

Red Sage Presents

Alice
Gaines

Three
Kinds
of
Wicked

To
Touch
a Woman



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*To Touch a
Woman*

* * *

by Alice Gaines

To My Reader:

What could be more fun than having two sexy lovers dedicated to your pleasure? Margaret Sinclair is a lucky woman. I hope all my readers can be so lucky.

To Touch a Woman: Chapter 1

Why did love have to be so bloody hard? As the carriage rattled over country roads, Edward Sinclair gazed across the narrow space that separated him from his wife of three months. With nothing but the lanterns outside for illumination, she resembled a fey creature of fragile beauty. The shifting light played over her amber curls, pale skin, and deep green eyes. Even in near darkness he could read her fear. Fear she tried to hide behind a brave but faltering smile. Fear of him, for the love of God. Fear that he'd want carnal knowledge of her body again and that he'd muck it up. Again.

"Are you quite well, Margaret?" he asked.

She gave him the pleasant expression she always did, an upward curl to her lips that masked the trepidation in her eyes. "I'm very well, my darling."

"You seem...." Oh hell, what word would he use tonight? "Out of sorts."

"A bit tired. It's been a long day."

"We should reach Baresford soon. The inn there is clean and sets a decent table."

"There you are," she said. "I'll be fine."

If only he could believe that. They'd shared such happiness before their marriage. Such joy at falling hopelessly, madly in love with each other. Such excitement when their parents had approved the match. Then, on their wedding night when they could finally make the ultimate commitment to each other, he'd hurt her with his clumsiness. Things hadn't gotten any better since.

"I want you to be happy, Margaret," he said.

She leaned across the seat they shared and put her hand on his. "I am, my darling. Truly."

He lifted her fingers to his mouth and kissed the backs. "I'll make that other thing good. I don't know how, but I will."

Mistake, that. She stiffened. Not much, only enough for a loving eye to catch. She smiled as she pulled away and settled back against her seat.

“We should talk about this,” he said. “Other couples must have faced the same problem. They’d have worked through it somehow.”

“We will, too.”

“Only if you help me. I need to know how to please you. I need to know what makes you feel good.” Damn him, he already knew what hurt her.

“Everything you do feels good.”

Now she’d started lying outright. She couldn’t think she’d fool him with that. She hoped only to put off the conversation. Well, he wouldn’t allow that any longer. His body craved hers like a drug. If they didn’t do something soon, he’d go mad with wanting her.

“My darling, I know you’re reluctant to talk about this, but—”

The coach suddenly stopped, nearly throwing him across the seat and onto her lap. Outside, tack jangled and the horses whinnied and stamped their feet. He regained his balance and stuck his head out the window. “Ned, what’s going on there?”

“A stranger, Mr. Sinclair. I swear, he jumped out at us.”

“Make yourself known,” Edward called. Most likely the fellow wasn’t a highwayman. If he had been, he’d be issuing orders by now. More likely a farmer who’d drunk too much and had gotten himself lost.

The man who approached the carriage was no farmer. He wore a finely cut suit of black wool, every bit as expensive as Edward’s own. When he removed his hat, he revealed dark eyes and gleaming black hair a bit overlong for fashion.

“I’m sorry I startled your horses,” he said, although he didn’t look the least bit apologetic or even alarmed at being far from civilization and alone.

“Who are you?” Edward demanded. A bit rude, perhaps, but the man had appeared from nowhere to disturb his horses.

“Wilkes Treveylan.” The man smiled, revealing teeth too perfect and a wicked glint in his eyes. “My horse threw me, and now the beast has run off.”

“Where are you headed?”

“I’d hoped to make Baresford by now.”

That didn't answer the question of his ultimate destination. The man had an air about him that suggested he'd reveal only what suited him. A fanciful conclusion for such a short conversation, but what in bloody hell was he doing here at this time of night?

"Who is it, Edward?" Margaret asked.

He pulled himself back into the carriage. "A stranger. Says his mount's run off."

"We'll take him with us, then."

"Do you think that wise?"

She put her hand on his arm. "I think we must."

"Right." He opened the door. "You're welcome to ride with us to Baresford."

"Thank you." The man—Treveylan—climbed in and sat across from Edward as if he'd expected the invitation.

"I'm Edward Sinclair, and this is my wife Margaret."

Treveylan set his hat on the seat beside him and nodded toward Margaret. "Ma'am."

"Mr. Treveylan."

"Call me Trey, please."

The devil she would, Edward thought. Neither would he. They didn't know the man from Adam and didn't plan to keep his acquaintance for longer than it took to get to the inn. They wouldn't be using nicknames with him.

"Have we met, Mr. Treveylan?" Margaret asked. Good girl.

The man's brow rose at the dismissal of his request for familiarity. Otherwise, his face gave nothing away. "No."

"You seem familiar," she said.

"I look like a lot of people."

That wasn't true, as the man had to know. He had the face and figure women swooned over when imagining he'd make a good pirate or other such nonsense. The unusual cut of his hair, the reckless tilt of his jaw, the spark of insolence in his dark eyes gave him an air of danger women found romantic, if not acceptable attributes for a husband. Margaret herself didn't appear immune to it, although she snuggled closer to Edward as she studied the stranger

across from her.

“Could we have met in London?” she said. “At Lord and Lady Fairfax’s, perhaps.”

“I’m sorry. I don’t know them. In any case, I’m seldom in town.”

“I’m sure I’ll remember in time,” she concluded.

“We haven’t met. I wouldn’t have forgotten you, Mrs. Sinclair.”

Exactly the sort of thing a rake said to start a flirtation. Edward squeezed Margaret’s hand. “Mr. Trevelyan’s a stranger.”

“I was only trying to be pleasant, Edward.”

“I’m sorry if I’ve caused a problem,” Trevelyan said. “Pretend I’m not here.”

A good suggestion, if they could manage it. The interloper dominated the space too completely for that, though. They’d endure each other’s company for the rest of the journey and part ways at the inn. Edward put his arm around his wife. “Lay your head on my shoulder and see if you can doze.”

She nodded and did as he suggested, closing her eyes. He stared across the carriage at the other man. Not ordinarily a jealous sort, he could make an exception in this case.

Trevelyan leaned back and stared out the window, although he couldn’t possibly see anything but the bobbing lantern. The coach rocked, not unlike a cradle, but neither of them would sleep. With any luck, Margaret would.

Time stretched out as if it had stopped passing at all, and Edward managed to relax enough to enjoy the floral scent of his wife’s hair and the warmth of her small body next to his. They fulfilled each other so perfectly, except for that one thing. If they could overcome that hurdle and come to enjoy each other as lovers, too, life would hold no limits to their happiness. At least, he could enjoy moments like this—her complete trust in him to keep her safe, her unwavering affection and love. If she didn’t draw out his animal nature so strongly, he’d figure some way to do without. But every inch of his body responded to her, and the love between them only amplified the hunger.

The carriage turned a corner and hit a rut or obstacle in the road. It jerked sharply and bobbed up and down a few times.

Margaret straightened, opened her eyes, and let out cry of alarm. "What was it?"

"Nothing, my dear. We're still moving," Edward said.

She put her hand over her breast. "How silly of me."

Treveylan stroked his chin and studied her. "Are you well, Mrs. Sinclair?"

"Of course. Pay no attention to my fancies."

The man leaned toward her a few inches. "Are you sure? You seem pale."

"A slight headache. Nothing to worry about."

"I think I can help you."

Her eyes widened. "How?"

"A touch. If your husband will allow me, of course."

"See here," Edward said. "Touch what?"

The man held up his hands. "My fingers at her temples. That's all."

Edward glanced down at her. "Would you like that?"

She shrugged. "If it would help."

"Good, then." Treveylan leaned closer and placed his hands on either side of her face. He slid his fingers into her hair, working them over her temples. Slow, firm circles. Nothing too intimate.

After a few passes, she closed her eyes and sighed. "That does feel good."

Treveylan reached farther back on her head and brought his thumbs to bear as well. Her shoulders softened. The corners of her mouth turned up. The tension seemed to fall away from her, and her body eased softly against his.

Now Treveylan's hands went to the back of her neck and downward to where it met her shoulders. As he continued his massage, her head lolled first one way and then the other.

"Your muscles are knotted here," Treveylan said. "No wonder your head hurts."

"Yes," she whispered.

The man continued working his fingers into her neck and shoulders until she became pliant. She sighed again, more deeply this time.

Finally he removed his hands and pulled back. "Better?"

She opened her eyes and took a deep breath. "I feel wonderful. Thank you."

"It's nothing. Your husband can do that for you."

Edward pulled her a bit closer. "Thank you. I will."

"Ah, here we are," Treveylan said. "We're coming up on the inn."

"Indeed," Edward answered. And none too soon.

Margaret showed more animation at supper than Edward had seen for weeks. Despite the fact a mysterious stranger had joined them, she showered all her attentions on her husband. If she'd displayed interest in Treveylan, Edward would have found some way to turn down the invitation—no, insistence—that Treveylan assume the role of host.

As much as Edward enjoyed her behavior, it didn't make any sense. The timid mouse she'd become during their brief marriage had blossomed back into the lively girl who won his heart.

Seemingly as a result of Treveylan's touch. That in itself was more than a little odd. But if the man had charmed her, she ought to bestow her smiles and glances on him. Instead, they all went to Edward. Margaret didn't have a devious bone in her body, so none of this was an act for his benefit. Somehow, Treveylan had aroused her interest and focused it on her husband. Very strange, indeed.

"I didn't think a simple stew could taste so good," she said as she tore off a piece of bread and swirled it in the last puddle of sauce on her plate. She popped the whole into her mouth and ate it with relish. "Yes, very good."

"It's well seasoned," Treveylan said. "You don't often find that in English cooking."

"I take it you've traveled, then, Mr. Treveylan," she said.

He took a sip of his ale. "Here and there."

“Edward and I plan on traveling,” she said. “Don’t we, dear?”

“As soon as you’re up to it,” he answered.

“Let’s do. And soon.” Beneath the table, she placed her hand on his knee and squeezed. Not for the first time since they’d arrived. If he didn’t know better, he would have sworn she did it by way of invitation. A very intimate invitation. His body took the gesture at face value, his sex stiffening in his pants. Damn but he wanted her. If they tried again, would she shrink from him? Would he hurt her again? What a bloody, awful dilemma.

“You’d love Paris,” Treveylan said. “And Paris would love you.”

“Paris wouldn’t notice a simple English girl like me,” she said.

“You’re anything but simple. I’m sure your husband would agree.”

“Oh, he would.” She turned to face Edward, her eyes and smile filled with love so intense it stole his breath. “He’s biased.”

Edward’s heart swelled until it felt as if it would burst. He took her hand and brought it to his lips. “You’re the most beautiful woman on Earth.”

She blushed and lowered her gaze. “The two of you flatter me.”

“Not at all,” Treveylan said.

“Well, it’s been quite a day.” She put her hand over her mouth to hide a yawn. “I can scarcely hold my head up. I think I’ll retire.”

Edward rose to pull out her chair and Treveylan stood as well.

“Good night, Mr. Treveylan,” she said, offering her hand.

The man took it in both of his. “I hope to see you again in the morning, Mrs. Sinclair.”

“We’ll be leaving early,” Edward said. He put his hand at the small of Margaret’s back. “I’ll see you upstairs.”

“No need. You men stay and have some brandy.” She kissed Edward on the cheek, letting the caress linger. “Good night, my darling.”

She left them, headed toward the staircase that led to the rooms above. Edward watched her go and turned to find the other man doing the same.

“You’re a lucky man, Sinclair,” Treveylan said.

Edward nodded. "Have a brandy. On me."

"Thank you." Treveylan resumed his seat while Edward gestured to the innkeeper. By the time he'd sat back down, the portly fellow arrived and set two snifters in front of them. After he poured, Edward took the bottle. "Leave it, please."

The man nodded and returned to his place behind the bar.

Treveylan studied Edward, one eyebrow cocked. "We'll share more than one drink, I take it."

"There's something I need to know from you." Edward took a swallow of the liquor. "What did you do to my wife?"

That seemed to surprise Treveylan, because his eyes widened for a moment. "You've watched the whole time we've been together."

"Yes, but what did you...?"

"Nothing you couldn't do yourself."

Was Treveylan playing some kind of trick? He must have known damned well that she changed the moment he touched her. He could pretend ignorance, but that dark gaze missed nothing.

"You have some power over Margaret," Edward said.

"Don't be melodramatic."

"I want to know your secret." Needed to know it. If he could have the same healing touch, he could make things right in the marriage bed. He could make both of them as happy as they'd been on their wedding day.

"It's no secret," Treveylan said. "You only need to know how to touch a woman."

"I touch her all the time."

"I'm sure you put your hands on her. It's not the same thing."

"Explain," Edward said.

Treveylan picked up an orange from the bowl of fruit and nuts on the table and handed it to Edward. "What does that feel like?"

