

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

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ELLORA'S CAVE

# Quickies

## ANOTHER CHANCE

SHAWN LANE

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Another Chance

ISBN 9781419917837

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Edited by Helen Woodall.

Cover art by Syneca.

Electronic book Publication September 2008

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# **ANOTHER CHANCE**

Shawn Lane

## Dedication

To Ava with my thanks for the encouragement.

# Chapter One

*London, 1818*

Daniel Blake, Earl of Graystone, gazed out at the night from the window of his bedchamber in his London townhouse. He hadn't been back to London for more than a year. Since before Isabel had fallen ill. They'd been at their country home when her illness began and she died there.

Now he was a widower with two small children. And rather at a loss what to do now.

"My lord, have you decided whether or not to attend Lady Whittington's ball tonight?" his valet asked.

"Yes, Franks, I'll attend," he replied without turning around.

Time to get back into society. He didn't plan on getting married again. Couldn't imagine any woman replacing Isabel. But one day his son and daughter would need to make matches and so he would have to play the games of the *ton*.

\* \* \* \* \*

Aubrey St. Clair, Viscount Rothton, grabbed a flute of champagne off the tray of a passing servant. He'd already been at the blasted ball for an hour and he grew more restless by the moment. He'd managed to avoid the majority of the mothers trying to cajole him into partnering their daughters on the dance floor. Still, he had been forced to endure one or two.

*Where was he?*

Aubrey took a large sip of the bubbly drink and surveyed the new arrivals. Lady Whittington assured him Graystone had accepted the invitation. But it was nearing midnight and there was no sign of him. Had

he wasted his time? Surely Graystone hadn't come and gone before he even arrived. No, the Graystone he knew was always a night owl.

Maybe he just wouldn't recognize him. Even before the death of his countess, Graystone didn't spend a lot of time in London and Aubrey...well...he tried to stay away from events Graystone did attend. He hadn't been face-to-face with him in years.

But no, Aubrey would know Daniel when he arrived. He'd spent too many years dreaming of him.

Just before their last year at Oxford they'd gone to a Hell and had too much to drink. Aubrey didn't know what possessed him... Wait, that was a lie. He'd had a bit of a crush on Daniel since meeting him. A handsome man with light brown hair streaked with golden highlights when the sun shone and sky blue eyes, Daniel stoked Aubrey's fantasies even before that drunken carriage ride.

One minute they'd been laughing about their tremendous bad luck at the Hell and the next, Aubrey had pressed his lips against Daniel's. Expecting his friend to push him away in disgust, he'd been thrilled when Daniel had kissed him back, opening Aubrey's mouth with his tongue and exploring. They'd continued to kiss, Daniel nipping at Aubrey's lips, pushing him down on the seat.

"Want you," Daniel had whispered against Aubrey's lips.

Aubrey's cock had strained against his breeches, so hard he'd expected it to rip through.

"Oh God, yes," had been his answering groan. Aubrey didn't know what he'd expected next but Daniel sliding off the seat to kneel in front of him and unfastening his breeches hadn't been it. His breath had caught.

His cock had sprung free and Daniel had grasped it in his hand. He'd leaned his head back on the cushion. Daniel had cupped his balls and run a fingertip over the head of his cock.

"Pretty," Daniel had murmured, darting his tongue out to touch where his finger had trailed.

Aubrey'd gritted his teeth. He'd wanted to scream but wasn't sure if the coachman could hear them. Probably could.

Daniel had pulled the head of Aubrey's cock into his mouth. He'd almost come immediately and only managed not to by the grace of God.

Running his fingers through Daniel's soft hair, he'd pushed in farther. He'd done it slowly, not wanting to gag Daniel but it'd nearly killed him.

"Daniel, yes," he'd moaned. He'd opened his eyes and stared down, watching Daniel work his cock in and out of his mouth. He had to be dreaming.

Aubrey hadn't been able to stop himself any longer. He'd pushed his cock farther down into Daniel's throat. To his delight, Daniel had taken him without protest. What a sight it had been to see his friend's cheeks hollowed as he sucked. He'd started fucking Daniel's mouth faster, thrusting in and out over and over. Beads of sweat had pearled on his forehead and his head had thrashed back and forth on the seat cushion. His balls had tightened painfully.

"I'm going to come," Aubrey had shouted. He'd expected Daniel to release his cock so he could come all over the seats but instead Daniel had sucked harder and more desperately.

"Ah, fuck!" He'd poured down his friend's throat. Panting heavily, he'd leaned back, letting reality return. He was in a hired coach with his breeches undone, excess cum dripping down from Daniel's mouth and they would pull up to their destination any moment.

Aubrey had done up his breeches and reached down to help Daniel return to his seat. He opened his mouth to tell Daniel he would take care of him next when the hackney stopped.

Daniel had paid the driver when they got out but hadn't said a word to Aubrey. Aubrey wasn't sure what that meant.

When they got indoors they'd found a man waiting for Daniel. His father had died and Daniel was now the new Earl of Graystone. He was needed at home. Daniel had hurried off to get his things for departure. Leaving everything unsaid between them.

Only a little over a year later, Daniel had met and married Isabel. She had been the daughter of a well-respected peer and therefore they made the perfect match in the eyes of the *ton*.

During that time Aubrey's own father died and he had little time to think about the loss of Daniel to Isabel. Not that he'd ever expected anything more from Daniel. Hell, he hadn't known he'd get *that* much.

*Where was he?*

Aubrey decided, as he gulped down the last of his champagne, that he was the biggest fool. Graystone wasn't coming.

"There you are, Rothton. Enjoying the ball?" Lady Whittington herself sidled up to him wearing a deeply cut burgundy gown. She sank her fingers into his arm. He smelled her perfume of roses and sweet pea. Her blonde hair had been pinned up and flowers adorned it. She looked ravishing.

"Not really," Aubrey admitted. He handed his empty glass to a passing servant. "You've quite the crush though. Definitely a success, Maribel."

"But someone is missing," she replied. "He did say he would attend, Aubrey."

He shrugged, trying to pretend it didn't matter. It didn't really. It didn't change anything.

Maribel smiled. "I know how to distract you from your melancholy."

"Do you?"

"I can sneak away for a short period. Down that hall," she paused to flick a glance at a nearby hallway, "is a seldom-used library. I doubt my husband even remembers it's there. Let's go."

Aubrey allowed her to take his arm and lead him down the hall. It would be a distraction. He liked women, had his share of them over the years. Had even briefly thought of becoming engaged. He'd never married though. Quite doubted he would.

Maribel opened the library door and pulled him in, shutting it behind them. She turned the lock.

They undressed each other in silence. It was a familiar routine.

If Aubrey had ever met a woman he would have married, Maribel was she. Of course, she was already married to Whittington even when they began their affair years before. So what if her two children bore a rather curious resemblance to Aubrey rather than Whittington?

She came to him, her arms encircling his neck, pressing her bared breasts against his chest.

"I want you to love me, Aubrey," she whispered.

"I will... I do." He kissed her hard, forcing her mouth open to receive his probing tongue. His arms enclosed her and he lifted her up so she could wrap her legs around him. Pushing her against the nearest wall, he entered her, sliding easily into her moist heat.



“Aubrey,” she breathed, clenching herself around his throbbing hard cock.

He pumped fast and urgently, roughly into her, the way she liked it, the way he loved it. She nipped his jaw, then kissed the spots that stung from her teeth.

“Yes, yes,” Maribel screamed. She’d always been a noisy lover, much more than him.

“Hush,” he said with a husky laugh. It became more like a groan as her hips urged him to go faster, harder. He could not deny her and he quickened his thrusts until he was slamming her into the wall, making the nearby bookshelves shake with the pounding impact.

“God!” She bit his shoulder, sinking her teeth in deep as her orgasm rocked through her. He felt every quiver. He joined her then, spilling into her soft willing heat.

Aubrey continued to hold her up against the wall as they let their breathing return to normal. They shared a few soft kisses and finally he lowered her to the floor. The flowers so carefully dressed in her hair were ridiculously askew.

He laughed. He couldn’t help it, she was so adorably rumpled. It was terribly obvious she had just had sex.

Maribel pushed his shoulder and, rolling her eyes, reached for her clothing. She looked over her shoulder at him as she pulled on her underthings. “You’re leaving now, aren’t you?”

It didn’t take him long to think about it. He’d only come for Graystone. No reason to stay now.

“Probably,” he said evasively. He didn’t want to hurt her. She’d been planning the ball for months. He should have come even without the promise of Graystone.

