

Lady Tess Ashworth grew up with, and at fifteen, fell in love with Lord Gareth Caldwell. She has had seven years since they last met to mature into an elegant woman. And seven years to nurture resentment for the man who declared undying love, then married someone else.

Now widowed, Gareth has returned to capture Tess' heart. But she has acquired a reputation as an adventuress and will not be easily won. To intrigue her into his bed, he dares her—she never could resist a dare—to join him in a ménage a quatre. Tutored by his deceased wife, he and his two mates have perfected the art of pleasuring a woman while sating their own appetites.

Tess accepts, but not for the reason he imagines. While Gareth is devising a means to thwart her uncle's plot to murder her, Tess is devising her revenge for Gareth's betrayal.

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THE LADY DARES

Tish Domenick

MENAGE AND MORE



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THE LADY DARES

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Chapter One

Cowardice, at this stage of life? Only a woman such as Tess could reduce him to hiding in a garden without the least notion how to approach. Gravel crunched underfoot, and the scent of rosemary assailed his nostrils as he misstepped. The garden's offerings, circles of colored earth, fragrant shrubbery, shows of prize peony, went unappreciated. Nothing could entice his concentration from the woman he spied upon, the woman whose heart he had broken. Five years had passed since he held her in his arms.

Many moments ago, she had left her bed to pace the balcony, and as yet he had not the temerity to speak. With short, tight turns, she moved among pots of lilies. Not at all like the woman he knew to have insomnia. Or is this a case of nerves, my love? She'd always been fearless. It was what he'd loved most about her.

"Lady Tess, is that not you on the terrace in your night garb?" Fortune favored him and his voice rang stronger than he'd thought probable.

"Ah, Sir Gareth, you have caught me *en dishabille*. Why are you traipsing about the garden this time of eve?"

"Thoughts of you disturbed my repose." Truth was ever the best policy with Tess.

"You were talking to yourself as you were always wont to do and thrashing through my tulips with so much vigor, I could hardly remain asleep."

"May I ascend by way of the trellis?"

"Such impertinence."

"How so? We had many a terrace tryst in the past."

"We were children."

"More's the pity. If I had but known then what I now know."

"Have you learned so much in your absence from Plimpton Village?" She quit her pacing to stand full face to him. Moonlight highlighted the contours of her body through a near transparent shift. She was e'en lovelier than he remembered. Her body more lush than the girl she'd been at fifteen, the girl he'd known intimately.

He hoped she did not hear his indrawn breath.

"Yes. As have you, or so I'm told." And those tales had not pleased him. She'd had many lovers in his absence, too many. "I merely wish to talk. May I come up?"

"Talk is all I care to offer. If you understand, then rise to the occasion."

"I'm afraid I already have, seeing you backlit in moonlight."

Grey-blue eyes flashed. The color complimented her delicately pale-skinned complexion, yet in combination with deep chestnut hair seemed most unusual. He'd been unable to engage those ethereal eyes throughout a dismal evening of string études in the upper gallery of Grafton Hall.

Tess drew her robe closed over the shift and stepped into the shadows. "You must promise to behave and be quiet. My aunt and uncle are light sleepers. And take care. The climb, while undemanding in your youth, may be perilous for a sturdy six-foot man of...uh...what would it be? Three years my senior. Twenty-four?"

"Quite. Yet, though heavier, I'm much more agile."

"So I noticed as you trampled iris and lilac and kicked dust about."

She'd always had a sharp, wry wit. With gratification he noted her breath quickened as the wood trellis groaned under his weight, and she could not disguise a gasp. Her signs of worry bolstered his courage and his speed. She must yet have a small care for him.

"You made quick of the climb. Do you complete every task you undertake with excessive speed?"

"Some tasks require lingering and savoring. Would you care to discover how slowly I am able to proceed?" He flourished a solemn bow, lord to his lady.

She did not respond to his question. "Bowing without a hat in hand to a woman in night rails is ridiculous showmanship. I fervently hope you have more novel discourse in mind." She turned her back, stepped to a bench, and sat. "Join me. These benches are not meant for comfort but will have to do for your short visit."

"Not going to admit me any farther? Not into your chamber—or into you?"

"Certainly not, and please do not stand on past friendship to make sport of me."

"Do you dare imagine the sport I'd like to make of you?"

"I dare many things. You are a handsome, dashing devil, and you know it. How could any woman ignore the sheen of your black hair contrasted with the peacock blue of your eyes and not imagine your sporting form?"

"May we consider, then, other things you dare?" They sat close, but not touching.

"What passes through my brain is sacrosanct. I do not lay bare my mind to you. God's teeth, if I should, you'd be shocked into impotence."

"I see. If you do not bare your mind to a man, does it follow, then, that your flesh is also so flatly denied him?"

"Not so flatly, but as surely." She leaned forward, displaying a luscious amount of flesh over the scoop of her neckline. Only nipples remained restrained beneath silk.

His gaze raked the succulence of her, as she'd obviously calculated it would. His mouth went dry. "Yes, I can see my error in the use of the word. Flat can never be applied to any part of you."

"Do you remember my, um, parts so well?"

"Every inch."

"I was but a girl."

"My imagination fills in where needed." He couldn't pursue that path without embarrassing himself by ripping through his breeches. "Now, to the point of my talk. Are you open to a proposition?"

"I accept those which intrigue me." She folded her arms beneath her breasts, pushing them higher, closer together. Those delicious buds were the same delicate hue enshrined in his memory. They remained shell pink until they hardened and darkened to coral under his pinches. As a girl, she'd delighted in his caresses at least as much as he had. Would he see the transformation of those delightful nipples now if he touched her? He forced himself to look away. He had larger plans.

"Would spending the night together in your bed or mine intrigue you?"

Tinkling laughter rent the balmy night air. "Much too unoriginal a suggestion."

"You have grown in every sense, then."

"Many years have passed since you left me." Her lips tightened a mere trace before resuming their seductive smirk, but he hadn't missed it.

"I was compelled to depart or become a pauper. You know I did not want to go."

"Yet, you did so without compunction and with nary a word since."

"Tess, I realized my mistake soon after my marriage. I knew I'd been duped and feared you hated me. And I owed something to Lottie, the very least not to embarrass her after she bailed Marbrook out of its debts." He reached for her hand. She pulled it away. "Then,

Lottie succumbed to the ailment which felled her. I came as soon as was prudent."

"Prudent. Hasn't that always been your way? My heart, my love, could wait until Marbrook's problems had been solved, until you had your fill of Lottie's young and nubile body."

"It was never like that between us. It was business. I never stopped loving you. What could I have done to prove it?"

"The only thing you could possibly have done was leave Lottie and come to me. You did not do that."

"I am here now."

"To what end?"

"You."

She smirked with a tilt of her head. "I am not easily won."

"You will make me pay for leaving by keeping yourself from me when we both know what we desire?"

"I know what you desire." She stood to run a hand across her bosom, down her abdomen, down to cup the part of her he wanted most.

"This? Is this what you want?"

He was fairly panting for it. Watching her from across the long gallery all evening, he could think of nothing else save the way he'd played with her body when they were adolescents and the way she'd played with his. He could taste those nipples, feel the warmth of those lush lips on his shaft. He'd burned then. He burned now.

"Yes." It was all he could utter.

She leaned back provocatively, elbows against the railing. "Then you must propose something inspired. Heighten my sexual desire with experiences as yet unknown to me."

"I could frighten you with my inventiveness." What he'd heard about her must have basis in truth. Damn the skies if he were too late, if her love were lost to him forever.

"Frighten me? Never. You may recall I ever accepted your dares and oft won our many wagers."

"I recall everything about you." He waited for a reaction. She gave him none. "Here it is, then." Would this be the biggest mistake of his life? Would he alienate her with his unorthodox tastes or win her? "Did you notice the two gentlemen who accompanied me this afternoon when I arrived?"

"Yes, I commented to Daisy, my personal maid you met earlier, that you were the beauty, the huge one the ogre, and the other, perhaps, a delicate fairy-tale maiden."

"Yes, Sir Brand Guiles is quite effeminate and foppish. He loves clothes and jewels as women do. And Damian Luth, his manservant, can be most brutish. We three have been mates since I arrived at my late wife's abode."

Tess pursed her lips and swirled to give him her back. She could not disguise her hatred of poor Lottie, though she knew the marriage had been arranged by his father.

"Are you not a bit off the subject of your inventive mind?" She bit off the words in a staccato rush.

"The men in question are part of my proposal."

"Ah, how so?" After a pause, she faced him anew, a spark of mischief in her eyes. She once again became the Tess riding her uncle's prize horse wildly over the moors, dipping unclothed in the lake, climbing treetops to spy on unsuspecting victims.

"Are you intrigued?" The world seemed to tilt on her answer.

"Possibly. Go on." She tossed her head, raised her chin, and looked disdainfully down her nose. The Globe Theatre would have been proud to have her trod its boards.

"Are you quite certain you are courageous enough for my ingenuity?"

"Don't be a bore. I am ready for any play you are capable of staging."

"Here it is then." He rose to confront her, wishing to gauge her expression when his words registered. He felt her sweet breath on his

cheek, inhaled the aroma of cloves, and struggled mightily not to reach for her.

"We shall, Brand, Damian, and I...we shall, all three, have you and each other in one night of supreme pleasure for all."

Not an eyelash flickered. She floated regally to the door of her sleeping apartment. "Inform me of the time and place. I am indeed intrigued."

* * * *

Tess closed the door behind her, rage threatening to overwhelm her. So, he thought he could walk back into her life and she would lay herself at his feet. They would resume now his beloved Lottie was no more.

Oh, yes. She would meet his "mates" and give them the time of their lives, but she would give Sir Gareth Caldwell nothing, beg and grovel though he might. She'd delight in their every touch and shrink from his. He could watch her enjoyment and despair of ever having a scintilla of it directed to himself. She'd not been enough for him once Lottie Jaynes's prodigious bosom was within his grasp. She'd mattered not to him then. Gareth Caldwell would not satisfy his lust on her body now he had no wife. Lady Tess Ashworth would be no one's second choice.

She shook Daisy from her trundle. "Wake, please."

"What is it? Is the manor afire?" Daisy wiped sleep from her eyes. "Gor, dawn already?"

"No, the manor's not afire, and, yes, it's dawn or will be anon. I need advice. Come into my bed for warmth. I am well and truly chilled."

"You will go prowling the balcony in your nightclothes," Daisy grumbled as she rose and helped Tess remove her robe.

They parted floor-length curtains, climbed under several wool blankets, and huddled, shivering, in the cool spring dawn.

"Daisy, have you ever bedded more than one man at a time?" Daisy's exploits in bed were legend. Perhaps she knew something more than Tess herself.

"Aye, I have indeed." She hugged herself. "Oh, what memories. It fair melts my bones to recall. Do you have such a chance, take it. You will relish it."

"I have made a commitment and now fear I have been overbold."

"Oh, no, mum. Two men will slake your every thirst and pamper you as if you were queen. Truly you will not regret it."

"What if three men were involved?"

"Oh, dear." Daisy bolted to a sitting position and peered into Tess's face. "What have you gone and done, now?"

"It was Gareth's, Sir Gareth Caldwell's, device."

"And you agreed because e'en now you can deny him nothing."

"No, no. Because I hate him so." Tess smothered her face into a pillow.

Daisy pulled her out. "You may swear it to a thousand stars, yet I know it not."

"I will make him suffer for marrying that dairy cow, Lottie Jaynes. Her great bosom could have fed a pen of mewling calves."

"And you? Will you suffer, yet again, for love of him?"

"I do not love the likes of him, the disloyal, deceiving whoreson."

Daisy flopped back onto plump pillows. "He dared you, and you ne'er turn from a dare e'en when you know the danger."

"Stop simpering at once, and tell me everything you had to do during your ménage."

"I barely had to do anything 'cept open my legs and my lips. T'were all done to me. With three, I don't know. With three in line, you may needs give up the one place you be a virgin yet."

"What mean you?"

"Think on it, and if needs be, I will explain on the morrow." Daisy covered a yawn with her palm and sank into the bed linens.

Tess leaned against the padded bedstead. After a few moments of confusion, her eyes widened and her mouth gaped.

Chapter Two

Gareth fairly slid down the trellis. She agreed. He would make her love him again by showing her pleasures she could not resist. Brand and Damian would adore her and congratulate him for bringing the lovely morsel into their domain.

But sharing Tess was not like sharing Lottie. Brand, he would not mind, but Damian? Could he stand to see Damian's rough hands all over his Tess or her silken breasts in his coarse mouth? Could he remain calm as Damian's huge cock entered her, plundered what should belong to Gareth? What if she liked it more than his own?

God's teeth, these could not be Gareth Caldwell's thoughts. He ne'er minded when Brand and Damian got on Lottie's body. Lottie had introduced him to these experiences, indoctrinated him to performing the act her way with two, sometimes more, men involved. She liked it rough, and he had been more than ready as a young pup to share her with anyone as long as he, too, had his turns. He had enjoyed Lottie, but he had not truly loved her. He'd always suspected she had other men when he was not about. Perhaps that was how she came to the mysterious illness that took her life.

He must have done with pondering the past. That episode of his life was ale already drunk. He would think of those days with Lottie no more. He took himself off to find his mates and tell them the good news. He wanted the date for the tryst confirmed and all set at once. He couldn't bear a delay. His loins were set to bursting after being so near Tess without being able to touch her.

He found Brand in his cups and wild because Damian was upstairs dipping his wick into the serving wench. Brand hadn't a care when

Damian wanted a woman as much as he wanted Brand, as long as Brand could watch and participate.

If Gareth were a true friend, he'd offer the desolate man a romp himself, but he'd tried it once and found he couldn't appreciate a man's arse e'en when it was plowing a woman they both wanted.

"Damnation, I wished to settle something tonight. Are you aware enough to pay attention?"

"I am not unconscious, yet, dear boy." His eyes were at half-mast, yet clear.

"I have struck a proposition with Lady Tess Ashworth for the three of us. Are you game? And can it be achieved posthaste?"

"Dear boy, for such a lady as Miss Ashworth I would move the Alps. Damian, however, will need a few days to rejuvenate his spent member. He has been abovestairs for hours. By now he has poured every iota of his seed into the bitch, and she has likely sucked out what air was left."

"Hath the grape soured upon the noble tongue of the noble Brand Guiles?" Gareth chortled at Brand's obvious jealousy.

"I drink ale, and it is indeed sour." Nonetheless, he drained the tankard and banged it on the table. "Innkeeper, we thirst for your miserable brew."

The innkeeper wiped beefy hands on his apron before filling two tankards. He ambled to their side with his burdens and slammed them on the table.

Gareth could not wait for Brand to begin negotiations. He made inquiries to the hotelier. "My good fellow, do you know of a nearby residence my companions and I may occupy for the next several days? Money is no object."

Though the man's eyes were surrounded by enough loose flesh to render them near invisible, Gareth could not miss the flash of greed in them.

"My wife's dower cottage lies fallow since her cousins have disappeared with the furniture and left two months' rent unpaid. It sits by the lake and be clean as a whistle."

"Excellent. We shall provide our own furnishings. Mayhap, a house maid can be found on little notice?"

"My unwed daughter will cook and clean as needed."

Gareth stood and shook the man's hand. "We shall settle on the morrow when you have time to show it us." When the innkeeper jauntily left them for the only other patron still awake, Gareth turned to Brand, who had downed both brews.

"Do you intend to keep vigil, Guiles, or do you come to bed?"

With raised eyebrow, Brand slurred, "Have you taken pity on me?"

"Most assuredly not. But I would see you settled to ease my mind before I sleep what's left of the morn away."

To Gareth's amazement, Brand was able to navigate the rickety stairs on his own slender legs. Gareth settled his friend into bed and waited for his snores. He was about to depart for his own quarters when Damian burst through the door, disheveled and out of breath.

"Praise heaven, you be back, milord."

"Shh, Brand's had a bad evening and sleeps at last. What is it? You look a fright."

Damian collapsed onto the bed, narrowly missing Brand's feet. "Your Lady Tess—" He grasped at his chest as if to hold his heart in place.

"What about Tess? Speak before I choke the words out of you."

"Danger. She is to be slain."

"By whom? Why? How do you know?" Gareth grabbed Damian by his soiled and wrinkled shirt front and shook. "Speak."

Damian pulled out of Gareth's grasp, stood, paced, keeping a hand to his heart. "Wait a nonce. Been running. Have no breath."

Gareth was never good at waiting for what he wanted. "If you don't make sense in one tick of the clock, you shall be the one slain."

"Uncle. Money."

Gareth raised a fist.

"Wait." Damian sat again, this time directly onto Brand's foot. Brand moaned, but obligingly moved it from under him and continued snoring.

"I'm recovering." Damian's swarthy color gradually returned. "The lass from downstairs hears everything and was more than willing to spill it for love of my cock. As long as I kept poking her, she'd tell all."

"If you don't quick divulge what was said about Tess, I swear I will split you from maw to that prick you're so proud of."

"Seems her parents, when they knew their time was near, provided exceedingly well for their daughter's future."

"I know that, idiot. They willed their lands and half their riches to her when she was sent from their London townhouse to Grafton Hall to escape the infection they'd both contracted. We met at Grafton Hall. My father's farm is across the moors."

"Entailed as it was, Grafton Hall be her own property. Her aunt, Lady Alys, and Alys's husband, Richard Tremaine, came to be her guardians and live there at Lady Tess's pleasure."

"Yes, I had near forgotten her aunt and uncle lived in rented quarters before coming to Grafton, and that it belonged to Lord Ashworth. In any case, they gladly took Tess in and raised her."

"Ah, not so gladly, it now appears."

"Rubbish, they cared for her as if she were their own, since they were never blessed with babes themselves."

"Aye, her aunt, her mother's sister, did dote on her. Not so her uncle. His resentment ran quiet but deep. Grafton is now in trouble, and he has not the resource to pull through another year."