He hefted it in his palm. "It feels like an orange."

"No, what does it feel like? Rough, smooth? Cold, hot? Hard, soft?"

Edward concentrated on the sphere in his hand. It did have dif-

ferent textures, although he'd never have noticed if no one pointed them out. "It's firm, and yet giving. Harder at the poles where the peel's thickest."

"Good."

"You'd expect it to be smooth, but it has thousands of tiny pocks."

"And if you try, you can smell it," Treveylan said.

"Yes."

"There. You've touched an orange." Treveylan took a swig of his brandy. "Really touched it."

Edward set the fruit aside. "What's the point of that?"

"Men are simple beasts. In and out makes us happy. Women are more complicated. You need to engage all their senses."

"And that's it?"

Treveylan downed the rest of his drink. "It takes some practice."

Edward's mind spun. Oranges, engaging a woman's senses. What did he know of all that? Upstairs, his wife—the love of his life—would already have climbed into bed. She'd given him provocative touches this evening, had kissed him longer than strictly necessary and in front of strangers. She'd as much as asked him to join her and couple with her.

Now a perfect stranger had filled his head with nonsense he couldn't use. If he tried with Margaret and failed again, he'd push her even further away. The headaches, the timidity would get worse. He didn't have time for practice. He needed to make love to her properly, tonight. How in bloody hell could he learn how to do that in the next half-hour?

Oh, to be a fly on the wall when a more experienced man, like the one sitting across the table from him, coupled with a shy woman. He could watch the moves, the way to touch her body, the sort of reassurances that would relax her. Just the education he needed. But even if he could talk Treveylan into performing for him, where would he find a woman for the purpose? He didn't know anyone else here.

Unless—oh, no, impossible. He did have such a lady waiting

upstairs for him right this moment. Margaret. His own dear wife.

The idea was insane. And yet, if he were to convince her to try, and if Treveylan agreed, he'd accomplish two important goals at once. He'd learn, and the other man would help to lead her past her fear. The plan had its own internal logic. Desperate problems needed desperate solutions. Treveylan's touch had worked once already. It might work again.

Good Lord. If someone had told him that morning he'd even contemplate such a thing, he would have called him a lunatic. Now he'd done a lot more than contemplate it. He poured himself another drink and downed it in one swallow.

"Are you all right?" Treveylan asked.

"No." He'd do this. He'd hate every minute, but for Margaret, he'd do it. "I need a favor from you."

"Whatever I can do."

"You see..." God's blood, this was embarrassing. "I can't make my wife happy."

"She seems happy."

"In bed, damn it. I can't please her in bed."

"Ahh." Treveylan took the bottle and served himself. "A problem becoming erect?"

Edward couldn't help but laugh at that. He was already hard, and this conversation wouldn't help matters. "I get hard well enough. Hard enough that I hurt her."

Treveylan's brow furrowed. "That doesn't usually happen after the first time."

"The first time was bloody torture. She tried, but she was so tight I could hardly penetrate her." He poured some more brandy. "It even hurt me."

"I see."

"Now, every time I touch her, she tightens like a spring."

"That was the tension I felt in her shoulders," Treveylan said.

"She was afraid I'd want my rights as a husband tonight." Edward swallowed some of the liquor. He'd drunk enough that it had lost its bite. "God help me, I do."

“What do you do to prepare her?”

“I hold her, kiss her, tell her she’s beautiful,” Edward answered. “What else is there?”

Treveylan’s hand and glass stopped halfway to his mouth. “You really don’t know?”

“How could I? No one’s ever taught me.”

“Bloody hell.” Treveylan spat. “Bloody society with its bloody ‘decency.’”

“I don’t see how it’s anyone’s fault but mine.”

“You don’t?” Treveylan pushed his glass away and leaned over the table. “The pious asses preach sin night and day. The respectable declare that sex is dirty and shameful. Most young men have an older man to guide them, or an adventurous woman. You didn’t?”

“No one.”

“Neither you nor your wife had any experience, but you expect to figure it out on your own.”

Edward sighed. “That’s the long and the short of it, I’m afraid.”

“So, you want me to teach you.” Treveylan blew out a breath. “There’s too much to learn for one conversation, and besides, it’s already late.”

“That’s not exactly the favor I’d like to ask.” Edward gripped the stem of his snifter and stared into the amber liquid.

“What do you want, then?”

He clenched his teeth and searched for words that would make the proposal sound better.

“Out with it, man,” Treveylan said. “What do you want me to do?”

No use. There were no words except the simple ones. “I want you to make love to Margaret, and I want to watch.”

“Good Lord, you want me to swive your wife?”

Edward’s head jerked up in surprise. “Don’t call it that.”

“That’s what you’re talking about. You want me to tumble her, plow her, frig her.”

“Nothing that vulgar.”

“Sex is vulgar. And messy, and awkward, and profound. That’s part of your problem, Sinclair. Your whole life, you’ve danced around it.”

“Don’t be ridiculous.”

“What do you think you’ll see if I do what you want?” Treveylan said. “What do you think you’ll hear? A minuet? Polite conversation?”

Edward’s gut churned, and not from the liquor. Needless to say, he’d never watched anything like that before, but he knew enough about the act to imagine what he’d have to face. Still, what choice did he have? Things couldn’t continue as they’d gone on in the past.

“You’re serious about this, aren’t you?” Treveylan said.

“Deadly serious.”

Treveylan picked up his glass and put it down again. “She’d have to agree to it, and not just to please you.”

“She enjoyed your touch earlier. It transformed her.” Changed her back to the vivacious woman he’d courted and won. He’d give his right arm to have that lovely creature again. “Please, do this for us.”

“I usually don’t have to be convinced to make love to a beautiful woman.” Treveylan glanced at the staircase as if he could see up it to where Margaret waited in bed. “With her consent, I’ll do it.”

Margaret opened her eyes when Edward entered the bedroom. She’d dozed but hadn’t fallen into a deep sleep, so she came alert quickly. Still, her eyes had to be playing tricks on her, because two men stepped into the bedroom—one tall and blond, the other dark. Edward and Mr. Treveylan.

She sat up, pulling the covers over her chest and under her chin. “Edward?”

Her husband crossed the room and sat on the bed. “Don’t be alarmed. I invited him.”

“What on earth for?”

He closed his eyes in an expression that looked like pain.

“Before I explain, you have to know that I love you more than life itself.”

She put her palm on the side of his face. “I know that.”

“I’m desperate for us to be happy.”

“You’re frightening me, Edward.”

He opened his deep blue eyes. “I’m sorry, my love.”

“Your husband thinks I can help you,” Mr. Treveylan said from where he stood near the door.

“Help me with what?”

“Not you, darling,” Edward said. “Us. With our lack of compatibility.”

Compatibility. What could that be? They got along famously, without a single angry word. The only place they didn’t suit—oh, dear heaven. “You told him. How could you?”

“I didn’t want to. I had to.”

Oh, the shame. The humiliation. Her chin wobbled and tears burned at the backs of her eyes. “You told him about my inadequacy.”

“No!” He pulled her against his chest, and for the first time, she curled her hands into fists and could have pummeled him with them. “I’m the inadequate one,” he said. “You couldn’t be more perfect.”

“You’re lying. You’re just saying that to make me feel better.”

He rubbed his hands over her back. “It’s my fault. I don’t know what I’m doing, and I hurt you.”

“No,” she wailed, even though it was true. Neither of them knew how to please the other, and the lack was driving them apart. She couldn’t lose his love and live with herself. She pushed away from Edward and rubbed her eyes. “I don’t understand. What could he do to help?”

Edward clenched his jaw shut and stared at the floor. After a moment, he lifted his gaze to the man across the room.

Mr. Treveylan walked to the bed and put a hand on Edward’s shoulder. Her husband stood, and the man—no more than a stranger—took his place.

She scooted back against the headboard, clutching the covers.

"Mrs. Sinclair," he began. "Margaret. Your husband didn't make the decision lightly."

"What decision?"

"You see, the marital act comes naturally to lesser animals, but it's something men and women have to learn."

What a ridiculous situation. She could have laughed if the whole thing wasn't so embarrassing. Here she sat with a stranger sitting on her bed and her husband looking on. Edward had come to some sort of decision, and now the man she'd only just met was delivering a lecture on marital intercourse.

"Neither of you has had any experience," Mr. Treveylan went on. "That's why you're having a difficult time."

"And so my husband has come to a decision, but you won't tell me what it is." She glanced from him to Edward and back. "The two of you are making my head spin."

Mr. Treveylan reached to her temples again, much as he had in the carriage. And again, she lost herself in his dark gaze. How could she not? He had a mysterious power that drained her of all tension. Odd that such a handsome man could also be soothing. A balm to absorb pain and worry by the mere power of his presence.

As in the carriage, she allowed him to touch her, and the same heat passed from his hands to her skin. She sighed as it rolled through her, softening her shoulders and warming her heart.

This time he brought his mouth to her forehead and gave her the most innocent of kisses. It created a feeling of safety, but something lay underneath. Something laced with pleasure and danger.

He pulled back and stared into her eyes. "Do you trust me?"

"Yes." The word came out without thought, and yet, she wouldn't have taken it back if she could. The danger he offered might singe her, but he'd put out the fire.

"Your husband—Edward—wants me to show you how to enjoy your own body."

"How?"

"He wants me to make love to you."

All the air went out of her. Edward wanted her to do *that* with him? She looked at her husband. “Is this true?”

“I don’t want it,” Edward answered. “But if it can help...”

“I don’t believe it.” She turned back to Mr. Treveylan. “And you agreed?”

“Only if you want me to.”

Well, at least she had some say in the matter. In fact, it appeared all three of them had to consent or nothing would happen. Could she do this? Did she want to? How could you even decide something like that?

“Kiss me,” she whispered.

Mr. Treveylan smiled, his white teeth flashing in the dim light. She smiled back automatically. Her heart skittered in her chest, a pleasant feeling. She’d sample him and decide then. If he kissed as well as he soothed her, he might help them after all.

His expression went serious and his gaze settled on her mouth. For just a moment, something like hunger passed over his face, and then his eyes drifted shut as he lowered his mouth to hers.

The caress was gentle when it came, but it sent a jolt of awareness through her. She gasped in surprise, parting her lips under his. He didn’t push her, but brushed his lips over hers softly. An invitation to her to explore him. She took it, running her hands around his neck and burrowing her fingers into his hair. The strands felt warm and soft, like his kiss. Silky, like chocolate. Sinful and delicious. She savored him until her heart thudded in her chest and she had to work for air.

She pulled back. “Oh, my.”

He reached behind his neck, caught her hands, and brought them to his mouth. “Oh my, indeed.”

Something creaked nearby. Edward had pulled the chair into the center of the room and sat staring at them. His expression revealed nothing about having watched his wife kiss another man, but his eyes had a lazy look to them. She’d seen that before—when he became aroused.

“Do you want me to continue?” she asked him.

“If you desire it.”

She did. God forgive her, she did. The man who now nibbled at her fingertips had parted a curtain for her. He’d given her the tiniest glimpse of what lay behind. Sensations she’d never imagined. Already her body was responding.

She stared into those dark eyes. “And do you desire me?”

He bit gently at her knuckles. “More than I can tell you.”

“Then I want you, too.”

To Touch a Woman: Chapter 2

Trey. He'd asked her to call him that, and Mr. Treveylan hardly seemed to fit under the changed circumstances. Trey let out a ragged breath as if he'd held it inside with some difficulty.

"You doubted my answer?" she said.

"I never take a woman for granted."

"I'll do the best I can for you." She cast a glance at Edward.

"For both of you."

Edward gave nothing away but merely nodded.

"We'll go slowly," Trey corrected. "If I do anything you don't like, we'll stop immediately."

"Thank you."

"I mean it," he said. "If anything hurts you or frightens you, tell me."

"I will."

"Good girl," he said. "Now, you kiss me."

Happily. She leaned toward him and placed her lips against his. This time he tilted his head at an angle, giving her better access to his mouth. She took full advantage, exploring every inch from the corners to the full center of the lower lip. He held himself still, allowing her to take as much as she wanted. And the more she took, the more she craved. Her heart still raced, and her blood rushed in her ears. So this was lust. Not crude and base as she'd been taught, but sweet, like warm honey. When she ran the tip of her tongue along the seam between his lips, he parted them. He tasted of the brandy he'd drunk. Forbidden, intoxicating. She dipped her tongue inside for more.

He groaned and shuddered. Amazing. She had that power over him. But now he took control, tugging her down and away from the headboard until she lay flat on her back. He loomed over her, so large his head and shoulders filled her vision. She had only a moment to memorize the sight of him before he lowered himself to take her mouth again. She closed her eyes and gave herself up to him, clasping his shoulders as he launched an assault on her sens-

es. He sucked, nibbled, and stroked her with his tongue and then let his lips lead hers in an erotic dance. If a kiss could steal a soul, surely this one would. It went on and on until her mind clouded and she could hardly have told where she ended and he began.

