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GLASS

*Lucid*

**Lucid**  
*Debra Glass*

Librarian Jayne Shepard has always lived vicariously through her beloved books, especially Regency-era literature. So when her friends offer the chance to stay in Villa Diodati, where Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and John Polidori's *The Vampyre* were inspired, Jayne seizes the chance.

She expects to absorb the haunting atmosphere of the historic manor located on the shore of Lake Geneva. What she *doesn't* expect is an encounter with an enchanting stranger who calls himself Lord Byron—who awakens Jayne to a sensual and sexual ecstasy she's never before known.

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Lucid

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*LUCID*

**Debra Glass**

### *Dedication*

This book is dedicated to my friends, the wonderfully loyal, often silly, more often generous, infamous Black Sheep forumites.

### *Author Note*

While the Villa Diodati is a real place and Lord Byron an actual literary figure, *Lucid* is a contemporary work of fiction about sexual adventure, not historical accuracy.

### *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

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*"Sleep hath its own world."  
From The Dream by Lord George Gordon Byron*

## Chapter One

Mad, bad and dangerous to know.

At least that's what Lady Caroline Lamb had said of Lord George Gordon Byron—the poet with whom she'd been obsessed. Byron had been a heartbreaker, a gambler, a lover of both men and women, a revolutionary, a poet. And Atlanta librarian Jayne Shepard ranked him the highest on her list of historical figures she would love to meet.

Like the love-struck Lady Lamb, Jayne was so enthralled with Byron she had seized the chance to travel with her book club to Switzerland to stay in the famous Villa Diodati, where Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley, and John Polidori had gathered and shared ghost stories one stormy night in 1816.

It was the trip of a lifetime—especially since Villa Diodati, nestled in the undulating hills on the scenic shore of Lake Geneva, was privately owned and Gothic literature enthusiasts weren't normally allowed to tour the property.

Jayne's stomach roiled and she sank back in the seat of the Swiss cab as it meandered along the winding and steep *Chermoin de Ruth*. The flight from Atlanta had been long and cramped and if it weren't for those wonderful little motion sickness pills, Jayne knew she would have had to make generous use of the barf bag.

The cab lurched to the left and then to the right. Jayne groaned and shifted and although the scenery of the steep descent down to Lake Geneva was literally breathtaking, she had to close her eyes to keep her head from swimming. With the three other members of her book club crammed into the cab, the humid June heat was stifling. Jayne hadn't expected summer in Switzerland to match the sultry, sweltering American South.

But it did.

And just when she thought she was going to have to ask the driver to pull over, one of the book club members exclaimed, "There it is!"

Jayne opened her eyes as the ochre structure came into view.

Settled on the side of a steep hill, the rather boxy-looking house with its green shutters seemed unassuming, so like the other houses in this ritzy section of Switzerland. The lush lawn was terraced and well manicured, a testament to the wealth of the owner—who happened to be a relative of Angie's, one of the members of Jayne's club.

"This is where Mary Shelley got the inspiration to write *Frankenstein*," Bette said in awe, as if she were looking upon the Holy Grail instead of a house.

Of course, they all knew that. It was the reason they were here.

"And don't forget Polidori and *The Vampyre*," Angie added. "I love me a man with fangs."

Jayne's pulse accelerated and she brushed her fingers against the glass as if she could touch that moment in time that had inspired the cream of Gothic literature. She had read *Frankenstein* and *The Vampyre* for the fifth time each as a member of the book club but her real love was the poetry of Percy Shelley and, of course, Lord Byron.

The cab rolled through the open wrought iron gate and pulled up at the rear entrance of the house before the travel-weary women piled out.

Jayne breathed in the fresh air, relieved to be out of the confines of the car. Dark clouds were already gathering over the lake and the cab driver muttered something in French about bad weather heading their way.

Jayne didn't care. The weather had been stormy when the Shelleys and Byron had summered here. A thunderstorm would give the evening that much more ambience.

"I can't wait to try *this*," Angie said, and plunged a hand into her oversized shoulder bag. She withdrew the bottle of absinthe she'd bought as soon as they'd sighted a liquor store.



Jayne stared at the black bottle, her gaze locked with the mesmerizing cat eyes emblazoned on the front. "Lucid?" she asked, reading the brand name aloud.

"We can't recreate the telling of Gothic Penny Dreadfuls without absinthe," Carla said. "I packed the glasses in my suitcase. I hope they didn't get broken on the flight over."

"I thought absinthe was illegal," Bette said.

"Not anymore," Angie said, twisting the bottle in her hand to look it over.

"No. It was legalized in the U.S. in 2007," Jayne offered.

"I printed out all the recipes and how to drink it," Carla said as she hefted her bag out of the trunk of the cab.

Jayne laughed. "All you do is pour it over a sugar cube, hold your nose and shoot it."

"Have you tried it?" Carla asked.

"No," Jayne said quickly. "But that's how they do it in books."

Bette bumped her shoulder as she passed Jayne on the way toward the door. "You live your life in books, Jayne. You need to do some real living."

Jayne laughed but Bette's truthful declaration nicked a sore spot. Librarian by day, reader by night, Jayne found it easier to live vicariously through books than to venture out and experience life firsthand.

Plain Jayne. At least that was how her friends perceived her. The smart chick. The avid reader. The fount of useless knowledge.

She eyed her friends. Angie was the larger-than-life diva with bright blonde hair—the country club maven who loved to be big and beautiful and didn't care if she didn't exactly gel with her skinny tennis- and golf-playing compatriots. Bette was the twice-divorced practical one of the bunch who was all about girls' night out. Carla was the soccer mom with a mini-van in the driveway, a golden retriever in the backyard, white-collar husband and two teenage sons.

While the four of them were unlikely friends, they all had a love of reading in common. They had planned a two-week, literary-lover's trip to Europe, visiting Switzerland first, followed by Paris and even the home of the bard in England. When Angie had told them she'd scored Villa Diodati for the first weekend, they had all jumped at the opportunity to spend a few days in the same rooms where the *crème de la crème* of Romantic-era writers had summered nearly two hundred years prior.

The others wrestled their luggage out of the car and headed into the villa. Jayne followed and when she stepped across the threshold, a chill swept up her spine at the knowledge she was in a place where her favorite authors had resided. The interior was dark and cool—alive, as if the house itself had recorded the significance of what had transpired here all those years ago.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jayne stabbed a last bobby pin into her curly updo. Why they all thought it would be fun to wear Regency costumes was beyond Jayne. She was quite comfortable in a pencil skirt, sensible shoes and a twin sweater set—her uniform.

But looking at herself clad in a diaphanous, pale green silk dress, she had to admit she looked...pretty. Ringlets of dark, curly hair escaped her loose coif, giving her an authentic appearance. Always a stickler for accuracy, Jayne had opted to wear a lightweight shift under her dress. Over the shift she wore a historically accurate short corset, which consisted of two wraparound pieces that pushed her breasts up in a way that rivaled any Victoria's Secret bra. Under the shift she wore replica drawers that were made of fine lawn cotton and completely split through the crotch.

She chuckled when she felt the teasing air swirling through the underthings, reminding her she was, in effect, wearing early nineteenth-century crotchless panties.

Inhaling, she gave in to the warmth that unfurled in her abdomen, realizing that the risqué underthings made her feel feminine and...sexy.

What must it have been like for nineteenth-century women to have their skirts yanked up, to steal a quick, passionate moment in a secluded hallway or in a lush garden?

Jayne sighed, thinking she had been born two centuries too late as she sat on the edge of the antique tester bed in her room and unrolled the cream silk stockings she had bought for the occasion. She pulled them up just over the knee as they were worn during the Regency period and tied each one with a green silk garter.

She stood, stepped into her slippers and then turned to look at her reflection in the full-length mirror on a stand in the corner of the room. Jayne gasped at the sight. If her suitcase hadn't been gaping open in the mirror image, she would have looked as if she were thoroughly from another time period.

Rain suddenly pelted her window, startling her. Jayne twisted to glance at the thick panes just as lightning struck. A delicious thrill swept through her. This was exactly like the night the Shelleys and Byron had told ghost stories by the fire downstairs.

Inexplicable nervous energy thrummed through her veins and she took a deep breath before opening her door and stealing downstairs toward the parlor, where her friends were probably already waiting for her.

Angie was the first to see her. "Jayne! Wow! You look like a real person from back then."