"Has he depleted all Tess's funds?"

"There's the rub. She has total control of it now she is of age, what little he left untouched by his mercenary hands. She owns the London flat and her mother's dower home in Sussex."

"And if she dies?"

"All reverts to her aunt."

"Therefore, to her aunt's husband."

"Aye. And according to Gert, he plots to rid himself of a troublesome burden and thereby gain a fortune."

"How certain are you Gert speaks true?"

"In the face of my dick, no lass lies."

"Bollocks. I need more proof than a wanton's wish to keep your dick afloat. But we will soon discover more. I go to Grafton Hall tomorrow. You stay alert for more gossip."

"Did you speak with the Lady Tess 'bout our...our thing?"

"She has agreed."

"No, I do not fathom it. Why?"

"I have heard she is quite the wanton herself, and though I like it not, it plays into my scheme to win her."

"I look forward to the encounter, but now I must rest. Gert is returning in but a few hours for a bout with me and Guiles." He glanced at his snoring friend. "I imagine he felt left out in the cold tonight."

"Yes. You must needs service him when he awakes, or he will be rabid."

Damian nodded. "Do you join us with the gal in the morn?"

"No, I may peek in and add assistance, but I am too distracted and go to ferret out doings at Grafton Hall."

* * * *

The next morning when Gareth looked in on his mates, Gert was riding Brand. They lay, Brand on the bottom, diagonally across the bed so as to avoid the bed's footboard. Gert's smock had been pulled down on top, where Brand punished her generous breasts with mouth and fingers, and the garment had been swept up in back where Damian greased her rear entrance.

"Open, love. Relax for me," Damian said over and over as Gareth closed the door and walked to the bed. Gert laughed and apparently relaxed because Damian shoved into her with a loud, "Ah, that's a good girl. Want her after me, Gareth?"

"No, no," Brand objected, his words muffled by a breast. "Put it 'tween her lips."

"Oh, yes," Gert agreed. "That would be most pleasant. Do, do."

Gareth smiled. Brand cared not what the woman wanted. He loved when a girl was sucking a dick and riding him at the same time.

"Sorry, my man, but I have quite a busy day ahead of me. Thank you for the most generous invitation, Gert."

No one but Tess would be good enough to slake the lust within him ever again. He watched the trio enjoy themselves for a few more moments.

"Good girl," Damian whispered. "Keep bumpin' your arse, but it is making things happen too fast for me." He slowly withdrew, played around her opening with his fingers, then pushed back into her with a grunt and withdrew again. "Don't clamp down on me, lovie. I want to last in there a bit longer." He plunged again, eliciting a gasp from Gert, then a gurgle of glee.

Brand shouted, "I feel you in there, Damian. You're fucking both of us."

Damian withdrew and thrust, pulled out, and stabbed again. This time he stayed and let Gertie buck him into completion. When Brand heard his cries, he, too, let go, and Gert did the same. They stayed in place a few seconds before Damian stood. "She has a lovely arse, sure you don't want it before you leave, Gareth?" He fondled the body part in question as he spoke.

Gert and Brand flopped side by side on the rumpled bed, Brand still stroking her tits. "My turn back there, Damian. Won't take me long to get up for an arse."

Damian went to the corner basin to wash and quickly returned to the side of the bed, clearly not done with Gert yet. His member grew with each step.

At the door, Gareth turned. "It is near noon. Do you wish me to have food sent up?"

Gert sat up in a panic. "I was having such fun, I didn't realize. I'll lose me job if I don't get down for the dinner trade."

Brand pulled her back down. "Can't let you go yet." He stripped off her smock and tossed it across the room. "We're not quite finished with you. Gareth will fix things belowstairs. Will you not, my good friend?"

"I'll slip a few extra shillings into his hand and tell the innkeeper Gert is serving much needed sustenance to my mates."

Gert, in the altogether, turned her backside to Brand as she knelt to sheath Damian's prodigious member between her lips. Damian threw Brand a jar of cream. "Go to it. Give 'er hell, me man."

Brand stuck his fingers into the cream, then into Gert as she giggled around Damian's cock. "Ah, good. Damian has op't you wide for me." He latched onto her breasts as he barreled into her.

Gareth left without another word. Those two were insatiable. Seemed Gert was as well. He went to his room to finish dressing.

He covered his doublet with a lined jerkin of fine Spanish leather and chose an embroidered waist-length cloak thrown over one shoulder. It wouldn't do to appear at Grafton Hall not properly attired, however, he eschewed a ruff for a falling collar. Fortunately, the impossible fashion for elaborate ruffs was waning now Good Queen Bess had reigned over Great Britain more than forty-three years. Satisfied with his look, he strode down to the dining hall in search of the hotelier.

* * * *

Tess pinched Daisy's cheek for the third time. She had waited long enough for the lazy girl to awaken. Tess had not slept a wink.

"Ouch. What do you?" Daisy rubbed her cheek.

"I try to awaken the sloth in my bed so's she can pin me into my farthingale and I can dress to meet Sir Gareth. I feel certain he will arrive today at Grafton Hall, and I must know all afore I confirm last night's decision."

"Huh, you would not back down though an earthquake shook the whole of England."

"Of course not. But you will inform me of your crude intimation ere you slept so soundly, leaving me feared to shut mine eyes."

"About the other hole they might desire to penetrate?"

"Exactly."

"Turn over."

"What mean you?"

"I mean, turn over so I may observe your backside."

"To what end?"

"To its end." Daisy gave her shocked mistress a shove and raised her night rail. "Oh, mum, they will adore this. So white, as if bleached by the scouring maid." She gave it a pat. "Now, up on your knees."

"What? Why?"

"For easier access. Do you want to know how it goes, or do you wish to be surprised?"

"I want to know." She scooted to her knees. Daisy put a finger on the spot Tess thought no human should ever touch. "Oh."

"You have tensed beyond comprehension. Relax."

"I cannot."

"You must or be torn asunder. Pretend to be licking a huge cock."

"That thought is meant to distract me?"

"This is going to take practice, or you'll never convince them you're a wanton woman of the world."

"Everyone else believes it to be true."

"Everyone else loves to believe rumors, e'en when you've spread them yourself."

"I've had experiences." Tess pouted and plopped down.

"Yes, disasters all. Back on your knees if you wish to learn something more than a boy's groping and two-second penetration." Daisy leapt from the bed and came back with a jar of lotion and a tear-shaped crystal flute of perfume with an elongated neck. "Now, relax. We must simulate the act, or you will ne'er get through it."

Tess eyed the cylindrical object Daisy held and shuddered. "You are most assuredly right, but I am wary, too wary to relax."

"Think of something pleasant. If not sucking a cock, then a warm summer's day of berry picking or wading in a placid stream. Transport yourself so you do not think of what I am doing to your rear button." Daisy smeared lotion around and into the orifice under discussion, thrusting fingers in and out several times. "God's lips, you are squeezing ever more. You must open it or have it forced open."

"Have you had this done to you?"

"A few times. The first time I was unsuspecting, and the assault had me sore for days afterward. I would not have you go through that. You should know what's coming and ready yourself by relaxing the muscles down there before the entry."

"I will try." Tess closed her eyes and concentrated. "I am in a shady bower stringing a garland of wildflowers. Better?"

"Yes, a bit." Daisy inserted the neck of the bottle, and Tess involuntarily tightened around it. "You cannot do that, or the prick will shove into you and scrape you raw. Once begun, the thing has its own mind and will not be able to stop."

Tess took several long breaths. "I am ready."

Chapter Three

Daisy pushed the bottle into Tess as far as it would go. Tess screamed, but Daisy tweaked her nipples to distract her and didn't remove the foreign object. Instead she gave it little pulsing taps.

Tess forced herself to calm. "That isn't so bad. Feels quite nice, actually." She wiggled a bit to feel more of the smooth glass in her bum. "Hmm, I am lubricating and wishing for a true man's rod up the other way."

"Good, good, keep that thought." Daisy slid the bottle out and slammed it back in place.

"Ouch. It hurts going in and out."

"I know. You must become accustomed to it. Surely each man will want to plunge into you this way at least once." Daisy slid the vial in and out, in and out, over and over again until Tess could abide it without flinching or calling out.

"That be enough for now. Remember, the man's spear is going to be twice as big as this little flute. We will practice with a wider, longer version tonight. You must learn to take it with ease. Perhaps you may enjoy it after a while."

Tess didn't think she would ever enjoy it, but she would suffer it to have her revenge. She would make Gareth believe she loved every man's member anywhere in her body, every man's except his.

After she'd exacted her revenge on Caldwell, made him hurt the way she had hurt, she would say good-bye to him forever. She would marry someone of her uncle's choosing. Who did not matter.

In her attempts to purge Gareth from her mind, she had had enough lovers in her young life to not care anymore who possessed

her body. She was quite able to separate her mind from the act. She would give her husband his heir and a spare, then deny him her bed for the rest of their days and devote all her love and efforts to the babes. They would grow strong and happy and would marry for love.

Her future ran through her mind as Daisy dressed her. Gareth Caldwell would drool for her by the end of his visit to Plimpton. "Fetch me my petticoat of wrought scarlet velvet with gold fringe." Yes, she would tempt him to plan his tryst quickly, and he would earn his due by her torture. Never would he have her. She would force him to watch and suffer.

Suffer as she had suffered. Months she'd sat waiting for word, fully supposing him to forego his father's fortune. Certainly, he would refuse to wed Lottie, and return to claim Tess as his true love. Posh! Such juvenile fantasies she'd had until reality set in.

He'd married Lottie Jaynes, became wealthy in his own right without needing to wait for his inheritance. Once wealthy, he could do whatever he wished. And he wished to forget ever knowing a girl named Tess, until the sow's huge teats were buried and he could no longer fondle them. How he must have enjoyed their full measure for five years.

"Give me my blush pink silk stockings, and I will wear my leather ankle boots, for we may well walk in the garden while planning our night of 'supreme pleasure for all,' as he hath proclaimed. Little knows he, the night will hold pleasure for all except the arrogant Lord Gareth Caldwell."

"Lady Tess, you look overly decked out for an afternoon stroll. Do you desire a gauze for the neckline?"

"No, I desire to look as tempting as possible. Comb my hair to shining and lift it to heights unknown with jewels to blind the eye and curls falling to my décolletage. My tresses shall mark the flesh he oft kissed when I had but small buds sprouting there." While her tits could not rival Lottie's, they had grown to lushness.

When Daisy had done with her hair, Tess swirled to examine her gown in the crystal floor-length glass. Polished steel was not fine enough for her. Let her uncle squander her parents' money. She would have her comforts. The visage staring back at her from the glass gave her all the confidence she needed.

The gold embroidered bodice tapered to a vee at the point of the part of her anatomy Gareth wished to plunder, and the tawny overskirt flowed over the farthingale like a lake of satin. It split perfectly down the center to show off the red velvet beneath. When she stepped forward, the gold fringe fluttered in invitation. Yes, he would desire her as she had once desired him. And he would be disillusioned as she had been.

* * * *

Gareth stood at the gate for a moment admiring Grafton Hall. Its rose-colored brick, picked out in diamond ornamental work, shimmered in the sunlight. Clusters of chimney fists punched the sky. An avenue of stately elms led the way to the door. To please his adored wife, Tess's father had spared no expense on this manor.

Ashworth had been moneyed beyond Gareth's young imaginings. The earl had owned lead works, a shipyard, a glassworks, and had interests in steel and wool. Gareth had both admired and resented the man's good fortune. Yet, the man had not lived to see beyond his daughter's eleventh year, and the next four years of her life had belonged to Gareth.

He rode his gelding up the drive and handed him to the stable lad. Richard Tremaine, Tess's uncle, had been cordial yesterday when Gareth called on him. He'd invited him to the musical and told him not to stand on ceremony. Therefore, Gareth felt sure of a welcome. The butler ushered him into the library.

As a boy, Gareth had never been invited into rooms of the main part of the manor. He'd always been shown into what was then the

nursery. He had snuck into Tess's sleeping chamber on many occasions, and once into the dining room, but he'd never seen the drawing rooms, hall, parlors, or library.

The grandeur stunned him. Lord Ashworth must have been far wealthier than he had suspected. The wagon roof of double collar beams and trussed rafters was supported by arched braces, the whole crafted of chestnut. More panel-backed, ornately carved chairs than he'd ever seen in one room were scattered about. Tremaine sat at an oak desk of gargantuan proportions.

He rose, hand outstretched. "My boy, how nice to see you so soon. To what do I owe the honor? No trouble, I hope."

"Not at all. I am on my way to my father's estate and thought perhaps you had a message for him."

"You did not stay at Marbrook last evening?" He went to the bellpull.

"I have rooms at the local inn. My stepmother has informed me my father is ill and she prefers to not have the upheaval of guests at present."

"Most unfortunate." He took a seat in one of the two high-backed oak chairs and indicated for Gareth to do the same. "Fallon, see to some refreshments." He related instructions to the newly arrived servant without looking his way. "I am sorry to hear of Sir Hugo's discomfort. Do you know of its seriousness?"

"The message I received seemed ominous and warned me not to arrive before two of the clock as doctors would be ministering to Caldwell until that hour."

"I have no message to impart to Sir Hugo, save my well wishes and a desire to know when I may call upon him or his wife. Margot, is it not? I'm afraid I have been remiss in my duties as a neighbor and do not know the lady well."

"You are correct. Margot is her given name, and I don't expect you have been encouraged to be neighborly by my stepmother, as I have not been overly encouraged myself since my wife passed on."

"Bad business, that. I was sorry to hear of it."

"Thank you."

The two men pounced to their feet as Tess entered unannounced, tray in hand. "I thought to save Fallon some steps. Whiskey? Or would apple cider or wine be preferable?"

Once again Gareth was blindsided by Tess's beauty. She shimmered as she walked, revealing crimson velvet and flashes of gold with each step. A tiny golden heart nestled in the groove between creamy flesh spilling from a tight bodice.

"What is your pleasure, Sir Gareth?"

She knew damned well what would pleasure him, spirits, wine, anything lapped from her body. "Whiskey is fine for me. Sir Richard?"

"I have had dinner, thus whiskey is most welcome, niece." He took a glass cup from the tray and sat. Gareth followed suit. Tess placed her burden on the desk, then leaned forward to hand Gareth the other cup and allow him liberal observance of her wares.

Gareth groaned inwardly. Tess stood very slowly, sending faint echoes of lavender into the air and arousing his libido ever more. He had to adjust his position.

She smiled, obviously noting his discomfort. "Did I understand you to tell Sir Richard your father is ill?" They commiserated over his father's fate for several moments, then Sir Richard declared he must go back to his books. His solicitor was arriving soon.

"Would you care for a stroll in one of the gardens?" Tess's voice dripped with propriety.

"A splendid idea, my dear," Sir Richard, already behind his desk, advised.

Tess took Gareth's arm, causing tremors in his much too sensitive groin area. She led him to a yew and boxwood topiary garden to the left of the inner courtyard. Triangular shapes stretched eerily along a gravel path interspersed with stone benches.

Whiskey had served to flame the hunger within, and he longed to fling her across one of the slabs and ravish her. His throbbing dick begged to be ensconced within her folds. Her pubic area had grown a mere sprinkle of cinnamon brush as a girl. Now, her honeyed patch would be a brunette mass of thick, silken strands glistening with the dew of her need and soon the soaking of his. God's blood, he had to refrain from these thoughts or forego sanity.

"Have you made arrangements?" She drew circles on his sleeve with one sharp fingernail.

He shuddered. "Aye, I've secured a remote cottage, and furniture will arrive in a day or two. We meet three days hence. How will you explain your absence from Grafton Hall? This will take a full night, and much of the next day will be needed for recovery."

"Do you mean to use me so poorly I will need rejuvenation?"

"The matter rests with you. Our rules are simple. No one may force anything on anyone else, we on you or you on us. Yet, we are three healthy men and will expect good cooperation and a satisfying session. It will last all night and well into the morn with little respite. Each of us will want many goes at you." He cast a sidelong glance her way. "Do you wish to renege?"

"I shrink not out of any chamber. You may count on that. As to my absence from Grafton, I have always gone my own way. My aunt has her charities and her herbs to occupy her. A peck on the cheek and an 'I'm off' will do for a night, even two."

"And your uncle?"

"We do not pass much time together. He will little notice my absence and will not care should I drown in the fish pond. I daresay he may be glad of it."

"I have heard such rumors. Does his disaffection not worry you?"

She shrugged. "What can be done about it? He does not care for my presence, never has, and I do not care for his. We manage to avoid each other." Another shrug caused her bodice to gap and gave a complete view of velvety globes with tea rose tips.

"Shall we sit? This bench is far enough for us not to be seen or heard." She flounced and shook her skirt to afford comfort as she sat. Gold-streaked scarlet caught his eye, inflaming the already engorged member pushing at his breeches.

He pulled her onto his lap and reached into her gown to fondle the exposed nipple. "I cannot help myself."

"Seems to me you already have." She pushed him away and covered herself, but not before he noticed the tip harden and turn a glorious shade of coral. He allowed himself a moment of inner victory celebration.

"I will have you, you know." He would have her and have her and have her.

"I understand, 'in one night of supreme pleasure for all.' Have I said it correctly?"

"Quite. My mates and I will enjoy every part of you to the fullest, and hope you will be pleased with us. This one night need not be the end of it. We will accommodate you for as many nights as you are able to handle. Whenever and wherever you desire."

Her nostrils flared. "Too much of a good thing can be tedious. I have agreed to one night, and that will indeed be the end of it."

Gareth's hands encircled her waist and drew her close. He whispered against her mouth, "Will it, darling girl?" He pressed his lips to hers, circling the edges with his tongue until her resistance evaporated. At that moment, he thrust in his tongue and palmed the place his cock wished to enter. Even through all the layers of cloth, he felt her mound rise to meet his hand. "I will never have enough of you."