After long, heated moments, he released her mouth and dipped below her chin to caress her neck. She rolled her head to the side to study her husband.

Edward still sat there, following everything with his eyes. He'd removed his jacket at some point and was holding his hand over his pelvis. He moved it up and down, stroking himself through his pants. When he noticed her attention, he moved his fingers to show her the outline of his member. It pressed against the fabric of his trousers, large and thick. As big as she'd ever seen him. Before now it would have frightened her. But with the fever raging in her blood, it only fascinated her.

He reached to the buttons of his pants and raised an eyebrow in a silent question. She nodded, and he began unfastening his fly.

Then Trey tugged the covers from her fingers and pulled them down her body. She had no will to resist him. So when he started undoing the tiny buttons of her gown, she only watched. First, the way his long fingers manipulated each pearl as if he'd done this hundreds of times. Later, the fringe of dark lashes against his cheeks while he gazed down at her chest. He'd pursed his lips in concentration, and for a moment a flash of desire for his kiss swept over her. She would have taken his mouth again, but the backs of his fingers brushed the top of her breast—skin he'd just exposed—and air escaped her on a hiss.

He stopped immediately. "I've alarmed you."

"No. That is, I've alarmed myself."

He quirked an eyebrow in puzzlement.

"I didn't expect to feel like this."

"Pleasant, I hope," he said.

She turned her head again. Edward had indeed removed his hardness from his pants and had closed his fist around the base. His eyes were now half closed.

“My husband finds that pleasant, doesn’t he?” she asked.

“I’m sure he does,” Trey answered.

Edward, saying nothing, continued to slowly stroke himself.

“I think I feel the same way he does,” she said. “I wonder....”

“Just ask,” Trey said.

Her skin heated, an overlay of embarrassment to add to her rising excitement. Still, if she didn’t ask, she wouldn’t learn. “Are you hard like that right now?”

“I have been since our first kiss,” he answered. “You’ve seduced me completely.”

She couldn’t help but giggle at that idea. A seductress? Impossible.

He pushed her gown open and bent to kiss the base of her throat and the hollow above her collarbone. This time she closed her eyes fully and savored the slide of his lips over her. Each spot he touched caught fire, tongues of flame dancing on her skin. She sighed and lay limp and open to anything he cared to do to her. His hand slid under the cotton and found her breast. He cupped it and toyed with the nipple. The peak hardened into a sensitive nub for him. She let out a sigh and melted into a puddle of sensation. It felt so good. So very, very good.

Slowly, his mouth moved lower with playful nips of his teeth and swipes of his tongue. It seemed he found each inch of her skin worthy of his attention, and if he continued to take so much time, he’d soon have her begging for more. Harder, firmer, faster. Perhaps he’d planned the encounter that way—to make her burn for him. If so, he’d planned well.

When his mouth finally arrived at her breast, she expected more pleasure, more lust. But when he sucked the nipple into his mouth and rolled it with his tongue, desire as sharp as a knife slashed through her. The moist heat of the caress tugged at something deep inside her. A dull ache started between her legs. So odd. No part of him had touched her there, and yet a pathway connected them.

When his hand touched the other breast and he tugged at that nipple with his fingers, she arched her back and pressed herself

upward, offering herself. A beast came alive inside her. A creature of dark needs. Hungry and demanding.

The feelings ought to have frightened her. They were so foreign to everything she'd known before. But, here in this room with the man she loved and trusted looking on, she could surrender to the master who seemed to know her body better than she knew it herself.

He continued, now taking the other nipple into his mouth and treating it with the same reverence he'd shown the first. After a moment, an unfamiliar wetness coated her inner thighs as the ache turned to a soft throbbing.

He lifted his head from her breast and gazed down at her. "You're doing well."

"Well seems a weak word."

"Let's see how nakedness sits," he said. "I want to see you."

"So do I," Edward said.

Though he still held the hard part of him, he'd stopped moving his hand over it and sat as if transfixed by what was happening a few feet away. In truth, Trey had cast a spell on both of them. So when Trey helped her to sit up and tugged at her gown, she let him pull it above her hips, past her ribs, and over her arms.

When he set the gown aside, the look in his eyes softened. His gaze swept from her face and over her breasts to her lap and the auburn hairs there. She moved her hands to cover that place, but he gently pulled them away.

"Lie back and let me see you," he said.

She did and let her arms fall by her sides to give him a view of all of her. The softness in his eyes flared to something brighter. "Perfection."

She let out the breath she'd been holding. "Thank you."

"No, thank you."

Neither thanked Edward, at least not with words. And yet, what would follow came as the will of all three of them. If she'd believed her husband didn't want this, she would have stopped, no matter how much promise lay in Trey's caress. Somehow, this

stranger they'd only just met had woven a web around them. Silken strands too strong to break. The knowledge gave her the courage to offer her body for what would come next.

Trey stretched out beside her and ran the tips of his fingers along the furrow that ran from the valley between her breasts past her ribs to her belly. A bit lower and he'd touch the spot between her legs where she'd grown moist. The same place where Edward had pushed so hard to gain entry.

She tensed oh, so slightly, no matter how much she hated the fear. His hand stopped immediately, and he bent to kiss her. Again his lips worked their magic, and soon she opened her mouth to him. Their tongues met and twined until the fever rose in her, hotter than before. With a groan, he pulled away and placed his lips against her ear. "I swear, you'll make me mad."

The sound of his voice traveled through her bones to the center of her, and soon she'd gone pliant again. He must have felt her yield. His hand drifted lower, inch by inch, until his fingers worked their way through the hairs that covered her mound.

This time desire conquered fear, and when he touched the lips there, parted them, and rubbed the sensitive flesh between, she let out a cry of surprise and pleasure.

"Here?" he whispered, his lips grazing her ear.

"Yes."

"Let me find the exact spot." He did. Dear heaven, how he did. His fingers moved no more than an inch and touched her in a place that responded like a lock to a key. A new reality clicked into place. She let out a sigh like steam escaping.

"I see I've found it," he murmured. "What a perfect pussy."

"A cat?" she gasped.

"Your sex," he whispered. "Your precious cunny."

None of that made any sense, but who cared? As long as he didn't stop petting the place between her legs, what he called it didn't matter.

He didn't stop. The feel of his fingers between her legs robbed her of her voice. She could only manage to pull air into her lungs

in gulps as though she'd run a great distance. Her thighs parted farther as the flesh there seemed to swell. Her hips rose to meet his touch. With no more control over her own body, she had to trust he wouldn't abandon her to the rising tide of need inside her. He wouldn't stop until he finished what he'd started.

"Well done, Margaret," he said. "I think I'll call you Meg."

Good Lord, did he expect her to care? If he wanted, he could call her Jezebel. Heaven knew he'd turned her into a wanton. She'd do anything if only he wouldn't stop.

He did, though, and had she the strength, she would have wept. She did manage a whimper.

"Only long enough for me to get naked," he said. "I won't be long, I promise."

She bit her lip and nodded. What else could she do?

He quickly removed his shirt and dropped it to the floor, revealing a broad chest with an odd image on it. A tattoo that looked like a lock wrapped around the image of a heart. A golden chain extended over the muscles and even down his arm. Like the rest of him, it held a combination of mystery and beauty.

Beautiful. She'd never before thought of a man's body as a work of art, although now that she conjured the image in her mind, Edward's had at least as much appeal. Then again, she hadn't relished male strength and firmness until she needed a man as desperately as she did at this moment.

When he unfastened his pants and pushed them over his hips, his sex stood away from his torso. Even in the dim light, she could make out his dimensions. Not quite as long as Edward's but thick with a bulbous head and a large sac at the base.

"Not so frightened of it now, are you?" Trey said.

She studied him a bit more before looking over to her husband. Until this evening, the sight of either of them in an aroused state would have frightened her, even repulsed her. Now she could only gaze at them and imagine what wonders they could perform with those instruments. Unless she missed her guess, she'd find out in a few minutes.

“That’s my Meg.” Trey lay down again and pulled her against his body. A new wonder—the sensations of lying with a man without a scrap of clothing to separate them. His heat seeped into her, penetrating deep inside. The muscles of his chest pressed against her breasts, stimulating the hard peaks. He was solid everywhere, yet velvet-smooth on the surface.

He held her close for a moment and let his heart beat against her own. Then he pushed her back, pressing his palm against her pelvis. She opened for him, as she had before, and he stroked that secret place again. The blaze rekindled as urgent as before.

This time he parted the lips of her sex and slid a finger inside. The intrusion should have hurt, but instead, her inner muscles welcomed him. No pain, just friction, as he began to move it slowly, probing her depths.

“Sweet Meg,” he crooned. “Sweet and wet.”

Liquid seeped out of her as he continued stroking her. She should have felt shame, but he seemed so pleased, and he drove her wild with his caresses. She’d swoon if he continued, but she’d die if he stopped.

“Your body is ready for me,” Trey said. “Do you trust me not to hurt you?”

Yes, she trusted him. Would he hurt her without realizing it? Who knew? None of that made any difference. He’d created chaos inside her, and only he could put her back together again. Whether his penetration brought pain or not, she needed it as much as she needed her next breath.

“Please,” she said.

He kissed her briefly, parted her legs wider, and took his position between her thighs. The head of his member pressed for entrance between the lips of her sex.

For a moment, a coldness settled around her heart. He tensed and held himself still above her, staring into her eyes. The message came through clearly. The ice thawed and fell away, leaving desire uncolored by fear. She glanced at Edward one more time. When he nodded, she ran her arms around Trey’s shoulders and smiled at

him.

He sank slowly into her. Each inch of him stretched her until he'd embedded himself fully inside her. Oh, it was glorious! He filled her, completed her. No wonder people craved this contact. No wonder bards sang of its power. No wonder poets wrote odes to its pleasures. Still, no words could do it justice. How could a mere human convey the power of this connection?

Then he began to move, and her lust claimed her.

Long, slow strokes, nearly pulling out of her and possessing her again. She wrapped her legs around him and matched his movements, taking him as deeply as she could. He moved faster, pushed her harder. With each thrust, he rubbed against the magical place he'd teased before. When all the air whooshed out of her lungs, she took in rapid, panting breaths in rhythm with his thrusts.

His own breathing came in gusts against her ear, occasionally punctuated with a groan of pleasure. Hot liquid pooled in her belly and seeped out to coat him. Their bodies made wet sounds now as he plunged and plunged and plunged. Something coiled tight inside her, starting at the throbbing spot between her thighs, moving through the muscles that gripped him and into her core. Pleasure so intense it set her teeth on edge. Unbearable and inevitable. Irresistible and terrifying. Something was happening to her, changing her forever.

A loud moan sounded beside her. Edward's voice, the way he sounded as he lost control. It was deeper this time, more primitive.

He gripped his shaft in his fist and pumped it as though he'd like to throttle it. The thing had turned a dark crimson, and a drop of pearly liquid appeared at the tip. His gaze bored into her as he made frantic passes over his member.

In an instant, his sensations became hers. She felt him build to an explosion, the same one so close to detonating inside her. Together they rode a wave of passion as it crested higher and higher.

He hit the peak first. He shouted and a spray of semen shot from his sex. Her body responded as a series of convulsions coursed along her inner walls. She cried out as she shattered, gripping the

hard flesh inside her.

“Gods!” Trey roared as he slammed into her once, twice, three times and sprayed his own hot lust inside her.

The three of them soared together. Her spirit floated above them, watching. Three people, two men and a woman enraptured, in the throes of a force bigger than all of them combined. The image burned itself into her mind before she descended slowly back into herself and returned to reality.

Oh... dear... Lord. She lay boneless, Trey on top of her. His weight comforted her—a shelter from the storm he’d created. She found enough strength to stroke the side of his face. He sighed and rolled off her, pulling his now-softening member out of her.

Another weight settled on her other side. Edward snuggled up to her and brushed his lips over her temple. “Are you all right, my darling?”

“Yes,” she said. “I understand now.”

“We can thank Trey for that.”

Trey kissed her cheek. “My very, very great pleasure.”

Just after sunrise, Edward stood outside Treveylan’s door. Margaret still slept soundly in the bed they’d shared. The first light of day had shown the smile on her face. Whether merely sleeping or dreaming of the encounter from the night before, she was obviously happy. The knowledge warmed his soul, no matter that another man had the major part of creating her happiness.

He could pretend outrage that Treveylan had known his wife, but in truth, watching had been more erotic than he could have imagined. His woman, consumed by desire. It hadn’t presented a problem to imagine himself as her lover, and soon he would be. But first they had an issue to settle.

He knocked on the door. To Edward’s surprise, the man answered at once. Already awake, Trey wore his trousers and socks on his feet. He had shaving lather on his face. In one hand, he held his razor.