"I thought I was seeing a ghost," Bette said.

"You might know Jayne would be the most historically accurate," Carla added.

Jayne smiled. It was easy to see she had been the one who'd paid attention to detail. Angie was clad in a hot pink dress adorned with wide reams of lace that looked more like faux Scarlet O'Hara garb than a Regency-period costume. Bette's dress was better but her very modern sandals and one visible bra strap detracted from her otherwise authentic white dress. Carla, like Angie, had missed the time period altogether by trying to fashion a heavy crimson velvet Renaissance fair costume into a Regency dress.

"All right," Angie said as she dropped her voluptuous frame onto a big throw pillow on the floor. "Jayne's here. Let's crack open this absinthe."

Jayne smiled. She had never tried the spirit but she was well aware of its reputation.

Absinthe had once been the favored drink of the artists and authors during the nineteenth century and was reputed to cause hallucinations. While many of the artists of the past had been heavy absinthe drinkers, there was really no evidence that the drink was different from any other spirit.

Still, since it had been so popular in Byron's day, Jayne was willing to give it a try. She settled on a pillow next to Angie and watched as she peeled the seal from the lid. Bette set out the special reservoir glasses and the elaborately perforated silver absinthe spoon designed to rest on the rims of the barware.

"I brought the sugar cubes," Carla said, producing a china saucer laden with sparkling sugar cubes.

Lightning spiraled, cutting its way through the atmosphere to the earth. The electricity blinked and then everything went dark.

A chorus of high-pitched squeals filled the high-ceilinged room as the ladies stared at each other wide-eyed until their pupils adjusted to the flickering firelight.

Chills skittered down Jayne's arms. "Did anyone think to get cold water?"

"I did," Angie said. "The pitcher is on the table." She pointed to a marble-topped table next to the sofa.

"What's the cold water for?" Carla asked.

Angie popped the stopper out of the bottle. "You pour it over the sugar cube to dilute the absinthe."

Each of them leaned forward as Angie poured the green liquid into one of the special glasses designed to measure a shot of absinthe. Jayne breathed in the bittersweet, medicine-like scent and grimaced.

Bette frowned as well. "That stuff smells like ass."

"I bet it tastes like it too," Carla added.

"Babies," Angie chided as she held the reservoir glass up to examine the contents. "I think it smells like paregoric."

"Oh, I remember my mom giving me that," Bette said. "I thought it tasted like black licorice."

They all stared at the liquid, summoning courage to try it.

Jayne broke the few seconds of silence that ensued when she dramatically declared, "The green fairy wants your soul!"

Carla shuddered. "That gave me chills."

"This stuff right here ought to cure that," Angie said. "What do we do next?"

"Place the spoon over the glass," Jayne said.

Angie took the silver spoon and laid it over the top of the glass. Carla placed a sugar cube on the flat plane of the spoon.

Jayne twisted to get the carafe of cold water. "You're supposed to pour cold water over the cube, drop by drop, to louche the absinthe."

"Sounds like douche," Bette grinned.

Angie laughed so boisterously Jayne could scarcely pour the water over the cube. "Be still," she said. "I don't think your uncle will appreciate me dousing his Aubusson rug with water."

At once, Angie's expression turned serious. She cocked her head and stared at the contents of her glass. "Is it supposed to cloud up like that?"

"Yes," Jayne told her.

"Considering you've never tried this stuff, you sure know a lot about it," Carla said.

"Don't mind her, honey," Angie said. "Jayne knows everything."

"I read it in a book," Jayne explained.

"The water didn't melt the sugar cube completely," Bette said.

Jayne took the glass from Angie, deposited the cube into the already-opalescent absinthe and stirred it with the spoon. She passed the glass to Bette. "Try it."

"*You* try it." Bette pushed it back.

"Oh hell, I'll try it," Angie said, and snatched it out of Jayne's hand. She eyed each member of the group before lifting the glass to her lips and taking a sip.

The others looked on with curiosity as Angie's head involuntarily shook. Her face contorted.

"That bad?" Jayne laughed.

"It's pretty damn bad," Angie rasped, and then smacked her lips. "Sticks with you too."

Carla took the glass from Angie and took a tiny sip. "Oh jeez! That's awful!"

She passed it to Bette, who stared at it with dread.

"Shoot it," Jayne said.

Bette's dark eyebrows shot up. "*You* shoot it!"

"Jayne won't do it," Carla teased. "She's too chickenshit to do anything like shoot liquor."

"Yeah," Angie added. "I bet you've never done a shot in your life."

"A shot?" Bette interjected. "She won't even go out with that Edward Warren who's asked her three times already."

Jayne parted her lips to speak but the sad truth was, she *hadn't* ever done a shot and she had *not* taken Edward up on his offer, even though she wanted to. Well, she would show her friends tonight. "Let me show you how it's done," she said, taking the glass from Bette.

Courage surged and Jayne turned up the glass, downing half its contents. Warmth spread through her throat and chest. A line of perspiration beaded between her shoulder blades and trickled downward. Although the aftertaste was decidedly bitter, the sensation from the absinthe was toe-curlingly...wonderful.

She blinked and stared at the absinthe. "Not bad."

Angie gave voice to a hearty laugh. "You might know the librarian in the bunch would like it."

Bette reached for the glass but Jayne drew it back. "Louche your own. This one's mine."

After the others gave up on the foul taste of the absinthe and switched to wine, they began to discuss Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Jayne settled against the pillows and sipped her absinthe, relishing the warmth and heaviness filling her body. Oddly, she thought, her mind stayed lucid, which she assumed accounted for the name of the particular brand.

As the storm raged, Jayne's thoughts swept from the book discussion to the past, and in her mind's eye, she imagined Mary Shelley with her long, wild dark hair, her hands animated as she told the tale of the ill-fated Dr. Frankenstein and his pitiable monster. Of course, lounging nearby would have been her soon-to-be husband, the angelic-looking Percy Bysshe Shelley, as well as the handsome doctor John Polidori and the enigmatic scoundrel Lord George Gordon Byron.

Jayne felt her lips pull into a smile. She had always had a sort of literary crush on Lord Byron. *She Walks in Beauty* was one of Jayne's favorite poems and she wondered what sort of infatuation inspired a man to write such haunted words in tribute to a woman.

She turned up the glass and finished the last drop of absinthe. While the others talked on, Jayne put her glass aside and closed her eyes, intending only to rest for a moment. The combination of jetlag and a shot of absinthe was lethal, and it wasn't long before her mind, filled with images of a long-ago night, succumbed to sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

A sharp crack of thunder shook the very foundation of the villa. Startled, Jayne's eyes snapped open. She sat, blinking, trying to remember where she was. Fire crackled

in the hearth. An empty absinthe reservoir sat on the floor next to her hand and she was still clad in her Regency-style dress.

She could hardly believe the others hadn't awakened her and urged her to go to bed, but then, she could have been sleeping like the dead since she was suffering from jetlag.

She wet her lips, tasting the odd peppermint and licorice taste of the absinthe. "No hallucinations," she said, a little disappointed the spirit hadn't lived up to its infamous reputation.

Yawning, she stood, smoothed her dress and made her way toward the stairs. Without the benefit of electricity or the fire, the hallway was completely dark and, in unfamiliar surroundings, Jayne hoped she could find her way back through the sprawling villa to her room.

A tremor tickled her spine and she quickly looked over her shoulder. She swallowed thickly, feeling as if someone were with her. What if the old villa was haunted? But that was silly. Ghosts were fictional beings, figments of the imagination.

She turned to make her way up the stairs—and ran headlong into the hard wall of a very male chest.



## Chapter Two

Jayne's breath caught in her chest when the man seized her arms to keep her from falling.

"Quiet," he whispered. "You don't want to awaken the others."

Jayne gaped. Inherently she knew she should be terrified of this stranger who materialized out of the darkness as if made of the very shadows, but his warm hands on her bare arms rendered her unable to form a coherent thought.

One of his thumbs made lazy circles on her skin.

She swallowed thickly. A chill swept over her when he released her and she found herself aching for his touch.

Had the others mentioned they were sharing this house? Why couldn't she think?

"Were you awakened by the storm as well?" he asked, his voice as soft as black velvet.

His accent was decidedly English and, like her, he was also clad in Regency-style clothing. His white ruffled shirt, open midway down his naturally sculpted chest, bloused over black pants. With his wavy dark hair, soulful azure eyes, straight nose and stubble-shadowed, dimpled chin, he looked more like a cover model for a romance novel than a flesh-and-blood man.