He wanted to finger her to completion, but he had to wait for better access, to have her at his mercy. Their night couldn't come soon enough, so desperate was he for a taste of the juices her cunny would offer up to him. Oh, how he would enjoy her body over and over again during the night. E'en though she slept, he would take her,

play with her, feast on her. No part of her would escape his cravings. Surely by the end, she would realize their love again.

He trailed his mouth to her cheek and, with biting kisses, down her neck, reached the coral peak, uncovered it, and tongued it. He sucked hard, and she shuddered as she always had when he administered to her. She remembered all right, and she wanted all he could give her, deny it though she may.

Her hand stroked his joint, and he would have come in his breeches if she hadn't stopped and stood on unsteady legs. She wobbled, yet remained standing. "We have place and date and need only settle the hour."

The husky brush of her voice strengthened his rock-hard cock as if she'd kissed it.

"Will you send an escort?" Her bodice heaved with each word.

Gareth could not rise. His breath came in bursts. "A coach—will—collect—you. I have a coach."

"Glorious. I have not yet ridden in one of the new conveyances." She'd recovered her normal tone too quickly for his mind. "As I am quite busy these days, best send a messenger to remind me when the day draws nigh."

Her tone rang with a haughty peal, as if she could forget the date any more than he could. She disappeared down the lane and into the manor, and still his hard-on would not soften. Perhaps Gert would relieve him when he returned to the inn. No, Gert had sweet, plump lips, but they did not belong to Tess. Only that stubborn woman could ease this pain. No other would do now he had sampled her again.

* * * *

Tess threw herself onto her bed and shed the first tears she'd allowed since the day of Gareth's wedding to Lottie. Daisy ran up the stairs after her and plunked down on the mattress to cry along with

her mistress. Eventually, Tess raised her head to stare at her maid. "What are you crying about?"

"I don't know, but it must be serious if you are spouting like the fountain in the herb garden."

"Oh, for heaven's sake. Can I not have a decent cry without you blubbering along with me?" Tess wiped at her eyes with the pillow slip.

"What has happened to distress you so? I cannot bear to see it."

"Gareth has happened. He kissed me, the whoring son of a beetle."

"And you hated it enough to bring you to this state?"

"That's just it. I didn't hate it. I couldn't keep my hand off his manhood. I wanted it inside me, would have begged for it had I not learned iron control from the many years of being the unwanted guest at my uncle's table." She hopped down from the bed and swept brush, comb, and pots of lotion from the shelf jutting from the wainscot. "How does Gareth do this to me? What wizardry has he beset upon me?"

"Call it off. You cannot lie under his mates and not service him. How thought you to accomplish this?"

Tess wiped at the wet trails on her cheeks. "I can do it. I will do it. He shall not have me. I will be no one's second choice." She paced. "I simply faltered for a few minutes when he surprised me with his kiss. I shall be ready next time, and I shall resist. Cold will my lips and my heart be."

"What if he place his member betwixt those lips whilst you are being held in place by two other swords?"

"I will give him succor. I shall have to in such instance. But he will never enter the inner folds he wants most."

"And if he does not honor your refusal?"

"I know Sir Gareth better than any living being. He would not force himself upon any female should his very existence depend upon it."

"We will hope thus is the case." Daisy sighed. "But until the appointed time, you had better stay clear of Sir Gareth Caldwell entirely."

"And so I learned to my chagrin. I shall avoid his presence as if he were afflicted with the great dying illness. He shall not see e'en a stitch of my gown until he and his mates see me entirely without one."

"Good. See you mean it. Now sit and let me redo your face and hair. And we should practice stretching your bottom again."

* * * *

When he was able, Gareth strode back to the manor and entered surreptitiously. He eased his way down the great hall to the tightly closed library door.. Voices oozed through the cracks, but he could not decipher meaning. Apparently, the solicitor had arrived, and he and Sir Richard were in conference.

Gareth made his way back to the courtyard, having noticed one of the leaded glass sections was missing in the library window. He would listen from that advantageous spot under the eaves.

Once in place, he could see and hear everything going on in the library. Both Tremaine and the solicitor bent over an open ledger on the desk. Sir Richard kept his voice low and well modulated, but the solicitor boomed loud enough to shake loose the remaining glass in the casement. "Do you not fathom what I've said? You have no liquid assets at your disposal. None."

"I have credit. I can get by on that."

"Not for much longer. You must inform her ladyship of the dire consequences if she does not sell some parcels of land."

Tremaine pounded the desk, making Gareth jump. "She refuses. I have all but begged, and she will not budge, the stubborn whore."

Clenched fists would have gone straight through the brickwork had not Gareth held himself in check.

"The London townhouse, then. Does it not belong half to you?" The solicitor closed the record book.

"It does not. Nothing belongs to me. They left me in charge of her dower moneys, but my wife's selfish kin entailed all the rest to their daughter except what they deemed sufficient for her maintenance."

"And that amount had been substantial, as I recall."

"It was spent years ago."

Gareth had to cover his mouth so an audible gasp of disgust would not escape.

"And in the guise of Lady Tess's maintenance, the shipyard has already been sold as well as shares in the other enterprises." The solicitor sat, hand massaging his brow.

Sir Richard kicked an oak chair. "I have put in place measures to gain all that's left. She has much personal wealth I am forbidden to touch. It may take some time, but I shall have it all in the end."

"Let it not take too much time." The man lumbered to his feet. "Good luck, milord. There is nothing more I can do. I will see myself out."

"As you wish. Send Fallon in should you pass him." As soon as his solicitor was no longer in sight, Sir Richard flung the record book across the room, overturning a chair and a stool. The tray was next. Whiskey and cups scattered the length and breadth of the room.

Fallon came hobbling in on legs weakened by years of service at Grafton Hall. He had not been young when Gareth used to visit there. "You wished to see me, sir?"

"Summon a maid to tidy this mess and alert my master of horse I shall ride out anon. Also, inform Lady Alys I will not return to sup. I have no appetite, and I've urgent business to conclude. Business that cannot wait another night."

While Tremaine readied himself for the ride, Gareth retrieved his own mount and sequestered himself along the path leading to the back road out of the manor. He surmised Sir Richard would not leave on this mission by the front entrance.

Chapter Four

Gareth did not have long to wait for Sir Richard to appear. Despite the fact that his quarry did not seem at all cautious and would not have noted his stalker in any case, Gareth kept to the woods along the road. After a rousing gallop of several miles, Tremaine led him up an overgrown path to a one-storied thatched cottage of timber. With door hanging off its hinges and patches of missing wattlework, it looked abandoned.

A loud snort from Sir Richard's mount brought two swarthy men ambling out to greet their guest. They were behemoths, half a head taller than Gareth and broader in girth, with arms resembling battering rams and chests no normal-sized shirt could encompass.

"What ho, Sir Richard? Have you decided to pay our price?"

"Yes, and a bonus if she dies painfully."

"Glad to accommodate ya, milord. Me brother and me, we'll have our fun with 'er first, rend her in two with our cocks, then plow her with any other tools we've about. The last thing she'll feel is her arsehole being reamed as her lifeblood flows away from small punctures along her spine. 'Twill go slow and hard for her. For overlong we'll play with her, not too oft we get a real lady under us. She'll feel every thrust of our cocks and every second of pain from our knives." He wiped his lips with the back of a filthy hand. "That be good enough fer ye? Makes me randy thinkin' on it." He hitched his balls upward in his soiled breeches and rubbed at his bulge.

"Sure do," his brother chimed in. He cackled like a rooster being strangled. The answering chortle from Talkative Brother hand

continuing to fondle his manhood, chilled the air and unnerved Tremaine's horse. He struggled to keep the nag from unseating him.

"See it done tomorrow at twilight. I will ride with her below the cluster of oaks fifty feet down the road, and my horse will come up lame. When she dismounts to assist me, grab her. I will not stay for the assault." He turned his roan to leave, then added, "Best drag her well into the woods." He threw a bag of coins at them. "The rest will come when I am satisfied she breathes no more."

Gareth's muscles ached with a level of rage and revulsion heretofore unknown to him. He had never liked Tremaine, but this was monstrous. He wanted to whip his horse into a lather, catch Tremaine and strangle him, rush to the Grey Goose to gather his mates, then come back to slay these two brigands where they stood.

He tempered his emotions and forced himself to think logically. He couldn't murder Tess's uncle without facing gaol for the rest of his days. As for rushing back for Brand and Damian, e'en three against two, the odds may not favor him and his mates. The brothers' power lay in being accustomed to laboring with brawn, while Brand and Gareth's lay in using their brains. Only Damian could hold his own physically with the ogres.

No use rushing back to the Grey Goose now. He had to think first and not act precipitously. The wisest course for now was to warn Tess, then keep his appointment at Marbrook and discover how the land lay with his father and stepmother.

Besting Tremaine and punishing the nasty brothers for e'en considering putting their dirty hands on his woman would take careful thought and planning. They had the evening to plan and next morn to implement whatever system they could conceive to save Tess from her uncle's avarice. E'en after they thwarted this attempt, Tremaine would surely try again. They had to neutralize his ability to strike without committing murder on a peer of the realm.

Gareth turned his gelding back the way he'd come and once on the correct road, let the horse have his head. He left the gelding in a

lather at the stables with curt instructions to the stable boy to cool him. His jaunt to the front door proved fruitless as he was told, firmly, by Fallon that Lady Tess was not at home to him. Sir Richard and Lady Alys were, as well, not receiving.

Puzzled by the unwelcome atmosphere, Gareth determined to return in the eve to try again. Though he dreaded confrontation with his father and stepmother, nothing for it now but to continue to Marbrook.

The closer he came to his boyhood home, the more apprehension ate at him. What situation would he find there? How welcome would he be? Margot would not be overjoyed at his presence. Would his father greet him like the prodigal son, or with reserve and disdain, the way he always had in the past?

He was late by at least an hour, yet he stopped on the path to regard the area. The manor seemed smaller than in his memory, the lawn less vast and certainly less cared for. Shrubs needed pruning, and the side garden was overgrown and untended.

Upon his approach, no master of the horse or apprentice came to cool his mount. He rode to the stables and saw to the mount himself. At the front door, he was amazed to find old Livermore to greet him. The man should have been pensioned off years ago.

"Sir Gareth, what a fine man you have become." Livermore beamed at him as he led him into a decaying hall. The round oak table, always set with fresh flowers in his mother's day, was nowhere in sight. Battlements and armor, painted cloths that had graced the walls, were missing. His father had never hinted Marbrook had become financially strapped. Had he been too proud to ask his son for assistance? Gareth had managed his and Lottie's financial affairs well and through his own efforts had become a wealthy man in his own right.

He turned to the butler. "How goes it here, my man?"

Livermore bowed his head as he led him down the hall. "You shall soon determine that for yourself. The mistress wishes to speak with you in the sitting room before you see Sir Hugo."

Margot, resplendent in full coiffure and makeup, stood warming herself before the fireplace, her back to the door. Gareth motioned to Livermore not to announce him. He wanted to observe this rare bird in her habitat before she became aware of his presence.

She did not wear mourning garb, so his father lived still. He'd come in time. Her fine silk gown was of a peach hue with underskirt of orange. The colors suited her honey-hued hair and exquisitely pale complexion. Her bodice was neither modest nor shameful and showed a graceful neck off to perfection while offering a mere glimpse of full, rounded breasts struggling to escape as she breathed. Only ten years his senior, time had been kind to his stepmother. Gareth appreciated her beauty, but it aroused no stirring within him. Indifference was the most positive feeling he was able to conjure for her.

Because of her diminutive, doll-like stature and her snowflake skin, men flocked to do her every bidding, thinking her helpless. She was anything but, as Gareth had learned the hard way. Lady Margot Caldwell had the personality of a viper and a will of iron.

She had determined early in her marriage to his father that she would not become a mother to his son. She had driven Gareth to spend most of his days at Grafton Hall when he was not at school. She promoted his marriage to Lottie Jaynes and saw to it Sir Hugo would disinherit him unless he obeyed her dictates.

Gareth had wanted to get away, and though it meant abandoning the woman he loved, he married Lottie and tried to forget. Everyone advised him his passion for Tess was puppy love. He would not recall her face in a year, everyone said. Everyone was wrong.

He cleared his throat, causing Margot to swirl around. Gareth inclined his head, but didn't bow. "Livermore informed me you wished to see me."

"Yes. May I offer you some refreshment?" She gestured to a sideboard where decanter and glasses were waiting.

"No, I would see my father first."

"Of course. I will delay your visit a mere moment to warn you he is quite changed from the vigorous man you no doubt remember."

Under Gareth's protest, Lottie had insisted they spend holidays at Marbrook for most of their married life. She and Margot spent the time together, ostensibly to give Gareth and Sir Hugo time to talk.

But for the past two years, Lottie had been too sick to travel e'en a short distance. "To what do you attribute Sir Hugo's transformation?" Gareth's hands fisted involuntarily. Had his stepmother had a hand in his father's decline?

"He has been failing gradually for the past three years. I know not why. Doctors have been consulted. They know no more. His stomach at first, then debilitating headaches."

"Why was it no one informed me until now?"

"He had periods of good health, which we all took to be signs he was cured. Each relapse was more severe than the one before, until he took to his bed permanently last month. Since Lottie was also ill, we hadn't wished to add to your worry."

For once, Margot seemed sincere. She had been genuinely distraught over Lottie's death, e'en to making a spectacle of herself at the funeral. Gareth didn't doubt her distress over her husband's illness. It must have thoroughly curbed the social activities that had always been the focus of her life. She loved being Lady Margot Caldwell and all that went with it.

"The place seems run-down. What of Father's interests, the farm workings at Marbrook?"

"I have not coped well. Things have deteriorated without your father's constant diligence. I'm sorry, truly I am."

"And your own holdings, madam?"

Her eyes widened. "I have always kept my interests separate from Marbrook's."

"And are they doing well?"

"So my solicitor informs me." She had the grace to lower her eyes.

"And so I imagined." Gareth would never be able to prove it, but he was certain she had been transferring funds from Marbrook to Margot in anticipation of Sir Hugo's death. Gareth was heir to Marbrook, and his stepmother would not wish to see him enriched by a farthing. "I believe I'll go to Father's chamber, now."

"Yes, yes you must. But do not stay overlong. He tires easily."

"I understand." Gareth stepped to the door and hesitated. He'd learned from Lottie, long after he'd left Marbrook, that Margot had lost a babe in infancy, a son. Her husband had feared she was tainted and ne'er touched her again until just before his death, when he got her with child and promptly suffered the ague that felled him.

The shock of her husband's unexpected demise caused her to lose the babe, another son. A sudden burst of sympathy had Gareth turn back to her. "Shall we have cakes and ale when I return?" Perhaps time had come to bury past injustices and forget the pain he'd suffered as a lad.

"I shall have Cook prepare something more substantial. We'll sup before we obliterate our cares with cakes and ale." Her wide smile signified he'd been right. She was lonely and needed company beyond a sick husband and ancient servant. All his animosity toward her terminated. Let her have every pence she wanted from Marbrook. The woman deserved it for loving and caring for his father, if not for his son. And Gareth no longer needed it. The weight of ill will lifted from his shoulders.

He reached his father's chamber with conflicting emotions causing a rapid heartbeat. As a child, he'd both feared and adored his father though the man had never been demonstrative nor easily accessible. Despite spending time at Marbrook during his years with Lottie, they'd grown no closer. Long ago, Gareth had stopped craving his father's approval and accepted Sir Hugo was not an affectionate

man. Still, he hoped these final moments would be cordial, if not pleasant. Hand on the latch, he fortified himself with a long intake of breath.

Chapter Five

Sir Hugo's bedroom was dark and smelled of camphor and illness. A nurse with needlework in her lap dozed bedside.

The man Gareth had thought a giant barely made a lump under the bed linens. Only a shock of white hair could be seen from the doorway. Gareth silently closed the door and crept to his father's side.

"Don't mince about, boy. I'm not dead yet." Sir Hugo's voice, while not strong, managed to be authoritative, at least to his son.

"Hello, sire."

"Come to see what I've bequeathed you?"

"No, I came to see if I could aid you in any way."

"Aid in speeding me to perdition?" Sir Hugo attempted a laugh, but moaned instead and pressed a hand to his head, pain evident in his countenance.

"Father, may I fetch you anything? Water? A cloth for your brow?"

"I have a nurse for that, but don't wake her. She's a biddy. Always poking me somewhere or forcing foul brew down my gullet."

Gareth drew a chair to the bed. Its scrape across the unmatted stone floor stirred the nurse, who immediately sank back to sleep. "Would you like to hear news of your friends or the court or world affairs?"

"The world doesn't interest me now I'm about to leave it. Livermore fills me in on everything else. Mayhap he invents most of the stories he tells, but it matters little to a dying man."

"Doctors hold no hope?"

"None." Hugo waved away his son's concern. "I have but one request of you."

Gareth winced, glad his father's eyes were glassy and could not see it. A deathbed promise? He would honor the request in any case, deathbed or not. Yet, he worried an arduous or far-flung task would interfere with his rescue of Tess. "What would you have me do?"

"I know you do not hold Margot in high regard, and I understand why. I also understand her resentment of my having a handsome, healthy son when she could not manage it, voluptuous though she be. I was not dense to the atmosphere in my own house, though you may have thought otherwise." A spasm of pain again crossed his face, and he closed his eyes for a few seconds.

"Mayhap we should speak of this another time." Gareth pulled the covers up to Sir Hugo's neck.

"Who knows if we shall have another time? Here it is, then. Margot has not had it easy these last years seeing to my care. And she has done, you know."

"I know, and I commend her for it."

"I want her to go out, have some enjoyment. Livermore tells me we received an invitation to the Earl of Shrobeshire's ball. She has been currying Lady Shrobeshire's favor for months in desire of being invited. I want you to escort her."

