow all the rules while I'm gone. The carriage will be sent back home, but if you should need anything, send for it. You are not to ride off alone? Understand?"

"Yes, Jonathan I understand." Julianna had to force herself to sound sincere. She hadn't lied after all, she did understand what he was saying, and she just wasn't going to abide by the exact letter of it.

The evening was indeed festive and the couples all had a wonderful time. They all retired early as the men were leaving before dawn.

Julianna snuggled up to Jonathan after they made love and rubbed his chest. "I shall miss you. Please take care of yourself."

"I'll be fine and so will you. Don't worry; I'll be home before you have much of a chance to miss me. This is a once a year meeting so I won't be away from you many times." Jonathan settled her head down on his chest and they both fell asleep.

Jonathan woke early in the morning at the soft knocking on the door. He rose carefully as to not wake Julianna and left to dress. He returned when he was ready to leave. Julianna was still sleeping but stirring softly in her sleep. Jonathan gazed down on her for a moment. His heart was filled with love for the lady in his bed. He sat down on the edge and kissed her softly on the cheek. "I'm off, please be safe, and I'll see you on Friday. I love you."

Julianna awoke at his kiss and words. "Jonathan, I love you too."

Jonathan kissed her once more and left. Julianna drifted back to sleep feeling safe and looking forward to a happy few days.

Waking a few hours later Julianna dressed and went downstairs. Anne and Laura were there but Maise hadn't risen as yet.

They were sipping tea and eating scones when Maisie finally appeared. "I'm sorry, I was just so tired I couldn't wake up. I hope I haven't delayed our plans."

Laura rang the bell on the table. "No, not at all. The picnic basket is packed and ready. I've asked for the horses to be brought to the rear by the kitchen. That way no one from the road can see us."

Maisie ate her breakfast and the four left with their basket through the kitchen. The staff wondered a bit what they were up to, but knew better than to ask.

Clyde had obtained the information he needed. He knew exactly where the ladies were. He and his three associates fanned out on the road to watch their actions. They spent the entire Wednesday watching the roads to no avail.

The ladies rode across the fields and took the back way to the lake. Anne let out a small sigh of remembrance when the lake came in view "What memories this brings back. We had such fun here as children."

The day was sunny and pleasant and they all swam and had a marvelous time. Julianna had learned to thoroughly enjoy swimming and swam longer than the rest. When she finally dried off on the blanket Laura laughed at her. "I can't believe that you never learned to swim and Jonathan had to force you to learn. You enjoy it more than the rest of us do."

"I haven't been here for so many years. It is so much fun. Maybe we could have the men bring us here for a picnic next year." Anna rested on the blanket and let the sun soak through her body.

It was mid afternoon when they packed up and returned home. They giggled all through tea and all of them were so excited about the trip the next day. They would leave at dawn to ensure they would be home before dark. The carriage was ready and they would have a driver and a footman, so technically they weren't breaking any rules all.

"They never once told us we couldn't go to the city. It was never mentioned, and we aren't going alone." Julianna was feeling rather smug.

All retired early since they would be up very early the next morning.

The four thieves spent the evening around the campfire eating and drinking. Clyde was amazed that they hadn't caught one sighting of them that day.

"Mebbe they were tired and rested up today. I betcha we'll catch em tomorrow. Rich men we'll be." They drank into the wee hours of the morning and

then fell asleep. They were in no hurry to rise as they never knew of a lady that rose early. They had at least to mid morning to get in place.

The ladies were in the carriage and leaving before dawn broke. Maisie was so excited. "There is this wonderful millinery in the city. We will be able to get the finest hats in the area. I haven't spent any money since my marriage so I won't have to worry about my budget at all."

"I have been so good; I don't have a thing to worry about either." Julianna was so excited about all the finery in the city.

Laura and Anne looked at each other and laughed. Laura was amazed at both of them. "George hasn't looked at what I spend ever. I don't have much of an opportunity to shop, but he never questions it."

"Roger doesn't care what I spend. I think that is his way of trying to keep me happy." Anne chimed in.

By the time Clyde and his boys rose and shook the remnants of last night's drink from their heads, the ladies were in the city.

Faithfully they took up their positions along the road. Surely, they would see them soon this morning.

---

Julianna was in awe as they pulled into the city. She had never been there before and it was shocking to see so many carriages and people around. "This is amazing! It's hard to believe this many people live so close to one another."