"Y-yes," Jayne stammered. She couldn't take her eyes off him. He seemed eerily familiar but she knew she would remember meeting a man like this.

He flashed a handsome, dimpled smile that made Jayne's heart beat erratically. "We can enjoy the storm together then, eh?"

Unable to find the words to speak, she nodded dumbly as the stranger hooked his arm in hers and led her back into the parlor. Her skin tingled at his touch. She tried to

tell herself it was because he had appeared seemingly out of nowhere but the truth was, Jayne found him to be drop-dead gorgeous.

With a slight limp, he walked to the fireplace and then took up the poker. With an almost casual air, he placed one hand on the mantle to brace himself as he expertly wedged the poker under the log and flipped it on the andirons. At once the fire crackled back to life, illuminating the stranger's white shirt so Jayne could see his taut midsection through the fabric.

His trousers clung in such a way that they left little to the imagination and Jayne allowed her gaze to drift over the perfect curve of his backside, down his sturdy thighs to his black boots.

When he put the poker aside and turned to her, Jayne tensed as his lurid gaze met hers and then traveled down her body and back up again. Her nipples tightened under the soft fabric of her chemise. She was shocked at her physical reaction to the way this man looked at her.

Biting her bottom lip, she wondered what it would be like to kiss his perfectly formed mouth. To be certain, he was devastatingly handsome but Jayne couldn't explain her urges. Perhaps it was the fact he looked very much like the heroes of the novels she so loved. Mr. Darcy. Heathcliff. Mr. Rochester.

But there was something else—something almost otherworldly about this man that drew her to him like a moth to a flame.

When he started toward her, Jayne felt as if the breath had been knocked out of her.

"Are you staying here?" he asked.

The accent. It was definitely the accent. Jayne cleared her throat. "Yes. We just arrived this morning."

His eyes sparkled mischievously. "For how long?"

"Only until Sunday," she said. She wanted to kick herself. Her voice sounded meek. Silly. She was acting like a star-struck fan instead of a woman in command of her own body.

And yet, when he looked at her, Jayne saw unmistakable interest in his eyes.

"It is unfortunate that you must leave so soon," he said. "I think I would like to get to know you better."

Jayne swallowed thickly. "Are...are you staying here as well?"

"I am lodged in the smaller house just down the hill but I've spent many a night here," he said, closing the distance between them.

Jayne's pulse pounded and her pushed-up breasts heaved with her short, quick breaths. He didn't stop until he was toe-to-toe with her, his fingers flirting with hers.

A tiny smile tugged at her lips. This handsome man was interested in *her*!

"Ah, the glee of anticipation and infatuation," he said softly as his fingers entwined with hers.

"Who are you?" Jayne asked, her voice rising with hysteria. Something told her that despite his refined accent, this man, like Lord Byron, was dangerous to know.

"Only a fellow traveler," he said as he took an impossible step closer.

Jayne's head swam and she thought for a moment that he might kiss her. "I...I'm Jayne. Jayne with a *y*."

"Jayne," he repeated with a delectably diabolical glint in his eye. "With a *y*."

Her gaze darted between his eyes and his beautiful mouth.

Lightning flashed and when Jayne jolted, he seized the opportunity to pull her into his arms. "'Tis only the storm, Jayne," he cooed, but she had every reason to believe she had more to fear from this man than the tempest that raged over Lake Geneva.

She forced a sick-sounding laugh.

"Surely you are not frightened?"

She shook her head. "No. I'm not frightened."

“Good,” he said as one of his hands glided up her arm until his fingers caught her under the chin. He tilted her face up. “Storms are God’s gift to lovers.”

His breath smelled sweetly of wine. His skin and clothes didn’t smell of soap or cologne but rather of that spicy fragrance that belonged only to men. His gaze dropped to her mouth and he wet his lips with the tip of his tongue.

In that instant, Jayne knew without doubt he was going to kiss her, and the steep second she waited for it was the most exquisite torture she had ever known. She inhaled sharply as he lowered his mouth and she whimpered when his lips brushed hers, melting when he claimed her with a kiss. Her eyelids fluttered shut as his sensuous lips teased hers. Her thoughts and pulse raced but her body had a will of its own, and the very instant she responded, he crushed her in his arms, the pressure of his kiss tilting her head back so that her body arched into his.

Jayne’s fingers dug into the voluminous fabric of his shirt, finding hard biceps. She clung as his knee wedged between hers and expertly parted her legs until she was practically riding his thigh.

He moaned low in his chest as he skimmed a hand down her spine, his fingers splayed wide. Jayne reveled in the intensity of the kiss, of the heat of his body and his hand. Erotic need flourished, spreading through her limbs like molten lava, and she found herself wishing this kiss, this perfect moment would never end.

His tongue mated and sparred with hers as their mouths fused.

Jayne realized she didn’t even know his name but that hardly mattered. She was in Europe, in the very parlor where her favorite authors lived and loved and, on this night, she wanted to live recklessly, to pretend she was one of *them*.

All her life she had been the cautious one, the one who thought before she acted. Tonight would be different.

Very different.

When he finally dragged his mouth from hers, he muttered, "You taste of absinthe. I think you might not be real, that you might be the green fairy in the guise of a beautiful woman."

Jayne felt intoxicated, and she knew the sensation wasn't from the spirits she had consumed but rather from this stranger's touch.

He traced the low line of her bodice with the tip of his index finger. "You are, after all, dressed in green."

Jayne wanted to press her breast into his hand. She wanted to be free of these clothes, to feel his palms on her bare flesh...

What the hell? She seized his hand in hers and clutched it to her breast.

A smile claimed his lips. "An amorous little sprite, I see."

Jayne's breath left her lungs in a ragged rush as he slipped his hand into her bodice and the pad of his ring finger found her nipple. She rocked against his thigh, her body alive with sensation.

"Very amorous indeed," he breathed as he loosened the laces on the back of her dress.

Jayne gasped when he dragged the shoulders of her dress and the wraparound corset down her arms all in one rough motion. Her breasts sprang free and he stood back slightly to admire his handiwork.

"*Très beau,*" he uttered in French. "*Ma petite fée verte.*"

And with that, he swept one arm around her waist, one behind her head, bent her backward and covered one of her nipples with his hot, hot mouth.

Jayne shifted restlessly against him as flames licked from her nipple straight down to her pulsating clit. Who was this man, this stranger who was dressed like a Romantic-era hero? And what was this magical power he held over her? Her desire for him was so overwhelming, it was almost too much to bear.

She practically lolled, giving in to the lust ravaging her body, but her senses were set on edge when the hand that had been on her back slid around her hip and between her legs, where he cupped her pussy through her clothes.

"I can feel your heat, little fairy," he murmured as he lifted his head from her breast.

He stood, bringing her upright with him and taking her hand in his at the same time. Jayne froze as he guided her hand to where his cock strained against his pants. She watched as a tiny muscle at the corner of his eye twitched when she gripped him through the coarse fabric.

Fresh desire thrummed through her veins at the feel of him, hard and ready for her.

"Are you a maiden?" he rasped.

It took a moment for his meaning to sink in but when she realized he was asking whether or not she was a virgin, she shook her head. "No." He played the part of the Regency hero to the hilt but Jayne wasn't about to stop him.

She had been involved in long-term relationships with two other men but she had never, ever, not once done anything this spontaneous.

His eyes sparkled at her confession and he steered her to the sofa. When the backs of her knees met the cushion, she sat. He dropped, kneeling between her knees, his warm hands gliding up her calves, caressing her through the silk stockings.

She stared, her gaze locked with his. When he abruptly caught her under the knees, she gasped. He only chuckled as he dragged her bottom to the edge of the sofa.

Oh God in heaven, he was going to fuck her and she didn't have a condom. She parted her lips to ask him if he was—hopefully—packing one but he pressed his finger to her mouth. "Hush, my little fairy. I only intend to taste your sweet nectar."

Jayne's heart took flight as his hand snaked between her thighs, through the slit in her drawers, straight to the spot where she was already wet and ready for him. This was all happening too fast but she didn't have the will or desire to stop it. She

shuddered as he wriggled a finger into her channel, fighting the need to close her eyes. She wanted to watch him bury his face in her pussy. She wanted every second of this experience to leave an indelible mark on her memory so she could relive it over and over.