He didn’t seem in the least surprised to see Edward and pulled

the door fully open. "I expected you."

Edward crossed the threshold. "You knew I'd be awake this early?"

Trey closed the door. "Most men don't sleep well after they've shared their mate."

That caught him up short. "You do this often?"

Trey didn't reply but gestured toward a chair. "Have a seat."

Edward sat and watched as Trey went back to shaving. He swished the razor in a basin of water and pulled it carefully over his throat. After a moment, he paused and glanced into the mirror. "You must have come here for a reason."

"Well, yes." Edward cleared his throat. "There is one thing we need to discuss."

Trey rinsed the razor again and said nothing.

"You spent inside Margaret," Edward said.

"That I did."

"You might have created a child, and I want you to know I'll treat it as my own."

Trey leaned toward the mirror and made a pass of the razor over his cheek. "Decent of you."

"Of course, I've lain with her as well and expect to do so again soon, so I couldn't be sure if a child was yours." Of course, if the boy or girl had his black hair, dark eyes, and pale skin, he'd have a good idea. Still, he'd asked this man to swive his wife, as he put it. He could hardly resent a child who resulted from the union.

"Don't worry," Trey said. "Meg's not pregnant. At least, not by me."

"How can you be sure?"

Trey finished shaving, set aside the razor, and picked up a towel to remove the rest of the lather from his face. Then he draped the cloth over his shoulder and turned. "I'm sterile."

"How could you know such a thing?"

"Trust me, I do. You won't have to raise my child." He crossed his arms over the tattoo on his chest. "Is that all?"

"I want to thank you."

Trey shook his head and muttered something that sounded like “mortals.”

“I beg your pardon.”

“Nothing. Just an expression.”

“I do thank you,” Edward said. “And Margaret would, too, but you’ll be gone before she finishes dressing.”

“So, that’s it, then.”

Edward rose. “I imagine so.”

“You’ll take over from here.”

“Don’t you think I can?”

“I’m sure you can,” Trey said. “Meg has a passionate nature. The two of you will figure things out.”

“You don’t sound convinced.”

“I’m disappointed,” Trey said. “I thought you had more imagination.”

“Explain.”

“Sit down.”

Edward did and waited while Trey walked to the bed, sat, and reached for one of his shoes on the floor. “I saved something for you. Something very important.”

“About making love to Margaret?”

“You didn’t think you could learn everything in a few minutes, did you?”

Put that way, what he said made sense. No doubt Edward could use more information, especially regarding the important thing Trey hadn’t done. “This isn’t just a ploy to spend more time with my wife, is it?”

Trey stopped in the act of putting on his shoe. “I can find my own bed partners.”

“Forgive me. I may not be as open-minded as I thought.”

“Meg’s a beautiful woman. It must be difficult to share.”

Especially with a man who used a nickname for her. Damn this jealousy. He’d asked for this. He’d wanted it, for himself as well as Margaret. And if Trey could teach him more, the knowledge would enrich both their lives.

Trey rose and clapped Edward on the shoulder. "Buck up, man. She loves you. She wouldn't have had anything to do with me except that you asked."

"She seemed eager for your touch."

"She looked to you the entire time."

"I don't know how you noticed," Edward said. "As busy as you were."

Trey chuckled. "Husbands."

Delightful. Now the man was laughing at him. "What's this secret you mentioned?"

"The ultimate kiss." Trey paused, but the smile never left his face. "Have you never wanted her mouth on your cock?"

"Good Lord, no."

"Don't look so shocked. Most men do."

Edward had never thought of such a thing, but his sex responded to the suggestion as if it hadn't thought of anything else. In a moment it swelled and stiffened in his pants. In fact, it got bloody uncomfortable. He shifted his position, but that didn't help.

Trey looked very pointedly at his pelvis. "Nice erection. You could make me jealous."

"It doesn't help, not if my size hurts my wife."

"She'll do fine when we're through. Most women love having a large instrument inside them."

If someone had told Edward the day before that he'd spend this morning talking about the sex act, his instrument, and his wife, he would have thought the person insane. He might even have offered to fight him to protect Margaret's honor. Yet here he was, not only discussing such matters but becoming aroused. The mere idea of his love taking his member into her mouth had him hot and ready to couple.

"You like the idea, I see," Trey said.

"How could I not?"

"A woman responds the same way to her lover's lips and tongue between her legs. I can tell you how to do it."

"Perhaps you're right," Edward said. "You do have more to

teach us.”

“That’s what I was sent for.”

What a remarkable thing to say. “I beg your pardon?”

A slight flush covered Trey’s cheeks. “A joke about fate. Don’t read too much into it.”

What an odd duck he was. Normal looking if you ignored the wildness of his hair and the artwork on his chest, but he occasionally said strange things and seemed to have some sort of power over Margaret and, through her, Edward himself. Had fate sent him to guide them to a happier marriage?

“Well, Mr. Treveylan,” Edward said. “Will you accompany us back to Greyston Manor?”

“I’d be honored.”

To Touch a Woman: Chapter 3

The landscape seemed entirely changed, although Margaret had passed this way more times than she could remember. Of course, she'd only shared a carriage with her family or her husband. Now Trey sat across the small enclosure from her, so close their knees almost touched. All day he'd shown her no more interest than common courtesy demanded, but last night—oh, last night—he'd done such wicked things with her body. More astonishing, he'd made her want them.

Why in heaven's name had Edward invited him to Greyston? The two of them must have further plans for her, but she couldn't scrape up the courage to ask what it might be.

Meantime, her flesh had no reluctance to discover what lay in store for it. The encounter at the inn had left its mark on her in the form of a pleasant ache between her legs. Her heart beat in a restless rhythm. Indeed, her entire being—body and mind—felt more alert than usual. The air seemed charged, making the greens of the forest brighter as the coach traveled along, the birdsong brighter. The slanting rays of the sun still warmed the ground and sent forth a fertile scent of fallen leaves. Indeed, the landscape itself had changed, and all because of the man across from her and the mysterious power that seemed to emanate from him.

"You're doing it again," he said.

"Doing what?"

"Giving me that little half-smile, as if you're happy I'm here but you don't dare let on."

She glanced at Edward, but his expression gave no clue to how he felt. "You confound me, Mr. Treveylan."

"Trey," he corrected.

"My husband invited you to stay with us. I hope your visit is a pleasant one."

Edward placed his hand over hers. Normally she'd find the touch reassuring, but the fact remained that the two of them had plans for her. She ought to demand to know what lay in store.

They left the road and went through the gate to Greyston. She'd visited often as a child years before she married Edward and became the mistress of the house. In the coming years, she'd put her own mark on the estate. For now, she'd enjoy the scent of the roses as the carriage bore them up the gravel drive toward the front of the house.

"You have a lovely home," Trey said.

"Thank you," Edward answered, nearly doubling the number of words he'd uttered since they left the inn.

Curse them both. The two of them might have been sphinxes for all the clues they gave to what was going on in their minds.

"Nice of you to have me," Trey said.

"Our pleasure," Edward said.

"Oh, for heaven's sake," she said. "Stop it, both of you."

"Stop what?" Edward asked.

"All this pleasantness. I can't bear it."

Edward removed his hand. "You don't want us to be pleasant?"

"I'd prefer honesty."

Trey crossed his arms over his chest and gave her a knowing smile. Far too knowing. "I wondered when Meg would find her voice."

"My name is Margaret," she snapped back.

"You needn't be rude," Edward said.

"Really? You invite this man into my home without a word to me first and expect me to say nothing?"

"Please keep your voice down."

"Honestly, Edward. We don't even know him."

"Oh, you know me well enough," Trey said. "You know me intimately."

"That was my husband's doing as well."

"You gave me permission for everything I did. You enjoyed it. Tell the truth."

She had, and she wouldn't lie about that, but she didn't have to confirm it for him, either. She sat in silence, glaring at him.

"Don't stop now," Trey said. "Tell us what you want."

“Want?”

“Everyone wants something. Neither of you has any idea how to ask for it.”

Edward stiffened. “I beg your pardon.”

“You beg my pardon. It’s a pleasure to have me.” Trey made a dismissive huff. “You would have happily said good-bye back there, except that I promised you something.”

Edward’s brow went up and his lips settled into a rigid line.

“What did you promise him?” Margaret demanded.

“I’ll show you soon enough,” Edward said.

“*I want* you to tell me now.” If Trey had suddenly grown so keen on wants, he could have that one.

“In good time,” Trey answered. “And you’ll want it. Trust me.”

“I don’t know why I should.”

“Because your body still craves mine.” He leaned forward, and even in the carriage, his eyes caught the light of the sun. “You hate yourself for it, but you’re hoping for more. You’d rather have it from your husband, but you’ll take it where you can.”

By everything holy, could that be true? Their coupling the night before had created the heightened sensations she’d experienced ever since. The fluttering in her belly hadn’t ceased but only quieted, waiting for the right trigger to overcome her again. He knew all her secret places—the spots to touch to turn her into a creature of lust. She’d given that power to him in her bed in the inn. If he used his killing caresses on her now, she’d surrender all over again.

What had he said in the first moments after they met him? “You only need to know how to touch a woman.” He did.

Which left only Edward and what he thought of all this. Could he really enjoy sharing his wife with another man? Though his posture and expression gave no clue, he had initiated last night’s encounter and invited Trey to accompany them to Greyston. On some level, he must want this.

The carriage stopped at the front of the house. Margaret gathered her skirts and prepared to climb out, but Trey’s hand on her knee stopped her. She studied it for a moment—the long, elegant

fingers—before looking at his face. The fire in his eyes intensified.

“You want to know what your husband and I have planned for you.”

She nodded, although a tiny, timid voice in the back of her brain whispered that ignorance was better.

“We can’t tell you,” he said. “We need to show you.”

Edward sat on the bed in his robe and watched Margaret brush her hair. It hung in lush curls around her shoulders and down the back of her nightgown. The amber tresses seemed to shine against the startling white cotton. Pass after pass of the brush suggested she’d either taken great care with her toilette this evening, or she hoped to put off their assignation with Trey.

She finally stopped and set the brush aside. “Do you really want to do this?”

“I want to make you happy.”

Her back went rigid. “I am happy. With you.”

“I wish that were true.”

Her gaze met his in the mirror of her dressing table. “You’re the best husband on Earth. How could I not be happy with you?”

“There’s one thing I can’t give you,” he said. “Unless Trey teaches me how.”

She looked away. “That’s not important.”

“I watched you last night. I’ve never seen such rapture. I want to be able to give that to you.”

“Maybe you know now,” she said in a small voice that lacked conviction.

“Is this so very difficult for you? You enjoyed yourself last night.”

“I’m frightened.”

He patted the bed beside him. “Come sit and tell me what you fear.”

She did and took his hand in both of hers. “Something about him isn’t natural. You must have noticed.”

“He’s a bit of an odd sort, I’ll admit. But very handsome.”

“That’s part of it.” She worried her lower lip with her teeth. “He seems to have an uncommon degree of control over me.”

“How so?”

“When he touches me, I feel—how shall I describe it?—overheated. As if I don’t quite fit into my own skin.”

“Breathless? Unable to sit still?”

She gazed at him from emerald eyes. “Exactly.”

“There’s nothing unnatural about that,” he said. “I always feel that way around you.”

She cocked her head. “Truly?”

“Do you remember the first time we kissed?”

“Sitting on the bench by the river. You were so shy.”

“I was terrified.”

Her eyes widened in surprise. “Of me?”

“That you’d learn the state of my body and it would repulse you.”

“From no more than a kiss, you became...?”

He took her fingers and placed them over his already-erect cock. “Aroused.”

She pulled her hand back. “We haven’t even kissed.”

“You have this effect on me just by entering a room.”

“I had no idea.” She looked perplexed but not unhappy at the news.

He should have told her before how she moved him. Unfortunately, he’d never realized until last night that she could feel the same way. But watching the play of emotion on her face, listening to her sighs and moans of pleasure, witnessing her body responding to Trey’s touch had convinced him that she could reach the same level of passion he had for her. Together, they could celebrate life while joined together. He’d be a fool to let jealousy stand in the way of that possibility.

“I want to learn how to excite you the way Trey did so that you’re hot and eager for me,” he said.

“Like this.” She pressed her palm to the front of his robe and squeezed his rod through the silk.

He sucked in a breath and did his best to hold still while she explored his length. It wouldn't take much to make him spend tonight. Ever since Trey told him about the ultimate kiss, he'd thought of nothing else. He would taste his wife's precious cunny. He'd make her squirm and cry out in her release. Once he'd made her wet, he'd ease his way inside her. This time, when the walls of her sex gripped him, she'd take pleasure from the penetration. If he could only hold off long enough.

Some devil made her slip her hand inside his robe and make direct contact with his throbbing organ. No one save himself had ever touched him there. He'd only done it to get relief from the constant torment of wanting her, but now, with her small fingers moving over him, he could only look down as she petted his shaft and grazed her fingernails over the head.