Aubrey redressed and looked about the library, making sure nothing they discarded got accidentally left behind. He made an attempt at his cravat and finally gave up, waving the trailing ends at Maribel.

She sighed and took the offending garment and tied it expertly for him. He buttoned up the back of her gown and placed a chaste kiss on her neck.

“Christopher will be away for a few days in a fortnight from now,” she said, turning to face him. He reached up and smoothed out some of the

flowers in her blonde tresses. “It will be the perfect opportunity to see the children, if you’d like.”

A pain stabbed at his heart. *His* children. They’d never know it. Aubrey wouldn’t tell them and certainly Maribel and Christopher wouldn’t. A life without those he loved seemed to be all he would face.

Lord, he’d dropped into the depths of melancholia. He was...well...pathetic.

“I’d like that,” he managed to say. He didn’t know, really, if he would. He wanted to see them, loved the limited visits he was able to have but part of him thought it best to distance himself from them.

\* \* \* \* \*

Daniel took the last step into the ballroom. The place swarmed with people. Men all dressed in formal black, ladies in spring colors. Not unlike insects, really.

He’d nearly forgotten how tedious these affairs could be. Almost always were. No hope for it though. Perhaps if he were lucky he’d come across someone he knew.

It didn’t take long before the heads of nearby women turned toward him. After all, Daniel mused, he *was* an earl. And a wealthy widowed one at that. No doubt the buzzing insects could almost taste him.

He turned away from the nearest crowd, looking for a place he might escape. The card room might be best. He took a few steps in that direction and then stopped.

Directly in front of him, only mere feet away, coming out of a long hallway...*Aubrey St. Clair*.

Daniel stood frozen in place. His mind blanked and he was unable to form a thought. At least one that made any sense.

He swallowed the lump forming in his throat.

*Lord, he’s still as gorgeous as ever.*

Merely handsome didn’t really cover Aubrey. Daniel wasn’t entirely sure gorgeous was enough. The same silky, dark brown tousled locks, the brown eyes darker than any eyes he’d ever seen, nearly black and so intense. Full lips...and dimples. The kind of sheer masculine beauty that would make every woman there desperate to make him hers. Daniel clenched his fists.

He hadn't seen Aubrey since the night his father died, yet seeing him now affected him the way it always did. Daniel was rock-hard.

And there coming from the hallway mere moments behind Aubrey was Lady Whittington. Apparently the rumors were true. The two were lovers.

Daniel exhaled. He forced himself to turn his back to them, resisting the nearly unbearable urge to rub the spot on his chest where his heart beat painfully.

Why hadn't he paid attention to those rumors when he accepted Lady Whittington's invitation? Hell, it was even rumored that Aubrey fathered her children. Had he realized he would see Aubrey he would have stayed away. Or would he?

Daniel wondered if it was too late to escape. Could he now make his escape and pretend he never arrived? He closed his eyes. Aubrey had looked right at him. He didn't miss the subtle widening of those intense eyes.

"Graystone."

His already aching cock throbbed at the sound of Aubrey's warm, deep voice. He was in trouble. Turning around, he faced him.

*Lord.*

The man was *sin* walking and talking.

"Rothton," Daniel said, proud his voice didn't crack. He struggled desperately to keep his eyes from drifting to Aubrey's lips. He'd tasted those lips.

"It's been a long time," Aubrey murmured. His gaze went somewhere over Daniel's shoulder as though he couldn't quite bring himself to look directly at him.

"Ten years." Daniel swallowed. "You look...well." Lame, he knew but he didn't think Aubrey would appreciate him saying *you look edible*.

Aubrey continued to look at a point past him. "I'm sorry about Isabel."

"Thank you. She..." Daniel paused, his breath shuddered. "She...went rather peacefully in the end."

Finally Aubrey's eyes met his. Their dark intensity blazed. Behind their depths was a bit of sorrow and uncertainty. Vulnerability. Daniel wouldn't have believed it possible for Aubrey to be more attractive than he was ten years ago but he was. Incredibly so.

They lapsed into an awkward silence, each one of them just staring.

"I think I need some air," Daniel said. He inclined his head in the direction of the double doors leading to a balcony. "Want to join me?"

Aubrey nodded, then turned to search the room with his gaze. Looking for Lady Whittington, Daniel guessed. The lady in question had moved on and was involved in a conversation with two other ladies.

"Let's go," Aubrey said.

Daniel led the way and opened the doors, stepping outside. The night air was warm with a slight breeze. He smelled citrus blossoms, one of his favorite scents of the season. He walked up to the railing and leaned on it, looking out at the Whittingtons' garden.

Aubrey stood beside him and reached into his coat, withdrawing two cheroots. He offered one to Daniel.

Daniel shook his head. "No, thank you. I never smoke those."

Aubrey snorted. "Why am I not surprised?"

"Pardon?"

"Never mind."

Daniel tightened his jaw. "No. You meant something, Aubrey. What?"

Aubrey shrugged and turned his back on the garden, crossing his arms. "You were always just a bit better than the rest of us."

"What?" He straightened and glared.

"Whenever someone suggested doing anything a little different, you balked. You acted like you were above everyone else."

"I went to that Hell with you, didn't I?"

"You did. You hated every minute of it. You wouldn't wager more than a few coins and wondered when we were leaving almost the moment we walked in." Aubrey smiled a bit. "I'm still not sure why you agreed."

He'd wanted to spend time with Aubrey. Daniel had no intention of telling him that though. It didn't matter, he thought. If Aubrey wanted to think badly of him, so what? This was pointless.

"Forget it," he muttered. He walked toward the double doors.

"Going to walk away from me again, Daniel?"

That stopped him. He turned and stared at Aubrey. "Walk away? I didn't walk away from you."

"That night," Aubrey said. He ran his long fingers through his tousled locks, making them messier still. "After. When we got back."

"I didn't *walk away*. My father died."

“Yes, I know but later... You could have contacted me or come seen me or, I don’t know, anything. But nothing. We were friends. I came by to see you but was always refused.”

Daniel blinked. “I had a lot of responsibility. I wasn’t prepared for it. It took up all my time and then I met Isabel and everything happened so fast.”

Aubrey nodded and straightened from the balcony. “Yes, I understand. Never mind, Daniel.” He wrenched the doors open. “Nice to see you again, Graystone. Maybe we’ll see each other at some other event.”

“Aubrey...damn.” Daniel stared at the doors Aubrey went through. He told himself he didn’t care. After all he hadn’t really expected to see Aubrey again anyway. Nothing different had occurred. He hadn’t lost anything.

Or had he?

“Damn,” he muttered and went back inside.

The viscount was nowhere to be seen. Had he left already? Lord, Aubrey had always been stubborn. He was more than done with this ball anyway.

*Fuck.*

Why did he always have to screw up where Daniel was concerned?

Aubrey exhaled and looked to see how far down the crowded street he would need to go to find a hackney. Finances were tight for his family just now and he couldn’t afford to pay a regular driver to take him around London, so he walked when he could and took hired coaches on other occasions.

“Rothton.”

Aubrey turned to see Daniel coming toward him. He took a step back.

“Where’s your coach?”

“I didn’t bring one,” Aubrey admitted.

Daniel nodded. “Mine’s not far. I’ll give you a ride. Come on.”

“Are you sure you want to take another carriage ride with me?”

Daniel’s eyes widened. His cheeks pinked.

*Shut up, Aubrey. Lord, why don’t you keep your mouth shut?*

“I would like a ride, thank you.”

Daniel nodded stiffly and Aubrey felt like kicking himself. He followed Daniel to his carriage though and they took seats opposite from each other, waiting in the long line to move away from Maribel’s house.

“Look, I really think we should talk,” Daniel said after a moment. “Would you be agreeable to coming to my home?”

Aubrey forced himself not to shout *yes*. Overeagerness would probably scare Graystone away. Something he definitely did not want to do.

“All right,” he replied, forcing calm into his tone.

He stared across the coach, trying to will himself not to move to sit next to Daniel. He wanted to. Hell, he couldn’t even blame drunkenness this time. He’d only had the one glass at the ball. But Aubrey was absolutely compelled to get closer to Daniel. Turning toward the window, he blew out a heavy breath.

Aubrey tugged at his cravat and closed his eyes. If he didn’t look at Daniel he could fight the temptation. He heard movement from the seat across from him. Daniel shifting in his seat.

“Aubrey,” his name spoken softly right next to his ear. Aubrey opened his eyes to see Daniel very close. Before he could react, Daniel’s lips came down on his. The kiss was tentative at first, Aubrey supposed Daniel expected to be rebuffed. He wrapped his arms around Daniel and pulled him closer, slipping his tongue in between Daniel’s slightly parted lips.