His finger teased and Jayne emitted a sigh as she parted her thighs to give him easier access.

Deeper and deeper he pushed the digit inside her and Jayne felt her cream gathering at his pleasurable assault. She whimpered when he withdrew his finger but everything inside her seized taut when he slipped the glistening appendage into his mouth and seductively voiced his pleasure.

“Sweet,” he said with a sexy grin, reaching back under her skirt for more.

Jayne dragged her skirt and petticoat up to her waist. Cool air tickled her thighs, vying with the heat of his hand against her body. Jayne spread wider, arching and cupping her own breasts as he worked his finger in and out. It felt so wonderfully good she thought she might die from pure pleasure. Her few other lovers had been nervous and hasty. None of them had ever taken the time to tease her, ready her.

Normally she would have been bashful about being exposed to a man whose name she didn’t know – but not tonight.

No. Tonight she wanted to entangle her fingers in his wavy hair and drag his face into her pussy and never let him go. Emboldened by her own thoughts, she reached for his shoulders.

He had the audacity to flash a rakish smile as he descended between her thighs. “What do you want, dear Jayne?”

“Put your mouth on me.”

“Where?”

Frustrated, she wriggled closer to him, riding his intruding finger. “Down there,” she breathed.

His pink tongue darted out and swirled over her clit. Jayne cried out and he took more of her in his mouth. He knew just where and how to apply pressure. Dark lashes rested against his cheeks as he buried his face between her thighs, suckling her while his finger worked its magic. Drunk on desire, Jayne held his head between her legs and tilted her hips to give him more.

A growl escaped his throat and he reached under her bottom to lift and spread her even more. His lips closed over her clit and he sucked and tongued, and Jayne was helpless to do anything but enjoy it.

“Oh yes, eat me,” she heard herself saying wantonly. “Eat my pussy.”

He moaned again and his pressure increased. His fingers dug into the soft flesh of her bottom and he hummed against her, the vibrations escalating Jayne’s pleasure.

There was no more watching him. Now she entwined her fingers in his hair, inadvertently pulling as she felt her body rising toward orgasm. Her breathing deepened and she cried out as the first wave swept over her. Then spasms began deep in her channel as it gripped his finger. Her legs locked around his shoulders and she thrust upward against his mouth, riding the waves until the last one subsided.

He pressed one last kiss to her mons and lifted his head. Jayne felt her face flame when she saw her own juices glistening on his lips and chin. He dragged his sleeve across his face and gave her a lopsided smile as he reached down to untie the laces at the top of his pants.

More than anything in the world, Jayne wanted to feel him inside her, but she couldn’t be irresponsible. “Wait,” she said breathlessly. “Do you have...protection?”

“From whom?”

Jayne’s eyes dropped to his crotch, where he was running his hand up and down the length of his shaft. The head was bulbous and dark. Veins bulged along the thick span of flesh. He was so hard and she wanted him inside her with every fiber of her being. She swallowed, debating.

There was no earthly way she could consent to unprotected sex with a stranger.



He wedged between her legs and Jayne scrambled backward.

"Be a good fairy and let me put my prick in your cunny," he said, dragging her back to him with one hand.

"But—"

He raked the head of his cock through her folds and Jayne felt her desire crest again. The thought of him filling her was so, so good.

And yet...

"Wait," she managed as she pressed her palm against his chest. "I...I don't even know your name."

He laughed. "Everyone knows my name."

"I don't."

"Surely you jest."

Jayne shook her head. This area of Switzerland was known as the Beverly Hills of Europe. Was he an actor? Someone famous? She felt like a fool. "I'm sorry," she said. "Please...who are you?"

The humor softened in his eyes. "I thought you knew. My name is George."

"George," she repeated. "I cannot—"

"George Gordon Byron."

Icy chills swept down Jayne's body. "Lord Byron?" she asked. "*The* Lord Byron? What? Are you playing a part? Are you teasing me?"

His eyes narrowed. "Madam, I am flattered by your reaction...I think." He grinned. "But I assure you, I am playing no part and I will only tease you—here," he said, and tickled her between the legs.

Jayne jerked. "Are you insane?"

He laughed again. "I have been deemed as such by others but I assure you, the only madness upon me now is the mad desire to rut your cunny." He pulled her toward him again and this time, he impaled her on his cock.

Jayne gasped and braced herself to pull away despite her body screaming for her to allow this man to do anything he pleased.

He thrust completely up inside her and ground his pubis into hers, sending shards of white-hot desire shooting through her body. "Tell me you do not wish me to continue."

Jayne mewled.

His hands found her breasts and he gave her nipples a sensuous tug. "Tell me you wish me to cease."

"Please..."

"Please stop or please fuck you?" His voice touched her somewhere deep inside and she found herself opening her thighs.

He leaned over her so that his mouth was against her ear. "I am not rife with disease, if that is what you fear. Now...allow me to pleasure you."

Jayne gripped his arms and clung as he shifted his hips so his cock moved insidiously deeper inside her.

"Tell me what you desire, dear Jayne."

She trembled violently. He couldn't be *the* Lord Byron. It was as improbable as it was impossible. Byron had been dead since the early nineteenth century. But here he was—or rather seemed to be—personified in this gorgeous man.

The thought occurred to her that her friends had paid a male prostitute to trick her, but the way he was moving drove all other rational thought from her mind.

"Tell me, little fairy. Tell me what you desire."

"Fuck me!" she cried, scooting down so far she would have fallen off the sofa were it not for his hard, rhythmic thrusts driving her back onto the furniture.

She gasped as his pelvis slapped noisily against hers. His heavy scrotum swayed against her bottom and his pubic bone ground her clitoris, turning Jayne into a mindless being intent on one thing and one thing only—coming on Lord Byron's cock.

"That's it, little fairy," he cooed. "Spread for me. Take me. Take all of me inside your tight, wet sheath."

Jayne bucked. She was close. Oh so close. "Faster," she panted, as need besieged her to the point where she plunged her own hand between her legs and began to massage her hungry clit.

Her breaths left her body with each punctuated thrust and then suddenly she could feel ecstasy building, growing. "Yes, yes..."

Squeezing her eyes shut, she cried out as bliss shattered over and through her. Vaguely, she was aware of his ribald encouragements and while the last spasms eddied and waned, she felt him withdraw and then she felt his hot seed hitting her thigh.

Basking in the warm inner glow, Jayne inhaled slowly—and then she opened her eyes.

Her breath froze in her chest.

Jayne half sat in dishabille, her thighs gaping, wetness drenching her pussy, cum oozing down one leg—but Lord Byron had vanished.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Jayne!"

Jayne's eyes snapped open and she gasped.

"You must have been dreaming," Carla said.

"That must have been some kind of dream!" Bette exclaimed.

Jayne blinked as her eyes focused on her three friends who were still sitting on throw pillows in the floor, still wearing their costumes. "W-where...what happened?" The last thing she remembered was being ravaged by a man who claimed to be Lord Byron.

Her head swam with erotic images.

"Honey, you've been asleep for the last two hours," Angie said.

Jayne pushed herself up and rubbed her eyes. "I've been asleep? But..."

It had seemed so real.

Surely it couldn't have been *only* a dream. Jayne's gaze drifted to her glass with one sugary drop of absinthe left in it. She blew out a breath. "Now I know why that stuff is called *Lucid*. I had the most lucid dream I've ever had in my life."

"Do tell," Carla said.

Jayne swallowed and pulled her knees up to her chest. The dream had been so real; in fact, she still felt that sated hum between her legs. She hoped she hadn't cried out in her sleep.

"Come on," Angie prodded. "You can't just give us a lead-in like that and not cough up the details."

Jayne smiled and her thoughts meandered back to the handsome hero of her dreams. "I...dreamed I had sex with Lord Byron."

"Lucky you!" Bette exclaimed.

"I wouldn't mind being tied up in a knot with Byron *and* Shelley," Carla said.

"Percy or Mary?" Angie teased.

"Percy!" Carla said quickly as her eyebrows knitted together in the center. "I don't roll *that* way."

Angie prodded Jayne with her elbow. "So, was Lord Byron...any good?"

A warm blush infused Jayne's cheeks and she nodded amidst the giggles and hoots of her friends. "A lady doesn't kiss and tell," she said.

"You know what that means!" Angie said. "Maybe I should take another swig of that absinthe before I go to bed."

"You go right ahead," Bette said. "That stuff tastes like hell."