"When is the event?"

"Tomorrow eve."

Blast it all, he had to waylay two fiends from murdering Tess tomorrow eve. Brand and Damian could not do it without him, mayhap not even with him. "Of course, I shall see to it Margot is escorted to the ball."

"Not see to it. Do it yourself. Promise me. I will not leave this life having everyone believe I could not hold my family together, that I drove you away for love of Margot. You two must be seen together as a testament to my ability as leader of this clan." His eyes pressed together briefly. "One thing more. I do love Margot, more than I've

shown, perhaps. Forgive her. In my stead, be kind to her." Severe pain racked him again, and his moans woke the nurse.

She jumped to his side with a flagon of medicine for him to drink. "Please leave him to rest." She glared at Gareth.

Sir Hugo grabbed at Gareth's cloak as he rose from the chair. "Treat her well. Promise."

"I promise." Gareth proceeded down the stairs at a pace reminiscent of a criminal going to gallows. He had to invite his stepmother to attend a ball with him at exactly the same time he should be waylaying Tess's attackers. He had to be good to the woman who had never been good to him.

Margot awaited him in the sitting room. "I had supper brought in here." A joint stool had been set in front of the settle and been lain with various meats, cheeses, bread, and wine. The fire had been stoked, curtains drawn, tapers lit. "The dining room is too large and formal. I thought an intimate setting might give us a chance to set things aright between us."

God's blood, what was she up to? This was a setting for a lover, not an errant stepson. He forced a gracious smile, removed his cloak, and threw it over a side chair. "Looks lovely, and I am hungry."

"I have been hungry for more than a year." She approached him and undid the top button of his shirt, gauged his response, then loosed another two buttons. "Be comfortable, Gareth. Relax." She stroked fingertips down into the fur of his chest, pulled rather hard, then took his hand and led him to the settle.

Had her bodice been lowered? She fairly spilled from it as she leaned forward to hand him a glass of wine and to pour one for herself. A nipple popped out, stiff and ready. She did not replace it. Instead she took his hand again and placed it atop the puckering bud. He ran his thumb back and forth over the tip, watching her face for a clue to her behavior. Her nostrils flared with pleasure.

"We should become better friends, don't you think?" She reached for her wine, sipped, and let some dribble over her breast and his

hand, then set her glass on the stool. "You must taste this wine." She pulled her bodice down further to expose both breasts, then drew his head down to them. "Taste the seductive flavor of Hugo's finest vintage. Lap it up, son."

Her teats were ample, pillowy, and the skin smooth with reddishbrown areolas and extremely long nipples. He lapped the wine from her flesh. The taste of her and the feel of those elongated nips, stretched as if they'd been put to the rack, stirred something within him. He treated both breasts to his licks. "You have a magnificent body, Margot, but it belongs to Sir Hugo."

"Does it, when he hasn't touched it for so many years? I do not ask more of you than this one night. Please?" She slowly unpinned her voluminous sleeves and let them fall to the floor, then turned for Gareth to undo the back of her gown.

Curious about how far she would undress, he undid the many tiny buttons and the hook and eyes of her undergarment. She lay across the seat, her head propped on a cushion against the arm, yanked the bodice free, and pulled the skirt up to her waist.

Her bush was the same gold as that on her head, but Gareth could swear it had been trimmed so little of it there was and so neatly fashioned. He ran his fingers through the down. While he could not, would not, enter her, he fully intended to give her what she needed. He had promised his father. He inserted one finger, then two.

"Yes, yes. More, please. I have no shame left."

He bent his mouth to the task. A tongue swipe had her squirming. He found the nub and nipped it lightly while fingering her with his thumb. She used her own hands on her nipples, twisting them harder than he would have done. With the hand not otherwise occupied, he pinched the flesh of her bottom. She moaned with enjoyment of the pain. Thumb pressure and tongue strokes to her slit had her gasping and begging.

"No, Margot, no. You cannot have what you want just yet." He kept a finger inside her, but raised himself to draw one of her long nipples into his mouth. He twirled it around with his tongue and bit it.

"Harder," she demanded. "Bite down till it bleeds."

He sank his teeth into soft flesh while probing into the depths below with fingers and palm, finding a spot that made her moan.

"Please hurt me. Make me bleed. Make me come. I need it. I need it."

"Not yet." He ceased moving his fingers inside her, but pressed down hard on her mons with the heel of his hand, knowing it must hurt. A look of rapture crossed her face. He bit to draw a trickle of blood from a silken tit.

"Oh, yes. That's the way. More, master, I'm begging."

With his tongue he transferred blood to her lips. She slurped it hungrily. "Stick me. Abuse me now. Please, master."

"I will not enter you, but I will let you come soon, just not yet."

"I am trying to obey, master, but the pressure in my body cries for release. Please let me come, master. I am in pain with my need to let go."

"Not yet. I will tell you when." He despised himself for enjoying the hurt he inflicted, but it gave them both pleasure, albeit for different reasons. "You must wait for my command." He left her breast and went down on her again. Using fingers inside her while sucking at her nub, he pushed her to the brink and backed off. She swore and begged to be sucked, bitten, or whipped to completion once she realized he really would not enter her.

He licked, backed off. She moaned most pitifully.

"You may have your release soon." He dug fingernails into her belly while he licked and sucked her harder and ever harder. He wet a finger and inserted it into her bottom orifice.

"Yes. Yes. Yes. Oh, I love that. Please may I come now? Please spare me more waiting."

"Now, Margot, you may have your release now." With relish, he tongued her and fingered her, pressing inside both entryways as hard as he could.

She called out to the Deity, writhing as she climaxed, again and again gasping for breath. She twitched, climaxed again. He kept his mouth on her vulva until she quieted and ceased bucking.

Once sated, she rearranged her dress and sat up. "Do you wish discharge? I would love to suck you, lick you anywhere and everywhere. I am very good at going around the world."

"As tempting as that sounds, I have another engagement and must be leaving." He slipped a hand into her bodice and tweaked each nipple. "These are quite lovely. Thank you. I enjoyed myself."

She turned her back for him to redo her clothes. "Will you visit your father another day?" Her tone was pathetically full of hope.

"Yes, of course. And if you are amenable, I would like to escort you to the Shrobeshire ball tomorrow evening."

She hopped to her feet, glee written on her face. "Would you do that for me?"

"I would be delighted. I have some appointments to keep first. I will come for you latish. Shall we say nine of the clock?"

She couldn't keep the disappointment from her face, but nodded. "Nine will do fine."

He reached for his cloak, and she placed a hand on his shoulder. "Thank you for today. And know if you have need, I will supply it on my knees or in my bed. I can be very submissive and will let you do what you will to me. Your denying me my release shows you have knowledge, most likely from Lottie, of what I desire. And you are good at it. Whips, chains, bindings, all are in my repertoire just as they were with Lottie."

He was stunned. "You know what Lottie liked in the bedchamber?"

She laughed. "Of course, we did many things together before I married your father. It was why I chose her for you. Why we spent so much of the day and night together when you visited."

"You had assignations while we were on holidays here?" Gareth was numb with the shock of Lottie's duplicity.

"Most of the days and nights during your stays here, we played our games. Secret entrances let men arrive unnoticed. Lottie was e'en more ravenous than I. We could both take and enjoy pain, and when no man was available, we pleasured each other with abandon. Didn't she have the most luscious breasts and bottom?"

"You did things to each other?"

Margot shivered and hugged herself as if a chill had run through the room. "Only if need be. She was best with men. No matter what one did to her, she cried out for more. I've seen her, blindfolded and bound, handle four men at one time, mouth, hands, front, and rear openings all busy. No man left disappointed."

"I see. I knew of Lottie's proclivities, but never suspected you were cohorts." He wanted to ask if his father had been involved when Lottie was here, but was afraid of the answer.

Margot looked truly repentant. "I am so sorry. From what you did to me today, I assumed you knew about Lottie and me. Your father enjoyed—"

"Please say no more." Gareth pulled his cloak around him and left the manor without escort. He departed his boyhood home shaking his head at what had transpired. Never in his wildest dreams had he thought of his stepmother as a possible sex partner, not for him and certainly not for Lottie. Had he heard snaps of whips as a boy after Sir Hugo married Margot? He may have done without knowing. Moans and yelps, he'd heard for certain. He'd muffle noises from their chamber with a pillow.

He retrieved his mount from the stables and forced the incident with Margot from his mind. He had to determine how to best the two brutes who would rape and slay Tess. He must figure a way to change

Sir Richard's need for Tess's demise. Mayhap he could pay off his debts. Nay, the fiend would likely incur more debt and try to rid himself of Tess yet again.

When he reached the Grey Goose, Brand and Damian were at their supper in a private dining area reserved for special guests. Gareth tore into the room. "Mates, we have a sore duty before us."

Damian rushed to take his cloak and hand him a tankard of ale. "By God, ye look as if all the demons of hell was chasin' ye."

"I'm not certain they are not." He sat on a stool at the trestle table and helped himself to a slab of meat from the trencher in the middle. Holding the mutton with his knife, he talked while munching. "Tess is indeed in danger, as you foretold, Damian. And it is imminent."

"What learned you at Grafton Hall?" Brand asked.

Gareth related the day's events, including the episode with his stepmother.

"I'd like to fuck the bitch with some whips and chains in me hands," Damian muttered. "After the way she treated ye, and ye only a lad, I'd make her atone."

"Thank you, but I have no more malice toward her. She is a pitiful wretch with my father ill and her friends practically abandoning her." He tore off a chunk of coarse bread. "You would mistake not taking the opportunity for a session with my stepmother. She is primed like Lottie and quite luscious despite her age. Besides her soft skin, which she has cared for like a precious gem, she's somehow had her nipples stretched. They are amazingly extended e'en when soft, and her pussy's sweet and sparse of bush. I lapped it eagerly. You two may wield the whips and such. I'll not engage in that as I would not with Lottie."

"Did your stepmother give you a tongue-lashing?" Brand's eyes were shining.

"She offered her mouth or her bed, but I declined though I was rock hard. I enjoyed fondling her body. I cannot think of fucking anyone save Tess at present, but I may let Margot suck me after the

ball tomorrow. If we are successful in keeping Tess from danger, I will be aroused beyond my control from the fight."

"I would sample your stepmother's wares," Brand offered. "Since she's fond of Lottie's ways, I am hot already. Damian, can you bear to leave Gert's slit for a romp with Margot?"

"I believe I'll leave you to it. Give her cunt a jab or two for me, but I don't seem to want anyone save Gert at present. To mere think of her turns my rod to steel."

"She may not care for you more than she cares for the many other men she lets use her," Brand scoffed, and drained his glass.

"She does not go with all who ask her favors. She chooses but a few here and there. Plimpton Village has its store of whores, and Gert be not one of them." Damian narrowed his eyes, but did not strike. "I will always love you, Guiles, but I'm afraid I love Gert as well. I intend to ask her to be my wife."

"You will wife a tavern wench?"

"I am but a servant meself."

"You are much more than that to me."

"And I always will be. You enjoy Gert, couldn't get enough of her teats. And she enjoyed you up her arse much more than me. Suspect I hurt her a bit with me girth. She will come live with us as my wife and be bed partner to us both. Why not?"

"Why not indeed." Brand refilled his tankard and topped off Gareth's and Damian's. "A toast to love and Gert's teats."

Gareth toasted, amazed at Damian's fondness for the maid. She was a likeable sort, though. He could see it working with the three of them. "Now, to my problem. I'm back to Grafton Hall to warn Tess. But we must be at the ready in case she does not listen or Tremaine changes his plan."

Damian slapped him on the back. "We will let no harm come to Lady Tess, we assure ye."

Gareth wished he felt as confident as his good friend.

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For the third time that day, Gareth returned to Grafton Hall. At the door, Fallon, looking sheepish, told him Lady Tess was indisposed.

"I will see Tremaine in her stead." Gareth planted one foot in the doorway and did not intend to move until he talked to someone in the household besides the servants.

"I am very sorry, Sir Gareth, but my master has gone to his club." Fallon looked truthful this time.

Gareth pushed the man to the side and entered the hall. "Then, I will speak with Lady Alys."

With an exasperated sigh, Fallon went in search of his mistress, leaving Gareth where he stood. He shuffled his feet for a second or two, looked about, then strode to the staircase. He'd been to Tess's sleeping apartment many times as a youngster and could find his way there now. She had to be warned of going anywhere with Sir Richard. This was a life-or-death matter that could not wait.

Chapter Six

When Gareth reached the passageway to Tess's chamber, he hesitated before approaching the door. A new pediment had been added since last he'd been there. The inscription in Latin read: *Quod olim fuit meminisse minime juvat*. He grimaced as he translated, "There is little joy in remembrance of the past." It seemed meant for him and raised his ire. He burst through the door to her rooms with no thought of alerting her to his presence.

What he saw stopped him cold but made him hot.

On the bed, were both Daisy and Tess in short and all-buttransparent nightclothes. Neither woman noted his arrival. Daisy wore a smock, Tess, a loose shirt of some kind.

The sight of the two near-naked nymphs stopped him from revealing himself. They waved glass cups of wine, clinked, and sipped. Smooth thighs stretched across the bed, toes wiggled, bare shoulders raised and lowered with each breath.

Daisy set her glass on the table built into the bed's poster. Her rump, naked as the day she was born, pointed skyward as she demonstrated some acrobatic feat, which sent both women into gales of laughter. Tess, on her knees, patted her maid's arse with one hand and thirstily emptied her glass with the other. Daisy sat on the luscious flesh Tess had lately caressed and chucked her mistress under the chin while impishly tugging on the neckline of Tess's shirt.

"Let's see what you have to sell, madam," she said, imitating a man's voice. "Are you hawking these paltry wares today?"

Gareth hardened instantly, no buildup needed. The two women looked freshly tumbled and half drunk. The outline of Daisy's blonde

bush and Tess's chestnut mound were both quite evident through the sheer material of their nightclothes. Both had pebbled nipples. Neither had pinned up her hair. Tess's burnished tresses reached her arse. Daisy's curly mop flew about her shoulders with each movement.

"I'm selling, if you're buying." Tess giggled.

"Hmm, let's see how much these peaches weigh." Daisy hefted one exposed breast in her hand. "Nice." She grasped the other, bouncing it lightly in her palm.

By this time Gareth's dick was pulsing painfully against his breeches. His hands tingled with the need to weigh Tess's fruits for himself.

"They are of sufficient weight, but the taste is in the pudding, as they say," Daisy harrumphed, maintaining her grocer man's voice.

When she bent to place her lips around one of the pale buds, Gareth's hardness became too painful to ignore. He unlaced the ties to his breeches, giving himself more room. He couldn't imagine his cock getting any harder, yet it did when Tess pulled at Daisy's bodice, freeing more delights for his fancy.

"Let's see how peaches taste dipped in wine." Tess poured wine into her glass, sipped, but didn't swallow. Instead she clamped wine-soaked lips on Daisy's teat, sucked, and swallowed. Both women flopped on their backs in riotous laughter.

Tess's perfectly shaped legs and arched feet were so lovely, Gareth couldn't move. He wanted to munch on those toes, run his hands up her thighs, grasp that pretty pussy, and teach it to behave. He had all he could do to keep from joining them on that bed.

Propped on elbows, tits in full view, the nymphs poured and drank more wine.

In her own voice, Daisy moaned. "I'm fully engorged. What I wouldn't do for a man's pole inside me."

Tess gathered her shirt to show her nether lips to Daisy. "Am I swollen also?"

Daisy scooted her head closer to the mark and poked at it. "Puffy, wet. Yes, milady. You need a man as much as I."

Had any man ever had such a perfect entrance cue? "I believe I can help you women with that." Gareth loosed the cord of his cloak, let it swish to the floor, and then he stepped out of the shadows. The movement and sound elicited screeches from both women. The sight of two practically undressed goddesses hugging each other in fright caused him to groan with the force of his cock against the restraining fabric. He undid the small jeweled buttons of his doublet as he approached the bed.

"Don't be feared. It's Gareth. May I be of service?"

An enraged Tess scrambled to her feet totally disregarding what a vision she made in scanty nightshirt, hair tumbled over uncovered rosy breasts, lips puckered in anger.

"What mean you scaring us so? Are you possessed of not one remnant of brain?" She fisted her hands as if to box him.

She looked so adorable, so desirable, Gareth could not speak. He let the breeches holding in his unbelievably hard erection fall to the floor.

That tied her tongue and locked her gaze onto his manroot. He wouldn't have thought it possible, yet the thing grew even more. God's blood, he wanted to sink it into her until she felt it right up to her teeth.

Her flushed skin glowed pink and shimmered in the candlelight. Her breasts, riper, fuller than he remembered, heaved with anger. He wanted to lunge at them, yet managed to keep a modicum of control over his lust, just barely.

Daisy chose the moment to emerge from her shock. "Good heaven's gate, I've never seen a shaft so long and wide. Surely you could do damage to us with it." Her tone revealed more glee than fear.

"Punish you until you 'cry havoc,' is that not what the Bard hath writ?" Gareth said.

Daisy rose to stand beside her mistress. "Aye. You know best, milord." She gave a little dip as a bow to him. "And you mean to torture both of us?" A slight shiver shook her shoulders and hardened her nipples.

Tess broke from the trance centered on his member and turned to her maid. "Have you taken leave of your senses? Do you not recall our latest talks? Would you let this intruder touch you, or...or me?"

Daisy cast her gaze to the floor. "If he so wishes, for I am a mere servant, and he is a big, strong, virile lord of the realm. It is not within my power to refuse anything he wishes to do to me."

Gareth did not miss the smirk on her face. He had an ally here. "This is my command then, subject. My fondest wish is for you to completely disrobe your mistress and then yourself." He spoke as he divested himself of jerkin and doublet.