At any moment, Daniel could come to his senses and Aubrey had to make sure that didn’t happen. Keeping his lips locked with Daniel’s, Aubrey loosened his cravat, desperate to touch skin. He exposed Daniel’s throat and stroked it with his fingertips.

“Ah,” Daniel gasped against his mouth. “*Aubrey.*”

Aubrey plunged his tongue deeper and kissed him hard, pushing him down on the cushion. His hands roamed under Daniel’s coat, caressing his crisp white dress shirt, looking for a way in to touch naked skin.

Then Daniel cupped his hard cock through his trousers.

“Oh God!”

Aubrey’s breath hitched and his gaze went to Daniel’s long fingers which were tugging at the fastenings of his trousers. He swallowed.

“Um, Daniel,” he managed to say around their kiss.

Daniel broke the kiss and stared at him, a question in his passion-blazed blue eyes.

“I...just wanted to point out that with us being in a coach and all, a moving one at that, we might be better off waiting to go further when we reach our destination.” Aubrey prayed Daniel wouldn’t back off from the

idea of having sex. He really did. But he didn't relish having the Graystone driver opening the door to them fucking either.

Daniel blinked and then straightened in the seat. "Damnation. You're right. I'm sorry."

"Don't be, I'm not. But for what I have in mind I don't want to be interrupted."

Daniel nodded. "I'll...go back to my seat now."

Aubrey mourned the loss of the warm body next to his but agreed it was perhaps for the best.

Daniel laughed, glancing down at his own trousers. His arousal was plainly evident. "I'm afraid I won't be able to hide this."

Aubrey grinned. "Don't worry, I just need a private room without fear of interruption and I'll take care of that."

Daniel sighed and leaned his head back on the seat. "Do you think this is wise?"

"Probably not," Aubrey admitted. "But it's what I want."

Daniel didn't reply at first. In fact, Aubrey didn't think he would respond. Just as the coach slowed to a stop, Daniel shifted.

"Me too. Let's go *talk*."

# Chapter Two

Daniel handed his overcoat and gloves to the footman waiting at the door. Aubrey did the same.

Waiting just inside the foyer was his butler, Richmond, a tall, thin older man who'd been with the family for years. Thankfully despite his prediction, his erection had gone down. Naturally Richmond would never have lowered his gaze to such an inappropriate spot.

"Good evening, Richmond. You may close up and retire. I won't need you until morning."

"Very good, milord. Good night."

Daniel wondered what his next move should be. Would Aubrey think it too forward to lead him to his bedchamber? Apparently not, judging by the reaction he got from the viscount in the carriage but Daniel was cautious by nature. He led the way to the parlor down the hall.

Aubrey's shoes echoed on the tile floor close on his heels. Flinging open the double doors, Daniel gestured for the viscount to precede him. He closed the doors and after a brief hesitation locked them. He didn't turn around to face Aubrey right away. He was nervous. Ridiculously so. He was awkward again, like he'd been back in their school days. His cock had swollen painfully in anticipation of what was to come. *Hopefully.*

"Would...you care for a brandy?" he asked at last.

"No. Daniel, look at me."

Daniel turned, expecting to find Aubrey across the room or at least standing by the mantle. Instead Aubrey was close, only a few short feet from him, staring intently at him with those incredible dark eyes.

He opened his mouth to say something, what he didn't know, when Aubrey launched at him and pushed him against the closed double doors.



Grabbing Daniel's arms, Aubrey held them over his head in a tight grasp. His mouth came down hard, ravishing. It was a demanding kiss, no gentleness at all but hungry and hot. Aubrey's tongue plunged in and thrust against his own. Daniel's cock strained painfully against the confines of his trousers.

Aubrey shifted slightly to hold Daniel's wrists with only one hand and he moved his other to grasp Daniel's erection through the material.

"Aubrey," he gasped against his mouth.

Aubrey pulled back from the kiss but only long enough to tear at Daniel's cravat and fling it unceremoniously to the floor. Then his lips moved to Daniel's throat, nipping at the pulse there.

Daniel closed his eyes, unable to prevent a ragged moan from escaping his lips. If he didn't release his cock soon it would rip through the material. Already a drop of pre-cum wet the crotch.

Aubrey pulled away again and Daniel whimpered. He was too far gone with lust to feel shame. He had to have Aubrey. Even a moment away from his touch was torture.

"Move," Aubrey whispered hoarsely, tilting his head toward the settee. He appeared incapable of more than that. It thrilled Daniel to think he had such an effect on him.

"I'm not sure I can stand upright," Daniel admitted with a little laugh. His legs felt like they'd turned to water. His gaze moved from the dark eyes he loved so much down Aubrey's muscular chest, his flat stomach, tapered hips and...*Lord*. Aubrey's cock strained against his own trousers, reminding Daniel how large he was. He licked his lips, remembering the taste of that cock, remembering it fucking his mouth. He stumbled forward toward the settee.

Aubrey had moved over there ahead of him and was removing his coat, cravat and shirt with elegant precision. Daniel stared mesmerized at the viscount's long graceful fingers. He reminded him very much of a predatory wildcat. And Daniel appeared to be his prey.

Aubrey folded his shirt and set it on a nearby chair. He turned his attention back to Daniel, who couldn't stop staring at his naked chest.

"Are you going to take those off or will I?"

Daniel knew he must look like a complete idiot standing there drooling, with his mouth agape at Aubrey but, damn, he was a fine-looking man. His

chest was muscular and lightly tanned as though he'd spent some time outdoors shirtless. There was just the right amount of hair on Aubrey's chest, not too hairy but very masculine. He was the most beautiful man Daniel had ever seen. Surely it was a sin to be a walking sexual dream.

"Daniel?"

He tore his gaze from Aubrey's chest with a great deal of effort and met those dark eyes again. Aubrey raised a quizzical eyebrow.

"Your clothes?"

Daniel could only nod. He decided in order to concentrate he'd better turn away from Aubrey. Turning his back on his fantasy, he tugged off his coat and threw it in the general direction of the chair where Aubrey had carefully placed his own shirt. His cravat having already been taken care of, he moved on to his shirt.

Aubrey sat down on the settee and was removing his shoes.

Daniel stiffened when a thought came to him. Um...how to delicately ask who would...hell. He face turned a dark, hot red.

The truth was he wanted Aubrey to fuck *him*. Many years ago, even before meeting Aubrey at school, Daniel had a sexual encounter with his younger brother's tutor. He'd hidden the affair from his family for obvious reasons. It had only lasted a few weeks as the tutor had been fired for not doing well teaching Daniel's brother. But in his brief relationship, the tutor had been the aggressor. Although he would rather die of embarrassment before admitting it, Daniel liked to be dominated. Something he didn't get in his marriage to Isabel.

But what if Aubrey felt the same way? Maybe he wanted Daniel to fuck *him*? So far, Aubrey seemed content to play the aggressor.

Aubrey had finished removing his shoes and now stood to tug off his trousers. He stopped with a questioning look. "What?"

"Are you... I... Oh, damnation," Daniel said, running a hand through his light brown hair.

Aubrey took hold of Daniel's hands and pulled him close. He leaned into him and pulled Daniel's bottom lip with his teeth. "God, do you know how much I want you?"

Daniel felt Aubrey's cock pressing against him. He reached down and pushed the half lowered trousers farther down. He wanted to touch Aubrey's cock.

Aubrey gasped and pulled away. "Don't. I'm so hard if you touch me I'll come. I want to fuck you."

*Yes.*

"Now," Daniel whispered. "Do it now."

Aubrey smiled crookedly. "Some of us haven't fully disrobed."

Daniel felt his face flame again. He cleared his throat.

"Oh hell, Daniel, let me," Aubrey said, reaching for the waistband of Daniel's evening trousers. He unfastened and pulled them and his drawers down with one quick motion. Daniel's cock bobbed free.

"My shoes," Daniel muttered, barely able to think. His erection throbbed painfully, pre-cum leaking from the head.

"To hell with the shoes," Aubrey said, "I'll get those later." Aubrey pushed Daniel onto the settee. "Open your mouth."

Daniel complied and gratefully pulled the long, hard cock in. He swirled his tongue along the length, sucking it in farther to the back of his throat. Aubrey had the best-tasting cock.

Aubrey gritted his teeth. "Oh my God, you're good at that."

Daniel's balls tightened. The sound alone of Aubrey's voice could get him off. He was going to come soon.