"I don't know. I really liked it," Jayne said.

Yawning, Angie pushed herself to her feet. "Gals, I gotta turn in."

The others all clambered off their throw pillows, stretching and groaning. Jayne followed. "Do you think we should clean this stuff up?"

"Nah," Angie said, waving her hand at the empty glasses. "We'll get it in the morning."

"Good idea," Carla said.

Jayne bade her friends goodnight and climbed the stairs to her room. Although she had been flippant about the dream with the others, she still couldn't get the vivid images out of her thoughts.

As she unfastened her laces and slipped out of her dress, she recalled how her dream lover had pulled her bodice down to expose her breasts. Warmth spread downward as she remembered how his hot mouth had felt on her nipples.

She inhaled. Her thoughts soared only to come crashing back down around her. It wasn't as if she'd really had sex with the poet of her dreams. Chiding herself for her silliness, she finished undressing with fastidious intent. "Mad, bad and dangerous to know, indeed," she muttered as she snatched her flannel nightgown out of her suitcase.

But just as she prepared to pull the shabby, matronly gown over her head, she stopped. Tonight, she wanted to sleep without clothes. She wanted to feel the covers against her nude skin, to be unfettered and uninhibited.

A little thrill rushed through her veins. She never slept in the nude. Why now? Why in this place?

She dragged the down comforter back and slid underneath. Despite her knowledge that the experience she'd had was only a dream, when she closed her eyes, it was her dream lover who filled her last waking moments...

## **Chapter Three**

Limbs heavy with sleep, Jayne snuggled against the warmth beside her. Fingers caught her thigh, drawing it up and over a hard male hip. Those same fingers delved between her legs.

Jayne moaned and rocked toward the teasing digits. One especially inquisitive digit felt through her folds and then she heard a rough breath as the finger found its way inside her.

"You are still wet, my wee fairy."

Jayne opened her eyes at the sound of the hauntingly familiar voice. A sleepy smile pulled at her lips when she saw Lord Byron's face in the moonlight.

Her dream lover.

"Are you real?" she asked, reaching up to cup his stubbled jaw.

"Are we, any of us, real?" he uttered as he moved closer to press a kiss to her lips.

Jayne breathed in the fragrance of him and shifted toward his probing fingers. "I fear you're only a hallucination from the absinthe."

He gave voice to a little laugh. "Absinthe makes the heart grow fonder."

Jayne giggled at his clever play on words. "It would seem so."

But her humor was short-lived. Byron rolled onto his back, dragging her on top to straddle him. "Ride my cock, love."

Fully awake now, Jayne's face flamed. Even though she knew this was a dream, she had always felt self-conscious and exposed in this position. She bit her bottom lip and dropped her gaze.

He caught her under the chin so that her gaze found his. "You are a beauty, Jayne."

Joy swelled through her being.

"However," he added. "I do not think you are as timid about your beauty as you are your pleasure."

He was right. Jayne knew she wasn't an unattractive woman. She had, however, always feared her own desires and sexuality as if they were something that made her vulnerable.

She feared losing control and giving in to the all-encompassing feeling of orgasm. She feared...pleasure.

"Our bodies are made for our enjoyment," he said. "Take what you need from me, Jayne."

Her pulse skittered as she resolved to do just that. Boldly gazing into his eyes, she lifted her bottom and reached between her legs to guide his cock into her. A whimper escaped her lips as he filled her.

"That's it, love," he said, undulating like a gentle wave beneath her. "Tell me how it feels."

"Good."

"Describe it."

She could scarcely believe she was attempting description to a wordsmith like Byron, but she tried anyway. "The way you fill me...makes me feel complete."

His eyes sparkled.

"But it's more than the sensation of you being inside me," she continued. "The way you look at me, the scent of your skin, the sound of your breathing...all of it makes *this* seem right. Perfect."

"Are you afraid?"

She stared. She hadn't expected that question. "Should I be?"

"You tell me," he said, sliding his hands up and down her thighs. "Are you afraid of the taboo things you want to do with a man in the dark?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"Do you think women are not supposed to experience such primitive and dark desires?"

Jayne fought the need to close her eyes and instead held her lover's gaze. It was as if he could see through to her soul, as if they were connected more than physically. "I don't believe that," she said, but on some level she realized she did.

"There is no one here but us," he murmured. "And what happens in this room tonight is only ours to share."

Her pussy clenched at the possibilities.

He cupped her cheek. "I am your servant."

Determination seeped in. Jayne wanted to do all the things she had only read about, fantasized about. And if this were only a dream, she was free to enjoy even her darkest fantasies.

As she began to tentatively move, he trailed the backs of his fingers down the sensitive column of her throat, over her collarbone and down to her breast, where he gave her nipple a firm tug. Jayne arched into his touch.

"Does that please you?"

"Yes."

"Then ask me for more, Jayne. Tell me what you desire."

She took both his hands and placed them on her breasts but he remained still. "No, little fairy. Tell me. Voice your pleasure."

"Touch me," she whispered.

"Where?"

"Here."

"Where?" he asked more insistently.

"My breasts. My nipples. Squeeze them." Jayne sighed when he complied and, bracing her hands on the flat plane of his chest, she began to ride him harder and faster.

Confidence swelled inside her.



His breathing quickened and his hands moved to her hips to guide her, lifting her nearly completely off him and propelling her down so that her body smacked against his.

Jayne wallowed in the erotic sounds of their harsh breathing, of the rhythmic slap of their bodies, of their moans and sighs.

Her first orgasm took her completely by surprise and she threw back her head and rocked, grinding her clit against his body as rampant sensation crashed through her. Breathless, she allowed him to draw her body down to his chest, where she clung, burying her face in the curve of his neck while he controlled her hips.

"I'm not through with you yet, little fairy," he said, his voice but a breath as he continued his sexual assault, pumping into her from below.

She braced herself, spreading until her thighs burned from exertion while he worked his cock in her like a piston.

Jayne squeezed her eyes shut. It was too much. It was maddening, this pleasure. And just when she thought she couldn't take it any longer, another orgasm surged and crested. Digging her nails into his shoulders, she moaned and encouraged him in scandalous, unladylike language.

A raucous laugh rumbled low in his chest as he lifted, twisted and flipped her onto her back.

As she came drifting back to earth, Jayne opened her eyes and smiled at her handsome lover. "What about you?"

A half smile claimed one corner of his mouth, deepening a sexy dimple there. "My sweet, there is plenty of time for that." And then he kissed his way down her neck, down to her breasts where he laved each one with deliberate slowness.

Jayne buried her fingers in his careless hair and basked in the bliss cascading through her body with the intensity of a mountain creek. When he voiced his pleasure, she opened her eyes and her gaze locked with his just in time to watch him lightly rake his teeth over her distended nipple.

Desire welled again and as he kissed his way slowly along her abdomen, Jayne studied him. She had never before had dreams like these. Never.

Neither had she ever had a dream where she was aware she was dreaming.

But as he wedged his shoulders between her legs and flashed her a positively roguish smile, Jayne dismissed all thought. His eyes remained bonded to hers as he blew a hot breath on her quivering clitoris.

Jayne moaned. Her stomach tightened. Still holding his gaze, she felt his wet tongue explore her folds and thought she would literally die from the pleasure.

He seized her thighs and pushed them up and impossibly back, spreading her so wide her muscles burned from the strain.

"Open your wings for me, fairy," he murmured as he buried his face in her pussy.

Jayne squeezed her own breasts as she dropped her head to the pillow and reveled in the feeling of her lover's mouth. He sucked then prodded her with his tongue while rocking her hips up and down with his hands splayed wide on her thighs.

It wasn't long before Jayne's body took over and she began thrusting her hips to meet his ardent mouth. He could make her come this way. Of that, she had no doubt.

But this time she wanted to feel him find his own release deep inside her pussy.

She gave his hair a tug. "Fuck me. I want you inside me."

Heedless of her pleas, he continued to eat her, releasing one thigh so that he could work his finger into her channel. Jayne bucked and cried out as he found her pleasure spot. She heard herself encouraging him, telling him just how good it felt. "That's it," she said, her voice but a harsh whisper. "Oh yes. There! Oh...don't stop."

"Yes, fairy," he encouraged her. "Tell me what you want."

She shifted. "There...oh God..."

Jayne was mindless, spread and open, begging for more. She could hardly believe her wanton behavior. This was so unlike her. But so utterly wonderful.