"Does this feel good?" she asked.

He groaned. "Too good."

"How could it feel too good?"

"You don't want to make me spend now."

"Do you want me to stop?"

He needed to tell her yes. He needed to gain control of himself so that he could concentrate on her. Most especially, he needed to make her climax before he could bury himself inside her and spill his seed. But damn it all, he was only human, and the pressure felt so bloody delicious. He'd never expected her to show curiosity about his sex before, and stopping her now seemed like a crime.

"It isn't all that frightening, after all," she said. "I think I like playing with it."

He gritted his teeth. She'd kill him. She really would.

"It's just skin. Warm and dry, if hard underneath," she said.

"You're making it even harder."

"What would it taste like, I wonder?" she asked.

"Mercy." He found enough strength to push her hands away. He'd love her mouth on him, but some other time. The possibility had excited him when Trey mentioned it. The reality would push him past the limit and end the encounter before it got going.

“Later,” he managed to croak.

“I see you’ve started without me.” Trey stood on the threshold.

With Margaret fondling his cock, Edward hadn’t noticed the door opening.

Trey was fully dressed. He’d promised to instruct Edward, not indulge his own pleasures. Tonight the husband would make love to his wife, not witness another man doing it.

Margaret removed her hand from his instrument and sat, looking from him to Trey and back again.

Trey stepped into the room and sat on the other side of the bed. He lifted his hand and stroked her temple with the backs of his fingers. She relaxed visibly. As in the carriage on the night they’d met, he had a calming effect on her.

If Trey could teach him that skill, Edward thought, all this would be worth the trouble. Having a stranger in the house, allowing him to share intimacies with Margaret. All of it.

Trey looked intently into Margaret’s eyes. “Are you ready?”

Her face took on a wide-eyed expression, as if she’d entered a light trance. The same way she’d looked the previous night when Trey had elicited such passion from her that even Edward had become caught up in it.

She nodded, and when Trey scooted toward the head of the bed, she lay back and reached out her arms. Toward Edward, not Trey. Inviting her husband into her embrace.

He went to her, stretched his body next to hers, and caught her lips in a kiss.

“Slowly at first,” Trey said. “Let her come to you.”

Though every instinct told him to devour her, Edward obeyed and only feathered his mouth over hers. This way he could savor every inch from the corners to the fullness of her lower lip. A soft sigh escaped her, and he took her breath as his own but continued to hold himself back. His blood heated with wanting her, and from here on, he’d only become more and more excited. But he wouldn’t rush her, even if it killed him.

He nibbled her lower lip gently before soothing it with his

tongue. When the tip of her own tongue grazed his, a surge of lust coursed through him, lust so powerful it made him tremble as he held himself above her. He put his mouth to her ear. "Dear God, how I want you."

"Edward," she whispered. "Kiss me again."

Unable to restrain himself, he took her mouth with more urgency, and—miracle of miracles—she responded with heat of her own. Their lips moved together, fitting perfectly as they matched each other sigh for sigh. He took her face between his palms and tilted his head to drink deeply of her sweetness.

Both were working for breath now, her chest rising to meet his. He'd kissed her so many times before, but the contact had never done this to him. All coherent thought went right out of his head, leaving nothing but the way she filled his senses. The perfume of her hair, the softness of her skin under his palms, the sound of her sighs. And not the slightest hint of fear. She was giving herself freely, and the gift enflamed him even as it humbled him.

"Well done," Trey said. "Now pull back and collect yourself."

Damn, how it cost him, but Edward obeyed, releasing her lips. "I'm burning up."

"Of course you are. And you'll have your reward once you've satisfied your lover."

His lover. He'd never thought of Margaret that way. First childhood friends, then a harmless flirtation. Finally, the love of his life and his wife, but never his paramour. The idea had an innocent wickedness to it. They could play-act at indecency and add a new dimension to their love.

He gazed into her face. "Lover."

She looked back at him with the heavy-lidded gaze of a woman caught up in her own passion. Her breath came in a shallow, panting rhythm from between lips wet and swollen from his kisses. He'd never in his life expected to see anything so erotic and precious, and his heart swelled with pride.

"And now to continue," Trey said.

Edward nodded. "Oh, yes."

“A woman’s body has many treasures. Some she isn’t aware of herself.”

Edward had never thought of Margaret in that way, but the truth of it registered immediately. A treasure. His own for as long as they both would live. He poured all his love into his gaze and stroked her hair with one hand.

“The spot just under her chin, for example, and the nape of her neck,” Trey said. “For the moment, we’ll concentrate on the pulse points.”

“Oh, my darling,” Edward whispered.

“Find the area at the back of her knee and see what she does,” Trey said.

Edward reached to the hem of her gown and bunched it in his fist, pulling it up over her thigh. She showed not the least bit of tension as she allowed him access to the softness of her calf. When he slid his fingers underneath and stroked the hollow behind her knee, her eyes drifted closed and she tipped her head back, stretching like a cat.

“Do you like that, Margaret?” Trey said.

Instead of answering, she gave a soft moan of pleasure.

“Try kissing her there some morning when she’s first stirring. You’ll be inside her before she opens her eyes.”

“I think I will,” Edward said.

“Next, her wrist. Kiss her there.”

The sleeve of her nightgown was loose and went smoothly up her arm. When Edward pressed his lips to her wrist the thready pulse registered easily. Her heart was racing, just as his was. The sweet madness in his body had taken hold of hers, too. If he did this right, they’d both enjoy the coupling and set a new course for their journey together.

He trailed more kisses along her arm to her elbow. Her pulse beat here, too, and she gave him the same moan of satisfaction as when he’d touched the hollow of her knee. He’d never imagined that so innocent a place would provide him such a reaction. When they were alone, he’d cover every inch of her with caresses until

he'd found each spot that aroused her passions.

"Next, the base of her throat," Trey said. "Just above the collar-bone."

Edward brushed his mouth over the impossibly delicate skin. Here, too, the thump-thump of her heart beat under his lips. She ran her fingers into his hair and sighed her approval. Perhaps Trey had woven some spell around her, but it held him, too. Every response of her body fueled his need. Each tiny gasp, even when barely audible, resonated in his brain. He could do this for hours and never tire of her sounds. Except for one thing. His cock had gone beyond hard to nearly unbearable. It needed relief inside her cunny, and Trey hadn't said she was ready.

Still, if he hurt her again, Edward knew he might lose the opportunity to ever make things right for them in the bedroom. He had so much to learn and nothing but a lust-clouded brain to work with.

"Undress her now," Trey said softly.

Edward pulled away and sat up, dragging air into his lungs to regain control over himself.

She made a little whimper of disappointment. A good sign things were going well. An excellent sign. Her gown still lay above her knee on one side, giving him a view of the pale skin of her inner thigh. He touched it, stroking down to her calf and up again. She looked like alabaster and felt like flower petals. Not cool like stone, though. She was warm and yielding under his fingertips. He'd kiss her there, too, but first to get her naked.

She helped him as he tugged her gown upward, raising her hips and then sitting so he could pull the garment over her head. When she lay down again, she let her arms fall away from her sides and her legs part enough that he could see the swollen lips of her sex. She'd never been so bold, and it took all his will not to find his place between her thighs and drive himself home.

Slowly. He had to go slowly.

"She's beautiful, isn't she?" Trey said.

"Dear God, yes."

"Tell her."

“You’re beautiful, my darling.”

She gazed at him from eyes softened by love. Edward’s heart seemed to stop in his chest. When it started again, it beat with an erratic rhythm.

“What’s your favorite part of her body?” Trey said.

“I can’t choose.”

“Try.”

“I think I noticed her hair first. She wore it in pigtails when we were children. One day I came home from school and she had it down around her shoulders.”

“I remember that,” she whispered.

“I’d never seen anything so thick and silken.” Edward lifted a curl and twisted it around his finger. “I could scarcely keep my hands out of it.”

“Go on,” Trey said.

“Then I started noticing her mouth. How her lips curled when she laughed, and how they moved when she savored a bit of chocolate.”

“That’s why you brought me all those bonbons,” she said. “I was afraid I’d lose my figure.”

“I’d like you plump, I think,” he said. “I’d want you no matter how you looked.”

When she reached up and stroked his cheek, he caught her hand and brought her fingers to his mouth. “I couldn’t think of anything but kissing you. You caught me staring more than once.”

“That expression on your face always sent a little thrill through me.”

“I dreamed about our wedding night when I could finally see you, touch you everywhere. You were even more perfect than my fantasies.”

And then he’d ruined that perfection with his clumsiness. Not tonight. Tonight he’d give her every tenderness she deserved. Somehow.

“What do you see now?” Trey said.

“A graceful arch to her neck, the delicate lines of her collar

bone. The lushness of her breasts.”

“Touch one of them,” Trey said.

Edward covered a breast with his palm. The flesh seemed to blossom, swelling above his fingers.

“Do you feel how the nipple hardens?” Trey asked.

“Yes.” As Edward massaged her, the peak became a tight point. He circled his finger around it and watched as it hardened further.

She closed her eyes again and fairly purred as he moved to the other breast and gave it the same attention. The night before, Trey had sucked her nipple into his mouth and she’d crooned her pleasure. Edward did the same now. He used his hand to toy with one breast while bending to lavish the other with kisses. When he closed his lips around the tip, she arched her back, pressing herself toward him.

Such heaven, to play her body this way. She abandoned all shyness and held his head against her bosom. He sucked greedily for a moment and then moved to the other peak. The more he gave her, the more she seemed to crave. Her breaths came faster now, sounding harsh. She hadn’t sounded like this the night before—not so hungry and impatient. As if she needed more of him than he could give. As if she’d never get enough. Her animal nature called to his, demanding that he possess her in the most elemental way possible. He’d stamp his mark on her tonight. Claim her as his mate, no matter that another man looked on. In fact, let him watch. Let him see the way of things between them. It would make the claiming all the sweeter.

“Now, lower,” Trey said. “What we discussed.”

Ah, yes. The ultimate kiss. Perhaps the most intimate act possible. Any beast could mount his mate and empty his lust inside her. Only a man in love would take the time to worship her the way she deserved.

Edward released her nipple and followed the perfumed valley between her breasts to her belly. After covering it with kisses, he circled her navel with his tongue and moved lower. As if she sensed his destination, she parted her legs and made room for him

between them. Her scent filled his nostrils. Hot and clean. Aroused. He pressed his nose to her muff and breathed deeply. She made a little cry. Her hips jerked upward.

“You’ve found the spot,” Trey said. “Part her lips and you’ll see it.”

Edward gently pushed the petals of her sex aside and discovered a nub. A little jewel of hard flesh. When he licked it, her whole body trembled.

“Oh,” she gasped. “Oh God, I can’t...”

Edward glanced up at Trey. “I’ve hurt her.”

“It’s her most sensitive spot. The seat of her desire.”

“I don’t understand,” he said.

“Don’t stop,” Trey ordered. “She needs you now.”

When Edward ran his tongue over the bud again, she moaned loudly. Pleasure or pain? How bloody infuriating not to know which. She’d never made a sound before, enduring his penetrations in silence. But she’d enjoyed everything else he’d done tonight, so why should this hurt her?

He glanced up again to find Trey stroking her face. “Don’t be frightened. It feels good, doesn’t it?”

“Too much,” she whispered. “I can’t bear it.”

“You want more,” Trey said.

She clenched her eyes shut. “I shouldn’t.”

“It’s natural. Let Edward love you.”

Edward held perfectly still, waiting. Wanting her so badly every inch of him ached. This had to work or they’d never share their lives to the fullest.

“Yes,” she breathed finally. “Please more.”

He stroked her with his tongue again. More firmly this time, rolling the bud around. When her hips moved, he ran his arms under her thighs and pulled her to his face. She tasted like flowers and honey as nectar flowed from her and coated his chin. He could feast on her forever if his own excitement wasn’t reaching impossible levels. Even the pressure of his cock against the bed threatened to undo him, but he held on so he could satisfy her instead.

He pulled her bud into his mouth and sucked as he had at her breast. Her cries came faster and louder.

“She’ll spend soon,” Trey said. “Whatever you do, don’t stop.”

Stop? He’d sooner die. As Trey had done the night before, he slid a finger into her, encountering no resistance. She was tight but wet, and her muscles gripped him. He probed her gently, keeping to the rhythm of her ragged breathing, his fingers coated with moisture. That seemed to inflame her even more.

After a moment, her moans built to a crescendo that soared to a shout. The muscles of her sex clenched around his finger and exploded into violent shudders. It went on for long seconds, squeezing, squeezing, squeezing. She sobbed and screamed as her body shook with the force of her release. As instructed, he continued sucking and lapping at her until the tempest subsided and she went limp against the mattress.

“Good job, man,” Trey said. “You can stop now.”

Edward released her sex, stretched himself out beside her, and pulled her into his arms. She burrowed her nose into his chest as her breathing returned to normal.