Aubrey pulled his cock out of Daniel's mouth and then knelt down next to him. He pushed Daniel's legs up and spread them to give him access to his ass. He plunged his tongue in, rimming Daniel's hole.

"Oh..." Daniel nearly came off the settee. His balls tightened further. He hadn't believed it possible. Aubrey's tongue entered him again and again. Then a long finger joined the tongue, moving in and out of his ass. It burned a little, it had been a while since he'd been fucked but the burn didn't last long.

"Like that, Daniel?"

"God, yes," he breathed. "More. I want more."

Aubrey added another finger and continued to use his tongue.

"Aubrey... I'm going to..."

"Do it. Come for me, Daniel. Give yourself to me."

Daniel closed his eyes and bit his lip. He could no longer prevent the orgasm that had been waiting from happening. His whole body tensed as white liquid shot from his cock all over his stomach and thighs.

Aubrey moved up his body and kissed him hard, ravaging his mouth again, his hand pumping Daniel's cock through his orgasm.

Daniel panted. Lord, he hadn't come so intensely since...hell, he didn't know if he ever had. He was given no time to contemplate it, though, for Aubrey scooped up his cum and used it as a lubricant on his own cock. It was the hottest thing he'd ever seen. Daniel cock, which was still half-erect, twitched in response.

Aubrey lifted Daniel's legs, wrenched off his shoes and threw them who knew where, yanked off his offending clothing and poised his cock at Daniel's ass. He slowly pushed in. He was bigger than Daniel's previous lover and Daniel felt Aubrey stretching him. He tensed.

"Easy, love, shh, relax," Aubrey said soothingly.

Daniel nodded. "Just a bit tight."

Aubrey grinned. "I know. It feels fantastic."

Daniel blew out a breath. Aubrey's words made him feel instantly better and his cock pushing in didn't feel quite as uncomfortable either.

"That's it." Aubrey pushed all the way in, balls-deep.

"Ah."

"All right?"

Daniel nodded again. "Oh, yes. Fuck me, Aubrey. Fuck me hard."

"As you wish, milord." Aubrey withdrew and then pushed back again, hitting Daniel's prostate.

"That...feels...incredible," Daniel said. "Do it again."

Aubrey obliged, pulling out and pushing in, over and over, faster and harder. The parlor was alive with the sounds of Aubrey's balls slapping as he pumped Daniel's ass.

"Harder, Aubrey," Daniel pleaded. He grabbed his own newly erect cock and stroked it.

Aubrey thrust harder, quickening the pace. Sweat beaded his forehead. He held on tight to Daniel's thighs, pushing him up higher and plunging in deeper.

"Daniel, my God, you're...so...fucking...hot," Aubrey moaned.

Daniel's balls tightened, signifying another orgasm. He wanted to wait for Aubrey to come but he didn't think he could delay it much longer. Aubrey fucking him and the sight of him ramming in and out of him was

just too much. He'd stroked his own cock too often over the years to thoughts of the beautiful viscount.

"Aubrey...please, I'm going to come again."

Aubrey groaned. "Not until I tell you that you can."

Aubrey gasped and closed his eyes, ramming so fiercely into Daniel he wondered if they would break the settee. Daniel bit his lip so hard he was surprised he hadn't drawn blood.

"Now, Daniel, now, give me everything. I want it all."

Daniel couldn't hold back his shout as he emptied his cock, coming even more intensely than a few minutes before. With a hoarse shout of his own, Aubrey jerked and poured into Daniel. He collapsed on top and Daniel pulled him into his arms and kissed the top of his lover's head.

"That was... There aren't any words," Aubrey said, his voice rumbling across Daniel's chest.

"Agreed. I just hope I didn't wake the whole household with my screams."

"They're all good servants. Even if they heard you they would never be indiscreet enough to say so."

Daniel nodded. "True." And currently his children were visiting with their maternal grandmother. He never would have brought Aubrey home had they been staying with him.

Aubrey rose and kissed him hard. "What now?"

Daniel smiled. "Time to move to the bedroom. Don't you think?"

"I thought you'd never ask."

\* \* \* \* \*

Aubrey had never expected to be in Daniel's bedchamber. He was more than a little surprised and quite excited to find himself there. It was a simple but elegant room decorated with muted browns and greens. Plainly masculine with only a large bed, a side chest of drawers, a table with a decanter of brandy and a comfortable chair by the fire.

They wasted no time removing the clothing they'd hastily put on in the parlor. Graystone's efficient valet had left a fire burning in the hearth and now Daniel crouched down in front of it, poking the embers. Such a position afforded Aubrey the perfect view of his magnificent ass and balls.

Aubrey's mouth practically watered at the sight. Who was he kidding? It was watering. The man was scrumptious. Aubrey had every intention of having that ass again. And again. Perhaps forever if he were really lucky.

He'd been so caught up in the moment earlier while fucking Daniel he hadn't stopped to admire the earl's body overly much. Now he took that missed opportunity. Daniel was not as muscular as Aubrey was but his biceps were nicely prominent. He had noticed Daniel didn't have much chest hair which suited Aubrey fine. He didn't like hairy men.

Daniel stood and turned his attention back to Aubrey. He smiled. "Better? There's quite a chill tonight."

Aubrey loved his smile. It was slightly crooked with dimples on either side of his full mouth. His cock jumped to attention. He crooked his finger at Daniel. He was delighted when Daniel obeyed without hesitation. He was going to like ordering Daniel to do his will. Reaching for his lover's cock, Aubrey stroked up and down the rigid length.

"Oh God," Daniel groaned.

Aubrey kissed him hard, then pulled back to stare into his blue eyes. "I wasn't your first. Who was?"

Daniel blinked, clearly surprised by the question. "I...well...it's been a while actually. There was only one before. I was young. Before university. My brother's tutor." Aubrey cupped his balls and Daniel closed his eyes briefly. "You? I don't think I was your first either."

"No," Aubrey admitted. "You weren't my first man. I also have fucked women that way."

"Really? Isabel would never." Daniel shook his head. "Not even a possibility."

"Some won't. As for men, it was after your father died. After mine too, actually. I've been attracted to men as well as women most of my life but I suppose I didn't want to act on it while my father was still alive. I've been with a few. Anyway, that's not important now." It wasn't important. Aubrey felt nothing for the men he'd been with before. It was all about pleasure and he wouldn't apologize for it or defend it. He'd always been discreet. No one knew, except Maribel, who seemed to know everything about him.

Daniel walked to a side table in his room and poured himself a glass of brandy. He held up the carafe. "You?"

“Yes.” What he really wanted was Daniel on the bed ready to take him in but he didn’t need to rush. They had plenty of time. He took the snifter Daniel handed him and took a sip. He wondered what the other man was thinking. His expression was unreadable.

“I’ve thought a lot about you over the years,” Daniel said after a moment. “Wondered how you were doing. You haven’t married.”

Aubrey nodded. “I’ve only ever found one woman I wanted to marry and she was already married.”

“Lady Whittington?”

“Yes.”

Daniel finished his brandy and set it aside. He cleared his throat. “Is it true her children are...yours?”

“Most likely, yes.” Aubrey set his snifter next to Daniel’s. He did not want to talk about Maribel and the children. He didn’t want to talk at all. Tilting his head toward the bed, he said, “You in the bed. Now.”

Daniel’s eyes lit with excitement. Aubrey was delighted he didn’t hesitate at all when he moved to the bed. He lay on his back and bent one knee, giving Aubrey a perfect few of his thick, erect cock.

Lord, he was close to drooling. He followed Daniel and tried not to appear too eager when he jumped on the bed. Deciding not to waste any more time, Aubrey lay across Daniel’s warm muscular body and kissed him hard, forcing his mouth open to allow entry for his tongue.

Daniel whimpered, sending a jolt through Aubrey’s pulsing erection. Graystone was very good for his ego.

“Ah, God,” Daniel said against his lips. “You’re really good at that.” He threaded his fingers in Aubrey’s dark locks and pulled his lips down to his.

In the past, when bedding a man, Aubrey hadn’t wanted to kiss his partner. He was rather surprised he not only enjoyed kissing Daniel, he craved it.

They kissed for several moments, their erect cocks pressing against each other. Aubrey stroked a hand over one of his lover’s nipples and Daniel groaned.

“Hmm, you like your nipples played with?”

“Uh-huh,” Daniel said, his light blue eyes wide.

Aubrey grinned and dipped down to flick his tongue where his hand had just played.

“Aubrey...Aubrey...yes. Suck it.”

Aubrey raised a dark eyebrow. “What do you say, milord?”