Still, she wanted more than his finger. She wanted to see him come undone, to feel him pulse deep within her pussy.

Emboldened, she wriggled free of his grasp and popped onto her knees. "On your back! I want to ride your cock again."

A hearty laugh filled her ears as he complied, folding his hands behind his head as she straddled him and guided the head of his cock into her opening. This time, there was no long, slow slide down his thick shaft. No. She was intent on one thing and one thing only—satisfying this yearning tension that stretched as taut as a violin string between them.

He reached for her and she laced her fingers with his, bracing herself as she began to ride him. This time she watched his face, watched how his mouth tensed, how the muscles in his jaw and around his eyes twitched when she moved a certain way. Pleasing him was liberating, wonderful.

Sex for Jayne had always been something she did because she felt as if she were supposed to do it. This was different. This time she wanted it. She wanted him and, most of all, she wanted to pleasure him as much as he had pleased her. She wanted to know her power as a sexual woman capable of fulfilling herself as much as her lover.

He lowered his hands slowly, supporting her weight until their hands were locked on the pillow. Jayne used the slightly new position to not only pump him but to grind her clit on his body.

Each movement dragged the head of his cock deliciously across her G-spot. When Jayne's own breaths turned ragged and rough, she heard Byron's breathing intensify. Watching, she rode him to climax and, when he cried out and arched beneath her, another orgasm rolled over her like the raging thunder over Lake Geneva.

When the last spasm eddied away, Jayne found she was prostrate across George Byron's chest with her face turned into the curve of his neck. He was still here.

God in heaven, he was still here.

She lifted her mouth to his ear. "Don't go just yet. Don't let me awaken from this dream."

His hand skimmed up her back and threaded into the hair at her nape. "And dreams have breath, and tears and tortures and the touch of joy."

Instantly, Jayne recognized the line from Byron's poem *The Dream*. She added, "They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts, they take a weight from off waking toils, they do divide our being; they become a portion of ourselves as of our time and look like heralds of eternity; they pass like spirits of the past."

He had stilled as she spoke and after a long silence, he said, "Beautiful prose, little fairy."

"But—" she began—before she realized that at the time Byron spent his summer at Villa Diodati, he had not yet written *The Dream*. He wrote it later in 1816.

"What inspired such profound words in you, my pet?" he asked, caressing the nape of her neck.

"You did," she said truthfully.

He laughed. "I have encountered many women in my sordid lifetime, Jayne. But none like you."

Jayne didn't know how to respond.

"Most women have sought my company because it is fashionable to be involved with an artist or poet."

Jayne shifted her hips slightly, reminding him of a certain part of his anatomy. "Oh, I would think there's much more to it than that."

"Indeed," he said, and laughed again.

"And the two combined are lethal," Jayne whispered as she pushed herself up to straddle him once more.

"Ah, such is the life!" he teased.

"Perhaps it's the fact that you and your friends embody truth and beauty and freedom, where intellectual and sexual expression are often repressed," Jayne said, knowing that was what she wanted for herself.

"Doubtless," he mused as his gaze fell to her breasts. His hands followed and Jayne watched his face as he touched and appraised each one, giving her nipples teasing little pinches that sent fresh need twisting downward to her clit.

"What about you, Jayne?" he asked, his eyes lifting to hers while his fingers still worked their magic.

"What do you mean?" She was beginning to find it difficult to think. His cock was still semihard inside her and the way he was touching her breasts made her want to grind her hips.

"Are you wed?"

"No."

"Betrothed?"

"Never."

"Do you live at home?"

"No. I'm a librarian."

"A splendid profession, however you bear yourself as gracefully as any noblewoman," he said. "I've met very few unmarried women who are so free with their...favors."

"Do you find it...distasteful?"

"Quite the contrary," he said. "I find it refreshing."

But Jayne found it dismally appalling. A woman of her station should enjoy dates and should take men like Edward Warren up on their offers instead of hiding behind book covers.

The irony that her nineteenth-century lover was giving her a lesson in thoroughly modern sexual freedom was not lost on her.

Uncomfortable with the subject of their discussion being her love life, Jayne arched slightly, pressing her breasts more fully into his hands. He squeezed and she sighed. "I think you could make me come just from touching my breasts," she said.

And although he had probably never heard the term *come* before, the context in which she used it left no speculation as to her meaning.

"Pinch my nipples."

He did.

"Harder," she said, moaning when he obeyed.

He pinched and tugged, rolling her nipples between his thumbs and forefingers. The sensation was so overwhelming, Jayne reached between her legs to rub her clit.

"Harder," she cried again as her breaths quickened and flames licked through her body.

His grip tightened to the point of pain and a moan tore from Jayne's throat as she threw her head back and kneaded herself to orgasm, rubbing until the insidious pleasure subsided.

Before she had time to recover, Byron lifted her bottom off him and pushed her down between his legs. "Taste my cock. Make me hard again with your mouth. I want to fuck you, Jayne."

Jayne raked her long hair behind her shoulder, gripped his cock and engulfed it in her mouth. Her own cream tasted sweet on her tongue as she sucked him until he grew large and hard once more. She laved her tongue down the ever-hardening ridge to the base of his scrotum and then back up again. He gasped when she took him in her mouth and ran the tip of her tongue on the sensitive underside of the head.

Jayne felt the muscles in his legs twitch. She loved it when he threaded his fingers into her hair and guided her head up and down. When she relaxed her throat to take more of him – all of him – he moaned her name.

"Get on your knees, fairy," he commanded.

Jayne whirled and he was right behind her, seizing her hips, dragging her back and impaling her on his cock.

He held her, pounding her with furious thrusts, and all Jayne could do was clutch the covers and hold on. Her clit throbbed as his heavy scrotum swung against her flesh and then she yelped when she felt a stinging slap on her bottom.

"Is that enough for you?" he ground out. "Is it? Answer me!"

"No. More!" she cried. "Spank my ass. Fuck me!"

Another palm found its target. Heat spread through Jayne's backside. The thick covers muffled her groans. Pleasure and pain mingled into an intoxicating rush that spread over her body like wildfire.

Just when she thought she might spiral into orgasm again, he slowed his thrusts. Jayne glanced back, drinking in the sight of him with one rebellious wave stealing across his forehead, his mouth set and determined. Perspiration misted his chest, delineating the muscles there.

But when his gaze slid into hers and he sucked his index finger into his mouth, Jayne's pulse rioted.

Her mind screamed *no* as his hand dropped behind her bottom. He placed a quick kiss high on her left cheek, sucking briefly on her skin—then she felt that slick finger teasing the opening to her anus.

His eyebrow arched wickedly. "Have you ever taken a man inside you here before?"

"No." The word came out as a harsh whisper.

Uncertain, she sucked in a breath and tensed as the tip of his finger wriggled into that tight recess.

"Relax, love," he cooed, and Jayne watched his gaze drop to where his finger was teasing even deeper inside her. "Such a lovely sight with my cock in your cunny and my finger in your arse."

Desire throbbed in her clit. When she relaxed even more, she gave in to the utter sense of completion created by the combination of his cock and finger inside her. She buried her face in the covers and spread her thighs a fraction wider.

"That's it, darling," he said, pushing his finger into her bottom as far as he could.

Jayne moaned as he began to slip his cock in and out of her. The thought of taking him that way inside her anus both thrilled and terrified her. It felt good, but was it taboo to enjoy this? She just knew she could never request it.

"Your arse is wet," he said as he began working his finger in and out of the sensitive orifice.

Her clit screamed for more and Jayne reached between her legs to assuage her desire as he continued the pleasurable assault.

"You're close," he uttered. "So close. Let go, Jayne. Let go."

She bit the covers to keep from crying out as both her passages shuddered, gripping and clenching relentlessly while Jayne rubbed, wresting every last bit of sensation from her body.

If this was indeed a dream, Jayne never wanted to awaken.



## Chapter Four

*The tyranny of pleasure and of pain; they make us what we were not – what they will, and shake us with the vision that's gone by, the dread of vanished shadows...*

Jayne awakened the next morning with Byron's words playing through her head like a haunting song. Sore between the legs, she wondered how a dream could leave such a *real* impression the following morning.

She yawned and turned over, trying to focus on the clock. It was well past ten. She never slept late. The others would be furious she was wasting their precious vacation time piled up in the bed.