"Forgive me, Lady Tess, but I must obey milord." In one swift motion, Daisy had Tess's shirt over her head and thrown across the room. She did the same with her own smock.

Before Tess could react, Gareth took one arm and Daisy the other and dragged her across the bed. She struggled against them, but they held fast. Each lay across an arm, pinning her to the mattress like a specimen butterfly in a collection of rarities.

"God's blood, you are perfection. I must have you," Gareth whispered into Tess's ear.

"Let me go." Tess wrenched her body upward in an undulating motion that only succeeded in making it more enticing. He stroked her from breast to bottom, learning the contours of her body.

"Stop it this instant."

Neither Daisy nor Gareth paid the slightest attention to her protests. They continued to pet her, Gareth tweaking her nipples, Daisy massaging her tummy then slipping her fingers downward to rake her nails through Tess's curls. When Gareth's lips latched onto a teat, Tess writhed in pleasure, no longer trying to escape.

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Tess could not believe the sensations running through her body. A flash of warmth drenched her below, and she wished Daisy to finger her there and complete the release. Gareth at her breast was heaven. Damn she wanted him, but this could completely ruin her revenge, and she would not let it.

Desire to make him hurt the way he'd hurt her had been the focus of her every fantasy since the day he'd left her for Lottie Jaynes. She couldn't allow him to enter her, but she could let him have his way with Daisy. Her traitorous friend obviously wanted to get rammed and didn't much care which man did the deed. Tess could assist them both, have a little fun herself, and remain true to her plan to deny Gareth what he wanted most.

God's blessings, their petting felt good. Daisy now ministered to one breast as Gareth pursued the other and inserted a finger into her canal. She pushed against his hand, and he moved another finger in and pinched the little pulpy lump she used when pleasuring herself. Oh. A bolt of lust and heat and sin tore at her insides. She was ready to explode, but held it back. It wouldn't do to let it go too soon. He might think he had power over her.

Gareth lifted his head from her breast, leaving her arm free at last. "Give it up. Come for me, sweeting."

Sweeting, my arse. Had he call his wife "sweeting"? Had he aroused Lottie so quickly? Had she creamed for him the way Tess was right now? She used her free hand to take hold of his manhood. His gasp gave her more pleasure than a quick orgasm would have. Oh, he would suffer before she was done with him. With juices from the opening of his dick, she moistened her fingers and ran a hand down the inside seam and around the head, increasing the grasp as she massaged every ridge and crevice. He called her name, but she didn't stop.

She hadn't been good enough for him once, because he believed her uncle controlled her funds. He hadn't known of her private fortune. He hadn't asked. He ran to Lottie and her huge bosoms without a qualm. She would bring him to the edge, then leave him to be satisfied with Daisy. He'd lost his chance with her long ago, and another one would ne'er be. She thumbed the crown of his cock and ran her fisted hand down it with a twisting motion.

"No, Tess. Do not let me spill like this, please." He pulled away from her hand.

Daisy sat up. "May I?" She leaned across Tess and took him in her mouth. Tess watched as Daisy sucked so hard her cheeks hollowed. Daisy looked up at her mistress, eyes shining. Gareth closed his eyes.

Tess caressed Daisy's satiny bottom and became bolder as she listened to her slurps and Gareth's moans. Why not? Daisy had done worse to her several times since she'd told her about the ménage. She inserted two fingers into Daisy and massaged the inside of her vaginal tunnel. Daisy stopped working on Gareth and turned to smile at Tess. "Oh, yes."

"Don't stop, Daisy," Gareth growled.

"I won't. You really should taste him, Tess. It's good." Unable to help herself, Tess bent for one swift lick. Daisy giggled and went back to sucking him off while Tess continued to stroke her.

Gareth's long arms were able to reach Tess's breast and he kneaded it unmercifully as he came into Daisy's delighted mouth. Tess scooted away from them both. Daisy sat up, licked her lips, and manhandled her own breasts. "I ache. Someone, I care not who, take care of me."

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Gareth had trouble regaining normal breathing. After grasping Tess's tit, he had spurted into Daisy's mouth like a flowing dam.

Good it had happened that way, because he couldn't have held off for Tess. Once in her, he wanted to last a long, long time.

Daisy plucking at her nipples was a charming sight, but when she flew to Tess's embrace and her smooth, tight skin rubbed against the smooth, tight skin and honeyed breasts of his love, unbelievably, he hardened again.

Tess fondled Daisy's tits. Daisy, in response, brushed Tess's hair back from her shoulders and lovingly laved at her mistress's nipples. Tess lay back, enjoyment evident on her face.

Gareth took hold of her ankles and spread them to look upon the spot he wanted to invade. Tess tensed. To relax her, he bent to lap at the swollen lips of her sex. She was sweet, so sweet. Once begun, he could not stop. Daisy did her part at Tess's nipples.

Tess writhed and hummed her delight until Gareth used his thumb to rub her clit. She jumped, and then sank back, grasping the sheets in fisted hands. Her head thrashed from one side to the other as he sucked and nipped and stroked and Daisy pinched and licked. Tess screamed her release.

Gareth rose to position himself to relieve his throbbing, engorged dick by sinking it into the woman he'd loved all his life. Tess thwarted him by rolling to the side and allowing him access to Daisy to take her place.

"Please, milord, do not spare me," Daisy fairly moaned.

His cock thought for him and he would have plunged into the only open orifice presently available. Instead, he inserted two fingers. She was tight and creamy and already pulsing around him.

Tess ran her fingers through his hair and down his body, causing tiny electric shocks wherever she touched. On her side she lapped at Daisy's breast, which caused the maid to tighten around him. He joined Tess at the other delicious brown nipple, and Daisy's cunny clutched his fingers e'en more. He withdrew his hand slowly to ensure Daisy felt pressure at every withdrawing inch of her canal before he thrust anew.

Tess's fingers had reached the opening to his arse, causing him to lessen his care of Daisy. When Tess inserted a finger, he forgot himself, but Daisy purred her appreciation as he thrust three fingers into her this time.

"Please, sir, I wish to feel every ridge of your shaft inside me. I wish to feel it slam against the wall of my womb."

He could not do it for her. Tess's fingers massaged him inside, driving him to frantically draw on Daisy's nipple before pulling away, though he wished to ram her without mercy. "Tess, we cannot let her suffer more. She is your maid and friend. You must do what I will not."

"Oh, yes, milord. I should like milady's mouth on me."

Tess gave a moment's protest and then leaned to the task. Daisy had the presence of mind to take his joint in hand. She was expert in her ministrations despite moaning her pleasure at the sucking and tongue thrusting being performed on her by Tess.

He and Daisy spent themselves nearly simultaneously, he still fastened onto her tit and she still clenching him in her hand. No doubt she'd be a magnificent lay, her movements were practiced and gave her as much enjoyment as she would give to her partner.. He'd most likely ne'er had better, n'er would, he opined. Not until he had Tess.

The three of them stretched like lazy lions on the Serengeti. Legs and arms entwined, and hands and fingers caressed and probed, no one caring who did what to whom.

Tess broke the languid spell by speaking. "I believe it is time for you to take your leave, sir, before my uncle finds you here."

"Leave, now? We have only just begun. I am not some fop good for a mere two pops."

"I'm afraid the curtain has fallen on this act, Sir Gareth. You may recall we have a dare in abeyance. We shall resume, um, negotiations then." She retrieved her nightshirt and tossed Daisy her smock.

Gareth bowed as gracefully as he could since he remained engorged. He dressed while the women watched. "I did come here for a serious reason, Tess."

"Oh, something couldn't wait till morn?" Tess crossed her arms in front of her bosom, curiously modest of a sudden.

"No, it cannot wait. Your uncle has concocted a plot to have you raped and slain."

"That's a monstrous accusation, Gareth."

Daisy put an arm around her shoulder. "What would make you say such a thing, milord?"

"I say it because it is the truth. I overheard his conversation with the murderers. He has hired two toughs to do away with you and do it most agonizingly."

"I believe nary a word from your lips. Had I learned that lesson seven years ago, I would have been saved from much childish misery." Tess shook off Daisy's arm. "Why ever would Sir Richard plot to slay me? He has charge of my dowry and much monies from my father and land from my mother."

Daisy slipped onto her little trundle bed. "I am tired and not needed in this argument." She yawned, covering her mouth with her hand.

"I am sorry to tell you this, Tess, but he has depleted it all, all your monies."

"All? That cannot be possible." Tess paced the length of the room and back, brushing at her hair. "He had the shipyard and steel and I don't know what else under his control. He cannot have run through all of it."

"I promise you I do not lie. I overheard his conversation with his solicitor. He has run through every farthing and wants whatever separate money you had left to you. I don't understand the good it will do him. It can't be enough to bring him to solvency."

"It can and more." Tess tossed her head with a wry laugh. My parents, though they adored Aunt Alys, distrusted Sir Richard and entailed the greater part of their assets to me alone."

Gareth snapped his head round. "Hell, you say. You mean you..."

"I have always had more money than Lottie. My parents didn't even stipulate I had to be of age or married to be in control of the funds. Had they died when I was four, e'en then I would have had say as to use of the money. I chose not to use any of it, and thus it has increased over the years since their deaths."

A profusion of memories tumbled over Gareth, flooding him with regret. His father and Margot must have known this when they urged his alliance with Lottie for the sake of Marbrook's future. He could have been married to Tess lo these five years. They might have had children, toddlers now. Their gazes locked. She raised a brow, crossed her arms beneath her breasts, and tilted her head. She hadn't forgiven him.

He could regret the years without her in his life. In a way, he did. Yet, he knew without a doubt he would have made Tess a bad husband back then. He was too absorbed in himself, too selfish, and she too vulnerable having lately lost her parents.

Tess shrugged into a ruby robe, tied the sash tightly, and sat on the edge of the bed. "Sir Richard Tremaine would be fabulously wealthy should I die." She ran a hand over her face. "What you say may very well be fact." With a long intake of breath, she looked up at him. "How am I to be disposed of?"

"Two brutish louts have been hired to do the deed tomorrow eve when you ride out with Sir Richard."

She raised a crimson shoulder. "I will not ride out with him, and there's the end of it."

He shot her a wry look, and she closed her eyes. "Of course, he won't give up with such ease. What am I to do?"

Fuck me here and now, he wanted to say. Marry me and go away from here, he wanted to say. He could, of course, say neither. "My

mates and I will see to the villains. That will give us more time while Sir Richard is busy engaging others to do his dirty work. Meantime, we will devise a plan to stop him from considering this again." He strode a few paces away, fingered the ewer upon her washstand. "I don't yet know how."

"Perhaps I should talk to Sir Richard, give him more money? You and your friends will attempt to dispatch the marauders and perhaps be dispatched yourselves. Then that, too, will be on my head. I despise a world where people are put to death for lucre."

When Gareth turned back to her, she looked forlorn and defeated. He hated leaving her alone, but he had to return to the inn. He pasted on a smile. "Do not fret. I'll take care of it. Also, we shall have our tryst to divert us. Unless you care to retreat?"

Her visage toughened, he was happy to see. "I will not retreat. I have given my word. You may depend on my word."

Gareth saw the spark of fire in her eyes and noted the emphasis on the word "my." They would have this discussion after he smashed the barriers between them by making delicious love to her, by forcing her to recall what they'd been to each other, and by convincing her, he'd never stopped loving her.

"I must go before Tremaine returns from his club. You will hear from me when we have a plan in place."

He raced down the stairs, saluted a very confused Livermore, and set out for the Grey Goose. A sullen Brand Guiles came out to greet him as he was seeing to his horse.

Brand's hair was unkempt, his boots unpolished, and his clothes rumpled. He appeared not at all like the man who cared more for his dress than his food.

"You look a fright." Gareth was immediately concerned. "What has happened?"

"A storm called Gertie has happened. He truly means to take her home with us. He actually is in love, the brute. Why, when I give him everything and all the love he can want?"

Gareth clapped an arm around his friend's shoulder and led him into the inn. "Do you not care for the wench?"

"She's all right as wenches go, but Damian belongs to me."

"You cannot command him to leave her?" Gareth gestured to the innkeeper's wife to bring ale.

"Should I do that, he will resent me, and I shall lose his love." Brand plopped onto the bench and grasped the tankard held out to him. He drank deeply.

"Seems you must go along with having her in your house and pretend you enjoy it. If you find you can't take it, you'll have to throw them both out."

"Aye." Brand hung his head like a sulky child. "But Damian and I have been together more than ten years. How can I throw him out?"

"Buck up. We have a fight coming on. You like fights. We need to knock two vagabonds into the next world that they mayn't hurt my Tess."

Brand actually smiled. "When does the battle commence?"

"Tomorrow evening. Now, where is Damian? We shall need his brawn. These are burly sorts accustomed to solving problems with their fists."

"He's with Gertie." Brand tossed his head in the direction of the back room. "He paid the innkeep a goodly sum to have only Gertie serve him, and in private. He can't get enough of her, the way he used to be with me."

"The way he remains with you, never doubt that. I must speak with him. You stay put. Drink my ale before it flattens." Gareth trudged to the private room and parted its curtains, not knowing what reception he'd find.

Damian was seated on a low stool with Gertie straddling his thighs. Her gown's top was pulled down for access to her tits and her skirt bunched up to allow her to slither up and down Damian's engorged shaft. His eyes were closed as she bounced upon him, his mouth locked onto a breast. Gertie was laughing and using his cock as

she wished, but her eyes were open, and she waved to Gareth to join them.

"I'm riding my warrior steed into battle." She slapped at Damian's arm as if using a riding crop and continued abuse of his rod. Her mount moaned but didn't open his eyes. He switched his lips to the other breast, making her giggle.

Gareth waited silently by the curtained doorway until they both cried out in their release and Damian opened his eyes. "Sir Gareth." He kissed each of Gertie's nipples, and then set her on her feet. "What happened? Did you warn Tess?"

Without adjusting her clothes, Gertie sank onto the bench and took a long draught from a tankard of ale. "I can be ready in a few ticks of the clock if you want a go with me and Damie."

Damie? Gertie must have a honey pot for a pussy if Damian let her call him that. "Thank you, Gert, but I'm afraid I must take *Damie* away for a few hours. We have important business."

Damian tucked Gertie's top in place before he followed Gareth out into the taproom. "What's the rush, mate? My Gertie's always ready to take on my friends."

"The rush is whipping you in shape for tomorrow's eve." Gareth noted the use of the word "my" before Gert's name. "You've done naught but screw and bugger since you met this wench. Brand feels abandoned, and I'm worried you'll not have a lick of strength left for the battle we face."

"I'll be right as the good Queen's fart after a full night's sleep."

"Oh, ho. But will Gertie let you get a night of uninterrupted slumber?"

"See what you mean. No Gertie tonight. I best be goin' back in there to store up some pussy, then."

Gareth stopped Damian's forward movement toward the back room. "You best stay with Brand and me the rest of the eve and all of the morrow. We need to plan how to rid Tess of her uncle's malice." He steered Damian to Brand's table and onto the bench.

"Can we not shove a dirk up his arse and be done with it?" Damian asked.

"Tess would ne'er forgive me. She values her aunt's happiness."

Damian grasped Brand's hand and shook it heartily. "Me and Gert missed ye, man."

Brand growled low in his throat and called for more ale.

Gareth worried his friends would grow so sour with each other they could not work in tandem during the fight, nor show Tess a good time during their evening with her.

"I can't be worrying about you two tonight. We need to keep Tess's uncle from doing away with her."

"Why not take the lass home with us as Damian will take Gert? Seems he thinks that's the solution to everything." Brand's voice was as sulky as a tot's.

"I fully intend to take her away from here, if all goes as planned with our night together. Only if she agrees to marry me will she be safe from Tremaine's greed. If he believes his wife can still be her heir, he will try to rid himself of her whether she lives under his roof or ours."

"Do ye fancy another marriage, me boy?" Damian said as the innkeeper dropped three tankards on the table and retrieved the empties.

"With Tess, I do." He dreamed of a cozy home with bairns at his feet, a girl who looked like Tess, and a boy who favored him.

"And if she does not wish to partake of our particular bedtime games, what then?" Brand asked softly, almost shyly.

"Much depends on our tryst. You two must help me make her pussy vibrate like the strings of a lyre. Then she will be anxious to enjoy future sessions." He tossed back a slug of ale not feeling as confident as he usually felt. "If this result does not come to pass, make no mistake, I will live however and wherever she chooses."

"You are able to do without our sessions for the whole of your life? You will not crave them as we do?" Brand's voice hit high notes of disbelief.

"I am able to sacrifice anything, do without anything for love of Tess. You little comprehend what hell it was for me without her." And hell it had been. Though he'd liked Lottie and had enjoyable times learning the ways of group sex, longing to be with Tess was never far from his thoughts. "I cannot say I did not take pleasure in our bouts with Lottie, but the whole of the time, inwardly I pined for Tess. She was more than a lover to me. She was friend, confidant, and companion. She was and is my soul mate. No other will do."

Brand and Damian bowed their heads as they listened.

"See you grease up plenty, Brand, when you ream her bottom. Go slow and steady so she doesn't scream like some." Damian slammed his cup on the table.

"I know my role. See your blubber is not so limp from sticking it to Gertie that it waves instead of salutes."

"Gentlemen, please. You must stop this childish bickering. What say you to Tess's problem?"

They worked most of the night and came up with a scheme. They would implement it in the morn.

Chapter Seven

Damian seemed to get e'en less sleep without Gertie than he might have had with her. Brand and Gareth were reluctant to leave him at the inn, not believing he'd keep his distance from the woman, but they had arrangements to make for the tryst and weapons to stock up on for the encounter with the nasty brothers.

When they returned, Damian was indeed with Gertie, but in the taproom as a hands-off customer eating his dinner.

"We ride out at twilight. Have you managed to nod off at all?" Brand asked.

Gertie, reaching them with a trencher of veal and some venison pasties, chimed in with a pout. "He has lain abed all the day, alone." She huffed off giving the coldest of shoulders to Brand and Gareth.