Daniel closed his eyes. “Please.”

Aubrey clenched his fists against the urge to spill. His lover’s soft, desperate plea nearly made him lose his mind. He sucked Daniel’s nipple but it wasn’t enough. He wanted to taste all of Daniel. Sliding down the earl’s body, he paused to place a kiss on his quivering stomach.

“Au-Aubrey?”

“Shh, I’m going to taste you.” Aubrey loved the uncertainty he heard in his lover’s voice. Had no one ever sucked Daniel’s cock? How could anyone resist such a beautiful specimen? It bobbed up, striking his cheek. His tongue lashed out at the head.

“God,” Daniel said, sounding almost in pain. His hands now fisted in the sheets.

Aubrey slowly pulled the thick, hard cock inside the warmth of his mouth. With one of his hands, he cupped Daniel’s ball sac. He pulled the head out and then pushed it back in, repeating the process, each time taking in more.

“That’s...that’s, oh my God, is that how it feels?”

Aubrey paused and looked up at Daniel. His lover’s eyes were glazed with lust and wonder. “Um, so it’s true then. No one has ever sucked you off?”

“No.”

“This tutor. He was one selfish bastard, wasn’t he?”

Daniel laughed. “He was sacked before we could experiment too much. And, well, Isabel was lovely and sweet but she didn’t want to and I couldn’t force her.”

Aubrey shook his head. “You’ve missed a lot, Daniel. But don’t worry I’ll give your cock the attention it deserves often.”

Daniel shook a little. “Could you, maybe, go back to giving it attention now?”

Aubrey chuckled. “My pleasure.” He opened his mouth and throat and took the beautiful cock farther in. Daniel tasted a little bitter and musky but not unpleasant. Aubrey’s own cock leaked pre-cum. He needed to fuck Daniel and soon.



The little whimpers and moans coming from Daniel made him mad with lust. He sucked harder, wanting to make his love come or he would come himself all over the bed.

“Aubrey,” Daniel groaned, his ass lifting off the bed. He thrust frantically down Aubrey’s throat. “I...I...ah.”

Aubrey’s mouth filled with liquid. He swallowed the salty bitter cum but some leaked out onto his chin. He continued to suck on the semi-erect cock.

Daniel panted and squirmed, trying to get away from his ministrations but Aubrey held him down, working his cock in and out until he was satisfied Daniel was aroused again.

“Fuck me, please.”

Aubrey released his lover’s cock and taking some of the semen dripping from his chin, lubed his own cock. Daniel watched him intently, his blue eyes glazed with desire.

“There’s some oil over there in a drawer on the side table,” Daniel said, his cheeks turning a bit pink.

Aubrey raised a brow. “You’re full of surprises, milord.”

Daniel’s cheeks turned bright red. “Well, I—”

“Shh.” Aubrey kissed him silent. He rose from the bed and removed the small bottle of musk oil from the drawer. He uncapped the stopper and sniffed. “Expensive.”

“From India.”

Aubrey nodded and returned to the bed. He dipped a finger into the oil and then into Daniel’s asshole.

“God, yes. Hurry, I want you.”

Talk like that, Aubrey could get used to. He added another oiled finger.

“Please, I want your cock.”

Aubrey closed his eyes. He loved it when Daniel begged. He liberally lubed up his rock-hard shaft and leaned down to kiss his lover. Their tongues tangled, Daniel nibbled on his bottom lip.

“On your stomach,” Aubrey ordered.

Daniel obeyed instantly, presenting his ass in the air. Aubrey slapped it, not too hard but enough to cause a slight pink tinge to the cheeks.

He pressed the head of his cock at his lover’s opening. Slowly, he pushed in. God, Daniel was tight.

“Now, hard.”

“Demanding, aren’t you?” Aubrey pushed in balls-deep. When Daniel leaned his forehead on the pillow with a slight grimace, he asked, “All right?”

“Yes, fuck me.”

Aubrey grabbed a fistful of Daniel’s light brown hair and jerked his head back. “Are you trying to give me orders?”

Daniel moaned. “No, sir.”

“Hmm. Better not.” He bit his lover’s shoulder.

“Yes, oh God.”

“You really like that, don’t you? To be dominated?” Aubrey never would have guessed the proper earl would have wanted to be treated as a submissive but it was extremely hot.

Daniel closed his eyes and nodded.

He started moving, in and out of his lover, thrusting harder and faster, urged on by Graystone’s whimpers. His balls slapped as he rammed again and again. A tingle up his spine warned him of his impending orgasm. He reached under Daniel and started stroking the earl’s cock, rubbing in the pre-cum on the tip.

Sweat beaded on his forehead and his balls tightened. He knew he wasn’t going to last much longer.

“Fuck!” Daniel screamed, his ass tightening around Aubrey’s cock.

Aubrey smelled semen which sent him over the edge. Quickening his thrusts, he came in his lover with a roar of his own. Unable to hold himself up any longer, he collapsed on Daniel.

He lay like that with his eyes closed, breathing heavily for several minutes, still inside his lover. Neither of them moved. He was exhausted, both physically and emotionally. Sex with Daniel was amazing. Unlike anything he’d experienced with anyone else.

He’d always known his feelings for the earl went deeper than lust. He wanted to cherish and protect him. Wanted to spend all his time with him, talking and laughing and loving. He loved him. Always had. Blowing out a breath, Aubrey wondered if he could take the chance to admit it to Daniel. Telling someone he loved them had never been easy. In fact, now that he thought about, he’d only ever told Maribel.

“Aubrey?”

“Hmm?”

“You’re really heavy.”

“Oh. Sorry.” Aubrey eased out of Daniel and lay next to him. He threw his arm around his lover’s waist, yawning. Tomorrow, he thought. He would tell him how he felt tomorrow. He was too comfortable and too tired to do anything but sleep now.

As if reading his mind, Aubrey heard the sound of soft snoring coming from Daniel. Apparently he wasn’t the only one who was exhausted. For the first time, he could sleep with hope for the future.

# Chapter Three

Something jolted Aubrey awake. He'd always been a heavy sleeper and he didn't much care for being disturbed. Frowning, he kept his eyes closed with determination and settled back to return to blissful sleep.

"Aubrey, wake up, damn it."

He swatted at the voice. He didn't know what time it was but it had to be far too early, surely.

"Get up."

Aubrey grimaced at the irritation in the voice and pulled the covers up over his head. They were yanked out of his hands so hard they burned his fingers. Now he was getting angry.

"Fuck you," he grumbled. He was shaken so roughly, an eye finally popped open to peer at his attacker.

A fully dressed Daniel. What the hell?

"You're not one of those early risers, are you? Because I have to tell you I wake whenever the whim takes me. Seldom before noon, I should add."

"You have to get up now, Aubrey," Daniel said rather coldly. He turned away and bent down to pick something up.

Aubrey's clothes hit him in the face. He pulled them off his head and frowned. "Are you always this surly in the morning?"

"Get dressed." His tone was clipped.

"All right. What is it, Daniel?" Aubrey sat up, stood and slipped into his trousers.

"You have to leave."

Aubrey paused in the middle of putting on his shirt. "What?"

Daniel sighed and ran his long fingers through his damp light brown hair. He looked like he'd recently bathed. "My children's grandmother is coming by this morning to bring the children home. You can't be here."

Aubrey blew out a breath. He could understand. He didn't blame Daniel for not wanting his lover around his children. So he was slightly disappointed he wouldn't get to spend the day with Daniel. There would be time.

He finished fastening his shirt and loosely tied the snowy white cravat he'd worn to the ball the night before. He shrugged his coat on.

Daniel waited by the door and for some reason refused to look at him. Obviously mornings were not his favorite time.

"What time is it?" he wondered.

"A little before seven."

No wonder he was exhausted. He couldn't have had more than a few hours of sleep. Glancing around, he spied his shoes.

"I'm sorry to have to ask you this but I'd like you to leave by the servants' entrance," Daniel said. He was looking at the door handle now. "Come, I'll show you."

The servants' entrance? Well, that was carrying things a bit far, wasn't it? Aubrey ground his teeth together but tamped down his annoyance. He knew they had to be discreet. Daniel was inexperienced with having a lover, any lover, so naturally he would want to be extra cautious.

"When can we see each other again?" he asked.

Daniel stiffened. Without turning to face Aubrey, he said, "We can't."

Uncertainty returned in full force. It took Aubrey a moment to let his lover's words sink in. "It doesn't have to be today or even tomorrow. When will you be free again?"