Throwing back the covers, she scrambled out of bed and, as she dragged on a pair of jeans and a sweater, she noticed a telltale purplish bruise on her ass. "A hickey? What the —"

Confused, she backed closer the mirror.

*He was real?* It had really happened?

She had no doubt now that her friends were playing a hoax on her. The Lord Byron of her *dreams* was a flesh and blood man almost certainly hired by them because they thought she was incapable of finding a man on her own. Dismay warred with appreciation. At least the girls thought they were doing her a favor.

But she still intended to have words with them about hiring a...a European *gigolo* to drag her out of her shell.

Jayne finished dressing, dragged a brush through her hair and then padded to the bathroom to finish getting ready. It was obvious by the pile of towels and the lingering scent of hairspray in the air, the others were already set for the day.

When she made her way downstairs, she noticed any evidence of last night's revelry in the parlor had been tidied. How long had the others been up?

"Hey, guys!" she called, but no answer met her ears.

In the morning light, the villa had an even eerier air about it. An unexplainable chill pervaded Jayne as she moved through the high-ceilinged rooms.

She inhaled and a deep sadness tugged at her heart. Most women would have been happy the man they thought was only a dream was a real man with whom they might have a potential relationship.

Not Jayne.

There was something about what had happened during the night she wanted to keep locked away in her heart.

The bottle of Lucid absinthe sat on a side table, the two sinister, emerald cat eyes watching her every move. So...her very lucid dream was not a dream at all. The infamous green fairy hadn't lived up to her wicked reputation.

Next to the bottle, however, Jayne noticed a note. She opened it and immediately recognized Angie's boisterous handwriting.

Sleeping Beauty,

We didn't want to wake you so we slipped out early to take a sailboat cruise on Lake Geneva. Send us a text if you want us to come pick you up.

While the offer was enticing, Jayne was more tempted by the desire to spend the day all alone in Villa Diodati. Her stomach growled, reminding her she hadn't had anything to eat since before drinking the absinthe the night before.

She cast another glance at the cat eyes. The others hadn't liked the taste. Jayne had found it...interesting.

She knew that despite the disappointment her Lord Byron was an actor, albeit a good one, and not a result of her tryst with the green fairy, she would try the legendary drink again.

Soon.

Breakfast consisted of strong European coffee, fresh butter and croissants, after which Jayne donned a light jacket and took a turn on the terraced lawn. Outside, the house took on a totally different air. With winding asphalt streets, and cars, boats, and planes soaring overhead, it was easy to remember she was living in the twenty-first century.

Jayne, however, only spent a couple of hours soaking in the ambience of beautiful Lake Geneva, with its soaring, white-capped mountains reaching up behind the backdrop of villas dotting the undulating countryside. She wanted to disappear back into the villa, where she could peruse in solitude the books she had seen in the owner's personal library.

The library was like coming home. Jayne loved the musty scent of old books and leather, and as she quickly discovered, the owner was a collector of literary antiquities. Several first editions lined his shelves and Jayne didn't dare venture a guess as to the worth of many of them. She was as giddy as a child at Christmas when she came across the owner's collection of letters and even a leather-bound journal that beckoned Jayne to read it.

She took the journal and slid into a comfortable leather chair—but when she began reading, her heart skipped a beat.

There, in a florid scrawl, was the signature of Lord George Gordon Byron. It simply said *Byron* next to yesterday's date, although the year was written as 1816.

The words on the first page were the very lines she had quoted to him the night before—the words from his poem *The Dream*.

Chills swept up and down Jayne's arms as she read further.

*On the evening prior, I became acquainted with a woman who was borne most passionate of body. Diaphanous and initially timid, she was perhaps, I thought, a ghost or some other form of madness plaguing me, although my friends encouraged me not to reason, but to believe.*

*Jayne with a y. Jayne of my dreams. Most comely, comely Jayne. I can only hope to partake of your loveliness once more during my respite in this place.*

Jayne's heart seemed to be lodged in her throat. She tried to swallow but couldn't. Was this *real*? Was he a ghost? Was she mad?

*Not to reason, but to believe...*

She inhaled sharply, realizing her hands were trembling so badly she feared for the safety of the journal.

The words written on the page in Byron's own hand were hardly a trick played on her by her friends. They had no way of knowing she would have been drawn to that very volume. It wasn't even labeled. And yet Jayne couldn't wrap her mind around what was happening.

Her gaze darted around the room. "Are you here?"

No answer met her. There was only the sonorous ticking of a clock coming from some other room in the villa and the occasional creak and pop of the centuries-old structure.

This was ridiculous. There were no such things as ghosts.

And yet her mind raced back over last night's events. No. He had definitely not been a ghost. The soreness between her legs attested to that.

Jayne realized she was breathing so quickly she was in danger of hyperventilating. She needed to calm down. She needed to gather her thoughts and sort this out. There had to be a sane, reasonable explanation.

Clenching her fists, she strode into the parlor and poured another glass full of absinthe. Without the benefit of a sugar cube or cold water to louché the liquid, Jayne

turned up the glass and shot the contents. Immediately heat swept through her body like welcome wildfire.

She set her glass on the table and let her mind flow back over what she had read.

So, Byron had met a woman named Jayne.

Jayne with a *y*.

She swallowed, savoring the black licorice aftertaste. It could all be a coincidence. After all, Jayne was a common name in the early nineteenth century. There could be any number of women named Jayne.

But in French-speaking Switzerland? And who quoted the very same passage from a Byron poem?

Squeezing her eyes shut, she tried to think of all the possibilities. One jumped out foremost in her mind. She needed to go back and look at the next page in the journal.

With absinthe-induced courage, she walked back to the library, half expecting the ghost of Lord Byron to jump out at her at any moment.

The book lay on the armrest of the leather chair exactly where she'd left it. Shaking, she lifted it and gingerly turned the page to the second entry.

*Whilst the others enjoyed the brief respite from the deluge of the previous day and boated on Lake Geneva, I remained at the villa, purportedly to pen a few lines. Without my fairy muse, I had no such luck. Oh, for darkness to sink from above so that I might draw her once more from the shadows!*

Jayne bit her bottom lip and turned the page. It was dated the following day and the entry was signed *Byron*.

*Inspiration bursts from my being. I passed another night 'neath the wings of the green fairy, however I fear it will be my last. A muse such as mine cannot be real. The very words sprang*

*from her lips, for she told me thus... Is not the past all shadow? What are they? Creations of the mind? The mind can make substances, and people planets of its own with beings brighter than have been, and give a breath to forms which can outlive all flesh.*

Jayne stared at the page. If it were true she had been visited by the real Lord Byron, through some twist in time, some rip in heaven, then he had written of it – and not only that, he had gotten the inspiration for *The Dream*...from *her*.

A shiver traveled up her spine.

His words also meant that he would visit her again.

One last time.

Tonight.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jayne didn't mention the journal to her friends when they returned from their cruise. She only said that she had enjoyed the day in the library.

And yet the hours dragged by. She knew she wasn't the best of company when they ventured out to a restaurant to enjoy local favorites and soak up the Lake Geneva culture.

After they returned to the villa, the others poured glasses of wine but Jayne turned once more to the absinthe. "If no one else is going to drink it, I will," she joked. But in truth, she hoped the green fairy would once again give her the ability to see through the veil of time, to connect once more with her poet lover.

While the others talked and joked about a stunning Italian they had met on the sailboat, Jayne quietly louched her absinthe, daring to pour a bit more than she had the previous times she'd drunk it.

She sat on the sofa, curled her feet underneath her and sipped her drink, having acquired a taste for the pungent herbal spirit.

"I can't believe you're drinking that shit again," Angie exclaimed.

"I don't know," Carla added. "After the dream she said she had last night, I'm up for another shot of it."

Bette made a face of disdain. "No dream lover could ever get me to taste that crap again. I burped it all night long."

Jayne only smiled. "I like it."

"You'd have to like it to be sipping it like that," Angie remarked.

Carla downed the contents of her wine and then stood. "I've got to turn in, ladies. We have an early flight in the morning."

"That's right," Angie said. "I'll set my clock early since I'm the high-maintenance one."

"It's just a short flight to Paris," Bette said. "Can't you forego the makeup and wear a ponytail once in your life?"

Angie held up both hands. "Hey, I need all the help I can get. Besides, I'm a true southern belle and we don't dare step out in the daylight without first making sure our lipstick and nails match, our bags and shoes are color coordinated and our panties are clean."