Trey rose from the bed. “Let her rest for a bit.”

“And then...?”

Without responding, Trey left the room and closed the door behind him.

Edward kissed the top of his wife’s head and lay there with his body throbbing. It was sheer torture to want her like this and not plunge inside her. If he had to wait much longer, he’d go completely out of his mind.

After a while, she opened her eyes and smiled at him. Her expression radiated joy as warm as sunshine.

“That was astonishing,” she said. “I’ve never felt the like.”

“Trey did the same for you last night.”

“Not like that,” she said. “Nothing like that.”

He kissed the tip of her nose. “It seemed to frighten you at first.”

“I was afraid I’d lose myself to its power.”

“But you’ve come back.”

She ran her arms around his neck and kissed him. "Edward, Edward, I do love you so."

What a reward. He could have wept with happiness. She told him all the time that she loved him, and she always meant it. That she could declare it so happily while lying naked in his arms made their marriage everything he'd hoped for. Only one problem remained. Something rock hard and swollen. One way or another, his poor cock needed relief.

She gave him an evil grin. "Why are you wearing so many clothes?"

"Only my robe."

"Far too many clothes." She tugged at the belt until she had it untied and pushed the silk away. He tore off the garment and threw it God knew where. As soon as he was rid of it, she ran her palms over the hair on his chest. Her thumbs found his nipples and he couldn't stifle a groan.

"They're sensitive, like mine," she said.

"God, yes."

"What else can I find that's sensitive?" She stroked her hands over his ribs and down to his belly.

"Take care," he said. "You're playing with fire."

"Oh, I'll be very careful." She went lower, to his pelvis. "Very, very careful."

Then her fingers closed around his cock and he nearly spent on the spot. "Margaret, please."

"Please what? Please this?" she said as she stroked him from the tip to the root, even touching his sac.

He couldn't form words, and if he had managed that much, he couldn't have pushed the words past the constriction in his throat.

"Please *this*?" She gently squeezed the head of his cock until she'd drawn a droplet of liquid from him. His whole body trembled as he fought for his last scrap of sanity.

"Please let me inside you, Margaret?" she said.

"Yes," he gritted, his voice raw with need.

"Then do, my love. Take me." She rolled onto her back and

reached for him. Heaven help him, she'd better be ready for him, because he couldn't hold back any longer. He settled himself between her legs and eased the tip of his cock inside her portal. She didn't tense, didn't bite her lip, so he pushed inside her. Deep, so deep. All the way to his root.

"Oh, you're wonderful!" she cried. "So big and hard."

He pulled back and surged forward again. She was so wet. Gripping him, welcoming him. His hips set their own pace, thrusting hard and fast. "Can't... go... slow."

"I don't care." She wrapped her legs around him and rose to meet his movements. "Please more. Give me all of you."

"All," he growled as he pummeled her. Too rough. Savage. And yet he couldn't stop, couldn't stop, couldn't stop.

"Edward, yes. Oh, yes. Again. It's happening again."

"Love," he shouted. "Love you."

"Now," she cried as she went stiff in his arms. Her sex erupted around his cock. Pulled at him, milked him with powerful contractions. The universe went red-hot and then blinding white when his own orgasm took him. He bellowed as his balls tightened and the semen shot out of him. More and more and oh, more until he had nothing left and could only fall against her, whimpering.

Peace settled over him, gentle and profound. He used his last ounce of strength to roll to his side, bringing her with him so he stayed embedded inside her.

Edward woke some time in the night to find Margaret had lit a candle and propped herself on an elbow so she could study his face.

"Hello, sleepyhead," she said.

"What time is it?"

"I have no idea." She pushed the covers down and used her fingertips to trace a circle over his chest. "I couldn't sleep for thinking—"

"About what?"

"How good you felt inside me."

Glory hallelujah. "I did?"

She bit her lip. Not out of timidity this time, but more as a temptress would do. Heaven knew she tempted him. She tempted him right now, and Priapus began to rise to the occasion.

"You felt grand inside me," she said. "As if you belonged there. I'd like to have you inside me all the time."

"That could prove embarrassing at dinner parties."

Her hand moved lower, to his abdomen. "We could stop going to dinner parties."

"We wouldn't want to disappoint our friends," he said. "Or our families."

"None of them are here right now."

He caught her wrist before she could get to his cock and take matters beyond his control. "Are you sure you're ready again? We made love only a few hours ago."

"Only a few minutes ago," she said. "In my dream."

"You dreamed about us coupling?"

"It was delicious." She stretched and the covers fell away, revealing one breast and its erect nipple. A nipple that fairly cried out for his lips and tongue. "You were perfectly enormous, and I straddled you and rode you."

"My wife's become a wanton."

"Only for you," she said.

"Not Trey?"

That stopped her. She turned thoughtful for a moment, her brow furrowing. "I'm grateful to him. I enjoyed his touch. But, I'd never have asked for it except to make you happy."

"And you did." So very happy, in fact, that he could burst with it. "I think we don't need his help any longer."

"No, but I might exact a price from him all the same." The devilish look returned to her eyes. "The two of you made plans for me. I may do the same to you."

"You are decadent," he said.

"And lascivious. And perverse. And depraved. The pair of you made me so."

He pulled her down and rested on his elbows above her. “Whatever shall I do with you?”

“Have your way with me,” she said. “Bend me to your will.”

He pumped his hips, pressing his erection against her belly. “First I need to make you as desperate for me as I am for you.”

She stared up at him from eyes that shot emerald fire. “What makes you think I’m not?”

“Ah, no.” He kissed her forehead. “A good lover always makes his woman ready.”

She gave a deep, wicked chuckle. “Do your damndest.”

Foul language, too. So unlike the innocent he’d married. She wouldn’t dare talk that way in public, but in the bedroom, it fit. He had the best of both worlds now—a lady to everyone else and a courtesan in his bed. What man could want anything else?

He rewarded her with a kiss. Not tentative this time, but ravenous. He took her lips as if he were parched and she cool water in the desert. She answered in kind, pulling herself against him so that her nipples grazed his chest. Soon they were clutching each other as their lips and tongues tangled in a contest for who could take the most the fastest.

The little minx rolled him onto his back, climbed on top of him, and seized control of the kiss. She branded him with her heat, her sweet breath coming fast.

Her body slid over his everywhere—smooth as velvet and scorching as an open flame. Her hands roamed his sides, tracing each rib before reaching to his shoulders and the sides of his face to hold him captive while she devoured him. Though he answered her as best he could, he couldn’t get enough of her—the feel of her skin under his palms, the hungry sounds she made in the back of her throat, the perfume of her building arousal. She was a drug, and like the addict, he lost himself in her. Grasping, desperate for more.

When she moved her hips and pressed her pelvis against his cock, he almost lost control.

“Inside you,” he gritted. “Now.”

“Not yet.” She kept moving, mimicking the way he thrust

against her at the moment of his release. The hairs that covered her mound added a rough texture against the sensitive flesh of his shaft. Moisture seeped from her to coat him. So wet, she was clearly ready for him, but she kept moving, moving, moving, never opening herself so he could enter her.

“You’ll kill me,” he gasped.

“Not yet,” she repeated.

He caught her at the high point of her next pass—far enough up his body that he could reach past her arse to part the lips of her sex. He shoved two fingers inside her as deep as they would go. She froze as a loud moan passed her lips. Time stopped in its tracks as they lay there, her pussy coating the head of his cock with her nectar and his fingers stretching the walls of her cunny. He held as still as he could, despite the fever in his blood. For as long as he lived, he’d have this moment seared into his memory. The night his wife had come to him. Not out of duty or a desire to please him, but because she needed the connection, the passion, as much as he did. Perhaps more.

Finally she pushed herself up, arching her back so that she didn’t dislodge his fingers. Now he could gaze at her—the smile of ecstasy on her face, the hard peaks of her breasts. She was truly a goddess, and impossible as it seemed, she was his.

“Now,” she said. But instead of rolling onto the bed, she lifted herself over him. His fingers slipped from her body. Before he could object, she grasped his shaft and guided the head of his cock to her cleft. She planned to take him inside her from that position and ride him like the beast he’d become.

She slowly lowered herself onto his rod. Though his body drove him to slam up into her, he waited and watched as his member disappeared between her folds. She let out a long “ahh” as she took more and more of him, finally settling onto him all the way. Her muscles grasped him, making his blood boil. Nothing could provide more erotic pleasure than the little drama she’d just performed.

“You’re huge inside me,” she said.

“Am I hurting you?”

“No,” she whispered. “I want every inch.”

“I’ll give you everything you want and more.” Or die trying.

How could he do less for this most perfect woman?

“What’s that word men use for what we’re doing?”

“Swiving,” he answered. “Frigging.”

“Yes, frig. Frig me, Edward, please.”

He groaned at the wickedness of her demand, the sheer carnality of it. Grasping her hips, he lifted her and brought her down on him, shoving into her at the same time.

“Yes, that’s it,” she cried. “Yes, more.”

He complied—how could he not? Another thrust and another, each harder than the last. Deeper and wetter. She caught his rhythm and matched it with movements of her own until they’d created a primitive dance. Up, down. Thrust and slide. His heart thudded in his chest, his cock threatened to erupt in an explosion of lust. Somehow he had to last long enough to satisfy her, but the sight of her abandon as she took him over and over, the feel of her wetness clutching at him would unman him any moment now. Unless....

In this position, he ought to be able to reach her pearl as she moved. Sure enough, he found it easily and pressed his thumb against the hard nub of flesh.

She went absolutely rigid and sucked in a breath with a hiss. “Merciful heaven.”

He rubbed her and continued stroking her inner walls with his cock. “Spend, my darling.”

“Yes.” She grasped her breasts, kneading, toying with the nipples until the vision maddened him with desire. “Yes, Edward. Now, now!”

He made firm circles around her pearl and then tugged gently on it. She let out a ragged cry as her sex clamped down on his. Tight, so tight. The spasms followed, racing from deep inside her all along her inner walls. Powerful, rhythmic, undeniable. His own need spiraled out of control as he pounded into her. His sac contracted almost painfully before releasing the tension in an orgasm

so massive it rattled his skull. He screamed as it tore through him, now rushing the length of his cock and spraying out the end to deposit his semen inside her in waves.

Her pussy clutched at him the whole time until she'd milked every drop he had to give. At the end, she slumped against his chest, whimpering as her sex continued to contract with the aftershocks of their lovemaking.

Love. Lust. Possession. And more he didn't have names for. They had years to find those words. Together.

To Touch a Woman: Chapter 4

The two men looked so blessed civilized bent over their chess game. You wouldn't think that either had the slightest interest in her, they seemed so focused on the little figures of ivory. Prince Albert himself could have no clue what Trey and Edward did with her in the bedroom—first at the inn and now here. The Teutonic prude would imagine this the most innocent of domestic scenes, a happily married couple with a family friend. The queen would add her approval, no doubt, declaring them the height of English decency. What utter rubbish.

"Check," Trey said as a gleam of anticipation entered his dark eyes.

Edward stroked his chin. Clean-shaven as always. His suit was impeccable, his cravat perfectly tied. By contrast, Trey had more wildness to him. She knew the truth about both of them. How they could alternate between tenderness and savagery when they touched her. She'd have both in a few minutes, and she'd toss in a few twists of her own.

"You think you've won," Edward said.

"Your king's trapped." Trey cast a sly glance toward Margaret. "And I've captured your queen."

"You think so?" she answered.

"Why don't you tell me?"

"You've captured my attention," she said. "My heart's another matter."

Edward smiled and moved a chess piece. "The game."

Trey studied the board, a frown crinkling his brow. You could almost see the thoughts spinning in his brain. Edward had performed some maneuver he hadn't expected, and instead of the victory he'd expected, he faced a new and unpleasant situation.

After a moment, he moved his rook. Edward immediately swooped his bishop across the board and took the piece. "Check and mate."

"The devil you say." Trey stared at the board, but nothing erased

the truth of things. “Well done.”

“If you hadn’t been staring at my wife, you would have seen it coming.”

Edward’s voice held no anger. Rather, he seemed content with teasing Trey. He played a devilish game, and she’d long ago given up trying to beat him at it. No worry. They had better amusements now.

“I was, indeed, distracted,” Trey said. “I think the two of you have teamed up on me.”

“I’m the one who’s been teamed up on,” she said. “You two didn’t even consult me before you arranged this *ménage à trois*.”

It was Edward’s turn to frown. “We only did it for you.”

“Isn’t that always the way of things?” She set aside the book she’d been pretending to read. “Men think they know what’s best for women.”

Trey didn’t appear to share Edward’s worry. In fact, he gave her tiny smile as if suspecting this was a new game. Which it was. “You seemed to enjoy yourself,” he said.

“My enjoyment isn’t the point. I’d like some control over my own body.”

Edward’s brows rose in surprise. “But last night, when you woke me up....”