Daniel shook his head and when he finally turned to look at him his blue eyes were filled with sorrow. "I'm sorry. You misunderstand. What we had last night was...amazing but it's over."

"What?"

Daniel ran his fingers through his hair. "Look, I hoped we wouldn't have to talk about this but I can see it's inevitable. Aubrey, last night was the only time. I can't see you again."

He felt like someone had dashed ice water in his face. He tried to make his mouth move to say something—anything—but all he seemed capable of doing was staring at Daniel.

“I assumed you would know,” Daniel continued, not bothering to look at Aubrey. “I never intended last night to happen but I saw you at Lady Whittington’s and, well...”

Aubrey stood silently, feeling like a complete fool. Somehow he’d thought this time would be different. Had allowed himself to hope finally happiness would be his. Now he realized it was just an illusion. Closing his eyes briefly, he inhaled deeply, forcing himself to regain control.

“Aubrey... I am sorry.”

And that was the worst of it, really. Aubrey suspected Daniel was sorry. Sorry he’d ever allowed it to happen. His surly morning attitude made perfect sense now.

“Forget it,” he said hollowly.

“I didn’t mean to upset you. I thought, well, I did think you’d probably know we couldn’t continue seeing each other. It would be too much. I have the children to think of. There can’t be anything to jeopardize their future.”

“I said forget it. Where is this servants’ entrance you want me to use?” He knew his tone was cold, deliberately so and Daniel winced. Aubrey was glad. Let the bastard feel something.

Daniel bit his bottom lip. “Do you want to talk about it? I know—”

“What in all that is holy would there be to talk about? You’ve made your point. I’d like to get the hell out of here.”

Daniel’s cheeks pinked but he didn’t argue. He turned the handle on the door and stepped into the hall. Aubrey followed.

“This way,” Daniel said softly. He walked down the long hall and turned slightly to the left where a set of stairs led down.

Aubrey nodded. “This leads to the back of the house, I assume, and through the kitchen.”

“Right.”

“Goodbye.”

“Wait!” Daniel reached into his coat and withdrew some coins.

Aubrey could barely breathe and the lump forming in his throat nearly choked him. “I am no one’s paid companion.”

“No,” Daniel said, shaking his head. “I... That was not my intent. I thought you might need hackney fare.”

“Sod off, Graystone.” Aubrey went down the stairs without looking back. He practically ran. He couldn’t wait to get away from his lover. Former lover.

“Aubrey, please, I don’t want things to end this way,” Daniel said, following after him.

Aubrey went into the kitchen and found the door leading outside to the back alley. He wrenched it open.

“Lord, you’re stubborn,” Daniel said under his breath. He put his hand on the door.

Aubrey shoved him out of the way and went out the door into the alley. He walked away from the man he loved and never looked back.

\* \* \* \* \*

“I’m here to see Lady Whittington, please. Viscount Rothton,” Aubrey said to the butler who’d opened the door. He handed him his card.

“Yes, milord, I remember. Please wait here.”

Aubrey clasped his hands behind his back and waited in the foyer for an audience. He’d been there many times, not just for balls and soirees. Prior to the ball last night, he’d last been by to see the children.

The butler reappeared. “This way, milord.”

Aubrey followed him to the back parlor. Maribel sat on a sunny yellow settee holding a teacup in her hand. When she went to stand, he waved her to stay seated.

“Thank you,” he said to the butler, who then closed the door.

“Aubrey, I didn’t expect you this afternoon.” Maribel smiled. “I’m afraid the children are out getting their exercise with their nanny.”

“I haven’t come to see them.”

She frowned and gestured to the matching yellow chair situated close to the settee. “Tea?”

He wanted something much stronger than tea but he merely shook his head.

“What is it, Aubrey?”

He leaned his elbows on his knees and stared intently at her. "I'm done, Maribel."

"Done?"

"Yes. Done with London. Maybe done with England, if it comes to that." He leaned back in the chair and closed his eyes, rubbing his temples.

"You're being very cryptic. What has happened?" She stirred her tea with a metallic little sound.

"Last night I was with Graystone."

"That's wonderful...isn't it?"

"It was disastrous, actually." He opened his eyes and looked at her. "Not entirely."

Maribel scooted closer and grabbed his hands. "It wasn't what you hoped?"

"The sex was amazing," he admitted. "Or I thought so. I don't know what he thought. He said... Oh hell, who cares?" He tried to remove his hands from hers but she tightened her hold.

"You care, Aubrey, so I care. You love him, don't you?"

"It doesn't matter, because he doesn't love me." His throat clogged and for a moment he thought he might disgrace himself by crying.

"Are you so sure about that?"

Aubrey sighed. "He doesn't want to see me again. He couldn't wait to see me leave."

"Well...did he say why?"

"His children and responsibility and discretion. All of that. I knew it wouldn't be easy. I've always known we would have to be very careful." He drew her hands to his lips and placed a chaste kiss there. "I've always been discreet. But he woke me up to tell me to get out, his children were coming home and that what we did was a one-time occurrence."

"Oh, Aubrey, I am so sorry." Maribel threaded her fingers through his. "Maybe if you talk to him—"

"No," Aubrey said sharply. "I won't beg anyone to love me, Maribel. You of all people should know how futile that is."

Maribel lowered her gaze. "Yes." She let go of his hands and reached for her teacup.



Aubrey was instantly remorseful for hurting her, even a little. None of this was her fault. He had only himself to blame for the broken heart he now nursed.

“Forgive me?” he asked softly.

She shook her head and met his gaze. “There is nothing to forgive. What is this talk of your being done with London?”

“I’m thinking of leaving England.”

Her teacup rattled. “What?”

He nodded. “It’s true. Ever since I left Daniel I’ve been thinking about it.”

“But that’s...preposterous. Where would you go?”

“America.”

Maribel put her cup down with a clatter. She slipped down to her knees in front of him. “No, you can’t.”

“Why not? God, Maribel, what is keeping me here? So the title goes to my cousin when I die, there’s no money with it anyway. America is said to have opportunities.”

“Please,” Maribel said, her eyes brimming with tears, “don’t leave me. You’re my only friend.”

“Shhh,” he said, embracing her. He was surprised by the strength of her emotion. She hugged him tight and buried her face in his stomach. He held her like that for a few moments, neither of them saying a word. He realized, painfully, she was right. They were each other’s only true friends. “It’s all right, Maribel. I won’t, I won’t.”

Maribel pulled back at last but remained kneeling before him. “Whittington has a hunting lodge near Northampton. He never goes there but there is always a small staff in residence. You can go there and take as much time as you like.”

“Are you sure? I don’t want to cause you any problems, Maribel.”

“You won’t. Not if you do this for me and stop talking of leaving England.”

Aubrey kissed her forehead. “Very well. Northampton it is.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Are you listening to me, Graystone?”

Daniel sipped his brandy and stared out his study window, vaguely aware his brother was talking. "Yes, I think you should."

"You think I should what?"

"Do whatever you feel is right under the circumstances," he said noncommittally. How long had he been here barely listening to his brother drone on, thinking only of Aubrey?

"Very well, I shall run off with Bane's betrothed."

Daniel nodded. "Sound plan, James."

"And while I am at it, I will ask your solicitor for a huge raise in my allowance."

*God.*

Ever since Aubrey walked away from him, he'd been unable to think about anything but him. He'd cared about Isabel, surely he had but he didn't think he ever really loved her. Not the way he ought to have, anyway. He was fairly sure he did love Aubrey. He rubbed his chest where his heart beat. What had he done by sending him away?

"I'm going to fight a duel in the morning," his brother snapped, slamming his own snifter of brandy down hard on the desk.

Daniel glanced at James. He blinked. His brother, a younger version of him, glared back. "I'm sorry?"

James sighed, smiling just a little. "Your mind is elsewhere. I can come back another time."

"My apologies, James, I am a bit distracted."

"Hopefully it is a woman who has distracted you," James said, grinning broadly now. "You've grieved long enough for Isabel."

Not a woman but he definitely didn't grieve over Isabel any longer. He grieved over Aubrey. His brother wouldn't understand his being in love with a man in a hundred years, of course. No one he knew would. Except Aubrey, who he'd chased away.

"I'll come by in a few days." James clasped him on the shoulders. "Don't brood too long, Daniel. Whoever she is, you ought to go tell her how you feel."

Daniel smiled—or tried to. He didn't think he succeeded very well. He watched his brother leave with no little sense of relief. James' talk of a woman made him decidedly uncomfortable. He didn't want another woman. The plain truth of it staggered him.