Julianna was the only one who hadn't been to the city before, so the others sat back and let her appreciate it.

Laura instructed the driver where to pull up and the footman helped them out. "Please wait here for us to return, it will be several hours."

The ladies hustled off to see the stores. By lunchtime they were starving after all their

shopping. Anne knew of a nice inn where they could have a meal. Once again Julianna was amazed at the number of women eating together. Apparently shopping together in the city wasn't unusual. "I wonder why they have so much more freedom than we do."

Anne was taking off her cloak and bonnet, but turned to answer. "It's because there are so many people and they have constables patrolling the streets. They don't have to worry about traveling so far to the stores."

Lunch was delicious. They all were glad that Anne had suggested it. "Now, back to shopping!" Laura declared and they left to finish up.

They returned to the carriage and were so tired they didn't know if they could stay awake for the ride home. Their purchases would be delivered during the next few weeks. All of them had purchased dresses and hats and some things for their homes. They were happy and exhausted.

"What shall we do tomorrow?" Maisie asked. "I don't know that I feel like doing anything too ambitious right now I'm too tired to think of calling."

Laura yawned. "I know; I'm tired myself. Perhaps we shall just rest tomorrow and plan our next adventure. The men will be home by teatime I'd think, or at least for dinner. The plan is for you to stay the night and go home the next morning."

---

Clyde and his friends were growing weary of sitting watching the roads. There was little activity and not one sighting of the ladies. By three in the afternoon they gathered together on the road to Laura's house.

"We gotta find out what they be doin. They surely can't be holed up fer two days, without a breath a air. I think I'll go ta th'kitchen and ask fer th'lady a th'house. Least then we be knowin what's goin on, and I can get a feel fer how many men be

around." Clyde rode off to the house and dismounted and walked to the kitchen entrance.

A large round maid answered the door. "What do you want?"

Clyde held his hat in his hand. "Sorry ta bother ye Ma'am, but I'd like ta speak ta th'lady a th'estate. I may have sumthin she would be interested in."

"Well, you're out of luck. The ladies aren't home. I doubt any of them would be interested in anything you have to peddle. Now be off, afore I have you thrown off." The door slammed in his face.

Clyde had a grim smile on his face as he rode back to join the others. "Seems they gave us th'slip. I noticed there weren't a carriage in the stable either. I think them buggers must a left for somewhere early this morning. Which means they should be returnin soon. My idea is they went to th'city. Let's ride toward there and intercept them."

They rode off on the road to the city, bound and determined to grab the ladies.

---

Jonathan and the other Earl's had worked long, hard hours to finish early. The meetings were finally concluded; far faster and earlier than they had anticipated.

Jonathan woke up that morning with an uneasy feeling and it hadn't abated as the day went on. After lunch he couldn't stand it any longer. "The rest of you can stay for the night if you wish, but I've been uneasy all day. I'm going to ride on out and get home tonight."

George rose. "I agree; I'll go with you. We can ride hard across country and come out on the road from the city right before town. That should cut several hours off the journey."

Richard and Roger also agreed to leave with them. Richard commented as he mounted his horse. "I guess none of us really trust what those four may



have gotten up to. With those men on the loose, I think we'll all feel better getting home tonight."

"I think we are probably exaggerating the danger. Anne would never do anything foolish, especially when I forbade her to do it. We got that straightened out early in our marriage."

"Roger, don't underestimate the power of Julianna and Laura to persuade the other two to do almost anything. Julianna alone can come up with the worst of plans, but Laura is her match and I worry about what they may have come up with." Jonathan rode along side the others.

"Laura has always been a bit on the wild side. She grew up with absolutely no supervision or rules. I think she has come a long way, but there are still occasions when I need to rein her in." George shook his head thinking of some of the adventures she had gotten herself involved in.

"I think Anne will be a calming influence on them. After all she is a bit older and the epitome of obedience." Roger was proud of her.

"I hope you're right, but I'll not rest until we get there and see them safe and sound." Jonathan kicked his horse into a faster gallop.

They all would have been stunned if they knew where their ladies were at that moment.

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The four ladies had all napped in the carriage for at least an hour. Julianna woke first and looked out, the window. She recognized the area; they were nearing the town, which meant they would be home very soon. She ached from sleeping in a cramped position and could certainly use some tea. Anne, Maisie and Laura woke shortly after.

Maisie rubbed her eyes sleepily. "Where are we?"