"I see your lady does not hold us in high regard this day." Gareth speared a hunk of veal with his knife.

Brand chose a pasty. "Sorry, my man, but from Gareth's description, we will need every ounce of your strength to overcome these outlaws."

"It's okay. She'll appreciate me dick all the more later."

Damian's lopsided grin reminded Gareth of a lovesick calf. "How has she received the news of our night with Tess? You'll be gone a night and half a day."

The thought wiped the grin from Damian's face. "I have yet to tell her 'bout that." He stabbed at a piece of veal. "Do you suppose we can invite Gert as well?"

"No," Gareth fairly shouted. "You know how important this tryst is to me. I'll not have you or Gert or anyone else muck it up." God's

blood, this whole thing would fall apart if he could not get Damian under control, which meant getting Gertie to control him.

"Damian, mate, have you told Gert your plan to marry her and take her home with you and Brand?"

"We've talked, but nothing definite." Damian shot an eyeslowered glance toward Brand as he spoke. "She likes the way we do things together. There'll be no squawk from her when two or three of us are on her."

Brand turned from the table and began a conversation with an old codger at the next bench. Damian shook his head and sighed.

Gareth grimaced. "I believe I'll have a little talk with Gert, tell her about Tess since you seem not to be able to, and feel her out about some things."

Damian stood. "Don't go feelin' anything without me present. Don't care what we all do to her together, but no fair when we ain't all there."

Gareth clasped his shoulder and eased him back onto the bench. "I'm not in love with her tits the way Brand here is, lovely though they be. I meant test her feelings about living with us, and I'll pave the way for her acceptance of you being with Tess for a night."

Damian's frown stayed in place.

"Come on, now, mate. I need your brawn tonight, and I need your immense cock for Tess tomorrow night. I'm trying to smooth things with Gertie for all our sakes."

He walked away in search of Gertie and found her in the kitchen ladling stew for a customer. "Will you talk with me in the back room?"

"Talk, is it now? You want me lips to discuss sompin' with your schlong?" Gertie narrowed her eyes and sidestepped away from him. "I'll not be doin' it without Damie bein' with us." She raised her chin in defiance.

"No, you misunderstand. I need to talk, really talk. I need your help on a project of mine. No sucking or fucking involved. I swear."

"Well, then, let me see to me customer, and I'll meet ye in back."

Gareth slipped a coin to the innkeeper and asked for privacy. He paced while waiting for Gertie to finish her duties. He didn't know her well enough to have a good idea as to how to approach the subject of Tess. Most women were emotional beings. He'd trade on thus being true for Gert.

"Sir Gareth, are ye gonna ask me not to interfere 'tween Damie and Sir Brand?"

"No, I'm going to ask you to help me keep peace between them." He waited until she slid onto a stool, and then sat on a bench across from her. This small room was sparsely furnished with a trestle table, bench, and two stools. He started the tale with his past history and his love of Tess and how he'd had to leave her with no word, though his heart was heavy. Gertie seemed moved, and swiped at a tear.

"She is in danger, and you see how important it is to me to save her life."

"Deed I do." She leaned toward him. "How can I help?"

"Damian is distracted by his love for you, and Brand feels left out. Without Damian's full concentration, we all may be done for in our tussle with the brutes trying to murder my Tess. Can you not make Brand feel loved as well as Damie?"

"Course I can. Easy be that."

"One more thing." This was not going to be easy. He hoped he didn't hack it. "I have set up a tryst with Tess for Brand, Damian, and me. Like the one you had with the two of them."

"Oh, I be most willin', sire. Had me a good time, I did. Loved suckin' and bein' gored from both ends at once. Add a female, and I can play with her tits and arse, and suck me some juices from 'er. I know how. It be a grand idea."

He stood, paced, and gave it to her straight. "You are not invited, not this time."

Rain clouds appeared on her face. "But I want to come. I want to be with Damie if he be reamin' another lass."

"You see, this is complicated. The only way I could get Tess into my bed was to offer her a new experience by way of a dare. You were not included, and she could back out if the parameters were changed." He kneeled at her feet. "I'm begging you to allow Damie to go with us, this one time. After that, mayhap Tess will agree to a night with you as an added attraction. But this time I need to demonstrate my love in every way I know how."

Gertie furrowed her brows and swallowed several times. Gareth went through hell thinking she would refuse.

"For the sake of your love for Tess, I will do everything to help. Damie may go, but I'm hopin' he doesn't like plowin' her too much."

That settled, Gareth returned to Brand and Damian with a lighter heart. "Gertie has agreed to let us have our night with Tess as planned. And her next night with Damie, she wants to be certain Brand is there."

"She asked for me especially?" Brand beamed.

"She did indeed. Ready to bash some heads, mates?"

"Aye," Brand and Damian said in unison.

They rode out from the inn in silence, Gareth leading the way. The sky was dimming, not yet dark. The brothers would be restless by now wondering why their quarry hadn't arrived. Brand and Gareth were dressed in finery with stout saddlebags to lure the brothers into trying for gold since they did not have the woman to ravish and murder.

The three of them reconnoitered before reaching the oak tree copse. They checked pistols tucked into Gareth's and Brand's jerkins and into Damian's cloak. Knives and daggers were slid into every boot, and swords attached to waistbands. They reviewed the battle plan once more. It was a practiced one they had been victorious with many times before this. After a three-way hand clasp, they set off again, ears tuned to every forest sound.

Gareth could not believe what he heard. *Tess's voice*. He motioned to his mates to halt.

"What is she doing here? Did you not tell her of the danger?" Brand whispered.

"I certainly did. Of course, I did."

"Why is she up there conversing with the hired slayers?" Brand eyed him with distrust.

"I know not. Let us go closer on foot so we may hear the words from her lips." Gareth dismounted. After a slight hesitation, his friends slipped from their horses' backs.

As they approached, Tess's words became clear. "I will pay you twice what my uncle has offered if you go away tonight and never return. I do not wish to see any lives lost this eve on my account."

Shy Brother stammered his reply. "We ain't never had a lady afore." He was on the ground and had hold of her horse's reins.

Talkative Brother, still astride, nudged his mount close to hers. "We want sompin' more than money. Horny as hell, we be, thinkin' on what we gonna do to ye." He reached out and ripped one sleeve from her bodice, then the other.

Tess's voice became less confident, more shrill. "I'll thank you to keep your hands off my person."

Talkative Brother laughed as he dismounted. "You'll thank us plenty when you feel our joints up yer cunny and arse. You'll scream for more."

Shy Brother grabbed her from behind and dragged her from her horse.

"Ye'll like it. Wait and see." He loosed his breeches and waved his hardened wick at her. "Which way ye want it first?" He slapped the mare's rear, and it bolted.

All color drained from Tess's face.

Gareth and his mates could wait no longer to emerge from the woods. "How goes it, gentlemen and lady?" Gareth bowed his head to the men and tipped his hat to Tess as if he did not know her.

"Where you gentlemen off to this balmy eve? Town and taverns be behind ye." Talkative Brother spoke in a friendly manner with undertones of menace.

Shy Brother pushed Tess behind him and backed toward the woods. Damian stopped him from escaping with Tess by holding on to his collar. Tess wisely hid behind an oak.

As planned, Guiles, deceptively the easiest mark, strode a step ahead of his mates and answered, "We are on our way to visit a friend. Remove yourself that we may pass."

"Ye must forfeit a fine afore I let ye travel me road. The lady was about to pay hers when ye interrupted. The inconvenience will cost you dear."

"I believe all roads belong to our Queen."

Talkative Brother brought a cudgel from behind him and swung at Brand, who deflected it with one of his own. Gareth decided Damian could handle his foe and turned to help Brand.

But Brand had dropped the cudgel and unsheathed his sword. The man in front of him snickered, obviously thinking the smaller Brand would be easy pickings. He drew his own sword, grinning as if he'd already been victorious.

He didn't know what Gareth did, that Brand was a champion swordsman not likely to lose to a larger, clumsier opponent. Mere seconds of clashing steel passed before Brand divested the man of his weapon and pinned him to a tree by his waistcoat. Talkative Brother would have lived had he not produced a dirk from his boot and slashed Brand's sword arm. The attempt was provocation enough for Brand to run the villain through the heart without hesitation.

Gareth reached for his pistol, thinking to aid Damian, but the two men behind him were tumbling, and he couldn't tell where one began and the other ended. He and Brand watched helplessly, unable to assist. Bones cracked, and blood spurted, but Gareth knew not whose bones and whose blood was involved.

Somehow Damian ended on top and leaped to his feet, groggy but whole. Gareth watched the man on the ground draw a pistol from his pocket. As he cocked his own weapon, a shot rang out, and the man tumbled into a heap. Gareth swirled to find Brand sinking to his knees. A smoking pistol fell from his hand.

Damian recovered first and rushed to his mate. He raised him to standing. "Are you all right? Are you stuck or shot?"

"No, no. A new scar on my arm, from yon oaf with a hidden dirk. I collapsed for worry of you. When I saw the size of the behemoth, I doubted you'd see another sunrise."

Gareth let them have a moment while he saw to Tess. His fear for her grew to anger at her reckless behavior. Red flashes dotted his vision, he was that furious. "Are you ready to be committed to Bedlam? Who but an insane person would attempt to reason with such men as these?"

"I did not wish death on my head. I am sorry."

"Sorry? Sorry? What good would sorry do if you'd been raped and murdered?"

"I thought to buy them off with money. I—"

Damian interrupted. "Let's get this trash off the road before someone comes and takes us for marauders. Brand and you have a ball to attend."

"A ball? You have a ball to attend?"

Annoyed at Damian for dropping that little tidbit into the discourse, Gareth answered in a huff. "My father requested me to escort his wife to the Shrobeshire ball this eve. Any objections?"

"No, of course not. What you do is no concern of mine. And I have not been quite so witless as you imagine." She whistled, and two horsemen arrived. "I had my master of horse and his apprentice hidden further up the road. They were to come at my whistle."

Brand shouted to them, "This one's alive. I shot the gun from his hand and merely nicked him. Should I run him through?"

Gareth made the decision.

When the scene had been cleared and an abashed Tess escorted home, Gareth, Brand, and Damian headed for the Grey Goose.

Gertie awaited them in Brand's room. She had arranged a light supper of pasties, shiny apples, and wine on a rug-covered stool by the side of the bed.

She surprised Gareth by throwing her arms around both Damian and Brand, kissing first one, then the other over and over.

Once she noticed blood on Damian's cheek and Brand's arm, she screeched and ran for a cloth and the pewter basin. "My loves, my loves. How hurt be ye?"

"Sit and strip to your shirt so's I can see what's what," she ordered Brand. "Damian, you lie on the bed until I determine where you be hurt."

"Not hurt. Just a wee bit bruised here and there."

"I'll decide for meself. Now, off with your boots and onto the bed with ye."

Gareth felt like an extra flap of foreskin. "I'll be off to my own room to bathe and dress. Best ready yourself, Brand. We must rush to collect Margot at nine."

Brand was busy pulling down Gertie's bodice as she examined the slash on his upper arm. His tongue lapped at her rosy nips as she dabbed at his wound.

No one answered. "Brand?"

"Aye, I'll be ready afore you, with Gertie to help me."

"Help you or fuck you?"

"Both, my man, both." Brand resumed playing with Gert's tits.

"See that you are ready. I won't wait." He slipped out of the room.

Gareth laughed as he closed the door. Damian, Gert, and Brand would work out the arrangements between them. He only hoped Tess would prove as amenable as Gertie.

Tomorrow eve he would know. His rod jumped at the thought of the night they would have. He would taste and feel and fuck every part of his love very, very soon. His dreams would be painful tonight

for the last time. After their tryst, he'd merely turn in bed and ever find Tess a willing receptacle for his throbbing cock.

But tonight, he'd mollify himself with the delicious Margot and her hard, finger-length nipples. He salivated at the thought of them.

He dressed with care, ruff of finest linen at his throat, gems adorning his jerkin, and clock designs on his hose. Sir Walter could not have found fault. In the next room, he found Brand dressed similarly and transformed into Sir Brand Guiles, the Earl of Groatchester.. Their hired coach awaited, and they left Damian and Gert abed, naked and copulating.

"She did me good as she did *Damie* boy," Brand announced in hushed tones as they rode to Marbrook. "Says she loves me as well as him."

"Do you fancy having her live at your country manor or at your London apartment?"

"I'm thinking on it, but I believe she will live with us at both homes. We always had Lottie together before you wed and after, with you, of course. Although not under the same roof, Lottie was ever ready and needed little notice. Someone to take her place makes sense. And someone e'en closer, in our own home, much more convenient."

"And she has immense tits you love to fondle."

"And she has luscious tits."

They laughed, and Gareth knew it was okay with his friends and Gertie.

Margot, elegant in black satin with yellow underskirt and matching gloves, fan, and slippers, looked a queen. So happy was she that, immediately as the coach rolled from Marbrook's drive, she knelt to suck, first Gareth, then Brand. She lowered her bodice that they might play with her teats as she licked their balls and rear slits to raise them to heights of lust before bringing them to completion. True to her boast of yesterday, she was expert.

For the men, she'd brought voluminous handkerchiefs and held them in place at the ready so as not to soil their breeches. For herself, Margot produced a delicate lace handkerchief from her purse to wipe their juices from her lips.

"Delicious," she declared as she settled back onto her seat. "I hope to do more for you *après le bal*. Shall you have time?"

"Oui, mademoiselle. As much time as you like," Brand answered. "I am fascinated by the nipples you present for our amusement. Can you talk of their protrusion's genesis? Or were you so born?"

"No, I was not so fortunate. Shall I tell you the circumstances of their development as we travel to the Shrobeshire's manse?"

"Indeed, madam. I am most curious." Brand settled back into his seat.

"My first husband had business concerns in India. In the two years we resided there, I was indoctrinated to the unorthodox sexual practices I crave today." She flounced out her skirts a bit. "We were newly married, and I wanted to be brave about leaving my family. I was ready to accept anything my husband wished in the way of connubial bliss." She uttered a wry laugh with an accompanying shrug of a graceful shoulder.

"Immediately we arrived at his compound, my husband remanded me to the care of his houseman who was also his masseur with instructions to 'fix' me. We'd had rather painful couplings on the way over, and in my innocence, I assumed that was the way of things. My husband knew better."

She cast her gaze to her velvet slippers. "I am shamed e'en today as I recall his words, and I do recall them exactly as uttered. They are seared in my memory. He said, 'She is too tight for me. Stretch her, and do something about those nipples. You know the way I prefer them. If she squawks, beat her bottom. And as to that, open it for me. I dared not enter it after her vise of a cunt squeezed me raw. I shall visit my native wives for some solace. Three days ought to do it. Work her hard, boy.'

"The masseur's job was to ready me for the sexual activity my husband wished upon his return to our home and to my bed. While the masseur oiled my body for my husband's pleasure, he tugged my nipples into peaks, also for my husband's pleasure."

"Of course," Brand commented.

"Since he was also to 'stretch me,' the masseur found it necessary to enter me several times a day with his male member, which was several widths wider than my husband's. When I cried, he did indeed whip my bottom, and then reamed it most rudely with his cock." Margot paused to stare out the window, smiled, and returned to her narrative.

"After a while, I began to enjoy the pain he inflicted on my nipples and on my buttocks with his whip. The pain's ceasing made his forcing into my body more pleasurable in contrast. Thus, the beginnings of my present proclivity." She raised a brow in apology. "He taught me many lessons while my husband romped with his native wives. You have just been the recipients of some of the lessons." She ventured another wistful look out the window. "I spent most of the three days in bed either sucking cock or being plundered with one. My tutor was never satisfied with less than perfection. The slightest discomfort from my lips or pussy and he'd whip me and make me repeat the act until my jaw ached or my canal was rammed raw."

"Quite a shock for a new bride," Brand commented.

"Yes, it was. Few other women lived in the area, only older wives I could not possibly complain to without their censure. Exactly three days later, my bridegroom returned, and with him were three gorgeous Indian women who wore only saris, which they'd whip off at the crook of his finger. He did much finger-crooking. Usually he took two, sometimes all three, at a time and forced me to watch. 'Learn how it's done,' he'd say." Margot's lips turned up at the corners in a wry half grin, half grimace.

"Do not think he neglected me. Oh, no. He mounted me every night, mumbling all the while how he must get an heir on me. He was fascinated with the young, hard body he'd married and liked to stroke and suck me, but we were not a good fit. I hurt him and he me." She shrugged.

"The masseuse continued pulling and tugging my nipples each eve before I was to present my body for my husband's enjoyment. He paid particular attention to my rear opening since it was still too small for my husband's comfort. His painful ministrations almost made me eager to receive my husband's smaller vessel." She shivered and laughed, throwing back her head, tossing the curls at the nape of her neck.

"Neither my husband nor the masseur was satisfied with my nipples. They seemed to spring back to their usual shape every day. The masseuse urged me to wear tiny clips under my clothes. He whipped and thrust into my buttocks until I agreed. The clips held my nipples taut and upright. They also hurt terribly, yet I took pleasure in the pain and wore them day and night. It made me feel more alive, and the feel of them, the secret of them under my clothes was extremely erotic."

"Did your husband approve?" Gareth interrupted.

"Once my husband discovered them, he was intrigued and begged me to wear them to our bed. He twisted and pulled on them, sending pain through me with each touch. My yelps and tears spurred him on, and I found the pain led to pleasure, and for a time we were both happy." A forlorn look crossed her face.

"The results of wearing the clips made my husband proud. He liked to lower my bodice to show his male friends when they came for cards or chess or merely to chat. He encouraged each man to touch and twist my nipples, with and without the clips. Not one man ever refused to play with my very smooth and firm body. At first, I was shy and cried. Chains to bind me and whips to punish me were brought out those evenings I brought shame to my husband. He and

the masseuse would work me over sexually until they were exhausted. I learned to tolerate the exhibition of my body and eventually came to be aroused by the adulation showed me by the men. I existed in a constant state of arousal."