Shaking a bit, he held onto the edge of the desk, he lowered himself into the big chair behind his desk. Could it really be possible to be in love with another man? He'd had these feelings—this attraction—for men almost his entire life. Certainly since growing out of boyhood. No doubt his reasons for the brief affair he'd had with James' tutor all those years ago.

The tutor wasn't love though. Sexual attraction, certainly. But Aubrey had always been different. When they'd been in university together, Daniel always sought him out, always wanted to spend time with him. The entire reason for going to the Hell on the night his father died was to spend time with Aubrey. Daniel had no interest in Hells then or now.

The years without Aubrey in his life hadn't been unpleasant, just empty. He'd thought often about him. What he was doing, how he was faring. Truth was, Daniel sought out information about Aubrey every chance he had, which was why he knew of the rumors regarding Lady Whittington and her children.

Daniel now knew choosing to attend Lady Whittington's ball had been more than mere coincidence. He wanted to see Aubrey. After all these years he finally found what he wanted. And then cast it aside. Ordered it to leave.

*Idiot.*

Of course, they had to be discreet. He had his children to think of, naturally. He couldn't allow even a whisper of scandal to touch them. He would protect them from any and all dangers. Society would never accept their relationship. Daniel knew that, had always known that and Aubrey did too. They *could* do it. To the *ton* they'd merely be friends. Most wouldn't guess they were more and those that did would keep their mouths shut as long as they were careful.

Now he just needed to tell Aubrey.

\* \* \* \* \*

Daniel didn't know why he was nervous. Well, that was a lie, wasn't it? He'd hurt Aubrey when they parted and he was unsure what sort of reception he would receive. He hoped he would be welcome.

He stood outside the door to Aubrey's townhouse waiting for it to open. There was a distinct chill in the air and he was more than a little sorry he hadn't bothered with a greatcoat.

The door opened at last and a short, stocky, balding middle-aged man peered out through a small slit. "May I help you?"

Daniel cleared his throat. "I'm here to see Viscount Rothton. Earl of Graystone." He slid his card through the tiny opening.

The man opened the door all the way and handed the card back to him. "I'm sorry, milord, but Lord Rothton isn't here."

Hell, he hadn't counted on that. Gritting his teeth, Daniel asked, "When do you expect him home?"

"Difficult to say. He didn't tell the staff. Left London a few days ago, milord."

His stomach dropped. Or was that his heart? Left London? It never occurred to him Aubrey would take such a drastic step.

"Um... Where...where did he go?" Daniel managed to inquire when he could find his voice.

The man shrugged. "He didn't inform us, milord. I didn't get the impression he would return any time soon."

He was too late. Aubrey had left him.

"Thank you," he mumbled and, turning on his heel, headed back to where his coach waited.

Feeling numb, he gave orders to return home and then sat inside, wondering what he was supposed to do now. He couldn't remember if Aubrey's family had any estates in the country. He knew the Rothton title hadn't come with a lot of money but there might be a small manor. His solicitor could probably provide him the information but did he want to wait that long?

Daniel rapped on the roof and the grate slid open. He gave his driver Lady Whittington's address.

\* \* \* \* \*

Entering Lady Whittington's parlor, Daniel was immediately struck by the cozy little scene before him. The lady herself, gowned in periwinkle blue, sat in the middle of a bright yellow settee, her blonde hair regally pinned to

the top of her head. She held a book in her hands and next to her sat two small children, a boy and a girl. Their resemblance to their father was obvious, at least to him.

For a moment he felt he was intruding on Aubrey's wife and children in a family moment. But she was not Aubrey's wife and the children might be his but they would never be acknowledged as such.

Lady Whittington glanced up. "Graystone. How unexpected."

"I am sorry for the intrusion. Your butler said I could just come through."

She nodded and closed the book. "Children, go and tell Mrs. Hemsly it's time for tea."

The boy, whose dark eyes so resembled Aubrey's, looked at Daniel curiously. After a moment he shrugged and took hold of his younger sister's hand to lead her out of the parlor.

When they had closed the door behind them, Daniel turned to Lady Whittington. "They are quite beautiful."

"Thank you. Would you like to sit?"

"No, I won't stay long. Again, I am sorry for the unexpected visit. I didn't have time to send 'round a note asking if you'd agree to see me."

She folded her hands neatly in her lap and gave him a pensive look. "This is about Rothton, isn't it?"

He swallowed the painful lump in his throat. "Yes. I wanted to ask if he has a country manor. I probably should know but I find I don't. Does he?"

"Yes, they have a small estate in Ipswich."

Daniel blew out a breath. "Ipswich. Thank you."

"But, Graystone, Aubrey isn't there." She rose from the settee. "I think I should tell you he spoke of leaving England."

*God, no.*

He'd really mucked things up. What was he supposed to do now? He couldn't leave England to search for him. Damn Aubrey and his volatile temper.

Lady Whittington touched his sleeve. "I talked him out of it. At least for now. He spoke of America."

"Hell."

"Exactly." She seemed to be considering something. "Graystone, you hurt him. He was... Well, I've never seen him quite so desolate."

Daniel winced. He hadn't wanted to hurt Aubrey. Not him of all. "I want to make things right between us."

"I hope you can. He'll probably be angry with me for telling you where he has gone but perhaps he will thank me too. He's at Whittington's hunting lodge just outside Northampton."

"Oh...so now we have Graystone too."

They both turned at the coldly spoken words to see Lord Whittington standing in the parlor doorway. His face could have been formed of ice. His glacial stare fixed on Lady Whittington with only a brief glance in Daniel's direction.

Lady Whittington moved her hand off his sleeve and paled except for two rather prominent red spots on her cheeks.

Daniel was heartily sorry he caused her any discomfort. He wondered what was between them but it certainly wasn't his business and he had more important matters.

*Aubrey.*

"Thank you for the information, Lady Whittington." He bowed stiffly and walked past Whittington with a stiff nod.

\* \* \* \* \*

By the time Daniel stood outside the Whittington hunting lodge several days had passed since he'd forced Aubrey to leave him. His heart in his mouth, he used the heavy iron knocker on the large entrance door.

Daniel didn't know how long he stood there waiting. It could have been mere minutes or half an hour. His stomach fluttered. He was as nervous as a cat.

The door was opened by a tall dark-haired woman wearing a maid's uniform. She smiled quizzically. "Yes?"

Feeling more than a little foolish, he handed her his card. "I understand Viscount Rothton is here. I'd like to see him."

She opened the door wide to allow him entrance. He stepped into the foyer, noting it was lit by only a handful of candles.

"If you'll wait here, milord, I'll tell Lord Rothton you're here." She disappeared down the hall.

Daniel saw there was a painting of a man from years past. He peered at it. An ancestor of the current lord, no doubt.

The maid came back down the hall.

She shook her head rather sadly. "I'm sorry, milord. He has refused to see you. He asked me to send you away."

# Chapter Four

Aubrey stood across the room with his back to the library door and when it opened he prayed it wouldn't be the maid standing there. His heart thundered painfully in his chest. He'd taken a big chance but he'd hoped Daniel wouldn't have come all this way unless it meant something.

"Did Graystone leave?"

"No," Daniel said from the doorway.

Relief flooded him, nearly bringing him to his knees. For a moment he shook with it. Still, he had to know for sure. He clenched his fist.

"If you're here for another night of sex, don't bother," he said coolly.

The library door closed and for the tiniest moment his heart plummeted. Then he heard footsteps approaching and the pace of his heart increased.

"Aubrey."

Daniel spoke from just behind him. The softly spoken sound of his name melted through him. He wanted to turn and kiss him senseless but some perverse part of him incited him to bait Daniel. Turning to face him, Aubrey took a moment to devour him with his gaze.

Daniel's light brown hair appeared windblown and there were dark smudges under his startling blue eyes. His high cheekbones were tinged slightly pink and his full lips turned down in a frown. He wore casual brown breeches and coat with a cream-colored cravat. He was beautiful.

"Now you know what it's like to be so easily dismissed."

Daniel reached out with his right hand and touched Aubrey's cheek. "God, I can assure you it wasn't easy. Nor was coming here to beg you to forgive me. Yet here I am."

Aubrey swallowed. "Is-is that what you're doing?"

Daniel smiled. "Yes. Please forgive me for being a fool. I was afraid."



“Afraid?”

“I’ve been in love with you for years. For the longest time I’ve wondered if I wasn’t—”

“Normal?” Aubrey offered.

Daniel nodded. “Yes, exactly. Men don’t love other men. Or so I’ve always been taught. And all this time I’ve been attracted to men. Women too but never quite the same. Do you know?”