"We are almost to town, so we should be home very shortly." Julianna had no sooner spoken when she heard shouts and the carriage started to slow down.

The four looked at each other and pales. "What in the world could be wrong?"

They locked the door and could hear the footman and driver yelling at four other men. They had rough voices and Julianna suddenly recognized one of them.

"I think we are in deep trouble. I recognize that voice. It is one of the men that burned our stable. What are we going to do? Do we have anything to fight with?" Julianna looked around the carriage for anything that could be used as a weapon.

As she was looking a shot rang out. The four froze in panic. Julianna gasped as a dirty face appeared at the window. "G'day me pretties. Best ye be openin this door fer me. We need ta discuss some business with ye."

Julianna pulled the shade down with a snap. "What are we going to do? They have guns and may have killed the driver."

Laura started fiddling in the cushions of the couch. "Just as I thought, George hid a gun in here, when we had the highwaymen just in case we were ever stopped. Does anyone know how to use it?"

Julianna took it from her. "No, but there is a first time for everything. Take your hats off ladies and use your hairpins to poke at them, I'm not sure how long it will be before they force open the door."

Maisie was sitting frozen and crying. "Maisie, stop that! We have to fight to save ourselves."

They were all armed and ready when the door jerked open and several hands reached in to grab for them.

The ladies screamed and started poking at them with the pins.

"Ouch, they be attackin us. OUCH! Stop that ye bitch!" One of the men with a bloody hand reached in and grabbed Maisie and pulled her out.

Julianna had shifted to the farthest corner of the carriage and urged the others to continue fighting. They could hear Maisie screaming and an oath from the man holding her. A swift kick from her in the

right place and he dropped her and rolled on the ground. She picked up rocks and started throwing them at the men.

The driver and footman were tied and bound to the front of the carriage. They watched in wide-eyed astonishment at the ladies fighting.

Julianna was the only one left in the carriage and Clyde was determined to grab her. Every time he made a move for her he was kicked or poked with the pins.

Finally he managed to climb into the couch and as he was about to grab her Julianna fired a shot. It hit Clyde in the arm and he fell back out of the couch, screaming in agony.

The four Earls were just cresting the hill when they heard the first shot. They soon saw a carriage stopped on the road and four men disarming the driver and footman.

George let out a yell, as he recognized his carriage and men. "They have our ladies."

The men rode hard and arrived just in time to see Clyde fall injured from the carriage.

They pulled weapons and soon all the thieves were bound, and placed in the carriage.

The driver and footman were untied and instructed to take them to town and turn them over to the sheriff and tell him what happened.

Four very scared disheveled ladies were huddled together on the side of the road.

Four very angry and scared gentlemen glared at them.

Jonathan regained his voice first. "Anyone of you care to tell us, WHAT IN THE NAME OF ALL THAT IS HOLY, YOU ARE DOING HERE?"

Maisie tried to speak, but burst into tears instead. Richard picked her up and placed her on his horse. "I think maybe we should get them home and warmed up and finish our conversations there."

Jonathan grabbed Julianna and hugged her tight before putting her on his horse. "You almost scared the life out of me Julianna. I can't imagine what you

were thinking of, any of you, but you best have a good explanation or I guarantee you will not like the consequences at all."

It was a cold sorry lot that was led into the house forty minutes later. The ladies left to clean up and change clothes. The gentlemen retired to the parlor and poured stiff drinks for themselves.

Roger was in shock. "I can't believe Anne was part of this foolishness. Did any of you learn where they were?"

"Laura told me they were in the city. They left early this morning and were just returning. Her justification is something to the effect that, they weren't told not to, and they weren't alone." George sank down in a chair. "I don't think my heart has started beating normally yet."

Jonathan paced the room. "They should all know better than that. Julianna was told that I would take her some day. Their reasoning is pitiful."

"I know one lady who will be lucky if she sits comfortably anytime in the next month." Richard was still furious. "I don't know if they realize how close they came to being abducted."

Upstairs the four had changed and were whispering together in the hall. Anne was the most afraid. "Roger is furious with me. He could barely talk all the way back."

"George doesn't seem to think much of my excuse either." Laura bit her bottom lip.

Julianna was trying to comfort Maisie. "I would say we are all in a great deal of trouble. All we can do is plead innocence; that we really didn't think they would care."

"I guess we better get down there and face them." Maisie wiped her eyes one more time. "It was awfully scary."