"Thus, I was ever ready for my tutor's entry into my body for the stretching he insisted I still needed. He managed to complete this task each morn after my husband left the house and each evening before his arrival home. And in between he'd stop his work at odd times to let me practice giving oral comfort." She paused with a smile.

"Back to my unusual nipples. I wore the clips religiously. During the day when I was dressed, e'en when entertaining guests, my husband would surreptitiously tweak the clips in crowded rooms when backs were turned. The anticipation of being caught, paired with the knowledge he was hurting me, invariably aroused him to the point where he'd leave me in charge of the guests and he'd haul one or two of the sari-clad women into a dark chamber to satisfy himself. Of course, most of the men at our parties knew about the clips and would also corner me to give them a tweak. Since my husband had given them permission once or twice, I was fair game at any time or place. At any rate, the clips performed their task magnificently, and by the time I departed India, my nipples were as you see them." She lowered her bodice.

"Do you have the clips now?" Brand reached out for the clam-like nips, and she let him pinch and prod.

"Yes, and though I no longer need them, they afford me the pain I crave on occasion."

Brand had to hold his cloak in front of his breeches as they were passed through the receiving line. "I want to lick and suck them. I am crazed with the expectation of it," he whispered to Gareth.

"I know you are, and you will have your way soon. Do not embarrass yourself before then. Dance with some chestless maids."

* * * *

Tess woke more tired than when she'd gone to bed. She'd tossed and turned, sipped water, used the chamber pot, and tossed more. The uncle who'd pretended to be a father to her for ten years wanted her dead. Her sweet Aunt Alys was married to a monster. The trap Gareth had set in motion would ruin Sir Richard, and in so doing, would ruin Alys. Tess couldn't allow it. Then, in the midst of her turmoil, she remembered. Her pride's need for revenge had placed her in an untenable position. The rendezvous where she'd be obliged to service three men was to take place tonight. She thought of waking Daisy, but she'd kept her from sleep most of the night with her restlessness.

This trepidation had naught to do with fear of the situation except that she might not be equal to it. She certainly knew how to show a man a good time in bed. But three men? Could she handle three at once and keep them all happy? Of a certainty she could and would. She shook off her doubts. She would do whatever it took to make Gareth's life as miserable as he'd made hers.

Attention to the male member with mouth and pussy she'd learned from a French courtesan the last time she'd attended court. She'd not disappoint. She recalled the poor lad she'd sucked off over and over again during practice sessions. He'd been delirious with joy when asked and kept finding fault until her teacher realized his ploy and sent him on his way. He'd volunteered for other lessons, but the wise courtesan chose an older buck, not as randy and more able to take his time for fucking-training. He'd been good, much better than the boys she'd let have her after Gareth married. He taught her to delay gratification, to let the pressure within build, lessen a bit, and then build ever higher so the eruption was truly and magnificently satisfying and pleasurable.

A smile crept across her face, and a stirring began 'tween her legs as she imagined the thrill of having two men attend her. Her breasts tingled in anticipation. The question was not if she could please them,

but would they be able to satisfy her? She stretched and hugged her lonesome breasts.

"Mistress? Why did you not wake me?" A droopy-eyed Daisy rose from her trundle bed. "How long have you been risen?"

"Hours, Daisy, you sleepy kitten. Come, we've work to do. We must ready my wardrobe for tonight."

"Aye. But are you ready?"

"I am most eager to be had by two gentlemen and to leave one writhing in need."

"I believe you are quite ready by the flush on your face and the points on your nips." Daisy flew to the clothes press. "A gown, a morning gown not needing a farthingale. Nothing with excessive trimmings to be in the way, but something plain and sparse in underpinnings." She threw one garment after the other onto the bed.

"The men must have instant access to all of you to whet their appetite, that they may play with you a while afore they peel you like a juicy grape." More clothes flew through the air. "They must be assured easy admission to nipples and nether lips. Then you needs present yourself in the altogether for their vision's enjoyment. As you quiver in the cool air, their tools will swell." Daisy sighed with jealousy.

"They will wish you to pose this way and that so they may ogle your body from every angle. Only after they have each pinched, patted, and sucked all the intimate parts of you will they allow themselves the pleasure of sinking their rods into you and plowing you within an inch of your life."

Daisy's diatribe suffused Tess with need. She fairly shook with it, every nerve ending stretched taut with lust, waiting to be plucked, to sound forth with music. "This evening will be a symphony of delights."

"It will indeed. Would that I were invited."

"Perhaps another time."

"You foresee another time? How shall you keep Gareth at bay for two such bouts?"

"Hmm, t'would be difficult. Let's be done with tonight, and I will think on it."

* * * *

Gareth was at last satisfied all was ready at the cottage. Furniture had been placed exactly as directed. The innkeeper's daughter had cleaned, distributed linens as instructed, and laid a fire. She would return later with food and drink from the inn.

Now, to ensure the ruin of Sir Richard Tremaine. He raced his mount to Grafton Hall with dual purpose, to speak to Sir Richard on business, and to inform Tess a coach would collect her at seven precisely.

After seeing to the care of his horse, he was let into the house by Fallon, who showed him to a wainscoted parlor. Gareth crossed the floor covered with mats of coarsely plaited broad-leaved rushes, ran a hand across a table inlaid with precious stones and colored woods, and stopped to examine curios in a rosewood cabinet while waiting for Sir Richard to appear. He then seated himself on a cushioned settle, assuming he was being kept waiting in some kind of power play. The rogue arrived after several more moments.

"Ah, Sir Gareth, good to see you again so soon." Tremaine strode to him, hand outstretched. "Am I to feel flattered at the attention, or is it actually my lovely niece you have come to see?"

Gareth stood and appreciated the strong grasp of Tremaine's handshake. "I have truly come to see you; however, I sincerely doubt you will feel flattered."

"Oh? And why not? Sit, please. Has Fallon ordered refreshments?"

"They won't be needed. I will state my business briefly." He took a few steps toward the unlit hearth. "My mates and I have recently

had an, uh, discussion with two of your employees, the brothers who live just short of the stand of oaks to the east."

Tremaine paled, but remained mute.

"They have been dealt with, and if I were to believe you harbor any further idea of ridding yourself of Tess Ashworth, you would be eliminated as well. Do we understand each other?"

Sir Richard raised his head a notch. "I know not of what you speak."

"We will not play with each other. I am certain you understand completely." He strode toe-to-toe with Sir Richard. "To ensure you do, I have purchased all your outstanding debts. E'en now, Sir Brand Guiles and his man are making this known to gentry and local farmers alike. We will soon do the same at court." Gareth increased the tension in the room with a lengthy pause and a stroll to the window seat. He pulled back the drapes to look out upon the courtyard's expanse of lawn glistening in the midday sun.

"Any hint of illness or imminent attack on Tess's person will result in our crowing far and near how you reneged on said obligations to me."

"Sir, are you accusing me of an attempt on my niece's life? What preposterous nonsense"

Gareth held up a hand. "We have one of the brothers still alive and ready to testify at any time, since we have seen to his employment. You are not well-liked, Sir Richard, and e'en less respected. It would not be difficult to bar you from securing any further loans or business partnerships."

"Tess would not allow her beloved Aunt Alys to suffer the infamy of financial and social ruination."

"Indeed, she would not." Both men turned to the new voice in the room. "Unless, of course, she felt plotted against, e'en in a small way." Tess spoke from the doorway. "In such case, I would remove my aunt and myself from your clutches and see you jailed for embezzlement of my funds."

"I have never..." Sir Richard's words trailed off as Tess waved a dismissive hand.

"I am not now, nor have I ever been a dolt. I have record of every pound sterling you have spent without authorization. I didn't much care, since Alys gained from it. Your having contracted to have me murdered has changed my indulgence of your ways."

"Do we have compliance on everyone's part?" Gareth stood next to Tess as Tremaine sank into his chair. He nodded and buried his head in his hands.

With a hand at her waist, Gareth led a shaking Tess out of the room into the hall. She leaned her head on his chest. "He actually wanted me dead."

"I'm sorry, sweeting, so sorry." Gareth patted her hair and waited patiently for her to calm. Eventually, her shoulders eased their tense posture and she turned toward the stairs, chin high. "Thank you for your assistance with this most disturbing matter."

"You'll have ample time to thank me tonight. Everything is at the ready. The coach will call for you at seven." He spoke to her regal back.

"I'll be ready."

"Are you ready? It is not too late to call it off."

"You shall soon see how ready I am." She climbed the staircase with nary a backward glance.

Gareth took his leave wishing the hours would fly. He wanted to sink into her flesh with his cock, his tongue, his every appendage. She was his, had always been his. Whatever had come between them, whoever they had each lain with, it had been Tess and Gareth since they frolicked in the nursery together and swore their eternal love. They would swear it again this night.

Chapter Eight

Tess was ready well before seven. She had managed to stay afar from her uncle all day and he from her. How they would continue thus, she did not know. Some plan must be worked out so, although living in the same abode, their paths rarely crossed. Plenty of time to think on that when she'd had her revenge on Gareth Caldwell.

Nothing could distract her from her goal now she was so close. She had pangs of regret, since he had saved her life. Howsoever, he would do the same for a cur he found in a ditch. She must at all times remember he had rejected her for another after promising to be with her always. He'd keep her always safe, he'd vowed. He'd repel any intruders who might harbor harm in their hearts toward her. He'd gone on and on about their sacred love, their bond no one could sever.

Then the first chance he had to fuck another, younger, bustier, and, he thought, richer, bride, he'd thrust Tess aside like week-old mutton and never looked back. He'd rue it this night, rue it most sorely. She smiled and loosely wrapped her cloak around her. Daisy tied it beneath her chin. Almost singing, she scurried downstairs and out of doors to await the coach. It appeared the second she emerged from the house. Her long awaited means for revenge had arrived.

A lone horse pulled the carriage. The driver hopped down from his high seat and assisted Tess into the pumpkin-shaped coach. The sides were open, but a waterproof covering would keep out mist and debris. Cushions lined the seats, and a lap robe was folded across from where she sat. The evening was breezy, yet not cold. She drew her cloak closed and eschewed the blanket. With a wistful look, Daisy waved from the doorway.

Gareth himself helped Tess down from the coach when she arrived at the cottage. The coachman rode off into the night as Gareth enveloped Tess in his arms. She tensed.

"I expect you're a bit nervous. Come have some mulled wine or, if you prefer, mead or ale." He led her into a warm, sparsely furnished home. The hearth was ablaze and several pots hung from its spit. The scent of mint hanging from rafters permeated the atmosphere.

A table covered in a Persian carpet was laid with all manner of pasties, sweetmeats, confections, and various drinking vessels. A joint stool topped by a rug held pitchers of wine and other beverages.

The bed, however, was the focal point of the room. It was a huge oak affair with an ornately carved headboard and footboard. A further look identified the carvings as cherubs in positions of embrace. All four posters had built-in tables laden to groaning. One held a vast array of sheep's bladder prophylactics sewn with tiny stitches and trimmed with gaily colored ribbons. Another table was piled high with damask towels, a third with oddly-shaped pillows, and the last with objects Tess could not identify. The matted floor was strewn with huge cushions, and two chairs were in view, a rocker and a tall-backed cane contraption she did not recognize. That gave her pause.

Perhaps a cup of wine would be wise.

The two unknown men, dressed, as was Gareth, in loose shirts, breeches, hose, and slippers, introduced themselves by given name only as each kissed her cheek. Brand, the smaller man, hung her cloak on a peg by the door.

"Ah, a sensible woman. No stays and other nonsense. The popinjay blue enhances the beauty of your eyes." He led her to the smaller joint stool doubling as a table. "What's your pleasure? Your wish is our command tonight."

"And yours, mine," she replied with a wink. For once Tess was glad she'd had to act a part the whole of her life after her parents died. She was able to present herself with a sauciness she did not feel. "I'll have some of the spiced wine to warm me."

He handed it over with a bow and selected a tankard of ale for himself. "Here's to an interesting eve."

She inclined her head, raised her glass, and sipped. Cinnamon and gloves rolled over her tongue. *If only she felt as spiced instead of terrified*.

Damian, a huge wonder of a man, poured a flagon of mead and downed it in a gulp, then set it down to rip off his shirt. "Overwarm it be with the fire set ablaze on such a mellow spring eve."

His muscled torso quite startled Tess and caused her to choke on her wine. "Sorry, I enjoy the sight of a strong man."

"Welcome to touch all you wish." Damian grinned.

Curiosity overcame her trepidation. She set her glass aside and ran both hands down Damian's chest, pressing in on every muscled ridge. When she reached his waistband, she dipped her fingers to feel the down nestled below. Damian groaned and hardened before her eyes. She chuckled and retrieved her wine. The knowledge that her mere touch could elicit such a huge response suffused her with power. What they wanted was hers to give or withhold. She could make them beg, grovel even. Perhaps she would, with Gareth, at least.

"Shall we have another toast?" Tess raised her cup and the men followed suit. She smiled inwardly. *How easily men were led.* "To old memories, those we savor and those we promised to savor but forgot." She drank, and then sat on the bed's edge. "Hmm, soft." She bounced a bit. Damian sat on one side, Brand on the other.

"We use no titles here. Would you prefer Tess, or some other appellation?" Brand asked.

"Tess will do." She leaned forward to give an ample view of her bosom. He did not wait for an invitation. With both hands, he reached inside to massage her breasts. The nipples turned to pebbles under his fingers. Damian inched up her skirt to give all assembled a view of silk-clad legs cross-gartered with grosgrain red ribbons. He slid his hand farther up and caressed the fleshy lips. Surprised, Tess jumped a bit, and then settled, laughing.

"You are a delight, my dear," Brand whispered as he urged her into a prone position, still toying with her nipples. Damian began his fondling in earnest, massaging her nub, making it difficult for her to keep from creaming all over his hand.

"Do not hold back, lovie. Please me by coming into my hand. You must please us all night, and we shall do the same for you. You have but to ask for what you want."

Gareth came to the other side of the bed, leaned across, and replaced Brand's hand on her nipple with his lips. That was all it took, she pushed back into Damian's hand moaning loudly as she spilled onto it.

"I will taste you now," he said as he bent between her legs.

For a big man, he was exceedingly gentle, lapping her with gusto, but not so she'd empty again too quickly. Delightful sensations suffused her, sending her body into tensions she had not known existed. She felt as she imagined a snake felt, coiled and wanting to strike, but having to wait for the victim to move into place.

Someone removed the sleeves of her bodice and undid the laces to her skirt. She felt cool air on her breasts before she realized she wore nothing but pearls, stockings, and scrunched-up skirt. Then she was sucking cock, no idea whose, except it wasn't Damian's since she was well aware where he was.

Tess gave the cock in her mouth her all, circling the ridge and seam with her tongue and using enough pressure to pull in her cheeks. As soon as the delicious cock began to spout, it was removed, and another took its place. She licked to wet it.

"Harder, suck harder," someone moaned, and she sucked harder. Unfortunately, so did Damian, and she lost concentration as she exploded into his mouth.

When she surfaced from a delicious orgasm, she resumed attention to the member 'tween her lips. Someone attached to a breast yelped as ejaculation spilled down Tess's throat to her chest. They all

laughed, and Gareth brought a dampened cloth to clean her face, hair, and chest.

"Sorry," Brand whimpered sheepishly. "She's just so damned pretty, I lost control."

"No worry, mate," Gareth said as he helped Tess stand. "Do step out of your skirt, lovie," Damian asked.

She unlaced it and let it slide downward and pool at her feet. Three sets of hands fondled her body as they helped her step out of her skirt.

Then, she was nude before three pairs of hungry eyes. She was flushed with the heat of their ogling and petting. Although she'd just had a release, two actually, she became wet again seeing three steel-hard male rods before her.

As Daisy had warned, they wanted her to pose for them in all positions. She wore nothing except her white silk stockings and the rope of pearls. First, they had her stand against the wall, arms raised over her head, one knee bent. They sat her in the rocker, propped her on floor pillows, on her tummy, and on her back, legs in the air. She posed against the bed bolster arms raising her hair, her rope of pearls looped over one breast, then the other. They had her cross and recross her legs, then spread them wide for an unobstructed view.

On her knees, rump in the air, seemed to be their favorite, and they requested it again and again. Finally, all three were gigantically hard and ready to use their weapons.

"Since I have not had satisfaction yet, I shall be the first to enter her," Damian declared.

Gareth took him aside, but Tess interrupted. "Do I have no say?" "Of course you do," Gareth replied with a grin.

Tess laughed inwardly at his smug look. He was certain she'd choose him, the arrogant fool. She crooked her little finger at Damian. "Come here, biggie. I want you first." She was gratified by the look of shock on Gareth's face. It calmed the trembling inside her. Damian's shoulders were broad, his visage comely, and his man part of a size to

tempt any woman, yet doubts again crowded in on Tess. Would he fit in her little-used opening without some pain involved?

Be brave, she told herself. She could not falter so close to achieving her goal of denigrating Gareth Caldwell. He would crawl before she was finished with him. Head high, she reclined upon bed pillows in a provocative pose, arm behind her head, one knee bent, foot arched, breasts thrust forward.

Gareth sputtered. Brand clapped him on the back to quiet his protest. "No fair interfering. You know the rules. The lady's wishes precede ours. Always."

Damian's joint expanded e'en more as he neared Tess. Doubts crowded in on her again. Could she handle this huge dagger, tame this fierce instrument? She was grateful when he lubricated the sheep's bladder sheathing him. God's blood, if it killed her, she'd give dear Damian the ride of his life and hope Gareth suffered through every gasp of pleasure she uttered, every praise she heaped upon Damian's prowess. And judging by Damian's determined look, she'd not have to fake it.