“Yes, I know.” Aubrey held back. It was wonderful to hear Daniel loved him but he wanted to hear everything and so he waited.

“I gave in to that only once before I met you with the tutor but I was embarrassed and tried not to think about it. Somehow, though, the night we went to the Hell I couldn’t resist what I felt for you any longer.”

“No doubt the alcohol.”

Daniel gave him a twisted smile. “No doubt. Afterward, I convinced myself it had been a mistake and I should just pretend it didn’t happen. I was sure you would feel the same.”

“I didn’t.”

“I know that now.” Daniel closed his eyes for a brief moment then opened them and Aubrey could detect just the tiniest hint of moisture there. “I have children, Aubrey, and I must be very careful. They have to be the most important priority in my life.”

Aubrey took a step closer to Daniel until they stood very close. A sense of elation filled him. “I realize that, Daniel. I would never ask anything else of you.”

“Then I want to be with you. I want to make this work.”

“Are you sure?” Aubrey dared to hope. He leaned toward Daniel, almost touching him.

“Yes. And you?”

“I’ve always been sure.” Aubrey knew his grin was nearly wide enough to split his face but he didn’t care. His heart felt lighter than it had since... It had never felt lighter, actually. And now there was something he wanted from Daniel. A secret desire he long ago locked away. Even imagining that at long last it was possible made his cock spring to life. He placed a very quick kiss on Daniel’s mouth. “Enough talk. There’s something I want from you.”

Daniel raised a sardonic eyebrow. "Is there, indeed, Rothton? What would that be?"

"I thought you'd never ask." With a tilt of his head, he indicated the desk in the center of the library.

"You want me to lie on the desk?"

"Not exactly."

Daniel frowned and started undoing his creamy cravat. He tossed it aside and started working the buttons of his shirt. "What then?"

Aubrey loved the fact Daniel removed his clothes without him even prompting. Already the earl was well-trained. Excellent. He shrugged out of his own coat. "I want you to fuck me."

Daniel paused in the act of tossing his coat and shirt in the direction of the cravat. His blue eyes lit with a distinct excitement and his lips parted a little. "Really?"

"Think you can handle that, milord?"

"Hell yes!"

Aubrey laughed. He couldn't help it. He felt giddy seeing how excited Daniel was at the prospect. His own cock strained against his drawers, reminding him to remove the rest of his offending clothing. But if he didn't sit down to remove his Hessians he was going to topple over. He'd certainly lose his elegant reputation then.

Daniel stood naked and very obviously aroused. He glanced at the closed library door. "Shall I lock it?"

Aubrey nodded and watched Daniel's muscular ass as he went to lock the door. He nearly changed his mind about letting Daniel fuck him for his cock hardened painfully thinking about his lover's hole tightening around it. There would be time for him to dominate Daniel later. Thank God, they would have time.

Daniel turned and gave him a quizzical smile. "What?"

"You have a great ass." Aubrey finally got his Hessians off and so he stood to remove the rest of his clothes. Daniel stared openly and then leaned in to offer his lips to Aubrey.

"Oh...wait," Daniel said, glancing around the room. "Where did I throw my coat?"

Aubrey pointed to the right of the desk, nipping Daniel's bottom lip.

Daniel thrust his tongue in and dueled with Aubrey, their kiss deepening. He broke the kiss after several moments and went to pick up his coat. He withdrew something from it. He held up the bottle of musk oil. Matching red spots appeared on his cheeks but he grinned. "I thought... Well, I hoped."

Aubrey's cock sprang free from his restraining drawers, a drop of precum appearing on the head. His balls had tightened painfully. At this rate he wouldn't last long, especially seeing Daniel holding a bottle of oil.

"Fuck me now," he ordered. He went over to the large mahogany desk and cleared it off with one sweep of his hand. Then he hoisted himself up and lay on his back waiting for his lover, his knees spread apart and his ass displayed. He surprised himself at how eager he was to have the other man enter him. With his other male lovers, he'd always been the one to top.

Daniel removed the stopper of the bottle and poured oil onto his fingers. He then inserted an oiled finger into Aubrey's opening. "All right?"

It burned a bit but Aubrey just nodded.

Daniel inserted another slicked finger and thrust them in and out for a few moments.

Aubrey groaned.

"Does it hurt?"

"No, just do it."

Daniel laughed. "Yes, sir." He slid a third finger in and pressed against Aubrey's prostate.

"Oh my God." He arched off the desk, panting. His cock was so hard, he was sure it would break.

"Hmm, feels good?" Daniel teased a bit.

"Yes, damn you. I want your cock...now." Daniel was going to pay for this, Aubrey decided. After this, he was going to spank that beautiful ass before he fucked him until he couldn't stand.

Daniel withdrew his fingers and Aubrey rose on his elbows so he could watch his lover slicking up his straining rod. Lord, what a sight. It was incredibly erotic watching Daniel oil up his erection, caressing the head as he worked it.

He recapped the bottle and tossed it in the direction of his discarded clothes. Then he pressed his erection at Aubrey's opening, slowly pushing in.

Aubrey tightened at the intrusion at first but forced himself to relax to allow his lover in. He exhaled and Daniel pushed in farther.

“Sir?” Daniel paused.

“Yes, go all the way, Daniel.”

With a loud groan, Daniel pushed in balls-deep. He stayed motionless, giving Aubrey a chance to adjust to the feel of a cock up his ass. Aubrey didn’t need it. He wanted Daniel to move, so he raised his ass up off the desk.

“God!” Daniel moaned and started thrusting in and out, his balls slapping against Aubrey’s ass.

Aubrey held on to the desk. “Harder, Daniel. Fuck me deep.” He closed his eyes. Lord, it felt incredible. His cock begged to be touched, so with only one hand gripping the desk, he started stroking himself with the other.

“Aubrey, Aubrey. I love you,” Daniel said as he rammed.

Aubrey clenched his eyes closed, his heart leaping. His balls pulled impossibly tight and semen shot out all over his stomach.

“Yes!” Daniel shouted, jerking quickly and then pouring himself in Aubrey. He collapsed heavily on his lover and Aubrey wrapped his arms around him and held him close.

Daniel didn’t know how long he lay across Aubrey, his cock still resting inside him. He’d dozed a bit but he finally had to move for the awkward position made his muscles ache from strain. He placed a kiss on Aubrey’s bare stomach and disentangled himself. He gripped the desk for a moment to steady his still-quivering legs.

“Daniel, that was...amazing.” Aubrey struggled to sit up, a lopsided grin on his handsome face. A lock of deep brown hair fell over his incredible dark eyes.

Daniel grinned too. How could he help it? Sex was amazing with Aubrey. He loved it. While he loved being fucked by Aubrey, he could get used to taking Aubrey as well. And it seemed as though he would get many chances for both. He hadn’t ruined their relationship after all.

Aubrey swung his legs out and sat up fully. “I love you too, Daniel.”

“I know.” And the wonderful thing was he did know. Somehow, he’d known even back when they were in university together. His heart was glad and filled with hope.

“I have to say a desk isn’t very comfortable,” Aubrey grumbled, rolling his shoulders.

“You’re too pampered and used to a bed, are you?”

“Definitely,” Aubrey admitted unashamedly. “Speaking of which, shall we get dressed and continue this upstairs?”

Daniel nodded and reached for his clothes. He noticed Aubrey watching him. “What?”

“It won’t be easy, you know,” Aubrey said softly.

Daniel didn’t pretend not to understand. “I know it won’t. We won’t be able to see each other every day, maybe not even every week.”

“Yes, but as often as we can.”

Daniel came to him, only wearing his breeches and kissed him softly. “I know I shouldn’t demand anything but...Lady Whittington—”

Aubrey touched a finger to his lips. “Maribel and the children will always be in my life, Daniel, but I will only make love with you.”

Daniel felt relief and joy fill him. “Me too.”

Aubrey kissed him, deep and possessively. “Tell me again, Daniel.”

“I love you, Aubrey.”

“I love you too.” Aubrey smacked him hard on the ass.

“Ouch. What was that for?”

“Just to show you who is in charge, milord.” Aubrey grinned. “Now get your ass upstairs so I can fuck you all night.”

Daniel raised his eyebrows, his heart and his cock swelling. “All night?”

“At least. Tomorrow too. And beyond.”

## About the Author

Shawn Lane believes love and passion know no boundaries. Shawn writes both erotic love stories involving men in historical or contemporary settings and interracial romances between men and women. Shawn is always looking for new stories and new characters to create while holding down life in California.

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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