Trey’s smile said he’d caught the reference to what they’d done in the middle of the night, but he said nothing.

She had to bite her lip to keep from grinning. She’d had plenty of control in that encounter. She enjoyed it so much, her mind had buzzed with possibilities ever since. Finally she’d hit on an idea that would show them—Trey, too—that she was no longer a shrinking violet. She had her own appetites, and they’d satisfy them or suffer her displeasure.

The darker man stretched his long legs in front of him and crossed his arms over his chest. “I think Meg’s having fun with us.”

“Not yet,” she said. “But I will.”

“I say,” Edward said. “I like the sound of that.”

“Don’t be so sure,” she warned. “I intend to direct things this

time.”

“You wouldn’t do anything to hurt either of us,” Edward said.

“Certainly not to hurt you.” She leaned back in her chair and looked from Trey to Edward. “But I might order you to do a few things you’d find, um, unusual.”

Trey let out a little hoot of amusement. “The kitten unsheathes her claws.”

“Kitten or tigress?” She raised a brow. “Are you willing to risk your delicate male parts to find out which you’re dealing with?”

Edward’s eyes grew round with surprise. “Margaret!”

“Don’t pretend you’re shocked,” she said. “You’re probably hard in your pants already.”

Trey tipped his head back and let out a hearty laugh.

“You think this is funny?” Edward said.

“Of course.” Trey chuckled a bit more and then took a breath. “If you’re not hard in your pants, I am in mine.”

“Very well, if it’ll make the two of you happy,” Edward grumbled. “I am.”

“My poor, put-upon darling,” she said. “Take off your clothes. Both of you.”

“In the sitting room?” Edward said.

“Why not? The furniture doesn’t care.”

Trey cleared his throat. “You do have servants.”

“I sent them away for the afternoon,” she said. “We’ll have to eat a cold supper, but it’ll be worth the inconvenience.”

“And what will you be doing while we get undressed?” Trey asked.

“I’ll watch. Now do it.”

Trey obeyed first, removing his shoes and socks and then rising from his chair. He took his time, his gaze never leaving her face as he removed garment after garment. He was a striking specimen, even without the ornate tattoo covering his chest and radiating along his arm. Until now, she’d only seen him naked in the room at the inn. She’d thought the candle’s glow made the images of the links of chain appear to shimmer. In the light of day, the illusion

didn't disappear completely. Not when she looked straight on at them, but only when she caught one at the corner of her vision. A story must have lain behind the pattern, but he revealed nothing about himself—except for his body. She'd likely never learn the secret of his ornamentation.

After several tantalizing moments, he unfastened his pants, pushed them down his legs and kicked them aside. For the first time she could study him at her leisure. His skin stretched taut over muscle and bone. Strong jaw, sculpted collarbone, broad chest. Below that, he tapered to narrow hips. His sex stood rigidly out from his body. One couldn't really call the thing attractive with its bulbous tip and the sac between his legs, but it had its own beauty. He gave her an insolent smile and reached down to stroke the shaft. It turned a livid color, and a droplet of white liquid appeared at the tip. He smoothed it over his skin.

"You're thinking of how it feels inside you," he said.

Heaven help her, she was. He'd made her crave him that night. Even now her body remembered the feel of him as he entered her. The throbbing started between her legs. Soon it would take control of her mind. But until then, she'd have some fun at the men's expense.

"Edward, you're not undressed," she said.

Edward had removed some of his clothes, but he'd stopped to stare at Trey, too. He seemed as fascinated by the other man's cock as she was. His own pressed against the front of his pants. She'd never seen him naked by day, either. Indeed, until the night they'd met Trey, she'd never wanted to look at that part of him. His size had frightened her so badly, and accepting him inside her sex had always hurt.

He blushed. Embarrassed at being caught staring, no doubt, he resumed undressing. As Trey had before, he removed his pants and stood naked for her inspection.

What a study in contrasts they made. Trey dark and Edward golden. They stood about the same height, but Trey had the bulkier body. Edward had more slender limbs, but he also had the larger

cock. Despite Trey's considerable size, he didn't quite match Edward for length and thickness. No wonder they'd had a problem. That lay in the past, thanks to their mysterious friend.

"Well," she said. "You've had your way with me. This afternoon, you'll do as I say."

Trey put his hands on his hips. The action tilted his pelvis forward and emphasized the state of his member. An intentional move, no doubt. "We await your command," he said.

"First, neither of you will spend until I've given permission."

"Agreed," Trey said.

"Don't be so quick," she said. "You don't know what I'll make you do."

"Why don't you tell us?" Edward said.

"First I want to watch Trey take your sex into his mouth."

"What?" Edward made a choking sound, as if he'd swallowed something too large. "You wouldn't ask such a thing."

"I'm not asking," she replied.

Edward pointed at Trey. "He wouldn't do it, I'm sure."

"I'd be happy to," Trey answered easily.

Edward's face grew red. "Don't encourage her."

"She's right," Trey said. "You and I have directed everything. She's had little choice what she did with her own body."

"But she consented to everything. You made sure of that."

"She did it to make you happy. She had no idea she'd get any pleasure out of it." Trey turned toward her. "Did you, Meg?"

Another day, she'd tell him she'd wanted both of them from the moment he'd first put his fingers at her temples to ease her headache. She'd tell both of them that they'd made her blossom into a woman. She'd thank Edward for allowing a strange man to share their bed. She'd praise Trey for his expertise and gentleness. Another day, she'd do all that. Today, she'd make them perform for her entertainment.

"You can't be serious about this," Edward said.

"Deadly serious."

"Take heart," Trey said. "I'll make a good job of it. And

your cock thinks it's a jolly idea."

Trey walked toward Edward slowly, looking deeply into his eyes the entire time.

Edward's frown eased and the tension seeped from his posture. More of Trey's magic, perhaps. She'd experienced his soothing nature directly. He could hypnotize the way a roaring fire did, melt fears away the way soup took off a chill.

When he reached Edward, he dropped to his knees and wrapped his fist around Edward's shaft. He pumped a few times and rubbed his thumb around the tip.

Edward groaned. Pleasure, not disgust. Trey pressed Edward's cock upward against his stomach and bent to run his tongue in one swipe along the underside—all the way from the base to the head. The thing seemed to come alive, twitching.

She needed to memorize this so she could do the same for her husband. Trey knew what he was about, obviously, because when he lowered Edward's sex and took the tip into his mouth, Edward closed his eyes in bliss.

"Bloody hell, that's good," Edward muttered.

The fluttering in her belly intensified. Her sex clenched, and she squeezed her legs together for relief. That only made matters worse, of course, so she shifted in her chair for a more comfortable position. Every movement only increased the pressure between her thighs. Edward must have felt this way as he watched Trey make love to her at the inn. He'd spent under the pressure of his own fingers then. Could she do the same?

Trey removed his mouth from Edward's sex. "Do it, Meg."

"It?" she repeated.

"Touch your pearl. Make yourself come."

"You know what I'm thinking?" she said with a gasp.

"You're squirming in your seat," he said. "What else could you be thinking? Do it."

"I'm in charge here," she said.

He shrugged. "Then, don't."

She glared at him as she pulled up a corner of her skirt and slid

her fingers into the space between her thighs.

He chuckled and went back to work. He took more of Edward's flesh into his mouth and sucked. When he let his lips retreat again, Edward's cock came out glistening and ruddy with color. Edward tipped his head back, clenching his jaw in an expression of fierce arousal. Trey worked him faster, gripping the base of his cock and using his cheeks for suction on the rest. His free hand he used to pump his own shaft. It seemed to swell further, although that could scarcely be possible. Any bigger and he wouldn't fit inside his skin.

What an intoxicating sight. Two men becoming highly aroused at her direction. Both under her control. She grew wet between her legs. She smoothed her juices into the flesh of her thighs and parted her lips in search of the nubbin there. She had no trouble finding it, hard as it had become. When she rubbed it liquid fire coursed through her, seeping into her bones and making her weak. Her vision blurred, but she forced herself to focus on the men while she stroked her pearl and tweaked it between her thumb and forefinger. Her sex tightened, seeking something to fill it. She'd have that soon. She'd have both men hard and pounding inside her. Right now, she'd make herself spend while she watched the men torment themselves.

Edward moved his hips, frigging Trey's mouth. The action caused Trey's dark curls to fall into his face, blocking her view.

"Move his hair. I need to see," she said.

Edward ignored her, still pumping his hips.

"Edward," she snapped. "Move his hair."

"Damn, but it's good," he gritted.

No good. He'd become too excited. No matter how she ordered him, he'd spend soon if Trey didn't stop. She was close, so close. She needed to watch them a bit longer.

She rubbed herself faster, her fingers flying over her pearl.

"Switch positions. Now."

Trey released Edward's member. It had turned such a furious crimson. He would have released his seed if she hadn't stopped them. Instead, he opened his eyes and took a few gulps of air.

Trey rose, still clutching his sex as if he'd strangle it. No longer reluctant, Edward knelt and took Trey into his mouth. Now, it was Trey's turn to clench his jaw in an obvious fight for control. She'd satisfy them both soon, the poor things.

"Remember," she said. "Neither of you may spend until I tell you to."

Trey grunted in agreement and submitted to Edward's caress. With Edward's shorter hair, she had a good view, so she slipped a finger inside herself, coating it with her own wetness and stroking it over her pearl.

She couldn't fight any longer. She needed the release. She tugged on her nub and rolled it. Uncontrollable lust washed over her as the tension coiled and broke free. The spasms rushed through her, and she released a cry. Her body hung suspended as though hovering above her chair as she spent. When it finally ended, she floated back to reality and opened her eyes to find both men staring at her.

"Good one?" Trey said.

"Fair." In truth, she'd had no idea she could arouse that response from her body. Still, it paled in comparison to what either of the men could do. Imagine what both of them could do. Both cocks stood ready for the job. Big and beautiful. Swollen to maximum size and hardness.

She took the pins from her hair and set them aside. Her curls fell around her face and shoulders as she shook them out. She stood then and began unfastening her bodice, working each tiny button slowly.

The men followed the progress of her fingers with their eyes. Trey's had a dark, hooded expression. Unreadable, although no one could miss his interest after seeing the state of his member. Edward's gaze held honest lust. They'd both be surprised when they discovered how little she wore beneath her dress. She'd decided against a corset and many of the other trappings of feminine decency, settling on no more than a thin shift and stockings held up by garters. When she had the buttons undone to her waist, her

hardened nipples came into easy view where they poked against the cotton of her only undergarment.

She covered her breasts with her palms and squeezed. "These feel so heavy and sensitive. They need something."

"My tongue," Edward said in a voice darkened with hunger.

"You're right." She pushed her sleeves over her arms and let her dress fall into a pile at her feet. "Whatever will Trey do while you're loving my teats?"

"Any number of things," Trey answered.

"Ah, yes. Trey's the creative one." She pulled her shift over her head and dropped it by her side. That left her naked except for stockings and shoes. They made the whole display more wicked, so she left them on.

"I can use my tongue on your pussy," Trey said.

"I suppose." She put her hand on her mound and stroked the lips and groaned with pleasure. "I'd like that."

"Just give the word," Trey said.

"The chaise." She went to the piece of furniture most women kept for swooning and stretched out on it. She'd never in her life become faint enough to use it before, but she'd need it now. "Edward will suck on my breasts while Trey licks my pussy."

Edward grinned. "Yes, dear."

They obeyed immediately, Trey parting her legs and taking his place between them while Edward knelt to take one nipple into his mouth. Edward used his fingers on the other breast while Trey's tongue sought her pearl and flicked over it.

She sighed, closed her eyes, and gave herself over to the sensations. Every inch of her flesh came alive as her two lovers devoted themselves to her pleasure. To think that days ago, she had no idea such feelings were possible. They'd taken a shy mouse and turned her into a feline in heat.

Her body arched, straining for more. Greedy woman, and yet, this afternoon was for her.

Trey held her hips and continued devouring her pussy. Edward switched to the other breast. They both used an expert touch, pull-

ing her into a whirlwind of need. Too soon, she neared the peak. She'd climax again, but please, not yet. She clutched her hands into fists, digging her nails into her palm. She tried counting her breaths. One, two, three... three... three. No use. The sensations were too powerful to resist.

While Edward continued tugging at her nipples, Trey sucked her pearl into his mouth. All the feelings crashed together, creating a wave that caught her up and tossed her toward the stars. She opened her throat and shouted as she spent. The spasms raced through her again, stronger than before. They didn't stop until she'd left reality behind for heaven.

After a bit the real world returned and she opened her eyes to find Edward's face near hers. His blue eyes held such a look of love, her breath caught in her chest. She basked in his smile and reached down to find Trey's head where it rested on her thigh. Stroking his hair, she lay sated, letting her breathing return to normal.

Edward pressed a soft kiss to her lips. "We succeeded, I take it." In response, she simply groaned.