Four very subdued ladies walked into the parlor to join their husbands. A maid had brought tea and Laura poured a cup for each of them. Even though they had a substantial lunch they were all hungry.

There was no conversation for the first five minutes. Jonathan was leaning against the fireplace watching Julianna fidget. "I think it's time to hear what the ladies have to say. you were and what you were doing?"

Julianna swallowed hard and looked at Jonathan with sad eyes. "You had told us we could shop and have fun, as long as we didn't ride out alone anywhere. We decided since we had a full day, that it would be fun to go to the city. We weren't alone. We took the carriage with a driver and a footman. Plus, you told me, those men were far away, and there were no highwaymen anymore. We thought it was perfectly safe."

Jonathan's face turned a dark red and his eyes glowed in anger. "Do the four of you realize how close you came to being abducted? That was their intention; to kidnap you and hold you for ransom. What else may have happened to you, God only knows."

Roger had calmed down. "I have never heard such nonsense in all my years, and I have a few on the others here. You all know very well that we never would have allowed such a thing. On that long of a journey, four women are not safe with two old men. They could easily have been killed also. Personally I've heard enough. Anne, go to our room and stay there until I come. You may as well prepare for bed as you won't be returning down here."

"But Roger, what about dinner?" Anne really didn't think he would punish her.

Roger didn't bother answering her. He pulled her from the chair and swatted her hard. "I told you to do something. Now go. Have you also forgotten how to obey?"

Anne paled and ran from the room. The remaining three ladies also paled and looked at each other. They were afraid to look at their husbands.

"Julianna, I want you to go to our room also." Jonathan said no more and Julianna immediately left the room.

Richard and George also ordered their ladies to their rooms.

George half smiled. "I guess we will have a solitary dinner tonight."

"Yes we shall, and I don't intend to miss it. After this I'll be ready for a meal." Jonathan poured another drink and sat down. "I intend to let Miss Julianna think about what is coming for a while."

The others sat and discussed the entire affair. Roger summed up their thoughts. "At least the sheriff has them securely locked up now. I believe they have a long list of crimes on their hands. Most likely they were even highwaymen at some time. Their time on this earth is limited."

Slowly each gentleman left to attend to his lady. Jonathan waited the longest, and then slowly climbed the stairs. The sounds of bottoms being soundly smacked and ladies cries echoed throughout the hallways. The servants were certainly getting an earful this afternoon.

Julianna jumped when Jonathan opened the door. Jonathan was pleased to notice that she had changed into her nightgown even though he hadn't told her to. She was sitting on the edge of the bed trembling. He sat down next to her and pulled her onto his lap. "I have a few things I want to say, and I don't want you to say a word, until I ask you to."

Julianna stole a quick look at Jonathan and nodded. His face was still hard and stern and his eyes glaring.

"I thought when I came over the hill and saw that carriage and then heard the shot, that surely you would be killed. Those men were dangerous and armed. You shot one, and they wouldn't have hesitated to kill all of you and still demand ransom. That gun was useless to you beyond one shot. You didn't know how to reload or have the powder to do it. I explained to you in great length what

highwaymen and men of that ilk do to ladies." Jonathan stopped and took a breath.

"You knew I would never allow you to go to the city without me, or at least without proper guards. You risked your life, those of the other ladies, the driver and footman, as well as my future happiness with you. I don't know what it will take to drive this lesson home to you Julianna. You hear the others being punished and quite severely from the sounds of it. Yours will be no less severe." Jonathan grabbed her arm and pulled her over his knee and lifted her nightgown.

His hand slapped down hard over and over again on her bottom and thighs until she was pleading with him to stop and her bottom was a deep red. "Now, I still don't want a word from you Julianna. Go and stand in the corner and think about what you did, and what the consequences could have been. When I think you might possibly have some idea of the seriousness I shall continue."

Jonathan lifted her to her feet and Julianna cried all the way to the corner. She knew better than to try and talk, it would only make matters worse.

Julianna stood there for what seemed like eternity thinking about what Jonathan had said. She had quieted and when she realized he was right, she started sobbing again. This was the sign Jonathan was waiting for. "Come here, Julianna."

She turned and walked over to him. He guided her back over his knee. "Do you realize now, the consequences of your actions?"

"Yes Jonathan, I'm sorry. I didn't think. I should have obeyed you and listened to you." Julianna sobbed.