The others laughed but Jayne was anxious to go to bed as well. She stood. "Night, girls."

"Sweet dreams!" Carla teased.

But as Jayne climbed the stairs, taking the rest of her absinthe with her, anticipation fluttered like a wild moth in her stomach.

She brushed her long hair and then undressed, watching herself in the mirror as she did.

He would come to her tonight.

She knew it with absolute, intuitive certainty.

When she was finally naked, she studied her reflection. She had never looked at herself this way – the way *he* saw her.

While she wasn't a supermodel by any stretch of the imagination, she knew she was pretty and desirable in her own way, in an old world sort of way. With her pale complexion and flowing curly hair, she fit the description of many a heroine who had played a part in a Romantic-era novel. Her waist was small, her breasts heavy and full. Her hips were curvy and while her legs weren't miles long, they were well shaped. She turned and glanced over her shoulder, wondering what she had looked like from behind—on her hands and knees with her bottom in the air.

Her stomach plummeted as a thrill swept through her. He must have been pleased with the sight. He'd come again and then they'd spent hours tangled in each other's arms.

Jayne ran her own palms over her hardening nipples. *Hurry. Come back to me, my lover. Come back soon.*

Before she climbed into bed, she downed the rest of the absinthe, hoping it would calm her enough to make her sleep.

Despite her rampant thoughts, it wasn't long before her lashes drifted shut...

\* \* \* \* \*

Jayne moaned as she felt something warm and wet on her nipple. She opened her eyes and smiled. "Yes," she whispered.

His gaze held hers as he moved over her, parting her knees with his as he guided his hard cock into her. Jayne cried out as he filled her. Gripping his biceps, she held on as he began to move sensuously inside her, his chest raking her breasts, his hot breath fanning her forehead.

He fucked her with the obvious intent of both of them finding mutual, fast satisfaction and Jayne opened for him, spreading her legs and tilting her hips so he could gain full access to her channel, to her clit.

He growled, rocking so he could slip one hand under her ass and the other behind her head and, anchoring her, he began to drive into her.



Jayne entwined her legs around his as the knowledge that this would be their last time together made this moment as bittersweet as the absinthe she'd drunk earlier. She skimmed her arms down his back, memorizing every muscle, the tensing and releasing of his movements, every curve, the scent of him, the feel of him inside her...

And when she felt his body stiffen and heard his moans, tears seeped from the corners of her eyes and she gave in to the sensations raging in her own body. The orgasm was the most intense she had ever experienced. Stars flashed behind her eyelids and she felt as if she had been catapulted into the heavens, floating very slowly back down to earth.

He was still and heavy on top her for a long time before he grazed her lips with a tender kiss. "I fear you are a ghost I will never see again."

Jayne swallowed and before she could swipe away the tears she'd shed, he pressed a kiss to one. Her heart skidded sideways.

"Are you, Jayne?"

"Are you?" she replied.

"I wonder if we are all but hapless victims of a cruel hoax played upon us by the heavens."

"Is not the past all shadow?" Jayne began, quoting the lines from *The Dream* before she realized what she was doing—before she recalled he had written them in his journal.

He stared. "I will recall this vision which I dream, perchance in sleep."

Jayne smiled. "Promise me you'll write those words down and when we both read them, we'll think on these nights in this magical place."

"A promise sealed with kiss," he whispered, nuzzling her ear.

Jayne squirmed at the feel of his hot breath teasing the sensitive shell.

"Tonight, I intend to do to you all those things we have yet to do," he said, working his fingers into her cleft to tickle her rosette.

She swallowed thickly. She wanted him in every way possible. With him, she felt safe to voice her darkest desires, to allow him to pleasure her most private recess.

Boldly, Jayne shifted into his hand, declaring her unspoken desire with her body.

Byron voiced his delight with a moan before he withdrew his cock and kissed his way to her breasts.

Tangling her hands into his thick hair, she held his head as his mouth closed over one expectant nipple while he palmed the other one. Before this weekend, Jayne had never allowed herself to merely *experience* without analyzing motives and outcomes.

But in this moment, all she could do was feel and enjoy – and anticipate.

“Touch me,” she said. “I want your fingers inside me.”

The hand that had been on her breast glided down her abdomen, lower and lower still until his fingers worked between her dewy folds and he inserted one into her channel. He hummed his approval on her nipple and Jayne shuddered at the welcome invasion.

But when he withdrew his finger and prodded her rosette, her heart began to pump in forceful bursts. She could hardly swallow as she lifted and spread her knees apart, encouraging him with her body.

He lifted his head but only far enough to gaze into her eyes as he pushed his index finger slowly into her anus.

Jayne held her breath until she felt his fist push up hard against her bottom.

“Does that feel good, love?” he asked.

“Yes.”

He began to fuck her with his finger the same way he had fucked her pussy. In. Out. Back in again.

The sensation was different but wonderful just the same. She had never dreamed she would be so sensitive there.

Instinct took over and she kneaded her own nipples, pinching and tugging while she drew her knees up even higher to give him full access.

"You're wet there," he said, kneeling between her legs.

Jayne moaned. "Harder," she pleaded.

"Not yet," he told her, inserting a second finger.

"I can't...I'm too small."

"No, you're not," he said assuredly. "Besides, I have to ready you to take my cock there."

"I can't..."

"I promise you, my sweet, you will enjoy it," he said, dragging his middle finger through the wetness drenching her pussy before he pushed it inside her bottom as well.

Jayne gasped.

"Relax. You will stretch for me."

With a whimper, she forced herself to loosen and, as he worked his fingers like twin pistons, Jayne's clit swelled and ached for attention.

She was ready when he scooted closer between her legs. He withdrew his fingers and then spit in his palm, rubbing the liquid over his cock head. His gaze grazed hers as he dragged the slick head around the rim of her anus.

She had never thought she would want such an invasion there but her body jerked in response and, when he prodded her hole, she steeled herself.

Pain shot around the outer edge but then eased as he slipped in farther and farther, filling her to capacity until she felt his scrotum wedged against her body.

"Is that good?" he asked.

"Yes," she gasped as he lowered his body to hers and began gently undulating against her.

Jayne surrendered, winding her legs around his hips, tilting up so that his body raked her hungry clit. It was as if her pulse beat from that space deep inside her that no man, save this one, had ever touched.

His breathing quickened along with hers and when an intense orgasm shattered her, she was vaguely aware of him swelling and pulsing, coming with her.

He slipped out, lying heavily on top of her, lowering his lips to hers so he could plunder her mouth.

Afterward, Jayne's legs shook as she dragged on her robe and stole across the hallway to the bathroom to clean up. She half feared her phantom lover would be gone when she returned with a warm, wet washcloth but he was there in her bed.

Lying on his side, his head propped on one hand, he was the epitome of sensuality. Jayne's stomach flipped when her gaze met his — when she recalled what they had just done.

And after she lovingly washed him clean, they made love the rest of the night, touching, learning each other's bodies, each other's secret desires, kissing each other from head to toe and back again.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the first light of dawn seeped through the windowpanes, Lord Byron gave Jayne one last kiss — then vanished.

Jayne pushed herself up on her elbows and her gaze searched the room. "George," she called.

But the magic moment had passed. He was gone.

Jayne sat and drew her knees up to her chest. She sighed, her body sated and her mind steeled that, from now on, she would only find Lord Byron in books. Somehow, the unbelievable had happened. Some fissure had opened, allowing them both to connect despite the confines of time and space.

He had not been a dream. He had been a flesh and blood man.

Lord George Gordon Byron. Poet. Lover. Philanderer. Gambler. Rakehell. Genius.

And she, Jayne, had inspired one of his most famous works, *The Dream*.

He had given her even more. Now she knew what it was to live instead of simply to romanticize. And when she returned to Atlanta, she planned to take Edward Warren up on his invitation to dinner.

But no matter how many men she now had the courage and desire to date, Lord Byron would always be the man of her very lucid dreams.

## About the Author

Growing up in the south, where the air is thick with stories steeped in legend and truth, Debra came by her love of romance novels honestly. Well...sort of. At an early age, she pilfered from her grandmother's extensive library and has been a fan of the genre since.

A full-time freelance writer, Debra especially enjoys combining history, mystery and a touch of taboo to weave stories with unforgettable, haunted heroes.

She lives in Alabama with her sexy real life hero, a couple of smart-aleck ghosts and a diabolical black cat.

The author welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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