"That sounds like yes," Trey said.

"You two ought to be knighted for services to womanhood."

"I'll gladly use my sword in that service," Trey said.

"Mine, too," Edward answered.

She reached down to her husband's cock and stroked it. "Such wondrous weapons you have."

"Careful, or I'll have to run you through with it," he said.

"And then I'll finish the job," Trey said.

"Wrong order, I think," she replied. "I'll have you first while I swallow my husband's instrument."

"I won't last long if you do that," he said.

"You will because I order it."

"Margaret."

She placed her hand over Trey's lips to still them. "I said I order it."

"I'll do my best."

“Let me up,” she said.

They made space for her to rise, which she did on shaky knees. She’d already spent twice, but her cunny was eager for more. Toward the center of the room, she got down on all fours, presenting her arse for their view.

“Good Lord in heaven, I’ve never seen anything more beautiful,” Edward whispered.

“Trey, you’ll enter me from behind. Edward, kneel in front of me.”

They took their places—Trey between her legs with his hands on her hips, Edward directly before her. She urged him backward until he sat on his heels and his member stuck straight upward with the head only inches from her mouth. As she bent to circle the fleshy rib with her tongue, the tip of Trey’s cock eased inside her. Still wet, she took him easily as he pressed forward. He hissed his approval as he went deeper, now fully embedding himself.

He began to frig her slowly, almost pulling out only to surge forward again. As he did, she took more and more of Edward into her mouth and sucked. His breath came in hard gasps and grunts, and Trey joined in with deep moans. He reached around her waist to her pussy and plucked at her pearl as his member stroked her inner walls. All three of them moved together. Trey, with his hardness pressing into her and retreating. Margaret, with her head bobbing to stroke her lips along Edward’s shaft. Edward, with his pelvis tilting to offer more of him. An engine of mutual pleasure. Perfectly tuned and humming with sexual excitement.

Trey groaned and pushed into her harder. “Damn, this is heaven.”

Edward trembled, his whole body vibrating. “I can’t hold back.”

“Don’t say it,” Trey answered. “I’ll come with you.”

“Ahh,” Edward shouted. “Too much!”

Trey went rigid, holding himself still inside her while his fingers continued their torment of her pearl.

“How she grips me,” Trey cried. “She’s driving me mad.”

“Stop, my darling,” Edward begged. “Oh, stop.”

She gave him one last, deep suck and released him. “Trade places.”

Edward moved behind her and nearly shoved Trey aside before entering her with one deep thrust. He immediately set a furious rhythm, almost pushing her off balance as his enormous member hammered into her. When Trey took Edward’s former position, she took him in her fist and pumped at the same pace her husband used on her.

“You’ll both spend at the same time,” she said. “I want to feel Edward as I watch Trey.”

“Hurry, man,” Edward shouted. “I can’t last.”

Trey didn’t answer with words, but closed his eyes and thrust upwards. Still slick with her juices, his cock slid between her fingers, and she hung on tightly to give him maximum friction.

They continued that way, creating an erotic tableau. Three lovers consumed by lust. Each giving and taking and demanding more. Her own excitement reached impossible levels—nothing even the past days had let her imagine. On and on. Past sanity, past breathing, past enduring.

All of them reached the breaking point together in one eternal moment. Trey went first as his body jerked and hot semen spurted from his member to cover her hand. The sight sent her over the precipice to an explosion of her own as her sex grasped the monster cock inside her. Edward howled as he, too, released a stream of sperm inside her. A transcendent moment. A perfect joining. An experience to last a lifetime.

Her muscles turned liquid, her bones melting from within. Trey helped her onto her back on the carpet and Edward snuggled on her other side. She trailed her hands over both of them—Edward’s face, Trey’s shoulder—and sighed in complete satisfaction.

Trey drank in the sight of them. Margaret and Edward, the devoted couple, sharing their morning meal. The two were so much in love they never moved more than ten feet from each other and constantly touched whenever they got close enough. He could let

himself enjoy it for a few moments before he announced his presence for the last time.

His skin still tingled where the most recent link from the tattoo chain on his arm had disappeared. The signal that he'd accomplished his purpose here and should go on to the next couple.

Somehow this pair had become especially precious to him. Maybe because of the sacrifices they'd made to reach their happiness. Edward had suffered another man's possession of his wife to ensure their happiness. Margaret had surrendered her body, even when she'd never taken anything but pain from the sexual act. Yes, they really deserved their joy.

He cleared his throat.

Margaret looked up, spotted him, and smiled. "There you are. We thought you'd never come down to breakfast."

"I won't have time, I'm afraid," he said. "I've sent for a carriage."

Her face fell. "You're leaving us."

"My business demands it." That was a lot of nonsense, of course, as was the carriage. He had no more business in this time, and the ether would take him to his next destination.

Edward set his plate on the sideboard and rested his hand on her shoulder. "We can't keep him forever, my darling. Trey has a life of his own."

If only they knew. He had not one life, but many. So many miles to go, so many mortals to help before he could fall asleep with his head cushioned on Sage's breasts. Today he'd gone one step closer, thanks to these good people. If anyone deserved to be happy, Edward and Margaret did. Meg, his Meg.

She rose and walked to him, studying him closely. New knowledge shone in her deep green eyes.

"Who are you?" she said softly.

"Wilkes Treveylan." By now, that lie should come easily, but the skin at the back of his neck grew warm.

"Perhaps I should have asked *what* you are," she said.

He took her hand in his and toyed with her fingers. "A friend."

“You won’t tell me, will you?”

Edward joined her and touched her elbow. “Does it matter, my darling?”

“I suppose not.” She sighed. “Will we see you again?”

“No.”

“I won’t say good-bye but farewell, Wilkes Treveylan.” She rested a palm on his chest and reached up to place an innocent kiss on his cheek.

For just a moment, he could have pulled her into his arms and kissed her more earnestly. A taste of her to take with him toward his next destination. Instead, he pressed his lips to her forehead and gently put her away from him.

Edward slipped his arm around his wife’s shoulder and extended his hand toward Trey. They shook briefly, and Edward cleared his throat. “We owe you a great deal.”

“All I ask in payment is that you two be happy.”

Margaret looked at her husband with a look of love so fierce it hurt to watch. He missed his own mate so much.

“We will,” she said.

“I’ll take my leave, then.”

Before they could say anything, he left the room. No servants met him as he went down the stairs to the front entryway and let himself out the door into the morning sunlight. For a moment he stood, reflecting on his time here. He hadn’t required any magic. No spells except the simplest one. He’d only needed to teach a mortal man how to touch his woman.

About the author:

*Alice Gaines has been writing erotic romance since its beginning with **Secrets, Volume 1**. She likes strong heroes with a tender side to them and heroines who can keep their men in line. When she's not writing hot, hot romance, she enjoys cooking and vegetable gardening. She loves to hear from readers at authoralicegaines@yahoo.com, or visit her website at www.authoralicegaines.com.*

Q&A With Alice Gaines

1) Please tell us a bit about yourself:

First off, I'm an old, widow lady with bad knees. My generation was on the front lines of the sexual revolution and it's been said, we think we invented sex. I don't know about that but we did make it very popular. "If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with" was a hit when I was coming of age.

I still wear my hair hippie-style—straight and long, parted down the middle—even though it's pure white now.

2) How many books have you written, what genres?

Five of the books I've finished, have never been published. When I add those to the published ones (do I have enough fingers here to count?), I get ten all together. Three were historical romances (one of those paranormal). One was a paranormal contemporary romance. One was a fantasy with no sex at all but a strong romantic element.

I've lost count of how many shorter works I've published. All are romances, though and all erotic/ultra-sensual. My first publication was a fantasy novella in *Secrets 1*. I had historical novellas in *Secrets 6* and *8*. Of course, I'll have a fantasy romance with eRed-Sage.com in November. I really loved this story, and I'm thrilled that it'll be part of the launch.

3) What prompted you to become a writer, (erotic)?

My imagination has always run wild. Since I was little, I've told myself stories, and they were often more satisfying than the ones I read or saw in movies and on television. When personal computers became popular, I had an easy way to write my stories down. Immediately, I discovered that I wanted to write romance and the hotter the better. That probably comes from my background on the front lines of the sexual revolution and my natural optimism. I like happy endings. I don't care what the "serious" world thinks of them.

4) What are your plans for future books?

My next project will be a full-length romance that takes place in an alternative universe. My heroine discovers herself in a place that on the surface looks like her home, Oakland, California but here, the anti-sex vigilantes have taken over the government. She has to save this universe before she can return to save her own. The future of her children depends on it.

5) How did becoming a writer change your life?

What way did it not change my life? I can have Christmas every day. Only, people behave the way I want them to, my presents are perfect, dinner cooks itself and the day has a happy ending.

Writing gives me insights all the time. To show my heroines through my heroes' eyes, I had to learn to look at a woman as the object of sexual desire. As a heterosexual, that was new for me and it's enriched my appreciation of women. By training, I'm a PhD psychologist and I learn so much about people by writing. True, they aren't "real" people, but they have to behave like real people to be believable. Often, they have to be more real than actual people, who act pretty strangely a lot of the time.

Plus, I love my characters. It thrills me when someone else loves my characters, too. They're like my children but without the fighting and the college tuition.

6) Which if any, favorite, authors played into your wanting to write yourself?

I still remember the impression, C. S. Lewis made on me as a child and a teen. I wanted to be able to create worlds as magical as his. *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Perelandra* trilogy are what influenced me to want to write fantasy.

Of course, I read romantic literature like *Jane Eyre*, *Gone with the Wind* and *The Once and Future King* (the Arthur legend). Shakespeare rocks my world, especially *MacBeth* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. There's no one better in the English language. He takes my breath away and makes me feel as insignificant as

the dust collecting around his writing table. I admire the plays of Arthur Miller, too, especially, *The Crucible*. That play gave me a lifelong obsession with the Salem witch trials.

In romance, I adore Laura Kinsale, Anne Stuart, and Penny Williamson, although I'm sure there are others I should mention here, as well.

7) Any plans to step out of your usual genre?

I have done one fantasy. I may do more, especially if that book is successful. I honestly think, though, that my main interest is in writing romance inside fantasy worlds.

Alice's Cincinnati Chili

I love to cook. It's my second obsession, next to writing. Most of my favorite recipes are either copyrighted or too much work for someone who doesn't love to cook. I make my own pizza and pasta regularly. You really need a pasta roller to make pasta often.

My favorite thing to make on an evening when I'm too exhausted to cook or go out and buy something is my version of Cincinnati chili. It sounds weird but it's really yummy, easy and fast.

Start a big pot of water boiling. For one person, open a 15oz can of good chili with beans and dump half of the contents into a frying pan. Save the rest for another night. Warm gently until hot. Cook your favorite pasta until al dente. (I use spaghetti. I've been known to do this with homemade fettuccine.) Using tongs, transfer undrained pasta to the pan with the chili and mix. A little at a time, add pasta water until the chili makes a bubbling sauce around the pasta.

Put into a bowl, top with freshly grated jack or cheddar cheese. On the side, have sour cream and hot sauce. If you have mild onion, you can also add some finely chopped.

Try these other stories from Alice Gaines!

The Hot-Blooded Husband by Alice Gaines
Available in e-book!

Dan Herrera can't believe that his passionate wife, Paz, has called a halt on their love life—all because he won't back down in his quest to win his hedge clippers from their neighbor, Brad. He knows she can't resist him, and he sets about to prove it. When he and Brad settle their feud, Paz assumes they'll go back to loving as usual. But Dan has a surprise of his own.

The Wicked Wife by Alice Gaines
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After five years of marriage, Lisa and Brad still have dynamite going for them in bed. When Brad's feud with the next door neighbor, Dan, leads to blows, Lisa takes drastic action. She and Dan's wife, Paz, declare no more sex until the men stop their fighting. Can Lisa live without Brad's special brand of loving, and what punishment will he dole out when he can finally have his hot-as-a-firecracker wife back again?

Master of the Elements by Alice Gaines
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As Elsbeth says goodbye to her father at the foot of the forbidden mountain, he places a bride's garland on her head and then refuses to let her go.

"I won't leave you," he insists. "Not to what lives up there."

But Elsbeth has always known that her fate can only be found at the crest of the forbidden mountain in the master's castle, a place shrouded in legend and kissed by the clouds.

Every hundred years, on the sixth day of the sixth month of the sixth year of the new century, a virgin from the town is led to the foot of the mountain and sent up to her destiny at the master's hands. None of the virgins are ever heard from again.

As the time for the sacrifice grows near, the master's protection

against the elements begins to falter. Drought, wind, cold. Crops fail. The people are suffering, and only Elsbeth can put a stop to it.

But at what cost? Is Elsbeth a blood sacrifice? Or a companion to ease the master's isolation?

Look for Alice's stories in ***Secrets Volumes 1, 6, and 8***,
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