"Yes you should have. But you didn't. I don't like to punish you Julianna; I have told you that before. However, until you learn to obey, you will be punished and severely."

Julianna barely had time to breathe before his razor strop landed hard on her thighs. The pain was worse than anything she had ever experienced. He

continued to spank her until her thighs and bottom were well colored. Finally he threw the strop down and gathered her in his arms.

"I'm sorry Jonathan. I won't ever disobey you again." Julianna hugged him and cried into his chest.

"What am I to do with you Julianna? You have to learn to trust and listen to me. I know you mean it every time you promise never to disobey again, but then you do. What will it take for you to learn?" Jonathan held her and rubbed her back, but wasn't sure how to impress this lesson on her further.

"Julianna, if you disobey me in anything again, you will receive the strap twice as much as today, and will not be able to leave to go anywhere for a month without me. Each time it will get worse, until you learn." Jonathan kissed her and set her on her feet.

"I will try, I will, I promise." Julianna felt ashamed and suddenly scared that Jonathan would fall out of love with her. She had heard of men taking mistresses.

"Go to bed now, and I'll be up later." Jonathan kissed her on the forehead and left the room. He paused as he closed the door and heard the sound of her sobs coming from the room. His heart was torn, but she had to learn, and if it took being alone with no comfort, than it would be a small price to pay.

The men gathered for dinner, but it was a subdued gathering.

"What do you think we should do about our plans for tomorrow?" George asked them when they were sitting with their brandies.

"Our carriages aren't scheduled to pick us up until Saturday morning. I think we have four very contrite ladies. I know Anne is beside herself, with remorse. They really felt they were safe, and it was just a lark. I think we keep our plans. A quiet picnic may be just the thing for them." Roger waited for the others opinions.



Jonathan smiled. "I think you're right. Plus the servants are geared up for the special dinner tomorrow night. Perhaps it will help to let them know they are forgiven."

When it was time to retire, they left for their rooms. Jonathan opened the door softly in case Julianna was sleeping. At first he thought her asleep, until he climbed into bed and heard the muffled sobs she was making into her pillow. "Julianna, stop, it is over." Jonathan pulled her into his arms. Her face was swollen from crying and her nightgown and pillow soaked with tears.

"You are forgiven and I love you, now there is no need for this." Jonathan soothed her as best he could. Julianna was almost hysterically crying.

"I ...I don't want you to leave me...and...and get a mistress." Julianna tried to lie back down.

Jonathan was shocked. "Julianna Barrington! I never, ever even intimated such a thing. I should spank you again for even thinking that. Now, I said you were forgiven and you are. Come here and stop this. I love you more than life. That is why you were punished."

Julianna slowly calmed down and let Jonathan soothe her with kisses. "Now let me show you just how much I do love you." Jonathan slowly made love to her. Julianna responded with more passion than she ever had before. She fell asleep still entwined in Jonathan's arms, her nightgown forgotten.

When she woke the next morning she was embarrassed to find she was wearing no nightclothes. She retrieved her nightgown and put it back on.

"You needn't worry about being embarrassed Julianna." Jonathan pulled her back into his arms and once more made love to her. When they both recovered Jonathan told her about the plans for the day. "But, you best behave, all of you."

The ladies were subdued and all on their best behavior. Their husbands with the exception of Roger had never seen them so obedient and loving.

The rest of the day and evening passed uneventfully. That night the dinner was festive and smiles were finally restored to the ladies faces, even if sitting wasn't very pleasant for any of them.

They all returned to their homes, promising never, ever to disobey again. They soon found that they all had very good reasons to behave themselves.

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### **One year later...**

The ladies were gathered at the Barrington estate awaiting the return of their husbands from the annual business trip. Sebastian was curled up next to the fireplace sleeping.

Julianna laughed looking around the room at all of them. "Would any of you have believed a year ago, we would be here like this?"

"No, I especially never would have thought it possible." Anne was smiling broadly as she rocked her infant son.

"I know, I do think motherhood has changed us all." Julianna looked at young Alex Jonathan Barrington sleeping in her arms.

All of the ladies had borne sons in the year since their last adventure. Motherhood had kept them busy for the year.

Laura looked over her son's head at the others. "Don't you think soon we will need some sort of adventure though?"

Maisie laughed at the sparkle that came to Julianna's eyes. "Oh yes, I think soon. But something we won't get in trouble with."