* * * *

Gareth struggled in Brand's grasp, but his friend spoke only truth. He could do nothing to stop Damian's rape of his Tess, his one and only love. Not actually rape, since Tess asked for the man, but how was Gareth to watch and be content to wait his turn? Suppose she wanted Brand next? He wanted her to enjoy herself, but he wanted to enjoy her as well. Waiting was torture. Yes, he had gotten off with her lips around his cock, but that was not nearly enough. He wanted to plunge into her with all his might, make her moan and plead.

Damian was on her now, tweaking her nipples, slipping into her. She gasped with the first stab into her waiting cavity. Gareth didn't want to look, yet couldn't not look. Tess's smooth white skin contrasted against Damian's dark roughness was arousing in itself.

Damian's gigantic cock withdrew and stabbed again, eliciting gasps from Tess and panting from Damian. Gareth winced when Tess's hands reached for her lover's rear to push him more deeply inside her. Damian groaned and bit at the breast in his mouth.

Gareth shot a glance to Brand. He was not unaffected and stroked his dick in rhythm with Damian's thrusts into Tess's body. Tess arched to meet Damian's every blow as he plowed while sucking her, his panting growing ever more rapid and wild.

Gareth was apoplectic with jealousy. He would be next, no matter who Tess requested. He wanted in there, and quickly. He strode toward the bed, only to be beaten there by Brand, who greased Damian's exposed arse and rammed in. Both Damian and Tess cried out in glee as they adjusted their rhythm to the new entry. Always before, in such cases, Gareth would place his cock in the woman's hand or mouth. But this was Tess, and he wanted more from her. He wanted her love.

Very quickly, Brand shouted and shuddered and pulled out of Damian. Concluded for the moment, he went to the loft, where four tubs of hot water had been delivered earlier. They'd been covered by boards to retain heat.

Damian, blast him, remained inside of Tess, driving, plunging, and whooping with the pleasure of it. With grunts and shudders, he climaxed, yet he kept his member inside Tess, rotating and massaging her with his cock until she bucked under him. Still the damned man did not leave her side. Lips all but touching, they conversed in soft tones. Gareth strode toward the bed, but stopped when Damian rid himself of the sheath he'd used and donned another stitched with ridges designed to give more pleasure to the woman as it massaged along her canal. To Gareth's dismay, Tess laughed and unwound the pearls from her neck, swirling them around one breast, then the other until a panting and eternally hard Damian entered her again. She gasped at the new sensation. Pain, then joy, crossed her countenance.

Giggles of delight erupted as Damian withdrew and thrust over and over again.

To Gareth's amazement, Tess, very slowly and determinedly, inserted the pearls one at a time into Damian's rear portal.

"That's the way it's done, lovie. Oh yes, madam, oh yes." He kissed her, nipped at her breast, pulled out of her, and rammed back in to her contentment. The tinkling laugh Gareth used to love stabbed him through the heart. Her laugh became near manic as Damian punctured her, cock in and out, in and out. A giddy Tess inserted pearls into him with each of his probes, all but the last few. Those she kept in her hand.

Gareth winced at the force of Damian's cock plundering Tess's body. Surely, she would be bruised both inside and out.

Damian's spearing gained momentum, and his pumping became desperate lunges, ever harder, ever faster. He and Tess panted in synchronization with his driving rod.

"That thing you used is creating havoc within me. I can no longer hold off." Tess yelped and bucked and writhed.

A mere second passed before Damian called out, "Now, lovie, now."

Tess withdrew the pearls in one stroke as Damian spurted his release. He took a while to recover this time, rolled off to Tess's side, fondling her tits, but otherwise quiet. They hugged and petted each other like familiar lovers, and Gareth could do nothing but stand and watch the show in despair.

Perhaps he could talk Brand and Damian into going back to the inn and slaking their lust on Gertie. But he knew they wanted Tess in every way possible. They hadn't had their fill yet. He would not be able to get them off her. She was voluptuous, she was willing and what's more she gave as good as she got and welcomed additional stimulation.

Damian scooped Tess off the bed and carried her to the loft. Gareth could look his fill upon the trio, even join in, yet he chose to

turn his back. He sank onto the rocker as desolate as he could possibly be. This was not working out the way he'd planned. Not working at all. The scent of lavender soap, the sounds of laughter and splashing from above didn't allay his mood.

"Ooh, that's marvelous," Tess shouted out.

Gareth pressed a hand to his eyes.

He knew the routine his mates would follow. They would be enjoying Tess to the fullest, soaping her breasts and her belly whilst she washed their dicks with cloth and tongue. One or both would be fucking her on the mat or in the tub. Her tinkling giggles sent daggers of pain through his whole being.

He understood now that she was exacting her revenge for his having wed Lottie. He bowed his head as gasps and moans of lust wafted down to him. He should be happy she was enjoying this and would have been had she let him in on the fun. Their mutual gratification had been his intention.

After what seemed like hours, Damian came bounding down the stairs. "Man, she's all you said and more. A true lover of the art of fucking more than one man at a time. She does everything well." He poured mead for them both. "That cunny of hers has something special. I want her to suck me next, and then the grand opening of her bum should go to Brand with his skinny dick. Once he's stretched her a bit for us, you and me can take the plunge."

"Talkative, aren't you?"

"Yes, I be stoked from the havin' of her. Hoo-ee, it was good." He downed his mead and stuffed a pasty into his mouth.

Gareth had to remind himself this was his good friend. He wanted to run him through. "Where's Brand?"

"He's fuckin' her in the bath and actin' as her lady's maid."

Moments later, Tess tripped down the stairs, lively as could be in the transparent silk robe they'd provided. She wore the pearls once more, this time as a sash around her waist since none had been included with the robe. They'd planned for it to flow open at every

step, but somehow this was sexier. The fact that it hid bits of her from his eyes made Gareth want to rip it from her and pillage her body for having been shrouded e'en for mere moments.

"I must thank you, Sir Gareth, for this most delightful challenge. I've experienced nothing like it before this eve."

"Would you have us again without the dare?" Brand's voice was hopeful and anxious. He palmed a breast through the silk while reaching for an iced confection with the other.

"I might at that, Sir Brand." Tess leaned her breasts into his unclothed chest and ruffled his hair. Brand fed her a sweetmeat.

Gareth's ire increased. His friends were not playing fair. The woman had agreed to let all three of them have her, and she'd not complied. Ordinarily in such case, Brand and Damian would carry her to him, legs spread, and if she did not protest, slip her onto his shaft where he sat. Or they'd place her on the bed in ready position for him to enter her. They didn't seem wont to do this with Tess. They'd keep her to themselves if he did not intervene. Yet, he could not force himself on her. There was nothing for it but to leave the cottage and let the three of them have their "night of supreme pleasure."

Tess came to sit on his lap. "Why so glum, Gareth? Not having a good time? Not having a turn on the woman you left behind?" She kissed him long and hard. He ran a hand over her silk-clad breasts and when she didn't protest, reached for the hem of her robe. Before he could go further, she stood.

"Brand and Damian are going to show me this other chair. How does it work, gentlemen? I am intrigued and always anxious for new exploits." They rushed to her side, leaving Gareth once again frustrated and confused.

Tess untied the rope of pearls and slipped it around her neck to nestle between her breasts. Brand peeled the robe from her shoulders and threw it to a corner. "Damian, settle yourself."

Damian took a sheath from the bedstead table and leaned back in the chair so that his hardened rod pointed skyward as he covered it.

Brand continued with his instruction. "Impale yourself atop him, Lady Tess."

"Gladly, oh so gladly." Tess followed instructions with a pleased, "Ohhh, sir, you do me proud," as she slipped onto Damian's cock.

Brand released a lever, lowering Damian and raising Tess's bottom to heights never quite achieved with pillows alone. "Come look, Gareth. Her bum hole is as rosy pink as her nips. What a treat is this woman you brought us." He grabbed a jar of lotion from the table and with his fingers circled and pushed the liquid in and around the target. Tess was enjoying Damian's cock so much, she relaxed without the coaxing most women needed. Daisy's insistent practices had served her well.

Brand slid in slowly, and amazingly to Gareth, Tess's reaction was not of pain, but of joy. She actually pushed back into him, and his sigh of contentment proved she was doing it well. Brand held on to one tit. Damian sucked at the other. The chair was constructed so a third man could have access to the woman's breasts, hands, and mouth. Gareth did not want to be sucked off again. He wanted to make love to his woman. But she had made it clear she did not want him. The chair rocked with the motion of their fucking, each of them making noises in the throes of ecstasy. Gareth was sick, until Tess invited him to play.

"This is a marvelous invention, Gareth. Do join us. It feels so, so good."

He was tremendously hard watching them and could not walk away from the invitation. He held on to the chair back while Tess administered to him with hands and lips. She was magnificent in every way.

He slid himself in and out of her mouth, pretending it was her cunt. She inserted fingers into his arse, and he loved it. In appreciation, he bit at her nipples when Brand wasn't at them. She purred instead of crying out with the slight pain of his bites.

Brand held on to her hips and, eyes closed in concentration, punished her arse with his deep drives into her. Damian's dick shoved ever deeper inside her with every push. Tess inserted and withdrew her fingers from Gareth as he worked his dick in her mouth. She paused once to speak. "Let me taste you this time. Let me lick you clean."

It was all he needed to send him over the edge. He spurted, and she swallowed and licked as promised. Brand exploded with a whoop, but Damian, who had already released several times, kept pace with Tess e'en as Brand and Gareth withdrew. They watched as Damian held on to her waist for control and pushed himself deep inside her, then raised her to the end of his dick and back on it again with a slam.

"Oh my, sir, have you no mercy?"

"None, lovie. Enjoy."

"I shall. I am. Pray do not cease."

Brand cleaned himself at the basin and returned to Damian's head. "Do me, both of you. Take turns licking me while you fuck each other."

Tess complied first and, after a few slurps, gave way to Damian. The chair rocked harder and faster as they took turns sucking on Brand. Gareth aided by fondling and pressing Tess's bottom onto Damian as they rocked. He wanted her to reach all the heights she could, e'en if not with him.

Still, Damian didn't give it up. Brand did, however, and when finished spurting, knelt to lick Damian's balls and Tess's arse.

Tess stretched her torso upward. "Yes, oh, dear heaven, yes. Eeeee-ah." She exploded as Damian gave the same whoop. The three collapsed upon each other, limbs entwined.

A short time later, all repaired to the loft for bathing. Gareth had visions of loving Tess while she soaked, but she resisted, saying she needed to rest. After Brand rubbed her dry with a damask cloth, she lay, naked, upon a cot in the corner. She closed her eyes. Brand and

Damian went downstairs and out into the garden, leaving Gareth and Tess alone.

"Did you ever intend to make love to me?" Gareth sat on the edge of the cot.

"No, I never did." Tess was ever honest.

"You have no care for me, then?"

"As I said before, I will not be anyone's second preference. You chose Lottie and were thwarted by her death. Otherwise, I'd not have seen you again."

"Not at all true. I listened to those supposed to be wiser. They told me I'd forget you. I didn't. I had plans to divorce Lottie. I had made enough money on my own to pay back her dowry and more."

"Oh, and that is why you wrote to me so many times of your undying love and devotion? That is why you sent me word to wait for you?"

"It would not have been fair to ask you to wait when I knew not how long this would take nor how you felt or whether someone else had taken my place."

"And while you planned to come back to me, you had the enjoyment of Lottie's lush bosom in your bed every night."

"It was never like that between us. It was business. She knew at the outset I never stopped loving you."

"Why ever did she marry you?"

"She wanted freedom from her father, wanted her own home, to come and go as she pleased. She cared not for love. We talked about it. She was fair to me, knew I loved you, and was ready to let me go once she was out from under her father's thumb."

"I imagined her lording her success in taking you from me, laughing behind my back."

"Tess, she never would have done."

"Perhaps I misjudged the woman. It doesn't exonerate you from being unseemly ready to disregard the vows we made to each other, to treat my feelings so lightly." "I never took your feelings lightly. I was in agony when my father forbad me to visit you after he announced my betrothal to Lottie. They had me watched day and night. I wrote letters. They intercepted them."

"And later? When, like Lottie, you were free to do as you pleased, why did you not contact me then?"

"I could not humiliate Lottie by coming to you before we were divorced. Time passed. I knew not whether you still wanted me or had another. I heard rumors."

"Do you have any notion what it was like for me after your betrayal? I couldn't eat. I couldn't sleep. I wanted to end my life. Of course I tried to find solace elsewhere."

He folded her in his arms. "I do not blame you. Only please forgive me and know I, too, was miserable. I will do what you wish in atonement."

"I suppose I shall forgive you one day. One day my hurt and anger may wane." She nestled to his chest, and he combed her hair with his fingers.

"As long as I know I have a chance, I will be content, for your happiness is paramount to me." His kiss was tentative but became bold when she entwined her arms around his neck.

"Gareth, I have missed you sorely."

"And I you." They fell upon the cot length to length, every particle of skin touching.

Though he burned with need, Gareth went slowly. He kissed and licked his way down her body until reaching the honeyed spot he'd waited for all eve. She mewed like a kitten as he latched onto the waiting flesh. After a few seconds of tonguing her, he raised himself to her breasts and gave them the same attention. Her moans were an aphrodisiac to him, spurring him on.

"Do you truly want me, Tess?"

She hesitated, and then with a groan whispered a breathless, "Yes. Haven't I always?"

He entered her with a contented sigh, and her hands flew to his buttocks to push him further inside her. At last he was where he wanted to be. "I love you, Tess. That will never change."

"Oh, Gareth, I've tried so hard to hate you, spent so many hours plotting my revenge, and now, it matters not. I can't deny you my love because it's lit from within and will not be quenched in a thousand years."

"You forgive me, then? You will you marry me, soon?"

"I knew the second I saw you at the musical in the solar, I would one day marry you. I denied the truth of it to myself. Yes, we will wed and soon. Now, let us continue on the path we had started." She arched her back to give him greater access.

Brand and Damian circled the bed. Brand knelt to suck at Tess's toes while Damian played with her breasts and Gareth rode her.

* * * *

Tess could not believe the sensations running through her body. Damian inserted something into her bottom. It was slick and smooth, and with Gareth's cock in the other part of her, she felt filled to bursting with heat and need. She rose gradually into a maelstrom of swirling mist where nothing was real. All was pain and pleasure and wanting mixed into a ball of fire inside her. She wanted to rush toward it, but they wouldn't let her.

When they sensed she was about to reach the summit, they stilled their ministrations, not completely, but enough to bring her down from the ultimate height. This seemed to go on for so long she was reduced to pleading for release. "Let me come, please, please."

"No, not yet," they said in unison, in voices seeming to be underwater and far away. Her vision was blurred. Gareth's face appeared shrouded in gauze. Gareth plunged deep, so deep he hit the back wall, which was immediately struck from the other side by the

foreign object being wielded by Damian. She struggled for release, they backed off. Then, they began their assaults once again.

Brand, with lips and tongue laving her toes, massaged her thighs with a feather. Gareth had found that magic spot within her and rotated his hips to massage it over and over again. She arched to feel more, and he obliged by ramming in until his balls bounced against her. Damian tickled her bottom, and then plunged the object as far as it would go into her. Transported into an Eden of bliss, her senses drugged with titillation, she craved the final spark that would kindle the heat within her.

She pleaded again. "Pray, gentlemen, end my torture. I can stand no more."

"Yes, my darling, we'll let you have your due." Sucking on breasts and toes increased. Both Gareth and Damian thrust into her and with little pulses touched sensitive spots, making her throb inside. Lights flashed behind her eyes, and the world slipped away as she spiraled upward, beyond earth and sky, with Gareth and the pleasure of a singing body and a loving heart.

Then, she split in two, her body, like glass, shattered as it fell from those perilous heights onto the cot. She gradually regained awareness, panting and gasping for air. Gareth kissed her, Damian combed her hair, Brand massaged her feet.

"How do you feel?" Gareth whispered against her lips.

"Like a cat that has lapped the entire bowl of cream."

"Will you sleep now, or would you like food or drink?" Brand asked.

Tess sat up. "I'm too stimulated to sleep. I believe I'll go downstairs and have more wine and some of those delicious-looking berries."

They wouldn't let her walk. Gareth carried her this time, setting her on the mattress. He served her wine and fruit. The men petted her in between bites of their food and sips of their drinks. She grew hot again and squeezed a strawberry against one breast and a raspberry

onto the other. They whooped. Brand and Damian each took a breast to lick clean. Gareth rubbed some berry juice into her pussy and set his licking there. Tess reveled in the attention. She creamed into Gareth's mouth, and he entered her again to gain his own release while Damian thrust into her mouth and Brand into him. After more wine and berries, they wanted to show her some of the other objects on the table, but Gareth declared she'd won the dare and the evening was over.

They washed and dressed, and Damian went in search of the coachman. Tess was so invigorated, she hated to leave. Her body tingled with the excitement of the night. "May we do this again another day?" The timid tone was not at all like her. She was suddenly shy. "I do not mean often, but once in a while."

"We may do this and more, whenever you wish. I love you and can deny you nothing." He kissed her gently. "T'was always the way with me and ever will be."

"I know and I have done with revenge. It is for those who dislike happiness."

At the door, she turned. "I insist only upon this one thing."

"Yes, my darling Tess?"

"Our children shall marry for love and naught else."

"Love and naught else," he answered as he assisted her into the coach.

She waved. "Godspeed, my fairy-tale knights. Parting is such sweet sorrow."

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tish Domenick is first generation Italian-American. She has earned two University degrees, a BS (no, not that BS, Bachelor of Science—really) and an MA, and has many years experience in the health care field. Give her a bowl of pasta, a good red wine, a romantic novel, and life is good. She lives in Florida with her husband, who cooks the pasta and pours the wine and wonders how she researched those erotic scenes. She'll never tell.



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